

# Nicholas Hwende ready to defy limits in quest for second world title at BRAVE CF 105

Manama

Nicholas Hwende is poised to step into the most defining night of his career when he headlines BRAVE CF 105 on Sunday, May 31.

There, the former BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Champion ventures into deeper waters, chasing the vacant undisputed featherweight crown against interim titleholder Omar Solomanov in a high-stakes five-round clash at the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The Zimbabwean star has the opportunity to etch his name into the record books by becoming only the second athlete in the promotion's history to win a World Title in two separate weight classes.

Hwende is fully aware that the moment in Almaty could reshape his legacy, but he insists that the pursuit of history is only part of the mission.

"Moments like this are what every fighter dreams of. To



become a two-division World Champion in BRAVE CF would be historic, but I am not just chasing history, I am chasing proof that I belong among the very best who have ever stepped into this sport," he said.

Across from him stands a

proven force in Solomanov, a featherweight mainstay with a professional record of 14-3, including eight knockouts and three submission wins.

The Ukrainian dynamo captured interim gold at BRAVE CF 98 in September 2025 after a

commanding five-round performance against Kazakh rival Rauan "Shymyr" Bekbolat in a highly anticipated rematch, walking away with a clear-cut unanimous decision.

Hwende acknowledges the danger Solomanov brings, but refuses to be swayed by reputation or momentum.

To him, his Ukrainian opponent is simply another obstacle on a path he fully intends to dominate.

"I respect what Omar Solomanov has achieved, but respect does not mean hesitation. He is just another man standing in the way of what I want, and I have never been the type to step aside for anyone," Hwende said.

With a win-loss card of 10-2, Hwende has already proven himself under the bright lights of BRAVE CF, collecting four wins in six appearances.

One of his most recent statement-making exploits came at BRAVE CF 98, where he made a successful featherweight debut against China's "The Stalker"



Xie Bin, silencing the home crowd with a composed, technical display that earned him a unanimous decision victory.

Now, with championship gold within reach once again, Hwende believes BRAVE CF 105 will serve as the ultimate valida-

tion of his mindset and skill set.

"This is not about prediction or promise. This is a warning. I am coming to impose myself, to break resistance, and to show that no challenge is too great when I step into that cage," he declared.

## Swiatek, Svitolina cruise into French Open third round

AFP | Paris

Four-time champion Iga Swiatek and Elina Svitolina both eased into the French Open third round with straight-sets wins yesterday.

Swiatek, looking to regain the title she last won in 2024, saw off battling Czech youngster Sara Bejlek 6-2, 6-3 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The third-seeded Pole will next face either fellow former winner Jelena Ostapenko or compatriot Magda Linette as she bids to preserve her record of having always reached the second week at Roland Garros.

"Usually the weather is quite different here, but it doesn't matter," said Swiatek after spending 93 minutes on court on another boiling hot day in Paris.

"It's going to change, I feel, in the second part of the tournament.

"So I guess this tournament is really about: whoever will cope with both of these conditions will win."

Swiatek is playing at a first



Iga Swiatek in action

Grand Slam tournament since linking up with Rafael Nadal's former coach Francisco Roig.

She is among the favourites for a seventh major title after impressing in a run to the Italian Open semi-finals earlier this month.

But she could next be facing a serious test in Latvian Ostapenko, against whom she has lost in all six of their previous meetings.

Svitolina, who beat Swiatek en route to the Rome title, beat world number 126 Kaitlin Quevedo 6-0, 6-4.

The Ukrainian seventh seed ended an eight-year wait for her fifth WTA 1000 trophy at the Italian Open to underline her credentials as a contender in Paris.

She struggled through her first-round tie, edging out Hungary's Anna Bondar in a decid-

ing-set tie-break on Monday, before watching her husband Gael Monfils' final French Open match in the night session.

But Svitolina raced out of the blocks this time, quickly taking control against Quevedo.

The Spaniard competed better in the second set until a break in the ninth game helped Svitolina wrap up victory.

Svitolina, who reached her fourth career Slam semi-final earlier this year at the Australian Open, will next play Germany's Tamara Korpatsch, who made a major third round for the first time at the age of 31 by beating Chinese 32nd seed Wang Xinyu.

Former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic eased into the last 32 for the third time, brushing aside Caty McNally 6-4, 6-0.

Russian 13th seed Karen Khachanov came through a gruelling battle with Marco Trungelliti 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4).

He will play Dutch lucky loser Jesper de Jong, who backed up his win over Stan Wawrinka by defeating Federico Cina, for a last-16 berth on Friday.

## Argentina coach Scaloni encouraged by news on Messi injury



Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi leaves the field

AFP | Miami

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said the initial news regarding superstar Lionel Messi's fitness "is not that bad" and hopes further examinations will confirm that diagnosis with the World Cup just a fortnight away.

Messi has been diagnosed with muscle fatigue in his left hamstring by his Major League Soccer club Inter Miami after he made an abrupt exit from Miami's 6-4 victory over Philadelphia in the 73rd minute

on Sunday.

Even at 38 and eyeing a sixth World Cup finals appearance, Messi remains the side's talisman for the defence of the title they won in Qatar four years ago.

"Obviously we would have preferred that nothing had happened," Scaloni told Argentinian TV station DSports on Tuesday.

"Now one has to wait and see how it evolves and above all the new tests they are going to conduct in order to see if it confirms their original diagnosis."

## Valgren wins Giro 17th stage, Vingegaard stays in pink

AFP | Andalo

Danish rider Michael Valgren won the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday as Jonas Vingegaard continued his march to a first overall victory on the Grand Tour.

Valgren took the honours in Andalo after attacking from a small group with a kilometre remaining of the undulating 202km ride from Cassano d'Adda in which riders suffered both from punishing heat and also sudden downpours.

The 34-year-old EF Education-EasyPost rider claimed his second win of the season, with his other also coming in Italy at



EF Education - EasyPost Danish rider Michael Valgren attacks during the 17th stage of the Tirreno-Adriatico. Valgren was part of a group

which pulled away from the break on the final categorised Andalo-Lever climb.

Initially he looked to be contesting the stage honours with Einer Rubio before the pair were caught by a handful of other riders in the concluding kilometres.

Vingegaard, who is hunting a Giro-Tour de France double this year, stays four minutes ahead of Felix Gall in the overall standings after rolling home with the peloton.

Jhonatan Narvaez won the intermediate sprint and took the points jersey from France's Paul Magnier, who wasn't part of the break and now trails the UAE rider by 10 points.

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