

Musk says proposed Zuckerberg cage fight to be held at 'epic location' in Italy

Publication Date: 2023-08-12

Author: Dan Milmo

Section: Technology

Tags: Elon Musk, Italy, Mark Zuckerberg, Europe, X, Meta, UFC, news

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/11/elon-musk-mark-zuckerberg-cage-fight-italy-government>



Elon Musk is in talks with Italy's government about hosting his proposed cage fight with Mark Zuckerberg at a historic site in the country, but the Colosseum has been ruled out as a venue. The owner of X Corp and the chief executive of Facebook-owner Meta first raised the idea of a one-on-one scrap in a series of social media posts back in June. The challenge came as Zuckerberg prepared to launch Threads, a rival microblogging site to Musk's now rebranded Twitter platform. The Italian culture minister, Gennaro Sangiuliano, said he was discussing holding the bout "in full respect of the sites" where it might be staged, but that it would not be held in Rome. "I had a long and friendly phone conversation with Elon Musk," he said. "We talked about the common passion for the history of ancient Rome. We are discussing how to organise a great charity and historical evocation event, in full respect of the sites. It will not be held in Rome." Zuckerberg responded on Threads: "I love this sport and I've been ready to fight since the day Elon challenged me. If he ever agrees on an actual date, you'll hear it from me. Until then, please assume anything he says has not been agreed on." This week the president of the cage-fighting promotion company Ultimate Fighting Championship, Dana White, said he had spoken to the culture ministry about staging the fight between the two billionaires in the Colosseum. Musk added to the speculation on Friday when he posted on Twitter, now renamed as X, that the fight would be livestreamed on his and Zuckerberg's social media networks, saying: "Everything in camera frame will be ancient Rome, so nothing modern at all." He said he had spoken to the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, and the culture minister and had "agreed on an epic location". Earlier on Friday, Musk had posted the word "gladiators" next to two crossed-sword emojis. However, Sangiuliano then issued the statement ruling out Rome. From the north to the south, Italy is home to hundreds of ancient Roman and Greek sites, including the Capua amphitheatre and the ruins of the disaster-struck city Pompeii, near Naples; the ancient Greek temples in Agrigento, in Sicily; and the arena of Verona, completed in AD30, which is still used for opera, concerts and other events. Musk posted on X that the fight would be managed by his and Zuckerberg's charitable donations, not UFC, and that all proceeds would go to military veterans' organisations. Sangiuliano said in his statement that any location deal would include a donation worth "many millions of euros" to two Italian paediatric hospitals. However, Musk also indicated that any fight was not imminent. He had previously posted on X that he had a shoulder problem requiring minor surgery with a recovery period of "a few months". Zuckerberg wrote on Sunday that he was "not holding his breath" over the mooted fight, as he revealed that he had suggested a date of 26 August for the contest. That now seems unlikely given Musk's post about surgery. The chief executive of X, Linda Yaccarino, also questioned the seriousness of Musk and Zuckerberg's plans, saying this week that talk of a bout "may be a humorous

back and forth between Zuck and Musk". She also jokingly described the fight as a "great brand sponsorship opportunity".