



Barcelona and Levante players play during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Levante at the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

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Ukrainian claims WBA, WBO and IBF titles

Dominant Usyk ends Joshua 2nd 'reign' as heavyweight champion

LONDON, Sept 26, (AP) — Slumped helplessly on the ropes, Anthony Joshua greeted the final bell - and what he knew was the end of his second reign as world heavyweight champion - with a wry smile.

Oleksandr Usyk knew it, too, dropping to his knees and looking to the sky.

In just his third fight since stepping up from the cruiserweight division, Usyk delivered a clinic in movement and fast punching to claim a unanimous points win over Joshua in front of 66,267 stunned fans inside Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London.

Usyk became the third man, after Evander Holyfield and David Haye, to win world titles at cruiserweight then heavyweight. Six years after Wladimir Klitschko's long heavyweight reign ended, Ukraine has another champion in boxing's marquee division.

"The fight went exactly as I expected it to go," Usyk said through a translator. "There were a couple of moments when Anthony pushed me hard but nothing special."

After the judges scored the fight 117-112, 116-112 and 115-113 in favor of the 34-year-old Usyk, Joshua - sporting a closed right eye - walked over to Usyk's corner and congratulated the Ukrainian's team.

Dominated by a smaller, lighter and much faster opponent, Joshua lost his WBA, WBO and IBF titles for a second time - more than two years after a defeat to Andy Ruiz Jr. in New York that he immediately avenged in Saudi Arabia.

Joshua will have the chance to do the same thing - there is a rematch clause in the deal with Usyk - in a bid to keep alive his ultimate goal: To become undisputed champion. The British public, who have followed Joshua's journey from Olympic champion through to world champion, was hoping for an all-British fight against WBC champion Tyson Fury to unify the four belts.



Fury

BOXING

That looks fanciful now, though. Usyk was comfortably the more assured fighter, his reflexes drawing gasps from the pro-Joshua crowd and his lightning-quick punch off his left hand repeatedly connecting.

Joshua just didn't see the punches coming, like in the third round when his head was rocked back by a straight left before the Briton wobbled after a left hook flush on the jaw. Like in the ninth, when another left from Usyk caught Joshua, who nodded to the challenger as the bell went.

And especially in a sensational final round when the disparity between the fighters was at its biggest as Usyk unleashed a flurry of punches - from his left and right - that saw Joshua staggering backward onto the ropes. Indeed, he was saved by the bell.

Joshua couldn't see out of his right eye from the ninth round.

"I had no objective to knock him out because my corner pushed me not to do that," Usyk said. "At the start, I hit him and tried to knock him out but my trainer said, 'Just stop and do your job.'"

Usyk stepped up to heavyweight in 2019 after unifying all the cruiserweight belts, and now has 19 straight wins as a professional.

His energy levels were remarkable, as shown in the final round and then after the result was announced as Usyk - an eccentric - entertained the crowd with an acrobatic dance inside the ring.

Joshua fell to the second loss of his 25-fight pro career, this time to a man who followed him - just a day later - as Olympic champion at the London Games in 2012. His career is at a crossroads again.

"I'm not going to be going home tonight, crying about it," Joshua said. "Because this is war. I can't sulk. That is wasting time."

And there will be a rematch.

"Oh, 100% ... 110%," Joshua said. Joshua's promoter, Eddie Hearn, said it will likely take place in February or March, and preferably in Britain.



Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine (left), throws a punch at Anthony Joshua of Britain during their WBA (Super), WBO and IBF boxing title bout at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. (AP)

Barca end bad run, Real attack stalls

MADRID, Sept 26, (AP) — Wearing the No. 10 jersey that used to belong to Lionel Messi, Ansu Fati made a triumphant return from a long injury layoff on Sunday, scoring a goal and giving Barcelona fans hope for the future.

Fati, who hadn't played in more than 10 months because of a knee injury, scored in stoppage time to seal a 3-0 Spanish league win over Levante that helped ease some of the pressure on Barcelona following a three-match winless streak.

The 18-year-old Fati was loudly cheered by the crowd at the Camp Nou Stadium when he entered the match in the 81st minute, then profusely celebrated after scoring with a low shot from outside the area.

It was Fati's 14th goal in 44 matches with Barcelona, and his first since the "clásico" against Real Madrid at Camp Nou last October. He ran near the stands after the goal to thank his relatives.

Fati's initial recovery time from his left knee injury was about four months but there were several setbacks in the recovery process and he needed four surgeries to fully heal.

Memphis Depay and Luuk de Jong had each scored in the first 15 minutes of the match to put Barcelona on their way to their first victory since the demoralizing 3-0 home loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League two weeks ago.

The team had been in turmoil since then, with coach Ronald Koeman under pressure and at odds with club president

Joan Laporta and even some of his players for saying that the club would not realistically fight for titles this season.

The victory moved Barcelona to fifth place.

Memphis, who hadn't found the net for Barcelona since the third round, opened the scoring by converting a penalty kick in the sixth minute after he was fouled. De Jong added to the lead from close range after a pass by Sergiño Dest in the 14th for his first goal with Barcelona since joining from Sevilla this season. Levante remains winless after seven matches, with four draws and three losses. Granada and Getafe are the only other teams

SOCCER

without a win so far this season.

