

**THE IRISH
BOXING REVIEW**

THE IRISH BOXING REVIEW

2012 EDITION

By Steve Wellings

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Steve Wellings
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Author's Introduction

Hello and a very warm welcome to the second Irish Boxing Review. The 2011 edition received great coverage and an overwhelmingly positive response from the fight fraternity, both in Ireland and beyond, and this latest version aims to build on that encouraging start. Last season's domestic scene contained the usual mix of highs and lows, excitement and tedium, plus plenty of surprises.

It really has been a year of near misses. There was a worrying amount of proposed shows that either ended up cancelled, postponed or just failed to materialise and hopefully this is just a blip rather than a growing trend. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the recent boom period is well and truly over and that future shows will be few and far between. In this age of austerity, with constant talk of recessions and double dips, any card running without the financial boost provided by TV will have an almighty struggle to break even. Writer and broadcaster Cormac Campbell has seen plenty of comings and goings throughout his time covering the Irish boxing scene. Alongside journalist Kevin Byrne, Cormac offers a radical proposal to solve the current issues in a 'Special Comments' piece below.

So just what else can you expect from this year's Irish Boxing Review book? Well, in this edition we revisit the Irish Boxing Awards which is swiftly moving into its fourth year and still offering deserved recognition to the worthy achievers that collect the cut glass trophies on offer for outstanding achievement. We also meet the matchmakers entrusted with the unenviable task of putting together a fight card; delve into the minds of the creative talents

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behind those boxing photographs and quality images that regularly appear online and in magazines; plus we take a brief look at the growing influence of the intriguing World Series of Boxing tournament. After catching up with the Irish boxing fraternity online we finish by hearing from some of the better known boxing personalities who write, chat and debate the noble art on a regular basis. We later peruse a selection of concise reviews of the year including all of the results that mattered from the world of boxing. Sandwiched in between is the timeline of events, a selection of previews, reviews and fight articles that guide you step-by-step through all of the big talking points.

Even if it does feel a little bit like the heady days of Irish professional boxing are slowing down and about to hit a quiet spell, I believe that we have been riding on the crest of a wave. During this time there were more registered professional boxers than ever before, a record number of shows (both big and small) across the island, exciting success at amateur level and a sustained phase of unparalleled entertainment. Even if the boom is over, it was certainly fun while it lasted.

I hope you've savoured it as much as I have. Enjoy the book.

Best wishes, Steve Wellings.

The State of Play: Special Comments

Two of the domestic scenes' most respected scribes give their views on the current state of Irish boxing.

Cormac Campbell

When I relaunched Irish-boxing.com at the start of 2008 one of the first articles I wrote highlighted concerns that the stuttering Irish economy could ultimately swallow up what was a fledgling industry. It wasn't a question of talent, or enthusiasm – just economics and all the signs were there that we were in meltdown.

As such, it was argued that all factions of the Irish boxing industry needed to be organised, flexible and be prepared to sing from the same hymn sheet to get the best deal rather than pursuing self-interest which would only bring minor benefit in the short term.

In truth, it really took until 2011 for the economic squeeze to really hit professional boxing in Ireland and whilst the sport is not knocked out yet, it has certainly been teetering on the ropes these last few months.

We are seeing fewer and fewer bills of significance taking place on the island, the near disappearance of the country's premier promoter Brian Peters and the withdrawal of state broadcaster RTE from the scene.

We are also seeing our best fighters, like many of our best young people, having to jump on a plane for work – with Andy Lee and Matthew Macklin not fighting in Ireland in 2011. Granted they may have bigger fish to fry, but in the past they were able to fry some of that fish in Limerick or Dublin.

The withdrawal of state broadcaster RTE from the sport was incredibly disappointing – but no less inevitable – and the way it was addressed by some in the build-up to Willie Casey’s clash with Guillermo Rigondeaux was self-destructive and quite frankly embarrassing.

This was a time for cool heads. Instead we had many people who should have known better shouting the odds, effectively trying to bully the network into stumping up cash it hadn’t budgeted for. RTE did eventually show the fight after a considerable financial contribution from a leading businessman – something which perhaps set an unsavoury precedent for any other promoter hoping to do business in the coming years. After all, if RTE have to be paid to show a World Title fight, what are the chances of them investing any money in non-title, Irish or European bills?

So where now? There is little doubt that television coverage is essential to the future of the sport in Ireland. And that is why we need some brave new thinking on the matter. To budget, schedule and promote, television requires regularity. It needs to know that on the second Saturday of every month it will have two hours of boxing – come rain, hail or shine.

It is for this reason that I believe the best chance of boxing getting back on the box lies not with individual promoters, but with the National governing bodies – both amateur and professional. For me, the best way forward lies with the BUI, BBBofC (NI) and the IABA coming together to work out a proposal that would suit all of their needs and then taking it to the Networks.

By doing so they can provide TV with regularity, value for money and quality control whilst delivering TV dates and an assured income for worthy promoters. They can formalise dates months in advance, deliver the highlights package that will develop stars of the future and use their collective mass to bring in major sponsors.

The alternative is to do nothing and keep your fingers crossed. Which would you prefer?

Kevin Byrne

Irish boxing ends the calendar year in a strange funk, and only the actions of its supporters can get the sport out of it. By supporters I mean everyone involved in the game here: The fighters, management, their promoters and crucially, the paying public. I don't mean to criticise promoters as it's a rough business as any of them will tell you, and you rarely hear of many of them getting fat off of it. But Ireland, north and south, saw how many shows this year? Eight in all, and no one working together. It was all over the place, feast or famine stuff.

The sport of boxing needs some joined-up thinking because the rare shows that were held this year were not only bumping into each other, they were clashing with Ireland's amateur team as well. Two of those seven events took place on June 25, the same night Matthew Macklin was fighting for the world title in Germany. Where did the newspaper attention go that week? I know from talking to fellow hacks there was much frustration about not being able to give Patrick Hyland's Dublin bill the attention it deserved in print, and as for David Murphy's show in Craigavon, I am sorry to say I saw very little coverage at all to encourage spectators (without having seen the coverage from our northern brothers, that is).

Even then, Macklin, Hyland, Haughian and Co were vying for national attention with Joe Ward, Ray Moylette and the rest of our amateur side, with the two lads mentioned winning gold at the European Championships only a day before. I attended the Dublin card and was dismayed. In a year Ireland had had three world title challengers at that point, I could see little or no knock-on effect. A genuinely entertaining card failed to bring out the

punters with the Stadium taking in about 1,600. Two months later, the Castlebar card featuring Henry Coyle and Pajo Hyland clashed directly with action from the National Stadium as our top amateurs scrapped it out (unfortunately as it worked out, the joke was on them) for a place on the World Championships team.

Belfast, starved all year, then hosted two shows inside a week in September. It was crazy.

But all the same, the reaction to Matchroom's show, and Castlebar, and even Willie Casey vs. Guillermo Rigondeaux, proves the people are out there. The current situation is impacting on the fighters financially as they try to make a living. That's the reality we don't see, but the shame for fans is the realisation that there is a lot of talent going to waste at the moment. What this year did prove is that Irish fighters, both professional and amateur, are more than equipped to take their place among the world's elite. As if we didn't know already.

The pro game needs a break-out star a la Rory McIlroy - only Carl Frampton looks capable as of now - but the Olympic Games will hopefully give the sport another much-needed boost. I just hope that, as Michael Conlan and Katie Taylor gear up for Olympic finals and gold-medal matches, some promoter hasn't decided the time is right to stage a show down in Dungarvan.

Kev's Quote of the Year: "Unfortunately I got knocked the f*** out but it happens and you just get on with it." - *Willie Casey after the Rigondeaux annihilation.*

Kev's One to Watch: Dee Walsh, Belfast. The 21-year-old looked polished on his debut in September in his hometown. Hopefully can see some action on cards in this country over 2012 to grow into the fighter his handlers Gary Hyde and Tony Dunlop believe he can become.

Irish Boxing Awards

The annual Irish boxing awards took place in February 2011 and underlined the success of Dublin's Crumlin Boxing Club. Super-bantamweight hotshot Willie Casey, who faces Guillermo Rigondeaux on March 19, claimed the coveted Boxer of the Year trophy with team-mate Anthony Fitzgerald named as Irish Champion of the Year. Head trainer Phil Sutcliffe took Coach of the Year and former Crumlin amateur standout Jamie Kavanagh, currently plying his trade as a pro in the US, snared the Prospect of the Year crown.

The event was fittingly held in Dublin for the first time since its inception and various members of the Irish boxing fraternity were in attendance to celebrate DolPhil Promotions' successful 2010. That year saw Limerick's Willie Casey steamroll his way into the limelight with some show-stopping displays of heart and determination that culminated in the 29-year-old claiming the European title in front of his home faithful, last November.

"I'm delighted to be awarded for my achievements over the past year," stated 'Big Bang' after event co-ordinator Cormac Campbell presented him with the cut-glass trophy.

"Hopefully we can pick it up again next time. For the young lads out there, who train and put the effort in all the time, to see me win an award will have them put even more time in and want a piece of the glory. 2010 was a fantastic year for me. Going over to Canada and beating the Canadian champion [Tyson Cave], winning *Prizefighter* too – there are not many out there who can beat three men in one night! Then we won the European title and hopefully now we can win the WBA [interim] title and even make

some defences. Of course, we'll just worry about getting it first though."



Casey capped off his remarkable year with a European title win over Hyland
© Kevin Finn

Phil Sutcliffe accepted the Coach of the Year gong by paying tribute to the entire DolPhil team, especially his group of coaches who work tirelessly with every fighter that enters through the gym doors.

"It's really a teamwork event for DolPhil because I have my own team of coaches who all work off the same syllabus and it's their hard work and dedication that helped me win this award. Everything seems to be going well in the DolPhil camp at present.

"Being Coach of the Year is nice in the professional game and let's hope I get Coach of the Year in the amateurs and we bring in a few titles in that too," Phil added.

2010 saw Anthony Fitzgerald finally put the pain of two early-career losses behind him and claim the Irish super-middleweight belt. Fitzgerald was named Irish Champion of the Year having made two successful defences of his crown in 2010 and the native Dubliner could also lay claim to being the most improved boxer across Ireland.

"I'm delighted with the award and it's great for Willie and Phil as well, having three winners out of the same gym," said Fitz. "The Crumlin Club will keep getting bigger and bigger all the time. We have the most pro boxers at the moment [in Ireland] and it's just getting stronger. At the start of my career I wasn't putting in the training. Getting knocked out in front of 9,000 people, just two minutes away from my house, was a big shock. I had to either quit boxing or pick it up. I picked it up and here I am now."

"Anthony Fitzgerald is coming on leaps and bounds," agreed Sutcliffe. "Everyone knows that we called out Andy Lee but we would have liked to have got hold of John Duddy first as I felt that the clash of styles meant a better contest for Anthony. We will take the necessary chances for each fighter we take on and work on their technique as we move forward."

The final recipient, Jamie Kavanagh, was unable to attend so family member, and club coach, Patrick Brady accepted the award on his behalf. Jamie did send a message however.

"It's a great feeling to be getting the Prospect of the Year award from Ireland, my country," said the man trained in Los Angeles by Freddie Roach. "I didn't even know if I would be nominated because I'm all the way over here in America so I'm glad they picked me."

The 20-year-old is currently 4-0 as a professional and follows in the footsteps of previous winners Martin Lindsay and Carl Frampton.

"I know Carl Frampton won it," Kavanagh added. "I boxed in the amateurs with him and he's doing well and picked up a belt last year. Who knows, I might fight for one myself this year but there's no rush."

Organiser Cormac Campbell summed up the awards ceremony by saying that, "this year's awards have been voted for by a wide range of boxing writers and broadcasters, something that reflects the growth of the sport in recent times."

"It has been another great year for the sport here with European title successes for Willie Casey, Matthew Macklin, Paul McCloskey and Brian Magee. In 2011 we are hopeful that a number of these boxers can press on and win world titles.

"Behind them are a dozen or so other contenders and prospects who will ensure that boxing's resurgence in Ireland into a major mainstream sport will continue in the coming years," concluded Campbell.

