

A classic revisited

Boxing

REUTERS, London

Every element illustrating the heroism, fascination and moral ambiguity of prize fighting fused in the incandescent world title clash between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier in the punishing humidity of Manila 30 years ago.

After 14 rounds of unremitting brutality and with the two heavy-weights on the verge of collapse, Frazier's corner told their man it was time to quit.

Frazier's left eye was closed, he could barely see out of his right and nothing he was likely to produce in the final round was going to change the result.

Ali, slumped in his corner and drenched in sweat, had won the third and most brutal fight against an opponent who forced him to draw on resources his detractors believed he did not possess.

A year after he astonished the world by vanquishing the fearsome George Foreman, Ali was again king, indisput-

ably the greatest of his era and possibly of all time.

Victory in the 'Thriller in Manila' came with a literally crippling price.

"He's still beautiful outside," said one of Ali's medical team at the time. "But what has it done to him inside?"

The answer is chillingly apparent today as the man whose wit and repartee matched the speed of his fists is imprisoned in the mask of Parkinson's syndrome, the mind still active but the body irrevocably slowed after the impact of too many punches.

Ali's win over Foreman in Zaire, the famed 'Rumble in the Jungle', still astounds after repeat viewings.

Resisting the urgent entreaties of his corner, Ali rested on the ropes absorbing the punches of his increasingly frustrated opponent on his arms and shoulders before a sudden, savage assault floored the startled Foreman.

At 33, Ali had already passed the age when any boxer should retire.

Driven by the twin imperatives of financial demands from his expanding entourage and a healthy ego he agreed to a third fight with Frazier, the man

who beat him in 1971 after Ali had lost his best years to a ban following his refusal to be drafted into the army during the Vietnam war.

Frazier, a proud and decent man who became world champion by default when Ali was forced into exile, had won the Madison Square Garden contest on merit.

Maybe something still rankled with Ali four years later when he taunted Frazier before their Manila fight by comparing him to a gorilla, a slur resented not only by his opponent but also by many of Ali's supporters.

When the pair finally stepped into the ring on October 1, 1975, the tension was palpable and the atmosphere electric in one of the last great heavyweight fights of the 20th century.

Ali dominated the early rounds before Frazier hit him with a left hook in the sixth which would have floored anybody else on the planet.

Any lingering doubts among the onlookers about Ali's caliber as a boxer were extinguished when the fastest and classiest heavyweight of any era showed he could take as well as give a punch.

Frazier dominated the middle section of the bout as the two men traded a lightning series of punches in the suffocating humidity which made even breathing an effort.

But he could not land a decisive blow and in the 12th round the incredibly resilient Ali counter-attacked, closing Frazier's left eye.

At the end of the penultimate round, Frazier's corner had seen enough.

"Joe, the fight's over, I'm stopping it," said his chief cornerman Eddie Futch.

"You're taking too much punishment and I don't want you to take any more."

Ali later paid a gracious tribute to the man who had forced him to the limit.

"Of all the men I fought in boxing, before Frazier hit him with a left hook in the sixth which would have floored anybody else on the planet.

"But the roughest and toughest was Joe Frazier. He brought out the best in me and the best fight we fought was in Manila."