Javi Martínez scored an 88th-minute winner as Osasuna beat Mallorca 3-2 for its second win in three matches.

All three of Osasuna's victories this season have come in away matches.

With Karim Benzema and Vinícius Júnior finally contained, Real Madrid saw their five-match winning streak come to an end with a 0-0 draw against Villarreal at home.

It was the first time this season Madrid were held scoreless after outscoring opponents 22-8 in its first seven matches in all competitions. Their 21 goals in six league games was their best mark since 1987-88.

Benzema and Vinícius Júnior had been carrying Madrid's attack so far, with at least one of them scoring in five of the first seven matches.



Fati

Arsenal win London derby



Tottenham's Harry Kane, (left), jumps for a header with Arsenal's Gabriel during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AP)

Wolverhampton keep Southampton winless

LONDON, Sept 26, (AP) — Arsenal tore Tottenham apart with three goals in the opening 34 minutes in a 3-1 victory on Sunday that extended their early-season recovery and completed a miserable September for their north London rivals in the Premier League.

The goals from Emile Smith Rowe, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Bukayo Saka completed a third successive league win for Arsenal which lost their opening three games.

In a reversal of fortunes, Tottenham have now lost three in a row in the league after opening with a trio of successes.

The opener came in the 12th minute after Martin Odegaard spread the ball wide to Saka, whose low cross reached the unmarked Smith Rowe to sweep into the net.

Arsenal pounced on the counterattack in the 27th with Smith Rowe squaring for Aubameyang to add the second goal.

Things would get even better for the Gunners as Saka got on the scoresheet.

Thomas Partey stole the ball off Harry Kane and Arsenal again broke behind the Spurs defense with three passes. Smith Rowe found Saka, who ran into the box and was challenged well by a backtracking Kane, only for the loose ball to roll back into the path of his England teammate. Saka then finished low past goalkeeper Hugo Lloris.

Tottenham gave themselves a chance to make an unexpected comeback as

Son Heung-min turned in a cross from Sergio Reguilon in the 79th. But there would be no recovery for Nuno Espirito Santo's side.

Wolverhampton 1, Southampton 0

Raul Jimenez conjured a moment of magic to claim his first goal since suffering a career-threatening fractured skull and earn Wolverhampton a 1-0 Premier League victory at winless Southampton.

The Mexico striker, who wears protective head gear following his clash with David Luiz at Arsenal last year, ended a 336-day wait to hit the net after waltzing through the defense in the 61st minute.

He twice beat Southampton defender Jan Bednarek, as well as leaving Mohammed Salisu slipping to the ground, before slotting beyond goalkeeper Alex McCarthy in front of a packed away end.

SOCCER

Brentford 3, Liverpool 3

Mohamed Salah scored his 100th Premier League goal for Liverpool but it was not enough to beat Brentford, which twice pegged the Reds back in a breathless 3-3 draw.

Juergen Klopp's side were unable to reap the maximum profit from slip-ups by Manchester United and Chelsea earlier in the day as they shared the points with Brentford in early-evening entertainment in west London.

Instead Liverpool moved just one point clear at the top, while preserving the top flight's only remaining unbeaten record.

And Klopp will be relieved at that after Ivan Toney had what would have

been a late winner ruled out for offside.

The German coach will also know his side will not face many tougher trips all season, with vibrant Brentford leading through Ethan Pinnock and, following goals from Diogo Jota and Salah, equalizing through Vitaly Janelt.

Then, when Curtis Jones smashed Liverpool ahead again, Bees sub Yoane Wissa came up with another equalizer.

There was a taste of things to come when both teams were denied by goal-line clearances in the opening 10 minutes.

First, Salah missed out on a seventh-minute opener thanks to a spectacular piece of defending from Kristoffer Ajer, who slid in to hook the ball off the line.

Moments later, at the other end, Bryan Mbeumo latched onto Toney's

PSG edge Montpellier for eighth straight win

PARIS, Sept 26, (AP) — French league leaders Paris Saint-Germain relied on early and late goals to beat Montpellier 2-0 and make it eight straight wins.

Midfielder Idrissa Gueye scored in the 14th minute at Parc des Princes. Striker Kylian Mbappe's intended pass for Neymar was deflected and landed at the feet of winger Angel Di Maria,

flick-on and lifted the ball over Alisson, but this time Joel Matip got back to scoop the ball clear from underneath the crossbar.

who passed quickly to Gueye for his neat finish.

Substitute Julian Draxler had been on briefly when he met a sideways pass from Neymar, and slotted the ball through goalkeeper Jonas Omlin's legs from the right of the penalty area in the 88th.

PSG were again without superstar Lionel Messi, who has missed two games with a sore knee and is trying to get match fit for Tuesday's Champions League game against Manchester City.

Midfielder Ander Herrera hit the crossbar for PSG with a 20-meter strike shortly before the break.

SOCCER

English forward Stephy Mavididi went close to equalizing for Montpellier in the 62nd but standout goalkeeper Keylor Navas kept out his curling shot.

United States forward Timothy Weah set up the first goal and earned a penalty for the second as defending champion Lille won 2-1 at Strasbourg.

Weah set up Canada striker Jonathan David from the left flank midway through the first half.

David netted from the spot in the 57th after Weah - the son of Liberia President and former Ballon d'Or winner George Weah - ran onto David's pass and was tripped.