Freeze Frame: The Boxing Photographers

Having tried to take a few photos at sparring sessions or ringside at amateur shows, I can safely say that boxing photography is something that should be left to the experts. Muddling through an overstocked kit bag and trying to discern whether an f1.8 portrait lens or a standard multi-use lens is best for the shot in question, apparently all gets easier with experience. With combinations flying thick and fast and plenty going on inside *and* outside of the ring, there is often only a split second available to make any decision. Having tried, and mostly failed, to make any headway into confining my own little slice of the local boxing scene I reserve my utmost admiration for those who are not only able to capture the money punch or the moment of impact, but do it within the general constraints of photography – good lighting, correct exposure, rule of thirds, everybody in the frame and in focus.

Dublin photographer Sharon Flanagan made the move from point-and-shoot to DSLR three years ago and brushed up on her skills while taking photos at her husband's rugby matches. Flanagan's work soon got noticed and more offers rolled in, before a meeting with Irish boxing journalist, and rugby enthusiast, Jonny Stapleton persuaded Sharon to switch sports and try her luck at ringside.

"To be honest with you I said no at first as I wasn't interested in boxing and wouldn't even watch it on the telly but after a while of Jonny pestering me I decided to give it a go," she recalls. "To say I was dumped in at the deep end, head first, was a bit of an understatement. My first night of shooting was the Willie Casey fight last March in City West. I was a bit overwhelmed to start with but once a couple of

bouts had got underway and I had got my bearings I really got into it. I will never forget that first night, I came out of City West with the adrenaline seriously pumping and then the tables turned and I was the one pestering Jonny, asking when the next fight would be! Unfortunately, with family commitments I don't get to travel to Belfast or to other European destinations for the fights."

Flanagan was also present at the National Stadium show where all three Hyland brothers plied their trade in late June. She enjoyed the smaller hall venue and electric atmosphere that such a setting generates.

"Unfortunately you never know what is going to happen on a night and the fight could literally only last seconds. Every event is another experience and the more experience I can get the more I can learn. It's about getting out there and meeting other people in the photography world and talking about camera stuff, with exposure to boxing clubs, promoters and the press and getting myself known for my work."

I can certainly concur with Sharon when she says that plenty of practice is needed to get the right shot. Also, turning away at an inopportune moment can mean missing the most important move of the night. She was ringside for Anthony Fitzgerald's middleweight fight with erratic Frenchman Affif Belghecham. The away man infamously lost his temper after being stopped and decided to attack everybody within striking distance.

"Being a newbie to the whole boxing scene I was not only amused but also surprised to the reaction of Affif Belghecham," she laughs. "Belghecham decided that he had already found his next opponent and went for the referee, both verbally and physically, and two officials had to jump in to guard the ref. Not quite what I was expecting on my first night covering boxing."



Affif Belghecham loses his cool
© Sharon Flanagan

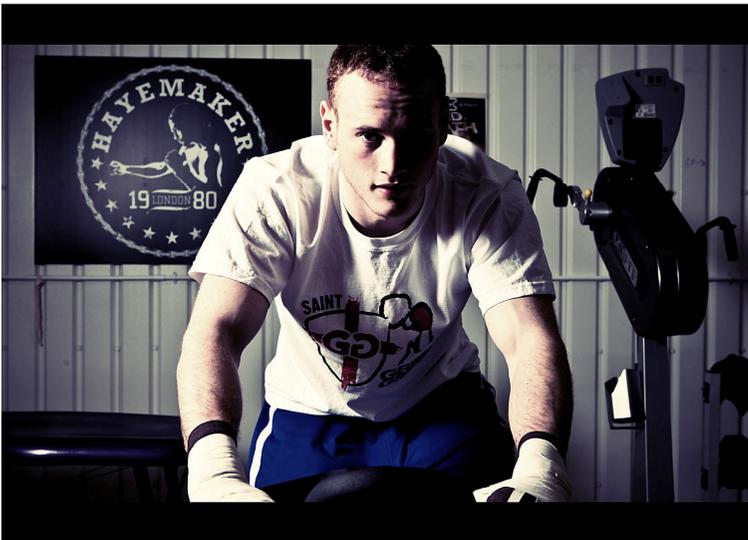
“I would say get your hands on the fastest lens you can afford or borrow,” she adds, when discussing the technical aspects. “An f2.8 really is necessary for the fights as the lighting tends not be the best unless you are lucky enough to be covering a fight that is being televised and then the lighting is great. You will usually need to bump up the ISO and don’t worry about a grainy picture as a grainy picture is better than a blurry picture.”

Grainy pictures and blurry boxing gloves are hazards of the job. Using flash is often frowned upon when the big shows come to town but a flashgun often serves to perfectly freeze the action.

Photographer Simon Pollock reckons that, “Flash is widely accepted as the norm in boxing, so you can use it to light your shots, and if you’re after that frozen, high powered punch moment, you’re going to need to either step your ISO/film speed right up, or you’re going to need to introduce flash. If you do decide to use flash, get yourself a sturdy L bracket and take that flash off your camera.”

While working at a television company in London, Pollock started a side project documenting up-and-coming boxers around the UK. He went along to ‘assist’ matters and took the opportunity to take photos of the aspiring pugilists training and fighting, trying to make headway in their chosen sport.

“The first fight I photographed was George Groves at York Hall,” Simon remembers. “George is a Hammersmith lad and that’s where we were based – we met him a number of times and it all started there. My most enjoyable shoot was my first show at York Hall. I approach boxing photography from a more ‘artistic’ perspective, rather than your regular journalistic angle. I don’t use flash which you see so very often at ringside, I try to be a bit more discreet and try to capture emotion in my work. Some of the other ‘best times’ were with George, training at the Hayemaker gym in London. George is a great bloke, very polite and fun to be around – it’s amazing to see someone turn into a hyper-focused machine in the ring after you’ve been laughing and joking in the gym.



George Groves inside the Hayemaker camp
© Simon Pollock

“I see no cons of photographing boxing, yet, although access is hard sometimes depending on which promoters are at the event, you’ve got to try, try and try again! Start slowly and work your way into it. Generally it’s under or around bottom rope level during a bout, so if like me you’re 6’3” and you have to bend over for three minutes, it can hurt. People are put in the most amazing position when they’re fighting to win though, and I’m talking about the boxers, not me! So the pros are that you get to capture some amazingly intense moments.”

Pollock offers his advice to the novice snapper: “Keep your eyes open, look around when you’re between rounds, capture crowd reactions, capture things that people don’t get to see. I’ve seen a photographer hit on the head with a mouth guard once, that drew a chuckle from the other photographers, myself included. I’ve had a boxer fall against the ropes and come very close to knocking me over – you’re right in the action but make sure you don’t become part of it accidentally!”

Simon’s insider access to the Hayemaker camp would make him the envy of many peers looking to get some juicy pics of the former world heavyweight champion and his team. British and Commonwealth king George Groves may have since left the set-up but he was very much the focus when Pollock started his side project.

“I think one of the funnier moments was when we were filming Adam Booth, David Haye’s manager, in their gym in London. We were standing around Adam’s desk, he was sitting talking into the camera when David walked in and accidentally shoulder barged my producer/director, Dave, who nearly went hurtling over the desk (he’s only little) and David didn’t even notice. I tried not to laugh, honest...”

Eccentric Dubliner Aidan Walsh is a familiar face often seen patrolling around boxing arenas in Ireland with his golden boots and flamboyant outfits. Another maverick, with his own distinctively artistic brand of photography, is

Limerick's Jurgen Foley. Jurgen started his photographic journey during a worldwide trip in 2004-2005. He enrolled in college upon his return and has never looked back.

"I had to complete a project in college and I was always interested in the life of boxers, the discipline they have and all the hard work they put in, so I based one of my projects in college on Willie Casey," says Foley. "I got nominated for a student sports competition and from that I got to go to the Andy Lee fight, so I just had a few lucky breaks."

Foley was on hand last November to capture Casey's superb European title winning effort over Paul Hyland. He draws comparisons between the noble art and the art of capturing the participants in brutal combat.

"Photography, like boxing, is a tough game in itself. If you work freelance it's very hard; if you work for a magazine it's difficult to do something different every time as they might not publish it. A lot of the time they're looking for the same old, same old. The benefits are that you can have the best seats in the house at a boxing match, free food afterwards and you might be seen on TV too [he laughs]. Best of all, hopefully, we get the work in some papers and magazines as well - that's the sweetest."



Andy Lee vs. Alejandro Gustavo Falliga in Limerick
© Jurgen Foley

Similar to the long running scoring system debate in amateur boxing, the issue of flash is a fairly contentious subject in boxing photography.

"I would say don't use flash; it's a very bad idea," Foley weighs in. "Other photographers will be angry as you might mess up their shots with your flash going off. Try to have some ideas before going to the fight, in what you want to capture or a particular style. Don't be afraid to try something new, try different lenses, angles, shutter speeds and apertures. Also, ask other photographers questions as they can be very helpful. I still have lots and lots to learn myself."

Esteemed fight photographer Chris Royle picked up his first DSLR camera (a canon 300d no less) a few days before his first card back in April 2005.

"I had no idea what I was doing as I only used a point and shoot before that," Royle reveals. "I shot the boxing card in Automatic mode and the results were poor. Six years down the road I shoot everything in Manual mode."

Royle's snaps are now seen adorning newspapers and magazines on a regular basis and his 'greatest hits' collection of boxing shots makes for an impressive slideshow.

"There are a few shows that stand out," agrees Chris. "Jamie Moore's fights with Michael Jones (in this case, the third of their outstanding trilogy), Matthew Macklin and Ryan Rhodes, as all three fights were classic British wars. Also, Tyson Fury's first fight with John McDermott. I got one of my favourite images from this fight, where referee Terry O'Connor raised Tyson Fury's hand and Frank Maloney was pictured showing his anger towards the verdict. David Haye's heavyweight fight with Nicolay Valuev was my first commission job, shooting the fight for Golden Boy Promotions."



Frank Maloney is outraged as Fury outpoints McDermott
© Chris Royle

Chris also branches out into providing football (soccer) coverage to local newspapers (in the Dorset area) and believes that any budding freelancers will find it hard to make any money from photo sales, and commission jobs are few and far between. So just how will an aspiring freelancer capture that special shot?

“Shoot tight from the hip up, legs are not really needed in a shot apart from when there is a knockdown,” he says. “I find it’s best to time your shots instead of holding the shutter button down. The photo that will stand out from the rest is the glove landing on the opponent face and that is the hardest shot to get. If there is a cut on a fighter get a picture of that, often cuts can lead to the fight being stopped and it’s a good way to tell the story.

“You need to get a 24-70mm lens when shooting boxing from ringside, most of your work will be done with this lens. A 70-200 lens is good to get close-ups of face shots when they are in the corner or on the way to the ring. You need to shoot with a fairly high ISO in boxing; I often shoot at 1600-2000 ISO. Shutter speed depends on the light so often I shoot at 640/800 shutter and an aperture of 3.5. If

you're not sending your photos live or straight after the fight you can shoot in RAW mode and edit your photos at home."

Plenty of practical insight there and should we also be prepared to attach a high powered flash bulb on to the camera to freeze those all important moments?

"TV fights don't require a flash, often at small hall shows where the light is bad you will need to flash. You need to mount your flash next to your camera, as placing it on top will only bounce the flash off the ropes not hitting your target.

"Always back up your photos as well; don't rely on hard drives/DVDs to store them on. The best place to back them up is either to use an online storage site or to email the photos to you. I have lost a hand full of cards which were stored on hard drives that failed."

One bad habit I have always fallen prey to is checking through my photographs while the action is still flowing. Admittedly it is usually sparring or a low key bout but the urge to check the last one and keep or discard mid-fight is too strong to resist!

"Don't look through your photos while the fight is taking place (chimping) unless you're sending live," warns Royle. "Often you could miss a key moment in the fight while you're trying to see if you've got a good shot."