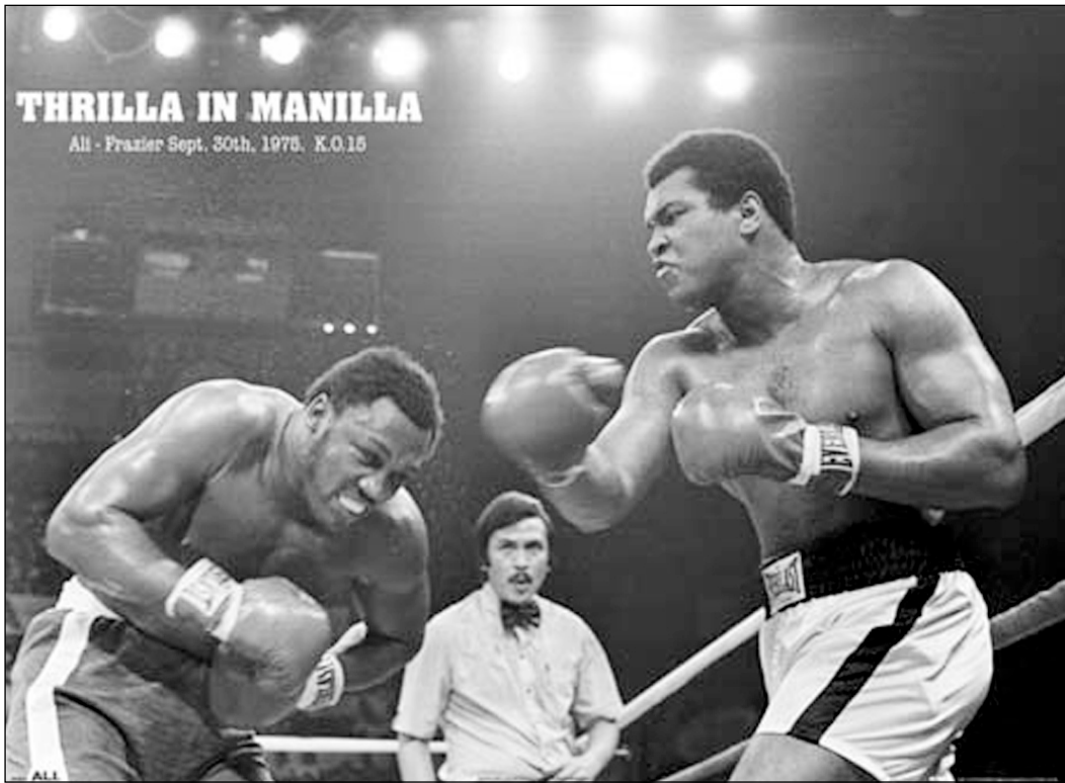


PHOTO: INTERNET

BLAST FROM THE PAST: A file photo of boxing legend Muhammad Ali delivering another blow to Joe Frazier in their classic title fight in 1975.

INTER-VARSITY FOOTBALL IBAIS move into final

SPORTS REPORTER

IBAIS University reached the final of the Stamford Inter-Private University Football Tournament outplaying Northern University by 9-0 in the first semifinal at the Army Stadium yesterday.

In the final on Monday, IBAIS will meet the winners of the second semifinal between hosts Stamford University and Asian University of Bangladesh (AUB) today.

AUB advanced to the semifinal beating American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB) by 2-1.

Stepanek a step closer

AFP, Ho Chi Minh City

Number three seed Radek Stepanek of the Czech Republic could finally win his first career singles title in the final of the Vietnam Open against Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman on Sunday.

Stepanek, a singles finalist this year in Milan, outgunned Sweden's Thomas Johansson, the number two seed, 7-5, 6-4 Saturday to claim the first final spot in the 380,000 dollar event.

Bjorkman, with five singles titles to his name but none so far this year, coasted into the second final spot with a 6-1, 6-0 victory against top seed Mariano Puerta of Argentina.

Japan clinch

FROM PAGE 12 in the World Cricket League in early 2007.

FINAL PLACINGS

1. Japan, 2. Cook Islands, 3. Vanuatu, 4. Tonga, 5. Indonesia, 6. Samoa.

"I still feel pain,"

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Tendulkar missed the first two tours of India in the new season, to Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, and also pulled out of the upcoming ICC's Johnnie Walker Super Series in Australia after being named both in the One-Day and SuperTests squads.

He hopes to make his international comeback in the home series against Sri Lanka commencing on October 25.

