

Said Maleem knocks out Fakhreddine at BRAVE CF 52

Mohamed Said Maleem puts bad blood behind to claim Light Heavyweight world title

● Chsiev stops hometown hero Cortese

TDT | Manama

It was a lead-up based on bad blood. It was all over the place, including on the event's tagline. But at the end of BRAVE CF 52 in Milan, Italy there was nothing but cordiality and respect, and, of course, the supreme glory for Mohamed Said Maalem, the new BRAVE CF 52 Light Heavyweight champion of the world.

Following months of back-and-forth public statements, social media war of words, and lots of anticipation, Said Maalem showed resilience, in addition to his traditional firepower, to emerge victorious and claim the vacant 93kg belt with a first-round KO over the reigning Middleweight champion Fakhreddine.

After the fight, in a long speech given in both Arabic and French, and subsequently translated to English by his team, "L' Ambiance" tried to smooth things over with Fakhreddine.

"I have no issue with Fakhreddine, at all. We are brothers before God, he's a good man, and I like to think I am too. I respect him, his team, and his country of Lebanon. The only thing in my mind now is happiness, happiness for becoming the world champion", he said.

Fakhreddine, who failed on his plans to become BRAVE CF's first double champion, adopted a similar tone, but used his time on the mic to mention a personal drama he went through



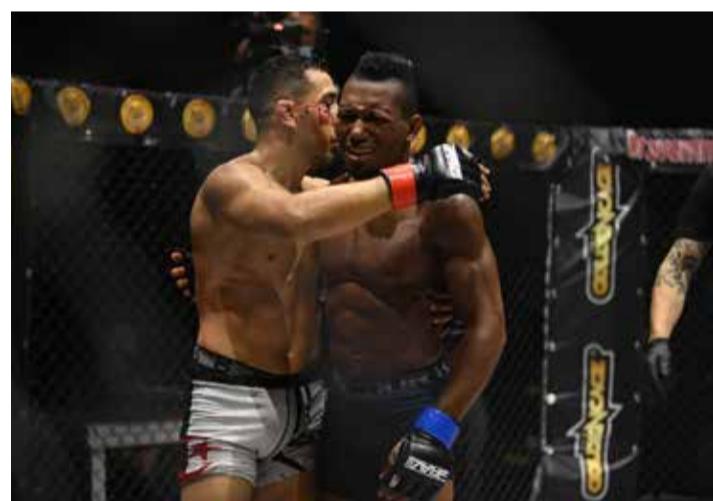
Gamzat Magomedov and Mochamed Machaev in action

moments after the fight and also the most controversial moment of the fight, the alleged illegal shots on the back of the head he suffered during the TKO.

"I don't mean it as an excuse but I just heard that a huge friend of mine got shot and killed, like 3 hours before the event. It was devastating. I was hit on the back of the head too a few times, the ref didn't see it. But it is what it is. I want to congratulate Said Maalem for his world title", Fakhreddine stated.

The fight

When the bell rang, Said Maalem went for an early takedown, Fakhreddine tried a guillotine choke and managed to stand up. When they were clinched, Fakhreddine complained about a groin shot but the referee Dec Larkin let the fight proceed. Less than a minute later, though, the referee stopped the fight due to a now undisputable low blow.



Elias Boudejdam and Brice Picaud

Fakhreddine recovered quickly and went for it right away, combining vicious leg kicks that slowed Maalem down and powerful strikes to the head, which promptly forced Maalem to shoot for a takedown.

They scrambled and fought on the fence and then Said Maalem showed great sense of urgency,

seizing the opportunity and connecting a short left hook that dropped Fakhreddine. With his opponent down, L' Ambiance engaged determined to finish the fight right there and connected multiple strikes until the fight was finally stopped.

These final seconds also led to the most controversial moment



Ahmad Labban and Virgiliu Frasineac Flag in action

of the fight, with Fakhreddine claiming he got hit on the back of the head by Said Maalem a few times.

With a little bit more than 30 seconds on the clock in the first round, the referee stepped in and stopped the fight. Said Maalem got his 8th KO victory and his first MMA world title at age 37.

At Chsiev's terms

BRAVE CF 52 was a night of highlights, beautiful finishes and exciting fights from the bottom to the top and that was also true in the co-main event of the evening.

Sadly for the Italians, though, the home fighter Enrico Cortese wasn't the one producing the highlights, but the victim in his opponent Rustam Chsiev's one.

The two men started at full throttle, putting everything on each single strike. Such incredible pace wasn't sustainable for the whole fight, so Chsiev brought the fight to his own

terms and took Cortese down -- the first of many times within only five minutes.

In fact, Chsiev did so every time he needed to, like when Cortese managed to bring the fight back up and started swinging and connecting at him.

On the ground and with time on the clock, Chsiev worked his way through a full mount, from which he managed to inflict huge damage on Cortese.

The Italian was able to stand up but was mauled to the ground once again, absorbing an enormous amount of strikes in the process. For a moment, it seemed that the fight was going to be stopped but Cortese was saved by the bell.

That didn't last long either, during the break between rounds, the doctors deemed Cortese unfit to continue due to an injury on his arm and Rustam Chsiev confirmed his 5th professional win, the third consecutive inside the BRAVE CF Arena.

Kane skips Spurs return amid Man City transfer talk

AFP | London

Harry Kane reportedly failed to turn up for his scheduled pre-season tests with Tottenham yesterday amid mounting speculation the striker wants to force a move to Manchester City.

England captain Kane was due back at Tottenham's training headquarters for a coronavirus test and a fitness assessment following his three-week holiday after Euro 2020.

However, it was widely re-



England's forward Harry Kane takes part in their MD-1 training session at the Tottenham Hotspur training ground in London

Kane has grown frustrated at Tottenham's failure to win a major trophy since 2008, with their latest let-down coming in last season's League Cup final defeat against Manchester City

ported Kane did not make an appearance at Tottenham's Enfield base, sparking fresh talk that he is determined to engineer a transfer to Premier League champions Manchester City.

He believes he has a 'gentleman's agreement' with Tottenham which allows him to move this year.

But with three years left on his contract, Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy has no intention of selling his club's prized asset, who is valued at around £150 million (\$208 million).

'I just want my friend to be ok': Root backs Stokes after England exit

AFP | London

England captain Joe Root has told Ben Stokes to take as long as he needs away from cricket after the all-rounder opted to prioritise his mental health.

Stokes on Friday said he was taking "an indefinite break from all cricket with immediate effect" because of the stress of his role as one of England's most high-profile stars.

Stokes will miss England's five Tests against India, which start in Nottingham on Wednesday.

After that, England face a winter series against Pakistan, the T20 World Cup, five Tests



England's Joe Root (R) congratulates England's Ben Stokes (L) during a match (file photo)

in Australia and three in the West Indies.

That relentless grind may have weighed on Stokes, who was a regular in all three formats of the game.

The 30-year-old also had surgery on his left index finger in April after suffering a fracture while playing for the Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League.

"From my point of view, I just want my friend to be OK. Anyone who knows Ben, he always puts other people in front of himself and first," Root told reporters yesterday.

"Now is an opportunity for him to put himself first, to take time to look after himself and get to a good place again. Hopefully that can be sooner rather than later."

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JOE ROOT