

BOXING

# Zou punches in with masterpiece

No sign of ring rust as flashy flyweight claims WBO title

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Zou Shiming rediscovered his roar on Saturday night.

In a comeback fight billed as ‘The Return of the King,’ China’s two-time Olympic gold medalist came through with a command performance, scoring an eighth-round TKO over previously-unbeaten Natan Santana of Brazil to claim the World Boxing Organization’s International flyweight title at the Oriental Sports Center in Shanghai.

Zou improved to 7-1 in his first professional match on the mainland after all his previous bouts were in Macao. Santana dropped to 12-1. The eight-bout card was promoted by Las Vegas-based Top Rank.

“The homecoming was great,” Zou said afterwards. “I really fed off the energy of the crowd.”

Unlike in his last outing — a distance loss to Thailand’s Amnat Ruenroeng for the IBF world title last March — the 34-year-old punching pride of Zunyi, Guizhou province, wasted no time going on the offensive, using a sharp jab to set up crisp combinations.

Zou’s two-fisted attack belied any hint of lingering damage from the torn rotator cuff he sustained against Ruenroeng, and the 21-year-old Santana spent most of the first three rounds in retreat mode.

The Brazilian was more aggressive in the fourth, landing two solid rights to Zou’s head early in the round, but Zou never lost his focus. He moved in and out of the pocket with smooth delibera-



Zou Shiming celebrates Saturday’s TKO victory over Natan Santana for the WBO International flyweight title at the Oriental Sports Center in Shanghai. JOHANNES EISELE / AFP

tion, landing with both fists before adroitly slipping out of range.

Late in the fifth, a six-punch flurry by Zou sent Santana reeling backwards into the ropes and the raucous crowd took up a chant of “KO! KO!”, but the gutsy Brazilian regained his composure and responded with a flurry of his own.

By round six Zou’s straight rights had raised a sizeable mouse over Santana’s left eye, and it became a target for the

2008 and 2012 Olympic gold medalist.

After punishing his shorter opponent with an impressive barrage in the neutral corner, Zou elicited a roar from the crowd with his rendition of the Ali shuffle at the bell.

The end came in the eighth, after Zou drilled Santana into the ropes with a lead right, then landed 16 unanswered punches before referee Saw-aeng Thaweekoon moved in to wave him off.

The time was 2:17.

“I took 10 months off to rest, spend time with my family and even found a little reality TV fame, but my heart never left the ring,” Zou said at the post-fight media conference.

“Tonight I fought patiently and got into a rhythm. (Santana) is young and has a powerful right hand, but once I got into a rhythm I was able to control the fight.”

Top Rank boss Bob Arum, who watched from ringside, gave the Chinese champion two thumbs up.

“Zou was really impressive. I want to test him again with another top contender in the spring,” said Arum. “If he passes that, we will have him fight for a world championship by the end of the year.”

**PUNCH LINES:** In the semi-main event, 2012 Olympic middleweight gold medalist Ryota Murata of Japan improved to 8-0 by stopping Argentina’s Gaston Vega (24-10-1) in two rounds ... Four Chinese fighters won

their prelims: light heavyweight Qu Peng of Dalian beat Australia’s Aaron Lai in a six-rounder; flyweight Ma Yiming of Dalian took a six-round split decision over Filipino Jaymar Diama; debuting featherweight Mai Qingxian of Danzhou, Hainan province, won a four-rounder over Filipino Marjo Borres (6-5); and super middleweight Zulpikar Maimaitali of Urumqi, Xinjiang autonomous region, stopped Australia’s Steve Moxon in three rounds.

# Kovalev hands Pascal a lopsided beatdown

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in Montreal

World light heavyweight champion Sergey Kovalev successfully defended his three titles on Saturday, demolishing challenger Jean Pascal in a rematch of their March 2015 fight.

The 32-year-old Russian dominated every round, masterfully cutting off the ring and landing left jabs at will before Pascal’s trainer, Freddie Roach, put a stop to the slaughter before the start of round eight, giving Kovalev a seventh-round TKO.

This was Pascal’s first fight with six-time trainer of the year Roach, but the outcome was virtually the same as his March fight against Kovalev, which ended with an eight-round technical knockout for the Russian.

Kovalev retained his World Boxing Association, International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Organization titles as he improved to 29-0-1, with 26 stoppages.

The two became bitter rivals in the build up to the rematch

“I wanted to fight more rounds and punish him more. Give him more pain.”