Laboni sets

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In the men's 200m individual medley, Rubel Rana of Bangladesh Navy finished first ahead of Kamal Hossain of Bangladesh Army and Hamid Ripon of Navy. Rubel won with a time of 2 mins 17.28 secs.

Rubel also completed the double by winning the 400m freestyle.

The men's 200m butterfly went to Jewel Ahmed of Bangladesh Navy.

David's reality-check

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"During the series, something we talked about, we had plans for each batsman and each bowler as we faced them and I think that's probably one of the reasons why we did so well," he said.

"Whoever it was, we stuck to our plans and executed them well."



Did U Know?

The 1960 Rome Olympic Games was the first to be transmitted live on TV and also it was the first to receive worldwide coverage.

Mourinho taunts Liverpool

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho believes another draw against Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday would represent a bad result for the Merseyside club.

The teams played out a goalless stalemate in the Champions League on Wednesday and Mourinho says the onus will now be firmly on Rafa Benitez's side in their Premier League clash.

"In the Champions League we started the game with the same number of points (three) and we had the same objective ... to go into the next round," Mourinho told Chelsea's website on Friday.

"So it was not a bad result for us and it was not a bad result for them."

"In the Premiership the points difference is a minimum eight points (if Liverpool win their two games in hand). So I think a draw for them on Sunday is a very bad result."

Runaway Premier League leaders Chelsea, who have a six-point lead over second-placed Charlton Athletic, have held the upper hand in recent matches against Liverpool.

Mourinho, however, said the Merseysiders deserved a lot of credit for the way they had defended in the last three games against his team.

"In (the previous) six matches Liverpool have only beaten us once and we know in which circumstances they beat us," said Mourinho in a barbed reference to their controversial Champions League semifinal winner at Anfield last season.

"But at the same time we know also that in the last three games we couldn't score (against them) and we couldn't score because they defended really well."

"We have to give credit to a team that defended well and defended with a lot of aggression."

PREMIERSHIP

Owen-less Magpies held

Football

AFP, Portsmouth

Newcastle United have shown how priceless Michael Owen is up front. On Saturday, it proved doubly true in a dour scoreless draw at Portsmouth which the England striker missed through injury.

Owen was a late call-off for the Magpies' eighth Premiership outing of the season although it is debatable whether the dead leg he suffered in training a few days ago cost Graeme Souness's side three points.

In the light of their performance Souness will be happy to share the points although the fiery Scot will have plenty to shout about after his side failed to procure a handful of scoring chances.

Alan Shearer had his first sniff of goal after seven minutes.

However, the former England striker saw his shot cross the area and wide of

Mourinho said he would have a fully-fit squad to choose from on Sunday and hinted that Spain left back Asier del Horno could return after

injury. "Del Horno played 45 minutes in the reserves on Wednesday and had no reaction," he said.



PHOTO: REUTERS

LOOK WHO'S TALKING! Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho stares at his Liverpool counterpart Rafael Benitez before their Champions League match at Anfield. The two clubs meet again in the Premiership today.

Jamie Ashdown's post.

Pompey keeper Ashdown was called into action for the first time seven minutes later when a free kick was awarded for a Matthew Taylor foul on Lee Clark.

Magpies midfielder Charles N'Zogbia crossed from the left but the opportunity was wasted as Ashdown collected the ball.

There was little to get excited about in subsequent play as both sides wasted free kick chances with attempts that went begging.

It looked as though Portsmouth were about to change all that just before the half hour mark.

After Newcastle striker Shola Ameobi had been caught offside in the 26th minute Pompey midfielder Zvonimir saw his ambitious strike from 30 yards sail left of Shay Given's post.

Barely a minute later Given was forced to parry a Gary O'Neil shot from the right side of the penalty area.

Newcastle were being held in midfield and their rare crosses into the Pompey area led to little.

Indeed it was Pompey who threatened again shortly before the interval, although Given easily collected Taylor's 25-yard strike from Taylor.

