

Boxer keeping day job, even with belt

Cancio, set to defend title Friday, continues to work 40-hour weeks at gas company.

By MANOUK AKOPYAN

Marvin Hagler once delivered a marvelous quote on the cerebral approach and psyche of a pugilist: “It’s tough to get out of bed to do roadwork at 5 a.m. when you’ve been sleeping in silk pajamas.”

Andrew Cancio, a recently crowned WBA super-featherweight titleholder born in Blythe, Calif., is a world champion cut from a different cloth — not made of luxurious fabric. The 30-year-old boxer is a previously retired career journeyman (20-4-2, 15 KOs) who can’t be said to have enjoyed the spoils of the sport in terms of opulence.

Like many boxers, the 130-pound fighter endures grueling roadwork in the wee hours of the morning. But after his predawn run concludes, he changes from his nylon sweatsuit to coveralls and steel-toe boots because, 40 hours a week, Cancio works as a construction technician for Southern California Gas Co., toiling on local streets, wielding a jackhammer on pavement and fixing gas leaks.

His day job leaves him sweaty, tired and sore, but it provides him with security and benefits to take care of his family while he pursues a resurgence as a boxer.

In February, Cancio’s life changed radically when he overcame monstrous odds to defeat Alberto Machado, an unbeaten Puerto Rican champion two years his junior who walked into the ring with a 4-inch reach advantage, 3½-inch height edge and devastating knockout power.

The fight unfolded in almost cinematic fashion. Cancio first had to shake off preflight anxiety. He was dealing with a wave of emotions stemming from the



GREG BEACHAM Associated Press

ANDREW CANCIO, a professional boxer since 2006, gained recognition after winning the WBA super-featherweight title in February. “It was the fight of my life,” said Cancio, who was born in Blythe, Calif.

enormity of his first world-title shot in front of a sold-out crowd mostly there to see him. As soon as he stepped into the ring, he promptly got caught with a left uppercut and was knocked down in the first round. He bounced back off of the canvas, survived a deep gash over his left eyelid and then went on to knock down Machado three times in the fourth round en route to a technical knockout win.

“It was the fight of my life,” said Cancio, who was crowned champion in front of his family and friends, as well as his boss and about 40 coworkers from the gas company. “It’s still surreal because I’ve never had this before. I’ve been on this grind for a while. My life has not changed too much. I still have my job and go to work every day. I’m just getting more recognition now.”

On Friday, Cancio, a professional boxer since 2006, will return to the site of his

career-defining performance to make the first defense of his belt in a rematch with Machado (21-1, 17 KOs) at the Fantasy Springs Resort Casino in Indio, Calif. The fight will be streamed on DAZN.

“I don’t expect anything different for this fight. I think he just went up against a guy that can get hit, get knocked down and come back to fight even harder,” said Cancio. “My nerves got the best of me that night. I didn’t get over it until I got dropped. That was my wake-up call, and it reminded me it was time to get to work.”

After Cancio’s convincing performance, the Freddie Roach-trained and Miguel Cotto-promoted Machado said he’d had issues preparing to make weight for his third title defense. He was distracted by a surgery for his 1-year-old son.

“Instead of being a gentleman of the sport and

saying it was my night, he made excuses discrediting my victory,” said Cancio, who was surprised how quickly he turned the first fight around in his favor. “My style was difficult for him to handle. I’m surprised he wanted a rematch. I’m going to show him that it was no fluke. I’m a better fighter than he is. I have a chip on my shoulder to annihilate him again.”

“Cancio is a great fighter, but I’m ready to come back on Friday,” said the southpaw Machado, who contemplated passing up on a rematch and moving up in weight because, at 5 feet 10, he had a hard time cutting down to 130 pounds. “I never underestimated my opponent. I knew he was good because that’s how he earned the opportunity to fight for a world title. It was just a situation and it ended in his favor that night.”

The rematch will mark the 11th time Cancio is fight-

ing at Fantasy Springs, which is 100 miles from Blythe, a small truck-stop town on the California-Arizona border. The venue has always provided Cancio, who is 9-1 in his previous appearances there, a chance to please the partisan crowd.

He’s even more beloved back home in Blythe as the 20,000-population desert community can claim its first world champion — with a feel-good story to boot. In April, Cancio was given the keys to the city by Mayor Dale Reynolds and presented his championship belt by Oscar De La Hoya, his promoter, in front of nearly 1,000 people at the Joe Wine recreation center as Cancio spent the day signing autographs and taking pictures.