Our final contributor is Sligo snapper Kevin Finn. The man responsible for the consistent output of quality visual art over at Boxing-ireland.com. Kevin's passing interest in photography quickly tied itself in with other hobbies and interests, from training to family events.

"For me, boxing photography is the perfect marriage of two hobbies," says Finn. "I'm blessed because the access I have is all down to Boxing-Ireland.com editor and fellow Sligoman Leonard Gunning. In my time as photographer I've covered everything from small hall shows to world title fights, visited several clubs in the UK and Ireland."

Finn views the Guillermo Rigondaeux-Willie Casey show as his standout boxing moment thus far. This was mainly down to the fact that as part of his first world title gig, Kevin was fortunate enough to spend the weekend with Team Rigo thanks to efforts of Irish boxing celebrity Paddy Cronan.

“Despite my access to arguably the greatest boxer to grace the Olympic podium I was still firmly behind Team Casey,” Finn divulges. “In fact I had my Casey t-shirt on underneath a short sleeved black shirt which I proudly wore about the place! On fight night I was walking into the Red Cow hotel, shirt open, an image of Casey holding the severed head of Rigo in full view when I saw a mean, moody Cuban looking back at me from a couch inside the foyer. Needless to say I swiftly made a 180 degree turn and buttoned up my shirt before Rigo saw it!”

Kevin believes that a ringside spot at any boxing show equates to being in the perfect place at the perfect time and finds it near impossible to be in better company.

“Unfortunately, the lighting is so unpredictable while rope and tapes often get in the way,” he adds. “You only have one chance to land that picture perfect punch. Which to be honest is what makes it fun.

“The lighting will have a major impact on what setting you use so it’s hard to give a one size fits all answer. However you will need a high shutter speed. I like 1/500th of a second and anything more than that I feel is gravy. Flash is generally a no-no at ringside and you will find shooting boxing demands a lot from your camera and you will often have an aperture of f/2.8 and an ISO higher than you would normally use. If a major TV network is there then you can often decrease the ISO to get cleaner images or increase the aperture which results in sharper more detailed photos.

Finn also reckons that it is a common misconception to assume that the equipment needed is overly expensive.

“It is by no means cheap but many of my published shots have been taken using a second hand canon DSLR and 50mm lens, both of which can be purchased on eBay for less than 200 euro,” he elaborates. “As for being ringside just remember that you are a lot less important than the fighters, trainers, officials and fans that make boxing what it is. Be courteous and respectful to all those around you as you are working hard to get the shot you want.”

Kevin has actually been involved in the boxing scene for years, helping out in an amateur club in Sligo as a fitness trainer and “borrowing” old fight tapes off his cousin Eamon Coyne from a young age

“To be in closed door sparring sessions, and in the thick of the Irish boxing scene which I love so much is surreal. I’d also like to say how much I appreciate the position I am in.”

Countless photographic records of the fight game adorn the shelves of book stores and it is easy to see why. Boxing creates fantastic drama that can often stand unparalleled among its sporting peers. The likes of Ken Regan, Adam Powley, Jules Allen and James Fox, to name but a few, are all well worth a detailed inspection.

So, the next time you marvel at that ‘money shot’ in the paper, the super snap where one fighter hits the canvas or takes a blinding shot bang on the chin, it will be easier to appreciate the skill and techniques involved in capturing such a quality image.

Meet the Matchmaker

Two boxers meet head-to-head in centre ring, neither let up or give an inch, it's a rollercoaster of punching for 12 non-stop rounds. The crowd go wild, both men reel away exhausted and all manner of plaudits are offered to each combatant; in years gone by, coins of appreciation or 'nobbins' are thrown in over the ropes. Whose idea was it to match these two guys? Which individual worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure that such a well-matched fight took place and everybody went home happy? Meet the matchmaker.

According to this concise description given by the BoxRec Boxing Encyclopedia, a matchmaker is, "...the person in charge of arranging bouts between boxers. He often works under the supervision of a particular venue's promoter. Sometimes the promoter alone handles the matchmaking duties. The matchmaker looks over candidates' fight records and tries to match opponents evenly. His job is to create interesting contests that will 'give the crowd a thrill.'"

According to Charles Jay, a former matchmaker in America, matchmaking is the hardest job in boxing. Matchmakers are the unsung, underappreciated, boxing nuts with an intensely deep knowledge of the sport who act as the paste that binds all manner of events, no matter how big or small, together.

Jerry Hoffman is another who has made it his business to match boxers evenly and organise good value local shows for a number of years. Hoffman has worked with hundreds of fighters and managers over the years and an esteemed list of fighters have starred on his shows. Names

like 'Sugar' Shane Mosley, Stevie Johnston, James Page, Robert Guerrero, Nonito Donaire and Carina Moreno are all pugilists that became recognised world champions later in their careers.

"I have never co-promoted with another promoter," says Jerry. "As for fighters who have fought on my shows, the list is too long to list other fighters, but anybody who has fought in Monterey and Santa Cruz since 1992 have dealt with me directly. I've primarily dealt with trainers who represent fighters, since my strategy was to feature prospects early in their careers, before they needed managers for the most part. My shows always sold out, but venues were between 1200-1500 so they were club shows without TV."

As he puts it, Jerry learned the business on the fly. He hosted a Sportstalk radio show throughout the 1980s and interviewed many boxing people along the way. Years of ring announcing experience connected him with those in the sport of boxing over many years and he came to know who to work with and which folks to stay away from.

"I was blow-by-blow radio announcer in the early '70s for all of 'Schoolboy' Bobby Chacon's fights when we both attended California State University at Northridge. Then in the 1980s I was ring announcer for dozens of boxing and muay thai shows in Northern California and learned the business aspect through that involvement. In the early '90s I created the 'Shakedown in Quaketown' boxing shows in Santa Cruz serving as promoter and matchmaker."

As many in the fight business would testify, Hoffman believes that problems are endless for matchmakers and there are numerous barriers preventing a matchmaker from doing his job. Usually, difficulties with the fighters themselves could be the main problem, but for Jerry, a member of the boxing establishment was the main cause of his irritation.

“At the end of my 15-year run, the former executive director of the California State Athletic Commission Armando Garcia was my greatest problem, as he screwed with my final six shows during his three-year tenure until finally being fired,” Jerry sighs.

“Of course, the reliability of fighters showing up on time and at the contracted weight was always the major concern. When dealing with trainers, some misrepresented their fighters at times. Trying to make matches for local fighters who thought their value was beyond what they were bringing to the ring and finding competitive, yet approvable, opponents.”

Now busy running 12sportsonline.com Hoffman remains contented with his successful run in the boxing game.

“I really enjoyed the experience, most of the people and made a decent living promoting boxing. When the economy went ‘south’, coupled with Garcia’s constant interference (whose antics included pulling fights already approved without cause, disputing blood tests, deciding certain fighters were either too green or over the hill without considering who I matched them with and other power plays). The fun went out of it for me and by eliminated matches I advertised at the last minute, he intentionally damaged my reputation. I never had a single issue with California until he arrived from Florida.”

Hoffman sat at ringside for many enthralling encounters and marveled at the fighters he had matched, going toe-to-toe on *his* shows. Which match-made leaves him with the long lasting feeling of a job well done?

“To select one is difficult,” he muses, “but I’d have to say matching two future world champions in Stevie Johnston and James Page. At that point neither could find a fight and Johnston was a lightweight and Page a welterweight. My timing was perfect in convincing each to fight in the compromise light-welterweight division. The

smaller Johnston won a spectacular eight round decision. Both fighters only had about 10 fights at the time."

A far cry from the glitter and glamour of the Santa Cruz scene - in a buzzing, cramped east Belfast gym - BBBofC matchmaker Gareth Thompson is busy plotting his next move. Working alongside Team Alio, Belfast Promotions and the Wilton clan, Thompson is an integral part of the Northern Irish boxing circuit. Talk about learning on the job, Gareth worked his way into boxing and soon found himself very much involved in the scene. And all without attending a BBBofC-approved course.

"Unfortunately there isn't one," laughs Thompson. "I did ask at the Belfast AGM about this and was told the BBBofC might be able to hold a matchmakers' forum in the future for us all to attend and discuss issues. I doubt this will ever happen though as matchmakers mostly seem to keep their contacts and resources close to their chests."

Gareth has been a boxing fan since childhood, growing up on Saturday night ITV extravaganzas, coming home and watching the fights with his father.

He picks up the story, "about 10 years ago the wife and I decided that boxing might be good for the wee lad and took him along to Ledley Hall. We trained together for five years with Sam Wilton. At that point football was taking priority in the Ledley Hall and boxing/training there was becoming difficult. Sam suggested that we all moved round the corner to his brother's (Alan Wilton's) gym, the Eastside ABC. My son and I had been in Alio's gym a few times before and been to a few of his amateur shows. My wee lad won an exhibition bout and decided to quit boxing but I decided to stay at Eastside and train myself; purely for fitness. I started to gel with the boxers and coaches and felt at home. Alan needed some help with the running of the club and I offered to help out, having had a bit of experience of running community groups and book keeping. As things progressed I designed, built and hosted

the Eastside ABC website and the professional side of things, over at TeamAlio.co.uk.

“As times had changed Alan could no longer rely on faxes and letters to make fights so he started to refer all the managers and promoters to the website and my email address to manage all the boxers. From here we decided two years ago that rather than me just passing paperwork both ways and checking boxers out that I should probably apply for my matchmaker’s license. Alio picked a few fights, asked me to make predictions (these were right, phew!) and then suggested opponents and so on for his own pro boxers. We applied to the BBBofC for the matchmaker’s license, I attended the interview in front of the N.I. board and must have given a good account of myself as they put me forward for my license, which thankfully was passed and granted. I had been in the background working on the Belfast Promotions’ show before this but all the paperwork was completed by the promoter. Alongside this I have completed the amateur boxing requirements for a coach and work closely with Eastside ABC in the day to day running of the club. First aid, child protection, book keeping and so on.”

There are two fights that stick in Thompson’s mind when he recalls his finest matchmaking moments thus far: “The first would be Paul Kayes’ professional debut against Frenchman Norredine Dahou, who at the time was 3-1. Dahou arrived in Belfast with Thierry Jacob (Ex-WBC, EBU champion and multiple title challenger) and all of Thierry’s stable are KO artists. When they arrived in the hotel on the first night and we met, my heart was in my mouth. I thought, “Ohh shit, what have I done?” Paul Kayes is good but this guy’s coach is an ex-champion with a stable of big punchers. Paul had a tough fight but won it on points – it was a great pro debut. The guys stayed an extra day due to the Icelandic ash cloud but got to see the sights of Belfast and enjoyed the great beer!

“The second fight that sticks with me is one that many would like to forget. Michael Harvey vs. Radoslav Mitev and Harvey lost this fight 40-35. Now people might say that I was the matchmaker for the home boxers and there should have been a win on Harvey’s cards if I made the fight. I disagree. I promised the BBBofC when I applied for my license that I would make 50-50 fights and none of these walk over wins that we see too many of. Harvey was under weight, had not got his weights correct before the fight and although in great shape was drained and it showed on the night. No one can say I make easy fights, I don’t see the point in the promoter having to pay to cushion a boxers record. Are you not better to know if the boxer can box/fight in their first three quarter of fights? Better than pay a fortune to get a good record and then get proved to be a journeyman.”

Like many matchmakers, buzzing around on fight night is only part of the experience. Pre-fight weigh ins, organising hotels and transport for the away fighters, liaising with officials and medics, Thompson’s hands are usually full. His red-hot mobile phone never stops ringing when there’s a show to put together and in today’s multinational sport of boxing Gareth could do with speaking a variety of languages to ease his path to a successful card.

“Language barriers, no other matchmaker wants to divulge their contacts or international agents – just a handful of the headaches involved,” he says. “The BBBofC can also be snowed under on busy weeks so the rush to change opponents’ last minute can prove hard. Everything needs to be with the matchmaker before it goes to the BBBofC but getting all this from the agents and boxers can be difficult. Some agents think their boxer has the correct medicals for the BBBofC but a lot of the time these are not MRI scans but only MRA and then the fight will get knocked back.”

