

Two career-defining bouts take center stage at BRAVE CF 108

Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation™ (BRAVE CF), the world’s fastest-growing and most global mixed martial arts organization, returns with another landmark event as BRAVE CF 108 arrives at the legendary Pula Arena in Croatia on September 5, featuring two pivotal contests that could reshape the future of two weight classes.

The historic evening will be headlined by hometown hero Andi “Highlight Machine” Vrtacic, who takes on France’s Sofiane Bouafia in a three-round middleweight clash.

Sharing top billing is an equally compelling co-main event as Filipino superstar Stephen “The Sniper” Loman takes on Georgian sensation Lasha Abramishvili in a high-stakes encounter, with the winner potentially earning an opportunity to vie for the vacant BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Championship.

The marquee attraction pairs together two dangerous finishers eager to make a statement under the bright lights.

Vrtacic has generated considerable momentum on the regional circuit, producing six knockouts in nine victories as a professional mixed martial artist. The explosive Croatian now prepares to make his long-awaited BRAVE CF debut, determined to announce himself on one of the sport’s biggest stages in front of his compatriots.



triots.

Across the cage stands a seasoned campaigner in Bouafia, who understands the demands of performing at the highest level. Since turning professional in 2012, the French veteran has amassed 12 appearances while capturing regional championships along the way. Seven of his career victories have come before the final bell, and he enters hostile territory intent on spoiling Vrtacic’s homecoming.

The co-main event carries equally significant implications as Loman finally returns to competition after years away from the cage.

The Filipino’s rise paralleled the promotion’s rapid international expansion. Since competing on BRAVE CF’s inaugural card in September 2016, Loman assembled a perfect 6-0 promotional record that established him as one of its pioneer stars.

His defining breakthrough came at BRAVE CF 9: THE KINGDOM OF CHAMPIONS in November 2017 when he stopped Gurdarshan “Saint Lion” Mangat by first-round technical knockout to become the inaugural BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Champion. That triumph launched a historic reign spanning 1,179 days, the longest in division-

al history, highlighted by four successful World Title defenses.

Awaiting him, however, is one of the division’s fastest-rising contenders.

Abramishvili has rapidly established himself as a legitimate force in the bantamweight ranks, bringing a 12-2-1 professional record alongside a spotless 4-0 run under the BRAVE CF banner. Three of those triumphs ended inside the distance, while his most recent appearance saw him eke out a hard-earned unanimous decision over Brice “Lion Kid” Picaud at BRAVE CF 106 this past June.

Beyond the action, BRAVE CF 108 also represents another landmark in the company’s continuing international journey.

Croatia becomes the newest nation to welcome BRAVE CF, reinforcing the promotion’s commanding presence across Europe while further cementing its standing as the continent’s leading MMA organization.

In less than a decade, BRAVE CF has emerged as one of the sport’s most influential forces. The Bahrain-based powerhouse now holds the largest share of the European MMA market while staging events in 38 countries around the world.

Its debut in Croatia marks the 18th European nation to host a BRAVE CF spectacle and the 39th overall, underscoring a truly unmatched global footprint that few organizations in the sport can claim.

Al Ittifaq barred from registering players

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama



The Bahrain Football Association has banned Al Ittifaq Club from registering new players due to outstanding financial obligations owed to a number of players and coaches.

The decision comes as part

of the association’s regulations aimed at protecting the rights of players and coaches. The registration ban will be lifted once the club settles all outstanding financial obligations and completes the required procedures with the association.

Salah arrives in Turkey for Trabzonspor talks



Mohamed Salah is greeted by supporters upon his arrival in Istanbul

AFP | Istanbul

Former Liverpool star Mohamed Salah arrived in Istanbul yesterday to complete his move to Turkish club Trabzonspor after leaving the Premier League giants at the end of his contract.

“Salah mode: ON,” Trabzonspor posted on social media alongside photos of the 34-year-old Egyptian aboard a private jet wearing the team’s blue and maroon home shirt.

The club from Turkey’s northeast announced on Tuesday that they had begun “negotiations” with Salah, who left Liverpool after nine seasons and as many trophies with the Reds.

He landed at around 0900 GMT in Istanbul, where he was greeted by hundreds of ecstatic supporters, AFP journalists reported.

“I’m here straight after my night shift, and now for Mo-

hamed Salah, I am ready to spend another sleepless night,” Trabzonspor supporter Abdul Kerim Yervan told AFP.

Salah is due to undergo a medical yesterday in Istanbul before flying to Trabzon later in the day.

