

The MMA trailblazer: how Bahrain's BRAVE CF took the sport to ten new countries

The Bahrain-based event became the first international organisation to host shows in 10 countries

● **BRAVE CF kept bringing together many nations under its umbrella but also travelled around the world**

TDT | Manama

Unlike all other Mixed Martial Arts organizations out there, BRAVE Combat Federation was born as a global MMA promotion, with an international factor in its DNA. The Bahrain-based event, founded by HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa has visited a staggering number of 20 countries in its four years of operations and, more than that,

became the first international organization to host shows in half of those countries.

This international aspect was evident since the very first fight night held by the promotion, in the Kingdom of Bahrain, back in 2016. The show featured a variety of international athletes, becoming the first global MMA show to take place in the Middle East.

From then on, the trend only grew. BRAVE CF kept bringing together many nations under its umbrella but also travelled around the world. Literally. From North to South and East to West.

In doing so, BRAVE CF assumed the role of an MMA developer, increasing the reach and impact of the sport around the globe. The fastest-growing promotion



in the world became the very first global MMA show to hold events in the following ten na-



BRAVE CF became the first global MMA organisation to hold events in India, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Indonesia, Morocco, Colombia, Pakistan, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Kyrgyzstan

Arabia, and Kyrgyzstan.

Thus, BRAVE Combat Federation lives up to its values of empowering the sport of Mixed Martial Arts and putting to-

gether the strongest scouting program on the planet, which really takes the sport to all parts of the world, reason why the largest media property in Asia is so praised inside and outside the industry of MMA.

Through the following weeks, BRAVE CF will return home, to the Kingdom of Bahrain, where it all began, with a series of events labelled as "Kombat Kingdom", three consecutive fight nights taking place in the MMA hub of the world.

Among global superstars in action, exciting prospects having the chance of their lives, anticipated title fights, and the prestigious Flyweight World Title Tournament, BRAVE CF will continue to pave the way for a new system to the sport of Mixed Martial Arts.

Djokovic back to winning ways in Rome after US Open default



Novak Djokovic hits a return

Reuters | Rome

Novak Djokovic turned the page on his contentious US Open exit and began his claycourt season with a convincing 6-3 6-2 victory over wildcard Salvatore Caruso in the second round of the Italian Open yesterday.

The world number one was disqualified in New York after accidentally hitting a line judge with a ball during his fourth round match against Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta.

Djokovic's frustration boiled over after dropping his serve against Carreno Busta in the opening set at Flushing Meadows but 10 days on in Rome he did not face a single break point in an imperious display against the unseeded Caruso.

"Obviously I had an early exit (at the US Open) so had more time to prepare," Djokovic said courtside. "I did practice for a week now and tried to play some sets coming into this ATP 1000 match."

"Caruso is a claycourt specialist and it was a great challenge today."

On arrival in Rome, an apologetic Djokovic vowed to be "the best version" of himself on and off the court and he kept his emotions in check against local hope Caruso.

Four-times Rome champi-



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NOVAK DJOKOVIC

on Djokovic, who received an opening-round bye, broke Caruso's serve in the eighth game before serving out the opening set.

Caruso, who battled past American Tennyis Sandgren in the opening round for his first ATP Masters 1000 match win, dropped his serve in a see-saw third game of the second set which lasted nearly 12 minutes.

With momentum firmly on his side, top seed Djokovic broke his opponent for a third time in the match before celebrating victory by blowing kisses into the empty stands at the Foro Italico.

Having recorded 51 victories in 60 matches, Djokovic is the second most successful player in the tournament's history - just behind nine-time champion Rafael Nadal.

Lopez storms Tour de France summit, Roglic extends lead

AFP | London

Colombia's Miguel Angel Lopez won stage 17 of the Tour de France yesterday to climb third in the overall standings as race leader Primoz Roglic extended his advantage.

The race ascended to 2,304m altitude atop the Col de la Loze where Slovenian rookie Tadej Pogacar lost a handful of seconds to his compatriot Roglic in the race for the yellow jersey on a day the 2019 champion Egan Bernal withdrew.

"I'm glad this is behind me," said Roglic after his toughest challenge as he merely needs to survive without a major incident to win this year's Tour.

"Every metre counts on a climb like that," said the 30-year-old.



Miguel Angel López celebrates his stage victory

Richard Carapaz produced a doomed solo bid for Ineos as the Giro champion was caught on the ever-changing gradient of the final 7km above 2,000m as the top 10 experienced a slight shake-up.

A day after the race was cleared of Covid-19 to run all the way to Paris on Sunday, French

President Emmanuel Macron was present as the peloton struggled through villages full of ubiquitous baskets of flowers hanging from Swiss-style ski chalets.

In the rarefied air that suits the men from the Andes, the 26-year-old Lopez leapfrogged compatriot Rigoberto Uran and extended his lead over Adam Yates and Richie Porte.

Roglic now leads his young compatriot Pogacar by 57 seconds with just three real races left before the Tour gets to Paris. Suffering from a bad back for a month now Bernal, his Tour defence in tatters, said a sad goodbye to the 2020 edition when Ineos decided to protect the long-term interests of their 23-year-old captain by withdrawing him.

Bale 'close' to Tottenham return but deal is 'complicated', says agent

AFP | London

Gareth Bale is "close" to sealing a sensational move back to Tottenham but the deal is "complicated", Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett said.

The Wales international has been frozen out by Real manager Zinedine Zidane and he said earlier this month he was open to returning to the Premier League.

Manchester United have also expressed an interest in Bale but they see him as a back-up option should they fail to agree a fee with Borussia Dortmund for England international Jadon Sancho.

That has left Spurs in pole position to sign the player who left the club for a then world-re-

cord fee of £85 million (\$132 million, 100 million euros) in 2013.

When asked about Tottenham's move for Bale, Barnett told AFP: "It's close but not done." He added: "It's a complicated deal."

Bale has two years left on a contract that pays him around 30 million euros a year at Real Madrid.

Madrid are pushing for a permanent transfer that could see Tottenham pay next to nothing up front for the 31-year-old, with various performance-related bonuses added on.

Spurs would prefer a loan move that involves Madrid covering a portion of the 31-year-old's wages.

"No problems, the clubs are negotiating," added Gareth Bale



Barnett.

Bale joined Madrid the summer that Jose Mourinho left the Spanish giants, but the Tottenham manager said he had tried to sign him during his spell as Real boss.

"I tried to sign him during my time at Real Madrid and the president followed my instinct and knowledge and the season I left, he brought Gareth to the club," Mourinho said in a press conference. "That's no secret and Gareth knows that."

Halep eases into Italian Open third round

AFP | Rome

Top seed Simona Halep teased into the Italian Open third round with a straight sets win over Jasmine Paolini of Italy.

World number two Halep came through 6-3, 6-4 against the 99th-ranked home hope on clay in Rome's Foro Italico.

The 28-year-old Romanian, who skipped the US Open because of the coronavirus pandemic, next meets either American Amanda Anisimova or Dayana Yastremska of the Ukraine.

Former French Open winner Halep has twice finished runner-up in Rome, losing in 2017 and 2018 to Ukraine's Elina Svitolina.

Swiss sixth seed Belinda Bencic fell 6-3, 6-1 in her second round match to Montenegro's Danka Kovinic.