Matchmaking can be a fine art, a balancing act. Providing even-money, 50-50 fights across the card is what boxing fans want in an ideal world but giving the 'house' fighter a testing fight without unduly risking his record or reputation can be trickier to achieve. Eastern European journeymen that may fall at the drop of a feather, teak tough Africans who stick the course, movers, boxers, sluggers, southpaws, veterans, shot fighters, young prospects - the list is endless when considering who should face whom. At the higher echelons of boxing, TV starts to dictate fights, executives eager to please their fans begin to command the agenda, while at the bottom end of the scale the matchmakers and promoters are more likely concerned with somebody who is able to shift a pile of tickets.

As matchmaker Charles Jay once said, "if the matchmaker gets the house fighter beat, they're basically out of a job."

It may not always be as extreme as that, but the matchmaker is under pressure to perform a juggling act of getting good fan-friendly workouts for the paying customer while preserving the unbeaten, and/or selling power of the home fighter. This is something that Brian Peters Promotions' matchmaker Tomas Rohan is particularly adept at. He has matched fighters at all levels since linking up with Peters in 2005 and was heavily involved in Bernard Dunne's epic 2009 world title win over Ricardo Cordoba in Dublin.

"I think it will always be hard to top the night Bernard Dunne beat Ricardo Cordoba to win the WBA title," he reckons. "Getting Cordoba to Dublin was a coup in itself and the whole night was a celebration of what was good about Irish boxing. You had Katie Taylor, Andy Lee, Andy Murray and Jim Rock on the card and you couldn't have scripted the way the main event turned out. Bernard boxed out of his skin on the night and beat an excellent champion. It was an incredible atmosphere and an incredible night."

I've been lucky enough to have witnessed some great nights for Irish boxing on the outside but that night was something else."

Like any matchmaker trying to weld together a successful show with decent fights that doesn't end up bankrupting the promoter, Tomas usually has to contend with a variety of headaches leading up to the show.

"Some shows just seem to be jinxed and you get a week (normally the week of the show!) where every phone call brings bad news with fighters pulling out injured or having visa problems, travel problems or some personal issue that causes them to pull out. On a few occasions I've had to go looking for replacement opponents after the weigh in on the day before the show so that's always "fun". I used to have hair before I started matchmaking so I think that tells its own story!"

We spoke to Rohan in the last review when celebrating the 10th anniversary of his creation Irish-boxing.com. Tomas set down the foundations and established a strong online presence for Irish boxing which continues to thrive.

"I've been a huge boxing fan since the 1992 Olympics and the heroics of Michael Carruth and Wayne McCullough. I can remember watching Barry McGuigan beat Eusebio Pedroza (I was just six at the time!) but it wasn't until that Olympics in Barcelona that I was really bitten by the bug. It was a good time to be an Irish boxing fan because by the mid-90s Wayne and Steve Collins had gone on to win world titles in the pro ranks. In the early 'noughties' I started up Irish-Boxing.com as even though there wasn't a lot happening in Ireland there were a lot of Irish pro's competing abroad and as a fan I felt it would be good for other boxing fans to have an online outlet to follow their fighters' progression.

"In 2005 Brian Peters started to run regular shows after Bernard Dunne returned home and for the first time ever, really regular professional boxing managed to establish

itself in Ireland. Obviously the backing of RTÉ was crucial and it allowed the likes of Matthew Macklin, Andy Lee, John Duddy, Paul McCloskey, Andy Murray, Patrick Hyland and Willie Casey to all go on and headline their own bills. In 2006 I started working for Brian as press officer and matchmaker. It meant handing over Irish-Boxing.com but thankfully it's gone from strength to strength ever since and a number of other sites have emerged as well which shows how healthy the current interest in Irish boxing is.

"On the amateur side of things I'm involved with Rathkeale Boxing Club in Limerick. After a long gap the club re-opened about eight years ago and has improved year-on-year since then and had its best year ever last year with seven Irish titles. It's great to see the rewards that kids get out of boxing at every level whether they just take it up because they are overweight or getting bullied at school, to the kids who from day one who just take to it and seem to have a natural talent for boxing."

After all those years involved in the matchmaking game, Tomas must have some interesting tales to tell us?

"Loads, but very few that I could ever commit to print!" he chuckles. "You probably wouldn't believe half of them anyway but you genuinely couldn't make up some of the stuff that you come across in boxing."

Brian Peters ran a number of successful shows during what can now be described as a 'boom period' for the sport, domestically speaking. The charismatic promoter has been less involved of late (at least in a visible capacity) but his role in reinvigorating the Irish boxing scene cannot be understated. What does Tomas think about the state of the game and what needs to change domestically to keep up the momentum of a thriving scene?

"I think the main challenge for boxing in Ireland and indeed worldwide right now is the cost of running events without the support of TV or sponsors," he opines. "It's

pretty much impossible for any promoter to break even on a show without the backing of TV or sponsorship. It always reminds me of that quote that the best way to become a millionaire in boxing is to start out as a billionaire!

“At world level it’s the age old problem with boxing that the fights involving the biggest stars and potentially the stars that can draw casual fans to the sport are hidden away on pay-per-view. As a business model, pay-per-view means that the boxers and promoters can do very well financially but basic economics dictate that you can’t maximize the viewing audience and grow the sport on the back of that when the customer has to part with \$50 / £20 / €25 to watch a big fight.

“The pay-per-view business model to me is a bit like flying first class, it’s great for the 10 people at the front of the plane who have paid the extra for it but it’s lost on the 190 people on the rest of the plane that can’t afford it or don’t see any value in it.”

Luckily pay-per-view has yet to filter into the domestic boxing scene, although I’ll try not to tempt fate on that one. If there are people offering big fights behind a pay wall then there are usually boxing fans quickly sucked in and ready to part with their hard earned cash – myself included! But however a card is being paid for, one thing is certain, that the job of a matchmaker is never easy, as our three contributors have illustrated. It’s no coincidence that when two good fighters collide, nine times out of ten they produce a good fight, that all the paying customers can enjoy. Depressingly often though, getting the best into the ring can really be the hardest part of boxing.

The World Series of Boxing

In last year's book we took an extended look at the differences between amateur and professional boxing and the way in which the two have evolved side-by-side, yet at the same time drifted apart from one another. One of the more interesting concepts to appear on the fight scene in recent years is the World Series of Boxing. A fascinating fusion of the two codes, it allows the world's top amateur fighters to face off without headguards and with the option of returning to the amateurs at the end of the season. The WSB openly claims that its aims are to provide a bridge between the world of Olympic (amateur) boxing and professional boxing.

The World Series of Boxing's website describes the idea as, "...a boxing competition without headguards or vests, with professional-style scoring, three judges, one referee and one supervisor. A WSB match consists of five bouts, with each bout consisting of five rounds of three minutes each. The team with most wins from five bouts wins the match.

"Each team has a minimum squad of 10 boxers and a maximum of 20 boxers, that is a minimum of two boxers in each weight category. The team is made up of both national boxers and foreign boxers, with at least three foreign boxers required in a squad of 10, up to six in a squad of 20."

The brainchild of AIBA (the amateurs game's International Boxing Association), the Series harks back to a more simplified era. There are no sub-categorised weight divisions and a meagre five weight categories in total: bantamweight (54kg), lightweight (61kg), middleweight (73kg), light-heavyweight (85kg) and heavyweight (91+kg).

Dungiven's Eamon O'Kane flirted with the WSB format before finally settling into the professional game. After winning a Commonwealth Games gold medal in Delhi (2010) he successfully used the tournament to bridge the gap and won all three World Series bouts in the 2010-11 season. O'Kane's victims were Onder Sipal, Evgeny Myakinin and Stephane Cuevas.

"The World Series of Boxing was definitely a great introduction to the pro game," Eamon confirms. "I moved up to five rounds of three minutes and took on the top boxers in the world, with no headguard or vest. It's boxed at a fast and furious amateur pace but with a professional way of fighting, in close with plenty of aggression. It was a good experience and a high calibre of opponents. I had three fights and three wins, against a Russian, a Turk and French guy and won all three fights convincingly.

"Coming out of the Commonwealth Games it was all about having a good defence and picking up points rather than having a high workrate. I was competing with some quality names and my sparring partner was Sergiy Derevyanchenko, who won the World Series [at middleweight]. I had been giving him a good going over and they even stopped a sparring session in the training camp because I was getting the better of him. The WSB wanted me to sign up for next year because they saw how well I was going and they thought I could do even more this year but I want to fight as a professional and emulate the big boxers in this game."

Fast growing disillusioned with the amateur game and considering a move into the paid ranks himself, Tommy McCarthy of the Oliver Plunkett club in west Belfast opted for a stab at the World Series, entering late into the 2010-11 season and taking part in two bouts. Even though he was defeated in both efforts, Tommy was unhappy with the endings and vowed to return to the tournament, having enjoyed the concept.

“I went to the World Series mostly for the money but I also liked the idea of being involved in the first ever WSB,” he tells me. “I thought it would be good to look back on and say that I was part of it.

“I was part of the Milano Thunder team and we had a great set-up. We were based in ASIS for the training camps before the fights and we trained alongside the Italian National Team and then we went back up to Milan the week before the fights and sparred with a few journeymen pros. I only had two contests because I joined the team for the last three months. My first fight ended with me getting a cut from a headbutt in the fifth round and my second fight was a disgraceful decision, against Enrico Kolling in Istanbul. I won every round and it was given to him 3-2 in rounds – I was sickened.”

Being on the wrong end of contentious decisions has not stopped McCarthy, who views the World Series as a learning curve that will eventually lead him into the professional game. As an amateur he has shown his true quality and benefited from the intense High Performance camps in Dublin. Tommy has achieved at domestic and world level, winning multiple titles as a junior and pushing Kenny Egan close at senior level. So how did the World Series compare stylistically to the amateur game?

“I didn’t find much difference with the punches without the headguard but it’s a different style of boxing from the amateurs – a lot fewer combination punches,” he estimates.

“Overall I was happy with the money I made, the new friends I made and the whole experience. I would definitely fight in it again as it gives you the opportunity to make some good money, box professionally and still come back and box amateur.”

The aforementioned Kenny Egan also took part in the World Series 2010-11. Competing for Miami Gallos, he got off to a solid start with two back-to-back wins over Dorian Anthony before dropping a decision to Vyacheslav

Shabransky. He made amends and left on a high, however, by recording a knockout win over Elber Passos in week 12. Egan has continued his association with the WSB by signing for the current season with German outfit Leipzig Leopards. Heavyweight prospect Con Sheehan joined Egan as the pair inked a six month deal in late October 2011 and Willie McLaughlin joined up with Milano Thunder.

“At the beginning I had doubts about WSB because I did not know much about it,” Egan told the official WSB website. “Now I am 100 per cent for it, I see it is taking off. I am 100 per cent convinced it will work. It is a great, great concept. I am part of the team. Because of this team I will improve as a fighter. It is a completely new experience and I really enjoy it.”

Egan’s first team, Miami Gallos, formed in 2010 as part of the WSB Americas franchise; as did teams from Mexico City, Los Angeles and Memphis. In November 2011 a 17-strong team from India, named the Mumbai Fighters, came into existence, with Gleann star Paddy (Patrick) Gallagher joining their ranks. Amateur stars Michael Conlan and Sean Turner also got involved, tying themselves to the LA Matadors and further strengthening the links between Irish amateur boxing and the World Series. Mullingar’s John Joe Nevin competed successfully in the 2010-11 season for Paris United.

Wherever the World Series leads, it is a tournament growing in popularity and credibility and with more Irish boxers signing up each year; it seems likely that domestic interest in this fledgling idea will only grow stronger.