Souness replaced Celestine Babayaro with Robbie Elliott at half time, but he must have been wishing it was Owen he was sending on.

Newcastle certainly got the first sniff of goal in the second half although N'Zogbia's 18-yard effort went sailing over Ashdown's crossbar.

Pompey hit back in similar fashion, with Dario Silva's header from a Vukic cross going wide of Given's post minutes later.

Elliott had little to do since coming on to replace Babayaro but he didn't have to be asked twice to shoot when he found space in front of the Pompey goal.

FIFA to review smart ball

AP, Lima

FIFA will discuss whether an experimental electronic microchip inside soccer balls needs refining before it can be introduced at next year's World Cup in Germany.

FIFA spokesman Andreas Werz said Friday that FIFA president Sepp Blatter would meet with the International Football Association board on Saturday morning.

"The most important topic is the goal-line technology, of course," Werz told The Associated Press of the meeting.

The microchip, designed to confirm whether or not a ball has crossed the goal line, has been used for the last three weeks at the under-17 world championships in Peru.

Werz said the technology was installed in four of the five stadiums where the tournament has been played. The adidas balls contained a microchip that sent a signal whenever they passed over sensors in the touch line, alerting referees via a special device worn on the wrist.

Werz said there were no goal-line controversies during the under-17 tournament -- which will be decided in Sunday's final between Brazil and Mexico -- but that the chip did help clarify a few minor calls.

"We didn't have one single '66 Wembley situation," said Werz, referring to the 1966 World Cup final when a linesman ruled that Geoff Hurst's shot had crossed the goal-line for England's third goal against West Germany at Wembley. Although the ball didn't cross the line, the goal stood and England went on to win 4-2.

2006 WC starts a day earlier

AFP, Berlin

FIFA announced on Friday that the opening ceremony of the 2006 World Cup will be moved forward by a day to June 7 instead of June 8 as originally planned.

The decision was taken to make sure that the pitch at Berlin's Olympic Stadium is in top condition for the tournament.

The tournament's 11th match, scheduled to take place in Berlin on June 12 and a match in Kaiserslautern on June 13 will also be played a day earlier.

"The decisions will ensure that there is sufficient time for restoration work on the pitch," said a FIFA statement.

Moin to lead

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"They stage two events in Hong Kong every year, the main Super Sixes and the Plate event which attract good crowds," said Khan.

The Hong Kong Sixes has been a popular attraction for all the major cricket playing countries since its debut in 1992.

Each team plays with six players, all of whom have to bowl and bat. A batsman is retired after scoring 30 runs.

Pakistan won the inaugural event in 1992 with former left arm pace bowler Wasim Akram as captain, and captured the title again in 1997, 2001 and 2002.

Pakistan will line up in Pool B for the preliminary round of the matches, alongside India, South Africa and West Indies while England line up in Pool A with arch-rivals Australia, Sri Lanka and hosts Hong Kong.

England, who have appointed former off-spinner Robert Croft as their captain, bid to win three titles in a row after winning the event in 2003 and 2004.

The Hong Kong Super Sixes 2005 will have a record prize money of 280,000 dollars with the winners receiving 100,000 dollars.

Rooney will learn: Sven

Football

AFP, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson believes fiery striker Wayne Rooney will learn from his mistakes and that any attempts to defuse the player's temperament will destroy his impact.

The Manchester United star is suspended for England's crucial next World Cup qualifier against Austria after picking up his second booking of the qualifying campaign in Northern Ireland.

While Eriksson has hinted Liverpool beanpole striker Peter Crouch would replace Rooney alongside Michael Owen in a return to a 4-4-2 formation at Old Trafford, he refused to condemn the controversial player.

Rooney was booked in Belfast and substituted before half-time in a friendly in Spain last November to prevent him being sent off.

He was also dismissed for Manchester United at Villarreal earlier this month for sarcastically clapping referee Kim Milton Nielsen during the Champions League qualifier.