Sergey Kovalev, after defending his titles against challenger Jean Pascal in Montreal on Saturday

with Pascal, who is black, accusing the Russian of being racist and Kovalev questioning the Haitian-born Canadian’s character.

In a post-fight ring address to the crowd of 9,866 at the Bell Centre arena, Kovalev said he purposely prolonged the fight to make Pascal suffer more.

“He doesn’t respect anybody,” Kovalev said. “I don’t respect him and I never will.

“I wanted to fight more rounds and punish him more. Give him more pain.”



Sergey Kovalev nails Jean Pascal with a straight left during their WBO, WBA and IBF light heavyweight title bout at the Bell Centre in Montreal on Saturday. Kovalev won by TKO in the seventh round. MINAS PANAGIOTAKIS/GETTY IMAGES/AFP

Kovalev dropped Pascal in the first round with a straight left jab but the referee ruled it a slip. Knockdown or not, it was a foreshadowing of what followed.

By the third round Kovalev was landing rights and lefts at

will against Pascal, whose only hope was to land a lucky knockout punch.

Pascal’s legs were already going and he looked wobbly as he tried in vain to get away from Kovalev’s stinging combinations.

Roach warned Pascal at the end of the fifth and sixth rounds that he was going to step in and stop the fight, but Pascal talked him out of it.

Roach even asked the referee to watch his fighter closely before the start of the seventh

round because he was worried about Pascal’s health.

“It just wasn’t your night,” Roach finally told the 33-year-old as the fighter slumped on his stool with a vacant look in his eyes.

Pascal, who struggled to win a 10-round decision over Yuni-eski Gonzalez in his most recent fight, came in as a heavy underdog. He dropped to 30-4-1.

Kovalev notched his eighth title defense since winning his first belt with a fourth-round KO of Nathan Cleverly in 2013.

After destroying Pascal, Kovalev now plans to fight either former super middleweight champ Andre Ward or WBC light heavy titleholder Adonis Stevenson.

He taunted Stevenson in his address to the crowd: “I would like to fight Adonis Chickenson,” he bellowed.

Stevenson, who watched the fight from ringside, had already climbed through the ropes and was jawing at Kovalev but kept his distance.

Kovalev then gave Stevenson the middle finger before being pushed away by several of his handlers.

Digest

SOCCER  
‘Auba’ lifts team with double strike

Borussia Dortmund trimmed Bayern Munich’s lead in the Bundesliga with a 2-0 win over Ingolstadt on Saturday as Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice to reach the 20-goal plateau in league play.

‘Auba’ — the 2015 African player of the year — headed second-place Dortmund into a 77th-minute lead at home, but replays showed he was offside when he took a cross from Lukasz Piszczek.

“I didn’t score last week (against Moenchengladbach), so it was important to stay focused,” said Aubameyang

Messi, Suarez fire up Barca

Barcelona took control of the La Liga title race as goals from Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez inspired a come-from-behind 2-1 win against nine-man Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

Koke handed the visiting side an early lead, but Barca turned the game thanks to two goals in eight minutes before the break.

Atletico’s hopes of salvaging a point were then ruined as Filipe Luis and Diego Godin were sent off for rash challenges either side of halftime.

GOLF  
Grace repeats victory in Qatar

South African Branden Grace retained his Qatar Masters title in Doha on Saturday, winning by two shots and making tournament history in the process.

The world No 11 fired a last-round 69 in the European Tour tournament to go with previous rounds of 70, 67 and 68 to finish at 14 under.

In doing so he became the first player to win back-to-back Qatar Masters’ titles, despite describing his chances of winning again in Doha as “slim” at the beginning of the week.

As well as the trophy, Grace also received a winner’s check for \$416,660.

NFL  
Manziel under investigation

Troubled Cleveland Browns quarterback Johnny Manziel is being investigated by police in Texas following a disturbance during which he might have assaulted his ex-girlfriend.

Manziel, who has had two tumultuous seasons in the NFL, was identified by Fort Worth police after they were called early on Saturday to investigate a report of a possible assault at an apartment complex.

The officers did not find the person who called, but they spoke to an unidentified 23-year-old woman who said she was “involved in a disturbance with her ex-boyfriend” earlier that night in Dallas.