The Boxing Fever

Every now and again the inevitable question arises and I'm asked to name the single greatest fight or show that I have ever attended. This is a fairly tough question to answer, seen as I'm lucky enough to have been ringside for some epic contests, at varied levels of boxing. But one fight always stands out in my memory - the 2009 world title bout between Bernard Dunne and Ricardo Cordoba. Not only had Brian Peters and his promotional team carefully manoeuvred Dunne into a genuine world title fight against a credible champion but they managed to bring Cordoba to Ireland, giving Bernard vital home advantage. He needed every ounce of that, coupled with a tenacious fighting spirit and refusal to be denied even when he was dropped and hurt midway through the contest. Dunne rallied back to produce a stunning comeback and quite literally beat the Panamanian into submission. To not only witness this bout live but also note down and report my thoughts the next day, made it all the more special.

Indeed, my first foray into the world of online boxing writing dates back to 2005. Kevin Taylor, then owner of the since defunct www.britishboxing.net, invited me to write for the site and despite providing me with a username and password I never quite managed to scribble that elusive first article. A while later I retold this story on a boxing forum, adding in that I could never be arsed to write my first piece! Content editor Ian McNeilly must have seen something in me, picked up on those throwaway comments and simply wrote back, "Come and write for us Steve...if you can be arsed." I took up the challenge, got my first

piece digitally published and never looked back - taking over as Irish correspondent for the site.

Since then I have met plenty of good people through the boxing scene, many who contribute online. After watching a close fight or witnessing a debatable decision I often feel inclined to seek an alternative viewpoint or second opinion from a writer or peer whose work I respect. So with this in mind I decided to hit a select group of writers/broadcasters/reporters with a bunch of questions relating to their years of work within the boxing game. The fights that made the hair on the back of their necks stand up, the veteran writers that inspired them to first lift the pen (or hit the keyboard), the offbeat tales from following such an unpredictable yet exciting sport and a general collection of fight-related stories. All of this, and more, is collated together for this feature - 'The Boxing Fever'. Boxing is one of those sports that grips you and refuses to let go, as all of the participants would no doubt attest.

James Howard

A BoxRec News contributor with strong Irish roots, James started writing for BritishBoxing.net under the stewardship of Ian McNeilly. James has also strayed over to BoxingScene, having closely followed the work of their current UK editor Terry Dooley.

Barry McGuigan was my first big boxing influence.....my family didn't have a particular interest in boxing but did support their fellow countrymen in any event they competed in, so that was the first dalliance I had with the sport. The real consolidation of that interest was the Eubank/Watson/Benn/Collins era. It was a special time for the sport, and one that really captured my imagination.

The fight I most enjoyed in recent years was Jamie Moore vs. Matt Macklin.....being a fan of both men, I'd eagerly anticipated the bout and it didn't disappoint. The greatest fight I've seen from all time would have to be Hagler-Hearns, never did two men do so much in so little time. I'd certainly rate it as the greatest opening round. I often wonder how Hearns would get on in the current era, without Hagler and Leonard to haunt him.

My most memorable show that I have reported on was at Wembley Arena.....headlined by Audley Harrison and Michael Sprott. A young Amir Khan featured for all of 60 seconds as he blew his outclassed opponent out of sight, but we subsequently enjoyed the evening's highlight - the Earl-Katsidis fight. To top off the evening, Audley was rocked to the core by Sprott, two rounds after having the Reading man down in the opener. Another show attended which lingers in the memory was the Enzo-Haye fight at the O2, not only for the main event, but for the fight of the night between Kevin Mitchell and Carl Johansson.

I have been fortunate enough to interview some great names, including a number with David Haye and Joe Calzaghe.....in terms of interview content, Haye usually had some interesting points to make, but Dave Coldwell and 'Rockin' Robin Deakin both had inspiring stories which were extremely satisfying to tell. Dave had difficulties as a youngster, was controlled by nerves throughout his fighting career but has gone on to be a successful trainer, manager and promoter. Robin was actually born disabled, has experienced an array of challenging personal and family issues, but is well known for displaying a warrior-like attitude whenever he's called to fight - which is often.

I think James De Gale and Frankie Gavin are two fighters who have been written off in some quarters but I fully expect both to become good world champions.....while Jamie McDonnell is a little further along in titles at the moment, I don't think expectations are as great as they should be. He's big for the weight and is improving with each fight and step up in level. I don't think you can look too far past Carl Frampton, on the Irish scene. He has a great style and attitude and a blossoming reputation to match. The Turley fight showed he has the grit required to dig in when necessary and he definitely has the tools and personality to go all the way. Being an Olympic year, I'll stick my neck out and tip Luke Campbell to medal. After a disappointing spell a couple of years ago he's turned it around and looks like a real prospect.

The funniest things are probably said by fighters in the heat of the moment, before they ask "you won't put that in will you?".....there was David Haye discussing the difficulties of "resisting ejaculation" before a fight. One of the things that amused me personally was when I was with a friend of mine and we noticed a buzz of activity surrounding a suited gentleman who we couldn't get a good look at due to the growing crowd. Expecting a hall of famer in there, we navigated our way to the middle of the

group – to see ring announcer Mark Burdis with lots of young male teenagers barking ‘Bev-Kev-Bev-Kev’ at him!

I don’t think that boxing’s current situation is nearly as grave as some doom-mongers would have you believe.....there are top fighters out there, Mayweather and Pacquiao to name two, and the Klitschko brothers are a phenomenon who can’t be blamed for the inferiority of all available opponents. You have fighters capable of making \$40 million in a single fight – so there is clearly a market for boxing. There are problems though, we find ourselves in a position where identifying and forcing the best fighters to fight each other is too easy to avoid, largely because of the multitude of world titles and sub-world titles. It becomes too easy for fighters who aren’t close to the top of the division to challenge for and win titles which appear to the general public as the real deal. That said, I’ve noticed a change in direction occurring in the UK and Ireland with quality becoming a more important benchmark than a meaningless alphabet title. The BBBoC’s recent rejection of recognition for two minor world title belts is an example of an encouraging development.

The heavyweight division landscape, traditionally the big seller in boxing, has changed.....there are fewer prospects and fewer American prospects, all of which takes a toll in the quality and interest in a division which once ruled. The UFC and other cage fighting organisations are a threat but not ones that should overly concern boxing. Learn the good things from it and adapt them into sweet science. While UFC is presented and marketed more effectively than boxing, I remain confident that boxing is the better raw product, it just needs to work harder and more cohesively than in recent years.

I’d like there to be a true champion in each weight.....I don’t mind the amount of belts in the sense that they give more fighters the opportunity to win something, I’d just rather we didn’t pretend they were true world titles. I’d like

a new untarnished version of the Ring Magazine belts with a set of predefined rules on how bouts are matched and the title awarded. Rule number one is to ban anything like a super-champion or interim belt. As a fan of small hall shows, I'd like some way of balancing our views on the so called journeymen of the sport. Perhaps an annual tournament where they can slug it out, with the winners being pushed forward with the support of a good promoter? Finally I'd like to increase the availability of online streaming. Boxing is being spread throughout a variety of channels which is increasing all the time. I would rather the sport made use of the improved technology which would make a show streamed to a PC available for a couple of pounds a more attractive option than bundles of subscription fees and extortionate PPV charges. Hats off to Hatton Promotions who are leading the way in this regard.

Probably the most beneficial advice I received in the early days of my boxing writing was.....to compare the piece you submitted to the piece that was published and use a highlighter to identify the differences. Obviously watch the sport as much as possible and read up on subjects similar to those you intend to write about. There is no point in writing an article if someone else covered the same content on a similar site as the audience for most boxing publications will have a huge crossover. Make use of your editor, he/she will be vastly experienced in knowing what works in the particular media they operate in. In most cases, you will realise why it's been amended and learn from it. If you don't know why it was changed, then ask!

Andrew Wake

After completing a BA degree in Sports Journalism Andrew now works for a press agency based in Leeds. He is known in boxing circles for his sterling work over at Secondsout.com and Boxing News magazine.

I got into boxing journalism by accident.....I always wanted to write novels and banged out a 90,000 word manuscript when I was about 21. The book was terrible and got nowhere but the writing bug stuck and in 2007 I was asked to write some things for Joe Calzaghe's old website. From there I did some pieces for ESB and Saddoboxing before joining SecondsOut.com. In a sporting capacity I also contribute to the Yorkshire Evening Post, The Asian Express and help out Hatton Promotions with the day to day running of their website. I also find time for freelance non-league football coverage.

The internet provides a world of opportunity for wannabe journalists.....and that's always a good starting point. Boxers and trainers are very welcoming so there is nothing stopping anyone calling in to their local gym and doing some interviews. Just get out there and do it.

I grew up during the Eubank-Benn era so it was difficult to avoid boxing.....but my first real fistic hero was featherweight master 'Prince' Naseem Hamed. He had the razzle-dazzle of the WWF with the punching power of a middleweight and I loved watching his fights. I remember seeing clips of him on local TV in Yorkshire before he'd got anywhere near title class and thinking "this guy will never be beaten". It's tough to decide but my favourite fight of all time is Barrera-Morales I and the best display of boxing I have seen in the flesh was Joe Calzaghe against Jeff Lacy in 2006.

The most memorable fight or show I have reported on.....is one that most people won't have seen or even heard of but Kevin Hammond vs. Kurt Bromberg from last year sticks in my mind. It was only for a British Masters belt at the Doncaster Dome but they put on a back and forth war for 10 rounds. Covering Gary Sykes winning his British title was special as well.

I remember one boxer asking me once whether he needed his passport for a fight in Scotland.....but my favourite interviewee was Brendan Ingle. I turned up in Sheffield one day with a brief to get a two page story on Brendan's life for the Yorkshire Sport - a now defunct weekly newspaper - and he welcomed me into his home. I spent three or four hours listening to his life story and famous wisdom. It was brilliant. Jason Booth and Richard Towers also both stick in the memory because of their stories of fistic redemption. Jason spoke with me very openly about his previous alcohol addiction and how boxing saved him, while Richard didn't hold back about his previous life of crime and the years he spent in prison.

Domestic boxing is still strong but internationally there are far too many titles.....the WBA are the biggest culprits of making boxing complicated at present with all their 'super', 'regular' and 'interim' champions. Boxing is confusing enough for the layman without every Tom, Dick and Harry claiming to be a world champion. I would get rid of the governing bodies and start again. I'd also like to see the Board do more to help small hall promoters. Most of these guys put their heart in soul into the sport and end up losing money because of high taxes and costs. It's not surprising that many would-be promoters now go down the unlicensed route.

In Irish boxing the man of the moment has to be Carl Frampton.....but I'm hearing really good things about Jamie Kavanagh. Jose Benevidez Jnr is a rising star on the world scene. In Britain I have high hopes for Josh Warrington and

Karl Place. Look out for Damon Jones and Qais Ashfaq in the amateurs as they could well be stars of the 2016 Olympics.

James Slater

After getting a few letters published in Ring Magazine and Boxing News, James began writing articles for www.eastsideboxing.com in December of 2005 and has since become a key member of their boxing team.

Interviews are one of the most interesting and rewarding parts of the job in my opinion.....most boxers are amazingly open, trusting and honest. I've done countless interviews for Eastside and contributed to them constantly. I've also written for Secondsout.com, Fightbeat.com and Saddoboxing.com and had work published in Boxing News, Boxing Monthly and Fighting Fit.

My all-time favourite fights have to be Ali-Frazier III, Foreman-Lyle and Hagler-Hearns.....the best fight I've ever witnessed live from ringside is Matthew Macklin's heroic loss to Jamie Moore. No fan or reporter who was there will ever forget that British classic - least of all me! George Foreman's unlikely comeback, in 1987, got me interested in boxing. I was fascinated to see if such an old guy could make it back. For some strange reason, I thought he would become champion again. I was telling all my mates how George would KO Tyson!

The biggest names I've interviewed have to be Ray Leonard, George Foreman and Joe Frazier.....the most enjoyable guys I've spoken with have to be David Tua (so forthright and revealing), Chris Arreola (such a modest, easy-going guy) and Eddie Chambers - never refuses an interview and never refuses a single question; no matter the subject. Also (for one-liners) James Toney - the ultimate trash-talker! If you're an aspiring writer then go to as many live fights as you can. Go to as many gyms as you can and be around as many fighters as you can. Also, read as much

boxing material as you can – the magazines, the stats books, stuff from the history of boxing.

