

Joshua promises to find a way against Povetkin

London, United Kingdom

Anthony Joshua has admitted to feeling under “tons of pressure” ahead of his latest world heavyweight title defence against Russia’s Alexander Povetkin at London’s Wembley Stadium today.

Joshua, the 2012 Olympic champion, will be fighting in front of his home London crowd as he looks to extend his unbeaten professional record to 22 consecutive wins when he puts his International Boxing Federation, World Boxing Association and World Boxing Organisation titles on the line.

The fight sees Joshua returning to the scene of arguably his greatest triumph, an 11th-round stoppage of former champion Wladimir Klitschko last year.

But he will be under particular pressure to deliver this time around. Many boxing fans had hoped this weekend would see Joshua up against World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder.

Negotiations with the American’s camp have proved fruitless, although whether that’s the fault of Joshua’s promoter Eddie Hearn, Wilder’s management or some combination of both - the often protracted nature of talks before a ‘mega fight’ actually takes place makes it difficult to say.

That Britain’s Tyson Fury, himself a former world heavyweight champion, is set to meet Wilder in Las Vegas in Novem-



Britain's Anthony Joshua (L) stares at his challenger Russia's Alexander Povetkin during a joint press conference at Wembley stadium in London

ber, as he continues his comeback to the ring is a reminder that Joshua is not the ‘only show in town’, either domestically or

internationally.

Joshua’s last fight saw the 28-year-old taken the distance for the first time in his profes-

Joshua heavier than Povetkin

London, United Kingdom

Britain’s world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua will be over a stone heavier than his veteran Russian opponent Alexander Povetkin when he defends his title at Wembley on Saturday.

Joshua -- whose International Boxing Federation, World Boxing Association and World Boxing Organisation titles will be on the line -- weighed in on Friday at 17 stone 8 pounds (111.5 kilogrammes), whilst 39-year-old Povetkin tipped the scales at 15st 12lbs.

sional career, but he secured a unanimous decision over New Zealand’s Joseph Parker in Cardiff in March.

‘Fire in my belly’

“There’s loads of pressure; tons of pressure,” Joshua told a Wembley news conference on Thursday. “That’s the reality.

“You’re calm and collected but underneath it all it’s the reality. We both know what we are in for. It’s the same with every fight.

“What more can I do than give my best? I’ll go out there and find a way to win.”

Joshua added: “I know I have a lot of fire in my belly; that’s just as important as skills.

“Skills and technique apart, we both have a big heart and can dig deep. We both showed that against Klitschko (who beat Povetkin on points).

“The one who’s toughest will come out victorious.”

A crowd of some 80,000 is expected at Wembley and Joshua said: “Coming back is a blessing

-- it’s time to put on a performance.

“This is not new to me, this feels like home.”

The night Joshua outpointed Parker at Cardiff’s Principality Stadium, Povetkin demonstrated his considerable punching power on the undercard, with a fearsome fifth-round knockout of Britain’s David Price.

Povetkin, like Joshua, is a former Olympic champion, having won gold at Athens in 2004.

The only blot on his 35-fight professional record is the 2013 defeat by Klitschko.

He will be giving away several inches in height and reach against Joshua, but Povetkin is convinced he is now a stronger fighter than the one beaten by Klitschko.

“Joshua is one of the strongest in the division,” said Povetkin. “Anthony is a very strong fighter but I am just as strong.

“When I fought Klitschko I was much weaker and in worse shape than I am now.”

Nadeem dreams of India cap

New Delhi, India

Indian spinner Shahbaz Nadeem yesterday said destiny will decide his dream of playing for the country after breaking a two-decade old List-A bowling record with figures of 8-10 in a domestic game in Chennai.

Nadeem, 29, helped his state side Jharkhand register a big win over Rajasthan with his 10 overs of wily left-arm spin that included a hat-trick on Thursday in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, India’s top domestic one-day competition.

“Performances like these are a step towards achieving my dream of playing for my country India,” Nadeem told AFP by phone from Chennai.

“But to tell you frankly I have deliberately stopped thinking about this (India call up) because the more you think about it the more frustrated you become and it starts affecting your performance.

“I believe if you continue performing consistently then one day selectors will take note and you will get your chance,” said Nadeem, who is also a regular with Indian Premier League side Delhi Daredevils.