“There’s been a big change in his attitude. He feels like a champion now,” trainer Joseph Janik said. “He feels like he belongs with the best in the world.”

Cancio is enjoying the newfound limelight and fanfare and relishing the underdog role for now, but his day job is not some kind of promotional gimmick. He’s not yet earning enough money solely from boxing. Still, Cancio made \$75,000 for his first scrap against Machado, and he’ll earn \$125,000 for the rematch before everyone gets their cut, and before taxes. His previous earnings, aside from one \$50,000 purse, did not come close to the figures he’s now earning.

Nicknamed “El Chango” because by the age of 14 he already had a beard, Cancio quit the sport in 2016 after a TKO loss to Joseph Diaz on the Canelo Alvarez-Liam Smith pay-per-view undercard. He’d lost three of his last six bouts, so he decided to retire, frustrated with the uncertainty of the sport. After a 19-month break, however, the itch returned. He picked up the gloves again for one more run in 2018, and it’s proved to be successful.

Providing for his family is largely the reason he still pulls double duty. Leading up to the fight, he conducted interviews while sitting in his truck during lunch breaks. This week, to fully focus on the rematch, he’s using accrued vacation days to take time off.

When he was juggling training for the Machado fight and his gas company job, Cancio’s typical weekday went as follows: Up at 4:30 a.m. for a five-mile run, navigating the asphalt streets that he’d be soon be pounding again at work. Change into work clothes by 5:50 a.m. Leave home in Oxnard and drive to the Southern California Gas Co. branch in Simi Valley. At 6:30 a.m., start work.

“I’m always tired between work and training. Both are hard work in its own right, but I have to do it,” said Cancio. “I can’t slack. My goal is to remain world champion. That’s how I find my stride. I love boxing. I wouldn’t say I love my day job. I’d rather wake up and just box.”

MORNING BRIEFING

These adults need to grow up

By CHUCK SCHILKEN

A brawl broke out among adults attending a baseball game played by 7-year-old athletes last weekend in Colorado. Police say the fight started after one group of adults did not agree with a call made by a 13-year-old umpire.

As you can tell, the word “adult” is being used very loosely here.

Lakewood police said there were numerous injuries, with one person being seriously hurt. Based on video shot by someone in attendance and released by the police, it does not appear that any children (based on age, not maturity) were involved in the clash.

Five citations for disorderly conduct and fighting in public have been issued so far. As of Thursday, police were searching for a man who can be seen in the video delivering multiple blows, including a sucker punch to the back of someone’s head.

That man could face assault charges, police said, as could others.

And, of course, the kids have to pay for the poor behavior of the grown-ups, with the remainder of the season being canceled for both teams. In addition, anyone who took part in the tussle has been banned from future events indefinitely.

“BCJSA has ZERO tolerance for this type of behavior ... PERIOD,” the Bear Creek Junior Sports Assn. said Wednesday in a statement. “We are embarrassed, ashamed and angry that this has taken place.”



ETHAN MILLER Getty Images

KENAN THOMPSON, wearing an original Ducks jersey, hosts the 2019 NHL Awards at the Mandalay Bay Events Center on Wednesday in Las Vegas.

The first Duck

Kenan Thompson was among the first people to be seen wearing a Mighty Ducks jersey — not as a hockey player, of course, but as a child actor.

Thompson first played the knuckle-puck-shooting Russ Tyler in “D2: The Mighty Ducks” in 1994, the same year the NHL team of the same name (without the “D2” part) was wrapping up its first season in Anaheim.

As host of the 2019 NHL Awards on Wednesday night in Las Vegas, Thompson broke out one of those old-school Mighty Ducks jerseys and waxed nostalgic about the movie franchise’s role in

helping the now-Anaheim Ducks establish their fan base.

“We felt super responsible for all that kind of stuff happening,” said the 41-year-old comedian, who also led the crowd in the “Quack!” chant from the movies.

“It’s just been a magical part of my life. I always thought I’d just be a fan, eating popcorn, watching games,” he said. “But I’m so glad to have this relationship with the NHL. It’s really nice. I’m always down to do whatever they ask.”