Floyd Mayweather Jnr looked at me like I was crazy when I asked him if he'd ever fight Ricky Hatton..... Mayweather was so dismissive of Hatton back when I asked him that question, after an open work-out in Las Vegas in 2006. Of course, a year later, the fight was on and it was a massive event. At a recent dinner/charity show with Tim Witherspoon, I asked Tim if he'd like a drink – he replied, “Yeah, I'll have a Morgan's Spice and a Stella.” I never said to him, “that's two drinks, champ!” Still, I didn't mind spending £7.00 on the former two-time heavyweight titlist.

Like anyone, I hate the number of 'world' titles that are available.....I also think there are too many old timers sticking around, especially at heavyweight; also, the heavyweight division is as dull as I can ever remember it. The good news is the number of great lower-weight fighters there are out there; Pac-Man, Marquez, Yuriorkis Gamboa, etc. Also, it's good that Sky have (for the time being at least) done away with Box Office. Also, boxing being back on Channel 5 is great. If I could change anything then I'd have just ONE world champion at each weight and I'd stop the growing number of catch-weight fights (153 pounds for Cotto vs. Margarito II for one example of the craziness!).

I really like the look of super-flyweight Jamie Conlan.....and at heavyweight on the world scene, I'm watching out for Luis Ortiz of Cuba and at super-bantam/featherweight, Roman Morales of the U.S.

Phil D. Jay

A lifelong fan of the written word, Phil is currently editor of his own web creation, the informative World Boxing News (WBN).

I've had a deep love for boxing since I was a child.....watching Rocky for the first time as a kid and then a young Mike Tyson tear through the heavyweight division as I got older seemed to just lure me and I was hooked from then on. I was always fascinated by the characters in the fight game like Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Chris Eubank and to see what the fighters went through to be the best they could be was intriguing to me.

I have always had a passion for journalism and used to write my own magazine as a youngster.....I had only one goal in life on the job front and that was to be a journalist so once I started writing there was no stopping me and WBN was born.I originally started out doing Facebook pages for boxers, which I still do occasionally but I wrote my first piece for Britishboxers.co.uk and with the help of editor Chris Maylett, I started a site which eventually I designed myself after teaching myself how to build and organize websites. I've also regularly had work published on BoxingScene.com and have forged a bond with the editor Rick Reeno who is a top man. I was once told that 'writer's write' and whatever you do - just keep writing, believe in your work and you will always get better.

It's probably a cliché but Gatti vs. Ward I is the most memorable fight that I've witnessed.....which included the best round of boxing I have ever seen in the ninth. The best I've reported on is the Amir Khan vs. Paul McCloskey fight in April 2011 at the MEN Arena in Manchester. The animosity surrounding the fight was intense and the post-fight press conference was an eye-opener to say the least. Although there was controversy over the undercard pull-

outs, it turned out to be a really entertaining show put on by Hatton Promotions.

My favourite interviewee at the moment is Devon Alexander.....he gave me my first interview when I just started my website and made my day when a world champion agreed to be our first exclusive interview on WBN. We still talk regularly now. I once interviewed former cruiserweight world champ and now Sky pundit Glenn McCory where he told me he had a Cheryl Cole tattoo which I still don't know whether to believe or not.

I will always love the sport but obviously there are an ever increasing amount of world titles which I think is damaging the fight game.....we should get back to at most two world titles a division and then we could actually call bouts a full unification and have the best in the division. I have actually had a good rant about this on WBN and dream of the day when some of the lesser titles would merge into one to leave us with just one or two organisations but I fear that boxing politics dictates that won't happen. I would put more intensity on the system that brings through world title judges. We need a stricter process to becoming a world title fight judge and then maybe we would get less bad decisions. I wish a lot more ex-fighters would want to get involved as they would make the best judges of fights for me.

Jamie Kavanagh looked good in his latest victory.....at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas and is one to watch for the Irish fans. For me at this moment, unbeaten super-featherweight Adrien Broner looks like he has the potential to be a multi-weight world champion.

Shaun Brown

After contributing to FightBeat and Eastside Boxing, Shaun caught a break with Boxing News magazine. He is now also writing for Boxing Scene after a brief stint with Undisputed Fight Magazine.

My most memorable fight was at a show in Glasgow.....it was a Scottish title fight between Gary Young and Gary McMillan. There was needle between the pair but it was the venue that made it memorable - the Pavillion Theatre, a place where pantomimes are more common than fights. I was on the stage, seated, watching two guys slug it out. The next week there was probably snow white and her seven dwarves. Surreal. Another would have to be from the archives. It may seem predictable but it's Marvin Hagler vs. Thomas Hearns for me. Nothing I have ever seen in a ring matches it. I've never watched a fight so intense, so wild that was also so short!

Initially, I got interested in boxing watching Frank Bruno's fights on the BBC in the late '80s.....then one night my Dad and I watched the first fight between Benn and Eubank, I was hooked from there on in. The passion grew once I started studying guys like Marvin Hagler.

My first boxing article was a dreadful piece on David Haye back in 2005 for a website.....thankfully my writing improved. I did a diploma at a local college but I never returned to journalism until I started doing some freelance work for a local paper. There are plenty of places you can write but too many lack credibility. Be prepared for a long haul and with little chance of financial reward. It takes a lot of hours to get anywhere near the top. Thankfully boxing is a sport full of decent and accessible people. Don't take things personally and write, write, write... it's the only way

you'll improve. For me it's the best way to flush all the drivel out your system.

It was a privilege and an honour to interview Marvin Hagler.....also Darren Barker for his honesty (in the lead up to the Sergio Martinez fight) and Ambrose Mendy (Benn's former manager) for giving his recollection of Nigel Benn vs. Chris Eubank I. These three interviews took about a total two and a half hours to do, 150 minutes I'll never forget.

I was trying to interview a British boxer for a phone interview.....I won't mention his name, but it had been arranged so I called and no answer. I tried again and it answered. Turns out it was a bad time because fighter x (who was drunk) was standing outside a man's door about to beat him up because he slagged off his girlfriend. It was a case of "I'll call you back then shall I?" The response was polite. "No problem mate, call tomorrow at 3pm and we'll talk then". I never found what happened once the phone got put down.

I don't think boxing is in the doldrums as much as many seem to think.....the problem is there are no household names. For every 10 people in the street two or three might know who Carl Froch is. We have to accept that we're something of a minority sport now. You just need to look at the pecking order boxing is placed in things such as what sport you want to read about on certain websites. I still love the razzamatazz of it all, the theatre... the storylines. When it gets it right boxing provides drama that no other sport can match. Too many fighters these days have conned themselves into thinking they're worth more than they are so the demands are ridiculous; hence the best fights don't always get made. Boxing needs a handful of crossover superstars, not just one.

Like many others, I would scrap a lot of the sanctioning bodies.....I believe in the honour that a title brings so I would still keep two or three. I would avoid fast

tracking every possible 'prospect' that comes our way. It's just a case of doing everything they can to make sure the best fight the best but boxing as a sport faces competition now more than ever, even from sports such as cricket!

My three tips for prospects would be.....Roman Gonzalez (worldwide), Carl Frampton (Irish) and Anthony Joshua (amateur).

Martin Williams

Martin has been a journalist for 12 years and submitted copy to several magazines and websites over the years. He now writes a weekly column in the Daily Post newspaper and regularly contributes to Boxrec News.

My late grandfather was a huge Muhammad Ali fan and gave me several books that sparked an interest when I was 7/8 years old.....that was then fuelled by the high-profile UK fighters doing well in the 1980s and early 90s - Bruno, Benn, Honeyghan - before I discovered my two favourite fighters of all time via a few dusty old videos given to me by a pal when I was in my early teens - Aaron Pryor and Terry Norris. I've been boxing mad for over 20 years now and always will be.

The best fight I've ever attended was probably Jamie Moore vs. Matthew Macklin.....though I've been privileged enough to watch Ricky Hatton, Naseem Hamed and Joe Calzaghe from ringside. Best ever seen live on TV was Morales vs. Barrera I. A few V.I.P. shows in the mid-2000s at Wigan were real stormers, featuring Jamie Moore, Alex Matvienko and Mark Thompson. One that sticks in the memory in recent years was Paul Smith vs. Tony Quigley at the Liverpool Echo Arena. I reported on that and the atmosphere was electric.

My best interviews were with Carl Froch, Ricky Hatton, Joe Calzaghe and the real gem - Mike Tyson.....I sat down on a couch with him in a theatre's green room in North Wales about two years ago. He was meek and quiet at first and then became very animated and agitated. We were alone in the room. I started to get nervous (to say the least) but kept the tape rolling and wound-up with a superb interview. He laid it all down. That one is probably the most memorable and another was interviewing Hatton

within days of the Pacquiao loss. We met at a hotel where he was doing an after-dinner show. He looked tired, and a shadow of himself. We mocked up a photo of us going head-to-head and having a staredown. I don't mean to sound dramatic but you could see the pain in his eyes. He looked devastated. Great guy though, one of the best in the sport.

I would change a lot in boxing.....the judging system, promoters, the way 'opponents' are often treated. The whole sport needs a real shake-up if it's to fend-off the UFC. The money needs sharing out better and it's a short career. There should be more in place to support boxers when they retire. I'd also like to see boxing back on terrestrial TV where it belongs. Politics and the inability to make the matches people want to see really annoys me. They are so few and far between. But when you do get a real 50/50 match-up the atmosphere and energy created before and during the fight is like no other feeling. DeGale vs. Groves for example.

Too many fans think they can write a story, go charging in and make a real hash of it while upsetting people along the way.....be passionate and humble. Learn your craft. Sit back, soak it all up and listen. Be creative. And be willing to take criticism as long as it's constructive. Getting close to boxers and hearing their stories is a unique position to be in, I've been blessed.

I like Carl Frampton, he looks a class act.....Paul McCloskey has a lot of talent but needs more drive and to 'go for it' a bit more. Scott Quigg, Rhys Roberts and Thomas Doran are other UK fighters to keep an eye on. They need a little sharpening but all the tools are there.

Jessica Sinyard

Jessica is the face of boxing analysis on YouTube; previewing, reviewing and predicting under the pseudonym 'Jessi Jackalope'. She has also written for a variety of boxing websites and eMagazines including Boxing-Articles.com, The Boxing Historian, The Boxing Post, and Undisputed Fight Magazine.

I was around ten years old when I first encountered a boxing encyclopedia and I took it with me wherever I went for over a year.....to this day I remember some of the images inside – they had grace and strength, power and personality. Jack Dempsey, Muhammed Ali and Sugar Ray Robinson were my favourites at that time although I soon adored Arturo Gatti and his fights with Micky Ward. My background was in ballet, which sounds like the antithesis of boxing at first, but they are both very disciplined, single-minded lifestyles. Even at that age I remember being fascinated by the way boxing could be conveyed in writing. I read as much boxing journalism and literature as I could and started taking my own notes on fights. Boxing – both then and now – combines several of my main passions and interests. It has a rich history and a wealth of stories and scandals. It combines athleticism with psychology and tactics. I always thought that my childlike enthusiasm for the sport would fade, but years later it's as strong as ever.

I noticed recently that I tend to favour great fight trilogies.....I love a bit of history between fighters where there is bad blood and respect in equal measure. I always return to the Gatti-Ward saga and Barrera-Morales was a favourite too. Michael Katsidis vs. Graham Earl is never far from my mind as a great scrap. It's not nearly as well-known or historic as the others, of course, but it's a strong example of what our sport has to offer: heart, grit, power, and resilience.

I was asked by Primetime to write a preview for the third fight in the Pacquiao-Marquez trilogy.....which was memorable for a number of reasons. It was an opportunity for my writing to be a small part of their fighting history, but also the result was enormously controversial. I've had a huge amount of respect for Marquez for years - I think he's a supremely talented, accomplished fighter - but even I hadn't expected him to look so sharp and fresh throughout. He made Pacquiao look ordinary, which is no easy feat. I personally saw the fight becoming tighter and more competitive in the later rounds but I still have mixed feelings about the result.

