

# BRAVE CF staked with #1 ranked Nordic European fighters

Many athletes are emerging from Nordic Europe - with several of them choosing BRAVE CF

● Nordic region is slowly becoming a hub of MMA

TDI | Manama

In recent years, mixed martial arts (MMA) has experienced an emergence in the mainstream consciousness of Nordic Europe.

Now that the region is slowly becoming a hub of the sport, it has also started to produce a crop of top-notch athletes—with several of them choosing to strut their wares in BRAVE Combat Federation.

Among the highly-touted athletes that came out of the growing Nordic European MMA scene is Olli “The Amazing” Santalahti, a well-rounded super welterweight who owns an impressive professional record of 12-3 with five wins via submission and three by knockout.

Unanimously recognized as the top-rated 175-pounder in the territory, Santalahti put the organization's entire division on notice by taking a short-notice bout against Lebanon's Georges Eid at BRAVE CF 48: ARABIAN NIGHT last March.

Even though he managed to eke out a split decision victory over his game Lebanese counterpart in an exhilarating clash, the 27-year-old Finnish stand-out is far from satisfied with his performance in his promotional debut and makes no secret of his



objective to climb the ranks.

“I am really hungry to get back in there. My debut happened on days' notice, but it was an opportunity that's hard to pass up. Now I am eagerly waiting to showcase my whole skill set because I have so much to offer. When I get back inside the cage, I will surely go for the finish,” Santalahti declared.

Joining Santalahti as a member of the roster is compatriot Abdul “ABBA” Hussein, a sub-

mission specialist who holds a 7-2 standing and has been a flyweight mainstay since 2018.

Meanwhile, Danish spitfire Louis “Spartacus” Glismann (8-2) is likewise doing his share of work in putting a premium on the Nordic European brand of MMA as part of BRAVE CF, winning two of his last three assignments in exciting fashion.

Completing the lineup is a stable of Swede exports led by Zvonimir “The Croatian Sensation”

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OLLI SANTALAHTI

Kralj (7-4), a 100-percent lethal finisher who is ranked as the No. 1 heavyweight in Nordic Europe.

Holding up the fort alongside Kralj are Anton “The Pleasure Man” Turkalj (7-0), David “Fat Boy Slim” Jacobsson (8-3), Andreas “Real Steel” Stahl (12-4) and Bilal “Borz” Tipsaev (1-1).

Santalahti is admittedly blown away by the level of talent that BRAVE CF possesses, leading him to laud its scouting program.

“I can say that BRAVE CF is taking over Europe,” he said. “The fighters they are getting are high level. Though they originated from the Middle East, I think they are also the top European organization at the moment.”

“BRAVE CF is a high-level organization, and it's my pleasure to be part of the roster,” Santalahti added.

Ever since its inception in 2016, BRAVE CF has bolstered

its profile as a global MMA promotion, staging 50 shows in 21 different countries—six of which are European nations such as Northern Ireland, England, Sweden, Russia, Slovenia and Romania.

Despite the ravaging effects of COVID-19 last year, BRAVE CF remained committed to its mission to empower the European MMA scene by hosting four consecutive cards in Sweden during the weekends of August 2020.

Overall, BRAVE CF was able to hold seven events in a calendar year in the region, doing it under extraordinary circumstances due to the global health crisis.

This past January, the organization even kicked off the year with BRAVE CF 46 in Sochi, Russia.

BRAVE CF will be breaking new ground in Europe on June 4, adding Belarus to the long list of countries that the company has visited through the years.

In partnership with Rukh Sport Management, BRAVE CF 51: THE FUTURE IS HERE is set to emanate from the state-of-the-art Falcon Club Arena in the Belarusian capital of Minsk.

Santalahti believes that BRAVE CF will push the boundaries further in the years to come.

“To me, this is just the start. I eagerly wait for fighters from other countries in Europe to join BRAVE CF,” he stated. “They did events in Sweden last autumn. Hopefully, they can also come to Finland and hold an event in my home country. The possibilities are endless.”

‘Saddle sore’ Hindley pulls out of Giro



Jai Hindley  
AFP | Milan

Australia's Jai Hindley, runner-up in last year's Giro d'Italia, was forced to pull out of this year's race before yesterday's mountainous 14th stage to the fearsome Monte Zoncolan.