The right winger, who is set to sign a two-season contract with an option for a third, will earn 17 million euros (\$19.6 million) a year, according to several Turkish media outlets.

Salah netted 257 goals for Liverpool in 442 appearances in all competitions, making him the third top goalscorer in the club’s history.

He also scored 193 Premier League goals, 191 of them for the Reds, putting him fourth in the all-time list behind English trio Alan Shearer, Harry Kane and Wayne Rooney.

Salah was far from his best in a struggling Liverpool team last term, scoring only seven times in the league.

De Minaur fights past Duckworth in all-Aussie Montreal battle



Alex de Minaur in action

AFP | Montreal

Alex de Minaur blew through the opening set but needed some good luck in the second to emerge with a 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) opening win over James Duckworth at the ATP Montreal Masters.

De Minaur, seeded third, hasn’t lost to a fellow Aussie in four years, but he was made to work hard by his 86th-ranked compatriot to keep that streak alive.

The second-round match turned in an instant in the second-set tiebreaker when a return which rolled off the top of the net handed de Minaur a match point after he saved six set points for his opponent.

“A little bit of luck went my way in the tiebreaker,” de Minaur said. “He was hitting me off the court in the second set, but I got lucky and managed to sneak away with the tiebreaker.

Inter Milan and AC Milan battle to 1-1 draw in Perth friendly

AFP | Perth

Frenchman Christopher Nkunku converted a late penalty as AC Milan drew 1-1 with rivals Inter Milan in a lacklustre pre-season derby yesterday in Perth.

In front of 52,310 fans, Serie A champions Inter Milan appeared to be claiming the bragging rights after Federico Dimarco’s strike from close range in the 52nd minute.

But Nkunku was brought down by Carlos Augusto in the 83rd minute before squaring the contest with a superbly taken penalty.

The result ensured that new AC Milan coach Ruben Amorim is still seeking a maiden victory



AC Milan’s Luka Modric in action

after his reign began with a 2-2 draw in a friendly against Celtic in Glasgow last month.

Amorim, fired as Manchester United coach in January, has been tasked with turning around ailing AC Milan, who missed out on the Champions League last season.

He will have some concerns his new side were fortunate to escape with a draw following an error-strewn performance.

They will be encouraged by veteran midfield maestro Luka Modric playing the last 30 minutes having recently signed a one-year extension.

“It was nice to get some minutes under the belt and I felt good,” Modric said.

“It’s good to have these kinds of games to prepare for the season.

Alonso hails ‘emotional’ Mudryk return in 1-0 loss to Juventus

AFP | Hong Kong

Manager Xabi Alonso hailed Mykhailo Mudryk’s “emotional” return from a doping ban as the winger played for Chelsea for the first time in nearly two years in a 1-0 friendly defeat to Juventus in Hong Kong yesterday.

The Ukrainian international came on as a substitute for Nicolas Jackson in the 82nd minute, drawing applause from

his teammates and loud cheers from Chelsea fans in the 43,575 crowd at Kai Tak Stadium.

Mudryk had not played since November 2024 because of a doping ban, but won permission to resume his football career on Friday after winning an appeal.

Despite a lively cameo on the left side, he was unable to stop Juventus taking the spoils courtesy of a wonderful second-half strike from Kosovo international

Edon Zhegrov.

“Really pleased for him. It was emotional for everyone from the club to see him back,” Alonso told reporters.

“He was thrilled, for sure. After such a long period, to be back on the pitch, it was a great feeling for him.”

Neither side could find the breakthrough in a drab first half as two experimental line-ups struggled to create clear-cut chances.

Sabalenka tops Uchijima in WTA Toronto opener

AFP | Toronto

World number one Aryna Sabalenka returned to her hard court comfort zone with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Moyuka Uchijima in the WTA 1000 in Toronto.

It was a solid start for Sabalenka in her bid to bounce back after falling in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros and in the round of 16 at Wimbledon.

The Belarusian star has dominated on hard courts this year and on Tuesday notched her 24th win in 25 matches on the surface. The lone defeat was her loss to Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final.

Now she’s eyeing a North American hard court run that could include a three-peat at the US Open, the final Grand



Aryna Sabalenka in action

Slam of the year that starts on August 30 in New York.

“I’m happy with the performance, I’m happy with the fight,” Sabalenka said after her second-round opener. “I knew going into this match I might struggle a little bit after a little break, but I was ready for that.

“I’m happy that mentally and physically I was ready to go.”