I was passionate about the amateurs and young boxing talent from an early age.....where I was based in East Yorkshire there was a very active, successful amateur scene but not a great deal of coverage. I wrote to a local newspaper while I was still in my teens, mentioning that there was an excellent standard of amateurs in the area but not enough coverage. After a bit of correspondence, they offered me the opportunity to cover the amateurs myself - which I went on to do for a number of years. I would report on the shows and interview boxers and coaches, then write up a little column for the local paper. It wasn't the big time; I don't even think my name was printed on them, but I was delighted to be involved in the sport. When I started making boxing analysis videos on YouTube last year, a number of websites got in touch with me to ask if I wanted to submit any written previews or predictions. It was after my article 'Hand to Heart Combat', a preview-prediction of Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Michael Katsidis, that people really started to give excellent feedback on my writing and request more regular work from me.

I've been a reader of the Boxing Monthly magazine for many years and I'm so proud and honoured to have had my writing featured inside.....my article 'Russian Revolution' was a perspective on the current realities of the

Russian and Eastern European boxing scene that had interested me for quite some time. There is quite a variety of material available from me now. My perspective on trainer Emanuel Steward ('A Man For All Seasons') was actually 'tweeted' by Steward himself to his followers on twitter. That was quite a surprise as I still haven't got to grips with twitter myself. I am yet to write an extended interview piece, but the interviews and quotations I included for my article on the Russian boxing scene were really positive experiences. Alexey Sukachev (Russian secretary of the Baltic Boxing Union) was an incredibly savvy and insightful interviewee. Philippe Fondu was also very engaging, and the president of the Russian Professional Boxing Association, Yuri Arbachakov, was warm, enthusiastic, and very humble considering his achievements.

One story that I often remember came from my days of covering the amateurs.....I was sitting ringside with the judges trying to interview a young fighter who had just lost his bout. He was being booed by a small crowd at the other side of the sports hall who had all had too much to drink, but to my amazement he remained completely composed and relaxed. He nodded politely and answered my all questions. He was respectful to his opponent and commented that he felt he'd learnt from the loss. I remember thinking what a classy, stoical young man he was, but I later learned he was partially deaf on one side. He probably hadn't heard a word said against him! But he was a credit to the club and went on to win his next five fights. I often remember him when I think about rising above doubters or critics!

I find the claims that boxing is 'dead' very hard to stomach.....I think it belittles the work of a lot of people I respect - writers, editors, promoters, and broadcasters; not to mention the athletes who risk their lives and health to entertain us. I can understand why some people long for

those bygone Golden Eras of the big heavyweight names, but there are some sensational talents at lower divisions. You have to be broad-minded and adaptable as a fan or analyst. The action at lower divisions can be truly breathtaking. I personally think it's important to keep a balanced view as a fan: stay positive and enthusiastic about the sport but also demand a high standard from referees, fighters, broadcasters, and so on. That's what keeps the state of boxing strong.

I feel one of the most pressing issues of the era is the use of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs).....the best minds and authorities in the sport need to come together to ensure more rigorous testing and transparency. It still provokes a lot of mixed feelings in me as a fan, however. On one hand, I think the fighters resorting to PEDs for a dangerous advantage are a disgrace to the sport, but on the other hand, I can appreciate that what is expected of a fighter today is arguably more demanding than ever before, both physically and psychologically. I respect Floyd Mayweather for having raised the issue of testing (whatever his motivation at the time) but I also think he set a dangerous precedent. Part of me wants every fighter to prove his or her honesty and safety as an opponent, but the rest of me wonders why they should be compelled to prove their innocence purely because they are accused. I think it remains a grey area in the sport and is worthy of discussion.

I write every day, and I have done so for as long as I can remember.....my own advice - if I'm remotely qualified to give any! - is to write because you love the process, not because you are seeking results. I would also add that it's important to take criticism as well as you possibly can. Arrogance or an ego of any kind can be a real hindrance. My sincere advice would be to examine your own passion. Would you be writing if you weren't being read, or published, or paid? In my case I had several journals and

notebooks devoted to my writing on boxing since I was 11 or 12 years old, but my other published writing is not sport related. From this perspective, I find it impossible not to be a writer – whether I am being read, or paid, or not.

I would name the female fighter Katie Taylor as a potential future star.....an excellent athlete and the one to beat at London 2012, I think! In terms of Irish talent, I am always impressed by the calibre of amateur fighters in particular. Also, I know he's not really a secret any more but for a long time I have been directing other fans toward Nonito Donaire. He has superb fundamentals, ring intelligence, good speed and concussive power.

Jose Santana Jnr.

A proud Puerto Rican fight scribe, Jose lends his bilingual writing talents to Secondsout.com and Undisputed Fight Magazine among others.

The greatest fight I have ever witnessed would have to be Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo I.....as I'm sure for a great majority of people it is as well. However, one of the greatest fights I have ever seen live was actually an amateur fight between Wilkins Santiago and Terrell Gausha in the 2009 Cleveland Golden Gloves middleweight final. Both fighters had a large contingency of supporters in attendance, especially for an amateur fight. The atmosphere was great and the fight even better. To this day the winner (Gausha) is still debated. Santiago is now a 4-0 pro and Gausha, still amateur, went on to become the 2010 U.S. amateur national champion.

The most memorable fight I have reported on was Wilfredo Vazquez Jr.'s world title winning performance over Marvin Sonsona in 2010.....it was my first fight card attended in Puerto Rico and the atmosphere was unmatched to any event I have been to in the U.S. Vazquez knocked out Sonsona in the fifth round I believe making him and his father, Wilfredo Sr., the first father-son pair to win the same world title in the same division. It was an excellent performance and a great display of boxing ability from the very young and inexperienced Vazquez against another young and inexperienced champion.

Growing up, my family loved getting together for fight parties.....most notably, being Puerto Rican, the biggest gatherings were for Felix Trinidad fights since we were all big fans of his. During Trinidad's undefeated run and into his comeback victory over Ricardo Mayorga is when my passion for boxing developed.

I first started writing for fun in a blog-type form both for the enjoyment of it and to improve my writing abilities.....at the time I was just a first-year college student with a little desire to work in journalism, but nothing serious. I was working an internship with an ESPN radio affiliate in Cleveland where I assisted in the production of a weekly boxing radio show; through the broadcast journalism experience I became interested in writing. Over time it became something I enjoyed and I found that I had a talent for the English language.

My first start was with a fan site called BoxingHideout.com.....I basically blogged, and then after a year or so I became a contributor for SecondsOut.com, through which I have had news pieces and fight reports also featured on MaxBoxing.com. I have contributed feature stories to a Cleveland bilingual newspaper, El Sol de Cleveland, in both Spanish and English as well. In addition to Secondsout.com, I joined Undisputed Fight Magazine at its upstart in late 2010 contributing to the website and I'm now the Assistant Editor for the magazine.

One of the best people I have talked to is Israel Vazquez.....quite simply, he was a polite, stand-up guy who was good to talk to and didn't leave you pulling for quotes.

My most "interesting" moment in boxing was certainly not amusing.....I was covering the Kelly Pavlik-Miguel Espino card in 2009 when after one of the undercard fights the referee, who had just finished the bout, suffered a heart attack on his walk to the backstage area. The previous fight featured Vanes Martirosyan; I remember seeing him visibly concerned. The medical staff on hand rushed to his aide and gave him CPR which helped save his life. Overall the situation lasted about 15 to 20 minutes until he was sent by ambulance to a local hospital. Certainly, a most unfortunate and scary situation for all in attendance.

I think a lot is made about the corruption and greed in the sport and I'm not so sure it hasn't always existed.....I'm not sure it's a direct cause to the drop in the sport's popularity but it is undeniable the sport is on a downfall and if not for Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao it would be even less. The good part of the sport is when we get two guys in the ring and the rest of the stuff that dominates the boxing news (or pretty much gossip these days) is forgotten for 48 minutes or so and we are given an excellent display of ability, athleticism, or an all-out war. I love watching a good tactical matchup between two smart fighters as well as I like a good, bloody brawl. What annoys me most, even more than all the organizations, is when the fights we desire to happen most do not occur. I am also annoyed by the fact that we (in the U.S.) can only watch boxing on one (sometimes two) days out of the week, on select weeks, on a limited number (two) of channels which require a subscription to receive and the "best" fights have to be bought via pay-per-view. I think more than anything that is what has hurt the sport's popularity.

I would do everything I can to reach an agreement for boxing to be shown on a broadcast channel.....Fox Sports en Espanol (in the U.S.) is OK, yet it reaches few and those few never know when it is on TV. I would also try airing it on Sunday or Saturday afternoons, maybe a Thursday or Monday night, any night other than Saturdays when the majority of young adults are out enjoying the evening, partying, what have you. During the [American] football off-season it could be a lucrative replacement for football broadcasts.

I would tell any aspiring writer to make sure you enjoy writing and not just seeing your name printed somewhere.....If you're in it for recognition then it is likely many shortcuts are being taken. The easiest part is getting one of the many boxing websites to let you write for them.

If you're serious, you will take a writing class, learn Associated Press Style, and practice good journalistic ethics

One of my favorite up-and-coming boxers is Cesar Seda from Puerto Rico.....some might know him from his world title challenge against Omar Narvaez and he is certainly a popular figure in Puerto Rico. He has the ability to become a star. He is tall, rangy, can move well, has a good jab, and long-reaching power shots. He gave Narvaez his toughest fight (before Donaire) and lost a fight I had scored a draw. In the amateurs I cannot wait for Rau'shee Warren and Raynell Williams to turn pro. For both fighters I think the biggest key is keeping their heads straight, because the overflow in boxing ability. I'm fairly uneducated on Irish boxers.

I enjoy reading Thomas Hauser. He's one of the very few actual journalists left in boxing.....he does research, is backed by facts, inserts his opinion through fact and by giving both sides to every story, and he is easy to read. Joe Maxse of the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper is also a good writer who keeps it simple. I enjoy reading his weekly column.

Ian McNeilly

A trained journalist, Ian oversees proceedings at BoxRec News. He also contributes to Boxing Monthly and provides concise punditry to other outlets on a regular basis.

My dad who was (and still is) my hero got me interested in boxing in the first place.....he used to box in the Army. He boxed an exhibition against former world lightweight champion Lew Jenkins in Tokyo when my dad was a kid and Jenkins a veteran. "He shoved me up his arse" was my father's honest assessment.

I was there for Nigel Benn vs. Gerald McClellan, just as a fan.....the fight encapsulated the whole of boxing for me - the triumph and the tragedy; the heroic victory and the devastating defeat. I carried the ticket stub around in my wallet every day for 15 years. Then I lost my wallet, got it back and decided I'd better put the ticket in a safer place.

There have been two occasions where I've had to get into the ring because it was the safest place to be.....first was one of Dave Coldwell's early shows in Rotherham. A load of lads from Derby travelled up the M1 and proceeded to drink for several hours in the bar. Then they got bored and decided to start their own undercard, which some of the locals didn't appreciate. Chairs, fists and people flying, 200 coppers were alerted, CS gas, the lot. I'd only been reporting for six weeks. I got the front page of the Sheffield Star with that story so I was probably the only one who benefited! The other was in my home town of Darlington when my mate Francis Jones was boxing. I saw a few likely lads in the crowd and knew they wouldn't behave. One went up and whacked former heavyweight turned promoter Dave Garside right in the mush whilst he was sat at his table. He was ever so annoyed.

As sad as it sounds but from being a little kid in junior school, I'd always wanted to be a journalist....I used to make up my own little magazines with features and made up interviews. When I graduated, I was skint and didn't want to ask my Dad for any more brass. The journalism course cost about two grand whereas at the time there was a two grand grant available to go into teaching. So I did the latter. It's been a good career but it was a stupid decision to make, especially when I look at the calibre of some of the journalists who are making a very good living from bashing out rubbish. I took a year out from teaching in 2002 and trained as a news journalist, working on a paper for a little while. The money is absolutely dreadful on the bottom rung and I was too long in the tooth and with too many commitments to ride that out. Had I been ten years younger, no problem. Whilst everyone else was getting cuttings from football, I chose boxing and have done it part-time ever since.