He added: “My job is to keep performing at the domestic circuit and leave the rest to God. If it’s destined it will happen.”

Fenati suspended for pulling rival's brake

Paris, France

Disgraced Italian Moto2 rider Romano Fenati, who grabbed a rival’s brake lever during the San Marino Grand Prix earlier this month, had his licence suspended until the end of the year by the International Motorcycling Federation on Friday.

The 22-year-old had already said he was retiring from the sport after being sacked by his Marinelli Snipers team and the Forward Racing team he was due to join next year.

Fenati was called to the FIM headquarters in Switzerland on Tuesday.

“A new FIM licence for the 2019 season may be granted to him subject to the conditions laid down in the FIM Regulations,” the sport’s governing body said in a statement.

Fenati’s moment of madness, when he caused Stefano Manzi to temporarily lose his balance before regaining control of his bike, caused widespread condemnation.

“The FIM representatives... reminded Mr Fenati of the profound influence high-level athletes can have on fans and young people and urged him to be mindful of his responsibility to set a positive example in future,” the statement added.

Fenati, who was originally suspended for two weeks by Marinelli Snipers before being fired, had apologised to “the world of sport” the following day.

Liverpool eye history against Southampton

Liverpool, United Kingdom

Liverpool look to maintain their impressive start to the new season in a potentially historic meeting against Southampton, with Jurgen Klopp’s players benefitting from their relatively quiet summer of international football.

Only four clubs in Premier League history - Newcastle in 1994, Manchester City two seasons ago and the Chelsea sides of 2005 and 2009 - have opened a campaign with six consecutive victories.

Now, Reds boss Klopp can add his current Liverpool side to that list with a victory over Southampton at Anfield on Saturday.

A win would also mark the first time since 1990-91 that Liverpool have opened the league season with seven consecutive victories.

Liverpool’s impressive start to the season, which has also included the thrilling midweek home Champions League victory over Paris Saint-Germain, can be traced to a number of factors.

But the fact that a only small number of Klopp’s key players made it through to the latter stages of the Russia World Cup is, possibly, one of the main reasons for such a strong opening to the season.

Just five Liverpool players were involved in the quarter-finals of the World Cup, behind

Chelsea, Tottenham and the two Manchester clubs with reigning champions City having had 11 of their stars reach the last eight.

Tottenham, whom Liverpool beat impressively 2-1 in London last week, had nine of their key personnel reach that stage of the World Cup, while Klopp has seen the likes of Andy Robertson, Virgil Van Dijk, James Milner and Georginio Wijnaldum make major contributions for his side having missed out on Russia completely.

Klopp also appears to have managed those players who did play an extended role in Russia extremely well.

Fitness levels

Club captain Jordan Henderson, who reached the semi-finals with England, has started just one league game but played a crucial role against PSG in midweek and explained the logic behind Klopp’s management style. “The lads have worked so hard in pre-season and I can see the benefits already in how fit they are, the rhythm they have got from playing games,” said Henderson.

“You can see that in the performances, they are winning games. So it’s normal for me that I’m not playing, I can accept it.

“Obviously, it’s a lot easier when you’ve had longer in pre-season and more games to play before the season starts



Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Fabinho (L) and Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp

then of course it is a lot easier to get in your rhythm straight away, your fitness levels will be

higher.

“When you are coming back from a World Cup when you

have had time off, you come back in and you have still got to get back up to speed straight away.

“I’ve used this period to try and refresh my body, refresh my mind because last season was long.

“Especially with the World Cup, it was enjoyable and ended with the disappointment but it was a long season and this is going to be another long season hopefully with a lot of games so I’m using this period to be as ready as possible.”

Klopp’s policy has also been aided by a busy summer transfer window in which he has added depth to his squad in key positions.

In the win over PSG, the Liverpool manager was able to start Daniel Sturridge ahead of Roberto Firmino and bring new signing Xherdan Shaqiri off the bench, to replace Mohamed Salah, with the game in the balance at 2-2.

Now, Liverpool fans dreaming of a first league title in 29 years, will hope the players who were involved deep into the World Cup - including Croatian defender Dejan Lovren who is currently injured - will soon be back to peak form.

Firmino, who came off the bench to net the winner against PSG despite suffering with an eye injury sustained against Tottenham, is likely to be fit to start against Southampton.