

COMMENTARY

After beating cancer, fight isn’t too big for Jacobs

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP Sports Columnist

LAS VEGAS — The moment won’t be too big for Daniel Jacobs, of that he’s certain.

Not after going toe-to-toe with the fearsome Gennady Golovkin before dropping a narrow decision. Not after beating cancer that doctors were sure would end his career, if not his life.

Canelo Alvarez will be just another obstacle in front of him when they meet Saturday night in a middleweight title unification fight.

“It’s not my first rodeo,” Jacobs said. “I don’t look forward to being nervous. If anything I’m excited.”

A lot of boxing fans are excited, too, about a 160-pound title fight that is the prime attraction in this gambling city on Cinco de Mayo weekend.

On one side is the 28-year-old Mexican champion and one of the top five pound-for-pound fighters in the game. Alvarez ducks nobody, and his own two fights against Golovkin were textbook performances for those studying boxing styles in the future.

And then there’s Jacobs, the 32-year-old who has conquered the usual obstacles put in the way of any



Canelo Alvarez, left, and Daniel Jacobs pose for photographers at a news conference on Wednesday for their middleweight title boxing match in Las Vegas. The two are scheduled to fight Saturday in Las Vegas.

AP Photo/John Locher

fighter — and then some.

He was once “The Golden Child,” a tough Brooklyn prospect with skills advanced far beyond his age. He became “The Miracle Man” after beating a cancerous tumor in 2011 that damaged his nerves and paralyzed his legs.

It’s a story that only boxing could deliver. And it’s one Jacobs is happy to let everyone know about.

“I never get tired of telling my story,” he said. “I know that there’s somebody

out in the world who hasn’t heard it, so I share it as much as I can talk about it.”

Jacobs shared it a little more this week, taking a break from training to look back at the winding path his career has taken since turning pro a dozen years ago.

He talked about being knocked out in Las Vegas nine years ago. He talked about being particularly nervous for a fight he ended up winning with an early knockout.

And he talked about liv-

ing on his mother’s couch as he tried desperately to beat a rare form of cancer while somehow keeping alive his dream of boxing, too.

“Sleepless nights,” Jacobs said. “Times where I used to cry. Times where I used to even doubt if I would walk right again.”

The cancer was osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of the disease that caused a tumor to wrap around his spine. Doctors removed it during a six-hour surgery, but not before they told

Jacobs he would probably not walk again, much less fight.

And now he’s in a bout that will make him millions of dollars — and could make him one of the most sought-after fighters around.

“I never thought about this opportunity,” Jacobs said. “I always just wanted to give back to boxing and see how far I could take it. But I never thought I would fight for a world championship. I mean, this is the greatest opportunity that I could even have, let alone dream about.”

The opportunity came about largely because Jacobs put on the performance of his career before dropping a decision to Golovkin in 2017 in a fight that could have gone either way. He helped himself more by winning a piece of the middleweight crown his last time out, a split-decision win over Sergiy Derevyanchenko.

After two close battles of his own with Triple G, Alvarez was looking for a different opponent on what traditionally is a big pay-per-view fight weekend for him in Las Vegas. Instead of pay-per-view, the fight is on DAZN, and Alvarez-Jacobs is being counted on to sell subscriptions to the streaming service.

And while Alvarez is a 4-1 pick by oddsmakers to retain his handful of titles, Jacobs is not an opponent he or promoter Oscar De La Hoya are selling short.

“What impresses me most is his coming back from cancer,” De La Hoya said. “It’s a very special fighter who does that, a very special person who does that. It shows you his character, his will to win. That’s what worries me most in this fight, his mind and his heart.”

That could mean 12 rounds of a thinking man’s fight. It could mean an all-out brawl, or something in between.

The outcome of the fight is uncertain, yes. But for a time, the outcome of Jacobs’ life was uncertain, too.

“I’m self-motivated,” Jacobs said. “When everything was taken away from me, all I wanted was to get back to the sport of boxing. It’s nothing short of a miracle to get to this point. That motivates myself to be the best version of myself that I can be.”

Whether that’s enough to beat Alvarez won’t be known until Saturday night, though one thing does seem certain: A win for The Miracle Man might not be such a miracle after all.

Messi scores twice to hit 600 goals as Barcelona beats Liverpool

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Lionel Messi hit the 600-goal mark for Barcelona after scoring twice to lead the Spanish club to a 3-0 victory over Liverpool in the first leg of their Champions League semifinal on Wednesday.

Luis Suarez opened the scoring against his former club in the 26th min-

ute against a Liverpool side that spurned a couple of good chances to equalize during a strong spell after the halftime break. Messi then quashed the comeback effort when he doubled the lead from a rebound with 15 minutes left and followed that up by making it 600 career goals for Barcelona by curling in a perfectly struck free kick in the 82nd.

Liverpool dominated

long stretches of the match but failed to finish its chances when it had the hosts on their back foot, especially early in the second half. Mohamed Salah still almost grabbed a valuable away goal for Liverpool late when he hit the post.

Coached by Ernesto Valverde, Barcelona is aiming to replicate the treble of titles it achieved in 2009 under Pep Guardiola and

2015 under Luis Enrique. It clinched the Spanish league title last weekend and plays Valencia in the Copa del Rey final on May 25.

Liverpool is trying to reach consecutive Champions League finals after losing last season 3-1 to Real Madrid.

Barcelona extended its unbeaten streak at home in Europe’s elite club competition to 32 straight matches, a

run that started in 2013.

The return leg at Anfield is next Tuesday. In the other semifinal, Ajax won 1-0 at Tottenham in the first leg on Tuesday.

At Camp Nou, Liverpool created an up-tempo, back-and-forth game right from kickoff.

The speed of Salah and Sadio Mane caused Barcelona problems throughout and a flurry of jitters in its

backline. A soft challenge by Jordi Alba left Salah with the ball in the box, Gerard Pique erred on more than one pass, and Sergi Roberto simply could not keep up with Mane.

But Messi was a force at the other end, causing Liverpool to bend and almost break on several solo runs right through the heart of its defense until it finally gave way in the final minutes.



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Banner Bank has been my bank since I first joined in 1962, and will be for as long as I have anything to say about it. Can you say the same about your bank? If not, perhaps it’s time you talk with someone at Banner.

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