His Team DSM revealed the 25-year-old rider had “suffered intensely with a serious saddle sore that has prevented him from riding his best over the last week.”

“The 2020 runner up is no longer fit to race, and will instead head home to recover.”

“This is obviously not how I wanted my Giro to end,” said Hindley.

“The team have really put in a lot to try and help, but the situation isn't improving and I really can't continue anymore.”

Hindley was 25th in the overall standings.

“Jai has been suffering pretty hard over the last few days with a saddle sore,” said team doctor Anko Boelens.

“We had hoped things would improve, but his condition has deteriorated significantly after the stage yesterday.”

“His pain levels are no longer tolerable and with some huge days in the mountains coming up, he cannot continue the race like this.”

## Ronaldo ‘still a Juve player,’ insists Pirlo before crunch finale

AFP | Milan

Cristiano Ronaldo remains very much a Juventus player, coach Andrea Pirlo insisted yesterday with the Portuguese star's future in doubt going into the final game of the season.

Juve's Champions League hopes are no longer in their hands as they head for 11th-placed Bologna needing a win and hoping rivals Napoli and AC Milan slip up.

However, Pirlo does not believe that the game will be Ronaldo's final one with the club if they fail to qualify for elite European football.

“No, I see him still in the ‘Bi-



Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo and Cristiano Ronaldo during a match

anconero' jersey and focused,” Pirlo told a pre-match press conference.

“He proved it the other night, sacrificing himself because he wanted to win the Coppa Italia.

“I see him focused on tomorrow, then there's time to discuss the rest.”

Juve's nine-year title run was ended by Inter Milan and failure to qualify for the Champions League would be a financial blow.

The competition is worth on average 80 million euros (\$94 million) a season to teams.

Failure to qualify would make Ronaldo's annual salary of 31 million euros a year difficult to sustain.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner was recruited in 2018 from Real Madrid to help Juventus win the title after two lost finals in 2015 and 2017.

The 36-year-old is the top scorer in the competition with 134 goals.

In the meantime, Ronaldo is set to become the first player to finish the season top scorer in three major leagues -- England, Spain, and Italy. He has scored 28 goals so far, six more than Inter's Romelu Lukaku and Atalanta's Luis Muriel.

Meanwhile Pirlo also insisted the match would not decide his own future after an erratic first season, during which he won two trophies.

## Dr Shehab wins Bahrain-France Friendship Tennis at BTC



Winners with officials at the awarding ceremony

TDI | Manama

Dr Fouad Shehab won the second Bahrain-France Friendship Open Tennis Day, organised by Bahrain Tennis Club on Friday.

The event was held under the patronage of French Ambassador Jerome Cauchard.

A total of 20 participants took part. They competed in doubles, where each team consist-

ed of a Bahraini and a French player. The teammates change every match, with the aim of giving everyone an opportunity to participate and get to know each other.

Shehab emerged as the winner at the end of the event. Aurelien Chaussy was the runner-up, while Abdulla Mohammed Ahmed claimed third place.

Following play, an awarding

ceremony was held, attended by BTC president Khamis Al Muqla, Ambassador Cauchard, Ahlia University Board of Trustees chairman Professor Abdullah Alhawayj, Ahlia University president Professor Mansoor Al Ali, and French Embassy Cooperation and Cultural Affairs Counsellor Emmanuel Mayer.

On this occasion, BTC presented an honorary membership to Ambassador Cauchard.

## US teen Gauff sweeps past Wang to win second WTA title in Parma

AFP | Parma

American teenager Coco Gauff swept aside China's Wang Qiang to win her second WTA career title on clay in Parma yesterday.

Third seed Gauff won

through 6-1, 6-3 against Wang, the sixth seed, in 74 minutes to add to her hardcourt title in Linz in 2019.

After reaching the semi-finals on clay in the Italian Open in Rome last week, 17-year-old Gauff dropped only one set en

route to the title in Parma, just one week before Roland Garros.

Gauff, who is ranked 30 in the world and has won 20 of her last 26 matches, saved each of four break points in her first meeting with the 29-year-old Wang.

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