

This is 40: Manny Pacquiao taking it one fight at a time

Focuses on his title defense against Adrien Broner in Las Vegas

LOS ANGELES: Manny Pacquiao, the Filipino multiple world champion who turned 40 last month, said on Wednesday that while he is focused on his title defense against Adrien Broner, he has considered life beyond the ring.

The WBA welterweight champion knows he will have his hands full when he battles the hard-hitting Broner in Las Vegas on Jan. 19 and is not lining up fighters down the road. "At the age of 40, it's hard to think about future fights," he told Reuters ahead of a workout at Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood.

"Just one at a time." He dismissed concerns that he has lost the knockout power that made the "PacMan" the sport's only eight-division world champion and among the best pound-for-pound fighters of all time.

After a knockout drought, Pacquiao had a return to form in July when he stunned defending champion Lucas Matthyse with a seventh-round knockout in Kuala Lumpur to claim the title. "I still have it," said the soft-spoken Pacquiao, who is 60-7-2 with 39 knockouts in his career.

"God is good," he said with a smile. Pacquiao knows, though, that Father Time is undefeated and hanging up his gloves would give him a chance to fully embrace his other pas-

sion-politics. Already a senator in the southeast Asian country, some believe the popular Pacquiao could take over from President Rodrigo Duterte when the election to replace him is held in 2022.

"Well if God wants me to be, then why not?" he said when asked whether he would like the position. "But I'm not thinking about that now." Pacquiao said he supported the conservative Duterte, who has come under fire for his hard line stance against drug dealers and users.

"He did a lot of good things in the Philippines. Big, big accomplishments," he said. One place you won't find Pacquiao is in exhibition matches like the one his former rival Floyd Mayweather fought last month against Japanese kickboxer Tenshin Nasukawa—a one-sided win for the American that was widely panned.

"I won't do that. If I'm Floyd I wouldn't do that," he said. "Exhibition match where you just knock him out. That's not good for the fans." Asked about his legacy, he said he had already proven himself in the ring and was more interested in connecting with the people.

"My legacy is already there," he said. "I want to be an inspiration to the fans and the people not only inside the ring but also outside the ring." —Reuters



HOLLYWOOD: Manny Pacquiao laughs with the press during Manny Pacquiao versus Adrien Broner Media Day at Wild Card Boxing Club yesterday in Hollywood, California. —AFP

India's Mary Kom becomes world's top woman boxer

NEW DELHI: India's Mary Kom rose to the top of the boxing world rankings yesterday, two months after becoming the first female boxer to win six world championships. The 36-year-old mother-of-three was ranked number one by the International Boxing Association (AIBA) in the Light Fly 45-48 kilogramme category, scoring 1700 points.

Kom capped her 2018 campaign with her sixth world championship title after defeating Ukraine's Hanna Okhota by 5-0 in Delhi. Okhota is ranked number two in the world, with 1100 points.

That victory took her past Ireland's Katie Taylor, and level with the men's record held by Cuban legend Felix Savon as the most successful pugilist ever at the world championships. She also won gold medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Silesian Open Boxing Tournament in Poland. She bagged a silver at the Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria. Kom won a silver at the inaugural women's world championships in 2001, kick-starting her international career. She went on to win gold in each of the next five world championships.

Kom, who was the subject of a Bollywood film in 2014, won bronze at the London 2012 Olympic Games. She is likely to miss the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as her 48-kg category is not included in the Games roster. —AFP



Mary Kom

Cilic cruises at Kooyong ahead of Grand Slam

MELBOURNE: Last year's Australian Open finalist Marin Cilic rounded off his preparations for this year's edition in style yesterday, winning his second match in as many days at the Kooyong Classic. With the first Grand Slam of the season starting on Monday, every opportunity is important for the Croatian, who went down in a battle to Roger Federer in the Mel-

bourne Park decider in 2018.

The world number seven beat Spain's Fernando Verdasco 6-4, 6-4, backing up his three-set victory a day before over world No. 6 Kevin Anderson. Earlier, American Jack Sock lost to fast-rising Canadian teenager Denis Shapovalov 6-2, 3-6, 10-7 after a final set played as a 10-point tiebreak—the format which will be used at the Australian Open from Monday.

Under the rules, the first player to win at least 10 points by a two-point margin takes the match. Ahead of the Australian Open last year, Sock was at a career-high eighth in the world rankings, but after a horror season he has plunged outside the top 100 and is desperate to turn it around.

His form slump has been dramatic. He played 31 singles matches in 2018, winning a mere nine. "I had some pretty low moments last year, it was horrendous," said Sock. "I did a lot of regrouping in the off-season, talking to family, team members, coaches.

"I'm trying to take a positive outlook. I know the level that I can play the game, where my game should be." With the Australian Open just days away, he is grateful to be out of the spotlight to focus on himself.

"It's nice to be able to fly under the radar and do my own thing." Shapovalov, 19, made up for lost time after losing in the first round at Auckland this week and then crossing the Tasman to squeeze into the Kooyong draw as a late entry. —AFP

India sack hockey coach after WCup exit

NEW DELHI: Hockey India has sacked men's national team coach Harendra Singh after a dismal showing at the Asian Games and their quarter-final exit as hosts in last month's World Cup. The much-fancied Indian senior team had to settle for a bronze at the Asiad in Jakarta last year and were dumped out by the Netherlands in the World Cup in December. Singh blamed poor umpiring in the last-eight 2-1 loss and vented his anger in a post-match news conference but his actions reportedly did not go down well with Indian officials. Hockey India said on Wednesday that the veteran player would now coach the junior team.

It said that the decision was aimed at building a "strong base" ahead of the 2021 Junior World Cup and the 2020 and 2024 Olympics. Singh, earlier the women's team coach, became the men's coach in May to replace Dutchman Sjoerd Marjine after India failed to win a medal at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. —AFP