The Danish referee is due to take charge of England's final group game against Poland four days after the clash against Austria, putting pressure on Rooney to watch his step.

"It's a pity that he is not available to

play against Austria. Wayne Rooney is Wayne Rooney and he is a world-class player," said Eriksson whose side need to win both their last two matches to pip the Poles as automatic qualifiers from Group Six for next summer's finals in Germany.

"He has a temperament but if you take that away from him, he will not play such good football. He must be up there and then it's a balance whether he gets a red card or not."

"But he will learn, I have no worries about that. You can't take away his temperament though."

Rooney's loss of self-control in Belfast, earning him booking with an arm-first challenge on Keith Gillespie, was followed by a four-letter retort at David Beckham when the England captain told him to calm down.

"Of course that shouldn't happen in an ideal world but the world isn't ideal. Nobody is perfect but he will learn," Eriksson told the BBC.

"Spain was a friendly game so I took him off because of that. I wouldn't have done if it was a qualification game. Of course I talked to him in Belfast but I will keep that private."

Eriksson would not exactly confirm his thoughts about Rooney's replacement against Austria, although he clearly seems to favour the potential combination of Owen and Crouch.

Although the Liverpool forward has played just once for his country -- in

A gift from Real to fans

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez inaugurated the club's lavish new training facilities on the edge of the Spanish capital on Friday, and dedicated them to Madrid fans the world over.

Their new training base, in Valdebebas near Madrid's Barajas airport, occupies 120 hectares and is 10 times bigger than their former training ground in northern Madrid.

"This training facility is a dream made real. It is for Madrid fans all over the world," said Perez.

"It will become a symbol of the club, and will be the base from where we work day by day to continue being the most important club in history."

The facilities, which are not yet complete, will be the home of Real's first team, all the youth teams, and the club's basketball side.

Along with the 30 football pitches, gymnasium, and running track, there is a medical centre, a hydro-therapy centre, conference facilities and offices.

the summer game against Colombia -- he helped Owen to a hat-trick and has since gained some Champions League experience.

The same partnership is now set to be resumed at Old Trafford, with Crouch likely to be preferred to the likes of Jermain Defoe, Andrew Johnson, Alan Smith, Darren Bent or Emile Heskey.

"Peter Crouch is doing very well and he is a player who interests me," said Eriksson.

The England coach, who names his squad for the double-header fixtures on Sunday, will be without Gary Neville and Wayne Bridge, while Michael Carrick and Kieron Dyer are major doubts.

Sol Campbell should at least return to the squad, while West Ham's Paul Konchesky could also feature as reserve to Ashley Cole at left-back and Danny Murphy has been winning rave reviews at Charlton.

Campbell's excellent recent form certainly gives Eriksson a major selection dilemma, with Rio Ferdinand and John Terry, let alone Jamie Carragher and Ledley King, also contesting a starting place.

"I think Sol Campbell is ready. Of course, his injuries were a concern but now he's back and he seems very fit and to be doing very well," said Eriksson.

Murray meets Federer in Thai Open final

Tennis

AFP, Bangkok

Teenaged British wild card entry Andy Murray defied all the odds Saturday as he rallied past local hero Paradorn Srichaphan 6-7 (3/7), 7-5, 6-2 to set up a miracle final at the 550,000-dollar Thailand open against peerless Roger Federer.

The Scottish outsider, not even entered in the event little more than a week ago and sitting outside the Top 100, has broken every convention this week, paying his dues in the course of a few days on the ATP.

Besides cracking the Top 100 by a wide margin, the 18-year-old who survived a school shooting a decade ago as a child will now with face a huge test Sunday against Federer, the world number one holder.

It was business as usual for the Swiss as friendship temporarily went out the window in a brief 6-3, 6-4 semifinal rout of Jarkko Nieminen.

Federer stands an ATP-best 76-3 record on the season after winning his 30th straight match.

The defending champion spent just 56 minutes in knocking back the player he has now beaten all seven times they have met.