Causing a buzz

Some of the most buzz-worthy moments at this week’s College World Series in Omaha have taken place off the field.

Austin Buysse, a 23-year-old amateur baseball player the Minnesota Mudhens, made a spectacular, leaping, one-handed catch in the left-field bleachers Monday on a home run during the Texas Tech-Arkansas game. Making the feat even more impressive, Buysse kept the full beer in his right hand upright, with minimum

spillage.

Then Buysse proceeded to chug the entire beer and spike the plastic cup like the legend he is.

“I was shocked that I caught the ball and everyone was looking at me,” Buysse told the Argus Leader. “I was so pumped that [chugging the beer] was my first reaction.”

And then there’s Franklin Preacher, the Vanderbilt fan who said he was warned by a TD Ameritrade Park employee Sunday that he’d be ejected if he continued with his incessant and loud whistling.

“They can’t throw me out for whistling for our [players], like I always do,” Franklin, 72, told the Tennessean on Tuesday.

But Franklin more or less behaved himself Wednesday and was able to watch all of the Commodore’s 5-4 win over Mississippi State at the stadium.

He told ESPN that he came to an understanding with the stadium employee about when it was appropriate to whistle and needed to be warned only once to pipe down.

PRO CALENDAR

	FRI. 21	SAT. 22	SUN. 23	MON. 24	TUE. 25
DODGERS	COLORADO 7 SNLA	COLORADO 4:15 Ch. 11	COLORADO 1 SNLA	at Arizona 6:30 SNLA	at Arizona 6:30 SNLA
ANGELS	at St. Louis 5:15 FSW	at St. Louis 11:15 a.m. FSW	at St. Louis 4 ESPN		CINCINNATI 7 FSW
GALAXY		at Cincinnati 4:30 SpecSN			
LAFC					
SPARKS	at Seattle 7:30 SpecSN, CBSSN		at Phoenix 3		

Shade denotes home game

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
AUTO RACING		
5:45 a.m.	Formula One, French Grand Prix, Practice 2	TV: ESPNU
2:30 p.m.	NASCAR Monster Energy, Toyota/Save Mart 350, final practice	TV: FS1
BASEBALL		
11:15 a.m.	New York Mets at Chicago Cubs	TV: MLB
4 p.m.	Houston at New York Yankees	TV: MLB
5:15 p.m.	Angels at St. Louis	TV: FSW R: 830, 1220
7 p.m.	Colorado at Dodgers	TV: SNLA R: 570, 1020
BASKETBALL		
7:30 p.m.	WNBA, Sparks at Seattle	TV: SpecSN, CBSSN
BOXING		
7 p.m.	Sebastian Fundora vs. Manuel Zepeda	TV: Showtime
COLLEGE BASEBALL WORLD SERIES		
11 a.m.	Texas Tech at Michigan	TV: ESPN
4 p.m.	Louisville vs. Vanderbilt	TV: ESPN
GOLF		
6:30 a.m.	European PGA Tour, BMW International Open, second round	TV: Golf
9 a.m.	PGA Tour, American Family Insurance Championship, first round	TV: Golf
Noon	PGA Tour, Travelers Championship, second round	TV: Golf
3 p.m.	LPGA, KPMG Championship, second round	TV: Golf
9 p.m.	Asian Tour, Kolon Korea Open, third round	TV: Golf
HORSE RACING		
Noon	Trackside Live! Santa Anita	TV: TVG
6 p.m.	The Quarters featuring Los Alamitos	TV: TVG
MIXED MARTIAL ARTS		
9 p.m.	Alejandro Martinez vs. Enrique Gonzalez	TV: UDN
SOCCER		
11:45 a.m.	UEFA European Under-21 Championship, France vs. Croatia	TV: UDN
12:45 p.m.	Africa Cup of Nations, Egypt vs. Zimbabwe	TV: beIN1
3:30 p.m.	CONMEBOL Copa America, Ecuador vs. Chile	TV: KVEA
3:30 p.m.	CONCACAF Gold Cup, El Salvador vs. Jamaica	TV: KFTIR, UDN, Unimas
6:30 p.m.	CONCACAF Gold Cup, Honduras vs. Curacao	TV: FS1, KFTIR, UDN, Unimas
TENNIS		
11 a.m.	Center Court: ATR, Halle and London, and WTA, Mallorca and Birmingham, quarterfinals	TV: Tennis

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