AGENCIES

Scoreboard

<b>BASKETBALL</b> Results of NBA games on Saturday: Golden State 108 Philadelphia 105 Toronto 111 Detroit 107 New Orleans 105 Brooklyn 103 Indiana 109 Denver 105 OT Memphis 121 Sacramento 117 Washington 123 Houston 122 Cleveland 117 San Antonio 103	211 - Aaron Baddeley (AUS) 73-69-69, Jason Kokrak 75-67-69, Patton Kizzire 67-73-71, Paul Dunne (IRL) 69-71-71, Derek Fathauer 74-65-72, Colt Knost 70-73-68, Billy Horschel 67-70-74 212 - Scott Stallings 68-73-71, Bud Cauley 71-69-72, Jason Gore 70-72-70
<b>GOLF</b> <b>Farmers Insurance Open</b> Leading scores after Saturday’s third round of the \$6.5 million US PGA Tour Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines in San Diego, California (USA unless noted, par-72): 207 - Scott Brown 66-71-70, K.J. Choi (KOR) 68-67-72 208 - Jimmy Walker 69-71-68, Gary Woodland 68-67-73 209 - Michael Kim 70-69-70, Jonas Blixt (SWE) 77-66-66, John Huh 69-69-71, Freddie Jacobson (SWE) 69-69-71 210 - Hudson Swafford 70-69-71, Jinonattan Vegas (VEN) 72-69-69, Hiroshi Iwata (JPN) 69-73-68, Ben Crane 71-68-71, J.B. Holmes 70-68-72, Kevin Streelman 69-69-72, Martin Laird (SCO) 69-68-73, Dustin Johnson 70-66-74	<b>Pure Silk Bahamas LPGA Classic</b> Leading scores after Saturday’s third round of the Pure Silk Bahamas LPGA Classic at Paradise Island, Bahamas (USA unless noted, par-73): 207 - Anna Nordqvist (SWE) 70-69-68, Charley Hull (ENG) 68-70-69 208 - Stacy Lewis 73-68-67, Kim Hyo-joo (KOR) 70-70-68, Kim Sei-young (KOR) 71-68-69 209 - Lee Il-hee (KOR) 71-72-66, Megan Khang 70-68-71 210 - Park Hee-young (KOR) 72-72-66, Catriona Matthew (SCO) 68-71-71 211 - Alison Lee 68-73-70, Paula Creamer 68-72-71, Kwak Min-seo (KOR) 69-70-72 212 - Jang Ha-na (KOR) 72-72-68, Pornanong Phatlum (THA) 71-72-69, Haru Nomura (JPN) 68-70-74 213 - Maude-Almeie Leblanc (CAN) 73-70-70, Brooke M. Henderson (CAN) 71-72-70, Brittany Lincicome 70-71-72

