

Resilient Joshua rises from the ashes to knock Prenga out in much awaited return

Anthony Joshua made a statement victory on his return to the ring – seven months after a horrific car crash.

Little did anyone know the contest would turn into one of the wildest heavyweight main events – where so much happened in such little time.

Wearing nothing but grit and confidence on his face, Joshua, a 95% favourite, was knocked down inside the first 19 seconds of a fight, after being caught by a vicious right-hand uppercut by Kristian Prenga, silencing the Jeddah crowd in an instant.

The Brit, who seemingly looked unfazed, let out a smile and got back up, only to be knocked down yet again a minute later in similar fashion.

As the bell rang, it was clear that work needed to be done, and much was needed to overturn a round that was scored a whopping 10-7 by the judges.

A loss would have possibly marked the end of his illustrious career and cancelled out a super-fight against veteran Tyson Fury later in the year, but fate had different plans.

To almost everyone's surprise, Joshua recovered from what was arguably his worst round ever to bounce back and pressure Prenga against the ropes. Just minutes later, he would go on to land a lethal right hand and send his Albanian counterpart right to the canvas, ending the fight immediately.

While the win extends Joshua's record to 30-4, it holds a lot more value than a mere numerical record – much more than anyone could ever say.

Late last year, he was involved in a car crash which took the lives of two of his best friends.

For an athlete to have endured insurmountable pain and grief, even the slightest in just showing up deserved all the respect and commendation in the world.

An emotional Joshua who refused to recall the events of the past in his post-fight interview, it was made clear by his manager that even the littlest movements caused unbearable pain following the accident, and to return in fashion like that was something only the toughest and most determined souls dared to do.

The win also confirmed Joshua's bout against Tyson Fury, with a date to be decided this year for the two to clash in a scintillating battle for the ages.