Their last match nine months ago ended badly for the 42nd-ranked Finn as Nieminen was forced to withdraw midway through their third-round match at the Australian Open with a pulled stomach muscle.

"I'm 7-0 against him, but that's just the way it goes," said Federer, a friend of his fellow 24-year-old from junior days. "He's my good friend, but that the way it is sometimes."

"This year it feel tougher getting to

the final, since I came straight from Davis Cup," said the world number one. "But getting into the final is what matters, that's the important part of the tournament."

The holder will bid for his 11th trophy this season with only Murray standing in the way.

The Scot calmly ignored a losing first set, recovering without hesitation against the seventh seeded Paradorn, who has yet to reach the final at his hometown event.

Murray favoured his right wrist while the Thai was treated for cramping in the third set and was limited in his movement in the closing stages.

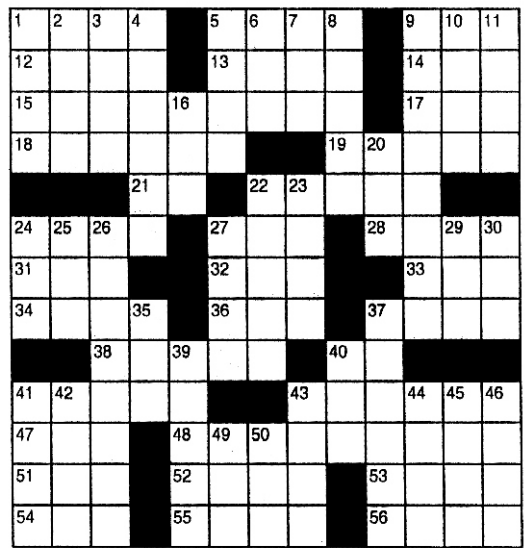
Murray favoured to victory in a final game featuring three deuces, claiming the win of his career when the Thai couldn't touch a service return stringer down the line after nearly two-and-a-half hours on court.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Boulder
 - 5 Pop
 - 9 Opponent
 - 12 Taj Mahal
 - 13 Belligerent
 - 14 More over
 - 15 Warden's
 - 17 Lemieux
 - 18 Con-
 - 19 Barkin or
 - 21 Billboard
 - 22 Tests the
 - 24 Kegler's
 - 27 Brooks or
 - 28 Enthusi-
 - 31 Geological
 - 32 Feedbag
 - 33 "Jaws"
 - 34 Pace
 - 36 Expert
 - 37 Role for
 - 38 Awful
 - 40 Exist

- DOWN**
- 1 Goya's
 - 3 Saharan
 - 4 Trinity
 - 5 Jam
 - 6 Mined-
 - 7 Meadow
 - 8 Sent out
 - 9 Guarant-
 - 10 Formerly
 - 11 Paradise
 - 16 Founda-
 - 20 Journey
 - 22 Exhaust-
 - 23 Saxo-
 - 24 "Married ... With Children"
 - 25 401(k)
 - 26 Manicured
 - 27 Swabs
 - 28 Fish
 - 29 Card-
 - 30 Pismire
 - 31 Youngster
 - 32 Fish
 - 33 Con-
 - 34 "My Boo"
 - 35 Clear the
 - 36 Ravi
 - 37 Shankar's
 - 38 NYSE
 - 39 counter-
 - 40 Stain
 - 41 Roger
 - 42 Rabbit,
 - 43 Aware of
 - 44 Capone
 - 45 Carte
 - 46 Little
 - 47 demon



CRYPTOQUIP

V O Q P Y P M K U A Q
M R W A W L F A M R A L I P Y A U X S N Q
W K U A M X N Y G G ? O U
P Y P I S F U U S O U U V U S L A I .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU RECENTLY ATE AN AFTER-DINNER CANDY, I'LL ASSUME YOU'RE IN MINT CONDITION.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals D

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.