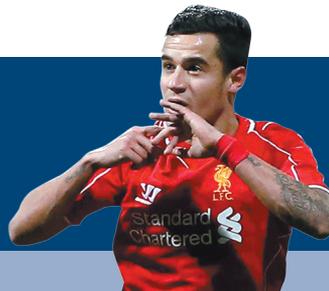


SOCCER

Philippe Coutinho could help Liverpool make up for the departure of Luis Suarez > P20



Boxing

Mayweather not welcome Down Under

By AGENCIES in Melbourne

The Australian tour of the world's best pound-for-pound boxer, Floyd Mayweather, was indefinitely postponed on Wednesday after the American, who has a history of violence toward women, was unable to secure a visa from immigration authorities.

The undefeated five-division world champion was booked for dinner and nightclub appearances in Melbourne and Sydney on Thursday and Friday.

The Immigration Department was still to give a decision on Mayweather's visa application when promoter Max Markson announced the events, including the dinners costing between \$150 and \$750, were unable to go ahead. "Floyd will be announcing new dates soon," Markson posted on his website on Wednesday.

The original organizers had already pulled out citing constant date changes by the boxer's representative.

The Department of Immigration is continuing to deliberate whether Mayweather should be allowed into the country despite a series of criminal convictions for domestic violence and assault committed against several women.

The 37-year-old spent two months in a US jail in 2012 after pleading guilty to assaulting his former partner in front of their children.

In 2004, he received a one-year suspended jail sentence and was ordered to undergo counseling for "impulse control" after being convicted for punching two women in a nightclub.

The department has previously overlooked the criminal convictions and dubious character of international celebrities, such as Mike Tyson and Snoop Lion (formerly known as Snoop Dogg).

However, more recently, the department revoked the visa of Julien Blanc, a "pick-up artist" who advocated emotionally manipulating women into sex, after public protests.

A Change.org petition call-

ing on Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to reject Mayweather's visa application reached 40,000 signatures within two days of its creation on Jan 29.

Mayweather was the world's highest-paid athlete last year after his two fights earned him \$119 million.

Hopes dampened

Over last weekend, Mayweather dampened talk of a possible mega-fight agreement with Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao, a day after the Asian star's promoter said a deal was near.

Mayweather posted a message on his Shots account that said in part: "While they continue to lie about making the fight... I'm just going to continue to travel and explore the world on my private jet. #FightNotMadeYet #Jamaica."

\$119 million

Floyd Mayweather's earnings last year in two fights, making him the world's highest-paid athlete.

Pacquiao promoter Bob Arum told the New York Post on Friday that he was optimistic a Pacquiao-Mayweather deal for a May 2 fight in Las Vegas would be completed in the next couple of days, with only a few final details to be settled between rival telecasters HBO and Showtime, the rights holders for Pacquiao and Mayweather respectively.

Mayweather, who turns 38 on Feb 24, left England's Amir Khan hanging for months until announcing on his birthday last year that he would fight Argentina's Marcos Maidana instead.

Mayweather wound up beating the South American twice in 2014, but has yet to test himself against Pacquiao or Khan.

Filipino southpaw Pacquiao is 57-5 with two drawn and 38 knockouts while Mayweather is 47-0 with 26 knockouts. Fans have sought a showdown between the two for five years, thus far in vain.



Boxer Floyd Mayweather attends a recent NBA game in Miami.

AP FILE PHOTO

Zou focused on world title shot

Double Olympic gold medalist fulfilling lifelong dream on March 7

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in Hong Kong

Double Olympic flyweight champion Zou Shiming has vowed to put China on the global boxing map by winning his first professional world title in Macao next month.

The 2008 and 2012 Olympic gold medalist was a three-time world champion in a glorious amateur career, but he believes that if he beats undefeated Thai Amnat Ruenroeng for the International Boxing Federation crown on March 7 he will finally bring Chinese boxing to the world's attention.

"I swore to fulfil my dreams to become a professional fighter, to achieve world titles and to bring China into the worldwide boxing family," Zou told AFP in an interview in Los Angeles.

Zou is currently training for the fight at legendary trainer Freddie Roach's Wildcard gym in the US city.

The boxer denied that fanatical support in his homeland — where up to 300 million are expected to watch his challenge for the IBF belt — was heaping pressure on him.

"The pressure doesn't come from my home country, but comes from myself and that made me enter the pro ring in my thirties," said the 33-year-old who is from Guizhou province in southwestern China.

Veteran promoter Bob Arum has dubbed Zou "the poster boy" for the rise of Chinese professional boxing, where it was banned for decades for being too Western and too violent.

"Zou is the engine behind all of this activity in China," said



China's Zou Shiming competes against Thailand's Yokthong Kokietygm in their flyweight bout in Macau in February 2014. Double Olympic flyweight champion Zou has vowed to put China on the global boxing map by winning his first pro world title in March. ALEX OGLE / AFP FILE

Arum. "He's the poster boy."