<b>Qatar Masters</b> Final-round scores at Doha on Saturday in the Qatar Masters, counting toward the European PGA Tour: 274 - Branden Grace (RSA) 70-67-68-69 276 - Thorbjorn Olesen (DEN) 67-69-69-71, Rafael Cabrera (ESP) 67-68-71-70 277 - Lee Slattery (ENG) 69-69-69-70, Andrew Johnston (ENG) 66-69-72-70, Bradley Dredge (WAL) 71-67-70-69 280 - Richard Bland (ENG) 72-69-67-72, Tommy Fleetwood (ENG) 67-69-70-74, Sergio Garc (ESP) 70-66-74-70, George Coetzee (RSA) 67-70-73-70, Louis Oosthuizen (RSA) 65-73-71-71, Ricardo Gouveia (POR) 67-71-70-72 281 - Joost Luiten (NED) 70-67-74-70, Johan Carlsson (SWE) 69-67-72-73, Pablo Larrazal (ESP) 65-72-72-72, Bernd Wiesberger (AUT) 68-70-73, Mikko Ilonen (FIN) 71-68-71-71, Grory Bourdy (FRA) 67-68-72-74, Paul Lawrie (SCO) 67-66-70-78 282 - Robert Rock (ENG) 68-70-71-73, Thongchai Jaidee (THA) 68-72-71-71, Benjamin Hert (FRA) 71-70-71-70, Jorge Campillo (ESP) 68-68-73-72, Soren Kjeldsen (DEN) 70-69-75-68, Belle Edberg (SWE) 70-66-71-75, Kristoffer Broberg (SWE) 67-70-74-71, 283 - Alejandro Cazares (ESP) 73-67-73-70, Nicolas Colsaerts (BEL) 66-68-77-72	<b>SOCCER</b> <b>Dutch league</b> Results on Saturday: Vitesse Arnhem 0 Excelsior 0 FC Zwolle 1 FC Groningen 3 PSV Eindhoven 4 De Graafschap 2 NEC Nijmegen 0 AZ Alkmaar 3 Friday Willem II 0 Heracles 0
<b>English FA Cup</b> Results on Saturday: Fourth round Arsenal 2 (Chambers 19, Sanchez 53) Burnley 1 (Vokes 30) Aston Villa 0 Manchester City 4 (Iheanacho 4, 24-pen, 74, Sterling 76) Bolton 1 (Pratley 80) Leeds 2 (Doukara 8, Diagouraga 39) Bury 1 (Jones 86) Hull 3 (Akpom 14, 57-pen, 69) Colchester 1 (Davies 80-og) Tottenham 4 (Chadli 27, 79, Dier 64, Carroll 82) Crystal Palace 1 (Zaha 17) Stoke 0 Liverpool 0 West Ham 0 Nottingham Forest 0 Watford 1 (Ighalo 89) Oxford 0 Blackburn 3 (Marshall 36-pen, 76, Watt 45+2) Portsmouth 1 (Roberts 43) Bournemouth 2	<b>French Ligue 1</b> Results on Saturday: Angers 3 (Ndoye 19, 43, Yattara 55) Monaco 0 Troyes 0 Nantes 1 (Gillet 40) Lorient 2 (Toure 15, 51) Reims 0 Toulouse 1 (Ben Yedder 64-pen) Guingamp 2 (Sankhare 12, Briand 72) Gazelec Ajaccio 0 Montpellier 4 (Yatabare 14, Martin 41-pen, Dabo 52, 57) Bastia 1 (Brandao 69) Lyon 0 Playing Sunday (all times GMT) Caen v Nice (1300), Bordeaux v Rennes (1600), Saint-Etienne v Paris Saint-Germain (2000) Played Friday Marseille 1 (Rabillard 90+6) Lille 1 (Corchia 57)

<b>German Bundesliga</b> Results on Saturday: Borussia Dortmund 2 (Aubameyang 77, 86) Ingolstadt 0 Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Kießling 44, Hernandez 62-pen, 87) Hanover 96 0 Augsburg 0 Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Werder Bremen 3 (Bartels 67, Pizarro 75-pen, 77) Hertha Berlin 3 (Darida 29, Plattenhardt 42, Kalou 71) Darmstadt 0 Schalke 04 2 (Meyer 43, Sane 53) VfB Stuttgart 2 (Didavi 66, Kravets 88) Hamburg 1 (Rudnevs 75)	<b>Italian Serie A</b> Results on Saturday: Carpi 1 (Mancosu 74-pen) Palermo 1 (Gillardino 24) Atalanta 1 (Denis 32) Sassuolo 1 (Berardi 27) Roma 3 (Nainggolan 18, El Shaarawy 48, Pjanic 84) Frosinone 1 (Ciofani 24)
<b>Portuguese league</b> Results on Saturday: Estoril 1 (Arnado 4) FC Porto 3 (Aboubakar 18, Pereira 33, Andre 32) Sporting Lisbon 3 (A. Silva 30, Ruiz 43, Montero 84) Academica Coimbra 2 (Rafa 8, Ewerton 58-og)	<b>Spanish La Liga</b> Results on Saturday: Barcelona 2 (Messi 30, Suarez 38) Atletico Madrid 1 (Koke 10) Eibar 1 (Baston 90) Malaga 2 (Juanpi 44, Santa Cruz 90) Getafe 0 Athletic Bilbao 1 (Williams 25) Villarreal 1 (Bruno 55) Granada 0 Real Sociedad 2 (Prieto 18, Martinez Berridi 33) Real Betis 1 (Ruben Castro 51) Dutch league table after Saturday’s matches: Vitesse Arnhem 0 Excelsior 0 FC Zwolle 1 FC Groningen 3 PSV Eindhoven 4 De Graafschap 2 NEC Nijmegen 0 AZ Alkmaar 3 Friday Willem II 0 Heracles 0

<b>Australian Open</b> Results on Sunday: Men’s singles final Novak Djokovic (SRB)x11 bt Andy Murray (GBR)x2 1-7, 5-7, 6-3 Mixed doubles final Elena Vesnina (RUS)/Bruno Soares (BRA x5) bt Coco Vandeweghe (USA)/Horia Tecau (ROM) 6-4, 4-6, 10-5 (match tiebreak)
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