Superstar status

Zou is quickly assuming superstar status following a cameo appearance in the latest *Transformers* movie and after starring in advertisements for Beats headphones with NBA icon LeBron James and tennis legend Serena Williams.

His soaring popularity back home will hit the stratosphere should he win at the Venetian Macao casino in the southern Chinese gambling hub.

In just two years since Zou's first professional fight at the Venetian's Cotai Arena, the venue has become the home of boxing in Asia.

It has hosted all of Zou's six professional fights and two world title cards featuring the Filipino eight-weight world champion Manny Pacquiao, regarded by many as the best pound-for-pound fighter of



As a boxer, you will always taste blood. Cuts and injuries are common. If they scare you, you will never become a good fighter."

Zou Shiming

the past 15 years.

Zou's last outing in November — second on the bill to Pacquiao's demolition of Chris Algieri — saw him go 12 rounds for the first time and batter another experienced Thai, Kwanpichit Onesongchaigym, in a runaway points victory.

Zou (6-0, 1 KO) expects a much tougher battle against Amnat (14-0, 5 KOs) who is making his third defence of the IBF flyweight title.

The pair fought three times in their amateur careers with Zou winning the last two encounters.

"He is as determined as me to win this fight. He is a tough fighter, and the professional experience should give him a bit of an advantage," said the soft-spoken Zou.

Fearless fighter

"I have fought Amnat three times and I am familiar with his style. However he turned

professional years earlier than me. This should bring me new challenges."

The one downside of Zou's victory over Kwanpichit was a nasty gash over his left eye, which delayed the world title fight by a month to give him time to heal.

"The eye problem has been fixed," said Zou. "As a boxer, you will always taste blood. Cuts and injuries are common. If they scare you, you will never become a good fighter."

Zou says his ultimate dream is to make it big in the US and headline in Las Vegas for a world title.

"Las Vegas is always the big stage that all professional boxers dream of," he said.

"At the moment I am only focused on March 7. I am not going to hang up my gloves no matter what result. I will try hard to make different kinds of breakthroughs. Fighting in Las Vegas is one of them."

Stone-faced Holyfield stars in road rage spot

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in Atlanta

Flashing the same stone-faced glare that once was so familiar in the boxing ring, Evander Holyfield appeared headed toward another fight.

This time the challenge came from a hot-tempered motorist who felt he had been cut off as Holyfield pulled out of a driveway.

The driver, unaware he was about to encounter the former four-time heavyweight champion, forced Holyfield off the road and slammed his hand onto the hood of Holyfield's SUV.

The enraged driver continued to yell curses and threats, demanding Holyfield get out of the vehicle. Holyfield obliged, opening the door. No longer hidden by the SUV's

tinted windows, he was immediately recognized and the motorist backed away, mumbling "I didn't know it was you."

It was an example of how road rage can lead to unexpected big trouble — and it wasn't real. Holyfield and his misguided antagonist were only acting in a short public service announcement.

The closing message: "Avoid road rage. You never know who you might run into."

Holyfield had no speaking line in the new PSA, which lasts about 30 seconds and is supported by several Georgia law enforcement agencies. He said he was happy to participate because he has seen road rage up close, when he was only 17 and driving a beat-up jalopy instead of a luxury SUV. He said his car "just



Evander Holyfield, the former world heavyweight champion, is seen in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, last month. Holyfield is taking part in a Georgia campaign to curtail road rage.

RON HARRIS / AP

stopped" in the middle of the road and he was challenged by an older driver.

"Somebody was blowing their horn and they got out and they just talked to me any

kind of way, you know," Holyfield said. "I fought then. I wasn't heavyweight champ of the world. I was 17, but I could fight and the guy is talking all this noise. He was probably

Klitschko ready to rumble with 'Rocky'

By REUTERS in New York

Long-reigning world heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko likens his next challenger, Bryant Jennings of Philadelphia, to Hollywood's fictional Rocky Balboa.

But the 38-year-old Ukrainian who has ruled the division for nine years does not predict a happy ending for

Jennings in their April 25 clash at Madison Square Garden.

"I think Bryant is Rocky Balboa," Klitschko said on Wednesday.

"He's from Philadelphia. He's someone who started late in boxing. He's a top contender. I can see the desire and will, the way he carries himself. Makes me think this

fight is going to be exciting. This is his life's chance."

But Klitschko likes his chances as holder of five belts and a 63-3 record.

"As the champion, I am the Bad Man. I am the Baddest Man on the Planet in boxing," said Klitschko, who has made 17 title defenses — second only to the immortal Joe Louis.

Jennings is 19-0, but at 6-3, 225 pounds and wearing a black tee shirt with "I MATTER!" lettered on the front, looked like a kid brother as he stared up at Klitschko for photographers.

"I'm ready because I've got to be ready," said Jennings, 30. "I'm big, I'm strong, I'm ready ... and I've never been beat. It's my time."



Unified world heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko (left) and challenger Bryant Jennings laugh during Wednesday's news conference for their April 25 bout. REUTERS