I currently try and look after a team of writers/enthusiasts for BoxRec News and have done so since it started in 2009....at the time of writing, we've got 40 writers on the books, though only about 15 contribute regularly. Previous to that, I was editor of Britishboxing.net for five years. During that time, I was Assistant Editor for a magazine called UpperCut which only lasted a few issues due to us discovering that the publisher's business plan was back of a fag packet stuff. I've been a contributor to Boxing Monthly since 2005. I've had copy in several regional papers and a couple of nationals, as well as being a pundit on Radio 5 and TalkSport.

You will make some friends both inside and outside of the ropes....try your hardest not to let this affect the accuracy of your reporting. Act professionally at ringside when you're on duty. We're all human but vocal support or jumping up and down is a no no. Take everything you're told with a massive pinch of salt. Boxers lie to themselves

all the time and end up believing it; some promoters lie as naturally as breathing. And don't look down your nose at little local bills just because you've been ringside for world title fights. They can often be the most interesting and you might be the only reporter there - something remarkable might just happen - this is boxing!

Perhaps because I trained as a news journalist, am a news hound generally and injustice angers me so much (boxing is rife with it).....I prefer writers who dig beyond the surface, even when it would be the easiest thing in the world not to bother. I had great respect for the late Jack Newfield who wrote the remarkable 'The Life and Crimes of Don King'. There are very few writers who even both doing 'news' any more as I would class it - Thomas Hauser is one who springs to mind. On a different tack, I know he's a bit 'marmite' but my favourite American writer has consistently been Steve Farhood. Very knowledgeable and I love his quirky, self-deprecating humour. I've got respect for Boxing Monthly editor Glyn Leach as he's devoted much of his adult life to a labour of love. Being a British small hall rat, I admire the dedication of freelancer Andy Whittle who works harder than any of the big shots for little reward. The best 'proper' boxing writer around at the moment is, without doubt, Bob Mee. His attention to detail is incredible as is his knowledge base. Lastly, BoxRec News' own Eric Armit should be in the Hall of Fame in the observer category and I'm serious about that. Now in his seventies, he's held lots of different offices in world boxing and still bashes out thousands of words a week on bills in towns I've never even heard of. Legend.

One of the funniest interviews I've done was with Wladimir Klitschko.....his manager, Bernd Boente, called me and I was out and about getting rained on in Sheffield whereas they were in the back of a limo. This was a few years ago now and he wasn't having the best of times. I started with, "Wladimir. You are thought of as a good

technical boxer, maybe one of the best in the division, but one who has major flaws. You are thought of as having a glass jaw and lacking in stamina. Do you think that is fair?"

The phone goes dead. The silence echoes.

"Are you talking about ME?" booms the big man, genuinely surprised.

"Yes." I remained firm though a tad uncomfortable.

"That's the first time compliment I've had in three years!" Klitschko positively squealed in delight.

I also interviewed Martin Murray next to the toilets of a gay bar in Hamburg. Don't ask.

I will also never forgive the more seasoned ringcard girl who showed her junior apprentice how to enter and exit the ring in a dignified manner at one show I attended. Let's just say that the first 20 minutes of her shift was the most engrossed I've ever been at ringside.

Boxing is the best sport in the world but greed is killing it....the greed of some promoters and of sanctioning bodies. I refuse to believe that it's dead because when there's a genuine fight with an interesting story, people talk about it and will watch it in their millions. The proliferation of titles is the most depressing aspect of boxing today because even I can't keep track of who the champs are. In fact, when it comes to the world governing bodies and their titles, I don't even bother following what's what anymore because they make it up as they go along, literally. I actually enjoy the opposite end of the scale - seeing someone make his pro debut in front of their friends and family usually provides a great atmosphere. Whatever they do in their career, they only get one debut. What never ceases to amaze and frustrate me in equal measure is how we're supposed to be dealing with people involved in the hardest sport in the world and it's populated by some of the most hyper-sensitive drama queens you could ever meet. One little bit of criticism and they whine on or, even worse, start rattling legal sabres.

The defamation laws of this country are an absolute disgrace.....they favour people with money who can begin spurious actions in order to silence people who are skint or reporters who need to protect their job. It works a treat and has had a really chilling effect on reporting certain matters. I urge anyone interested in free speech to sign the petition to change the law at libelreform.org. As for boxing, I would urge the regulatory authorities to bare their teeth more often and bite when necessary. At present, not only are they wearing dodgy dentures, they don't even bother to put them in most of the time.

I saw young Jamie Kavanagh make his debut in Madison Square Garden in 2010.....he looked like a good turn. Dublin-born, based in the States, a lightweight and born in the 90s, would you believe! I'm getting old.

Kim Francesca

As a copy editor for Leaveitinthefight.com and Undisputed Fight Magazine, traces of Kim's red pen can often be found across those publications. She also sits on the panel of the Comcast SportsNet Bay Area pound-for-pound list and regularly pens the popular 'Fight Feed' column.

Until last January, mine was just a casual interest in boxing.....having sat through many an ex-boyfriend mandated pay-per-view over the past few years (the Cinco de Mayweather-De La Hoya meeting of 2005 which would have put me to sleep had the three margaritas I'd imbibed not done the trick, plus the entire Pacquiao back catalog from Marquez to Margarito), I had developed an appreciation for the sweet science, if not a sharper understanding of its finer aspects, and genuinely enjoyed every single fight I'd seen—barnburner or otherwise. So when respected boxing writer (and lifelong friend) Ryan Maquinana [currently of BoxingScene.com and Comcast SportsNet Bay Area] invited me to tag along to a SoloBoxeo event in nearby Fairfield, Calif., I jumped—here, on a silver platter, was my opportunity to see in real time all the action I'd previously only witnessed on the small screen.

On Friday, Jan. 7, 2011, I attended the Don Chargin-promoted card headlined by local middleweight Brandon Gonzales and San Diego-based Lester Gonzalez. A passion was instantly ignited—maybe it was the lights, the cameras, the blood, sweat, and tears. Oh, and the women of boxing—not so much the ring card girls (although they were nice too), but the wives and girlfriends and sisters and daughters and mothers who supported their loved ones in the ring, despite the imminent dangers. I was fascinated by it all. I guess you could call it love at first fight. Since then, I've been to more than a dozen cards and related media

events, and study fights via live telecasts or retroactively whenever possible; I also take in content online every waking minute of the day – I have a lot to learn!

Naseem Hamed and Kevin Kelley’s December 1997 bout had me gripped even before the opening bell.....Prince Naseem, with his flashy footwork and excessive hubris, stressed the value of showmanship in addition to talent. Fight of the Year candidate Amir Khan vs. Marcos Maidana circa 2009 comprised my breakthrough moment, in which boxing ceased to become just two men trying to beat each other to a bloody pulp and the “science” part of the equation became clear to me. The fighters’ respective flaws and strengths, tactics— it all started to make sense. Best live fight; I must say, hands down, Erik Morales vs. Marcos Maidana.

This past April marked my inaugural pay-per-view, in Las Vegas’ own MGM Grand Hotel & Casino.....headlining “Action Heroes,” the Golden Boy card stacked deeper than your local Barnes & Noble (Malinaggi-Cotto, Guerrero-Katsidis, and the shocking Kirkland-Ishida were among the bouts), was, as previously mentioned, the old king himself, Erik “El Terrible” Morales, and Marcos Rene “El Chino” Maidana, the young Argentine brawler who posed one of the biggest threats in the division. What many had anticipated as the final nail in the coffin of Morales’ career (the handful of writers I had spoken to predicted the bout’s lifespan at about three to six rounds, and even so they thought such divinations charitable) turned out to be the *abuelito* of all comebacks.

After a three-year hiatus, Morales had resurrected the El Terrible of yore in 12 rounds of guts and glory (and with only one eye to boot). Though Maidana earned the majority decision – and the interim WBA light-welterweight belt that went with it – it was Morales’ heart that gripped the boxing press and public. Having only viewed his famed trilogy against Pacquiao prior to this battle, which, coupled with

the less than optimistic whispers in my ear, precipitated serious doubt about the former champion's survival instincts, I was all the more besotted. How, after such a display of courage and skill and intuition, could I *not* drink the Terrible Kool-Aid? I had seen boxing greatness. And I had seen it rise from the ashes.

I met friend and boxing colleague Mark Ortega at my very first pro card in Fairfield and he has been instrumental in my involvement in the sport....he appreciated not only my interest in (read: addiction to) boxing (which he enabled by way of unlimited access to his expansive fight library) but also my texts and emails (and the grammatical correctness with which I write them—rare among Americans, I know). He asked me to edit a few of his pieces and later referred me to Shaun Brown [currently of BoxingScene.com], then the co-editor of Undisputed, who recruited me to do some proofing. Guess I didn't do too badly in that arena, as they've kept me around. When Mark pitched to Dave Duenez [co-owner of LeaveitintheRing.com and Undisputed] the idea of my writing a weekly column, 'Fight Feed' was born. Borrowing inspiration from Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show," "The Colbert Report," et al., 'Fight Feed' was meant to deliver solid, relevant content in a fun, concise format. Although the past couple months have been spent rehabbing injuries related to a vehicular mishap, I do plan to resurrect the column in the near future. In the meantime, I've focused more on editing.

Promotional heavyweight Lou DiBella was my first high profile interview....we discussed the impact of social networking media on the sport, how it helped or hurt its marketability. His tongue is as sharp as his wit—a wickedly smart, colorful personality. This past October, I had a chance to speak with Rachel Marcial Donaire, wife of current WBC and WBO bantamweight titlist Nonito Donaire Jr., a week prior to his bout against Omar Narvaez.

Despite the less than flattering press she has received in the past, I found Rachel to be extremely candid and down-to-earth. She was gracious enough to lend me an hour of her time while Nonito worked out in preparation for his fight, and there existed a lot of warmth between the two—in between sets, he'd climb atop the ropes and serenade her with snatches of song.....He does a mean Bryan Adams.

There was the time I ran into—or rather, staked out—Erik Morales.....the night after his epic war with Maidana, I was wrapping up a very late dinner [at MGM's Wolfgang Puck] with my dear friend Andrew when El Terrible himself walked in. I force fed the poor kid about two desserts and six glasses of water biding time until I, a) mustered up the courage to harass Señor Morales (I'm not in the habit of requesting photos or signatures, I usually feel like an ass, but he is a legend after all); and b) found a Sharpie [nope, me neither - SW] - apparently, they're akin to unicorns in Vegas.

So, two desserts, six glasses of water, and about an hour and a half later, after he and his party had concluded their meal and parted ways, while the former champion and his wife were inspecting a display of Funyons and Sour Patch Kids, I very sheepishly approached him in the sundries store of the hotel and asked him, in very poor Spanish (my Japanese, Mandarin, and French language studies have clearly helped zero in boxing) if he would kindly sign my media credential. Which he did. And after thanking him, I practically sprinted out of the store. I was so embarrassed.

Though clearly not the case outside of the United States, domestic interest is flagging.....likely due to the rising popularity of MMA, but not least of all the plethora of mismatched fights that have been made in recent months. It would serve promoters and premium networks well to focus on delivering quality fights as opposed to selling individual fighters. Another gripe? Keeping tabs on the number of existing belts is practically a full-time job.

But I can't complain about our season—year round! And unlike other professional athletes, that boxers aren't muzzled by their handlers have allowed for some refreshingly honest content in the press. We see as much entertainment outside of the ring as inside—sometimes more.

Diligence and consistency will help a writer go far.....as will getting friendly with the AP Stylebook.....offering assistance to sites that could use coverage on smaller cards would allow an aspiring writer opportunities to report on fights and build his or her body of work for reference when applying for credentials to bigger events. Establishing a rapport with fighters, promoters, managers, et al., at said cards and local gyms raises one's visibility and helps build connections. Social media, too, is a great tool in proliferating one's work, drawing readership, and expanding a professional network.

As far as prospects go, Carl 'The Jackal' Frampton, the Belfast-based protégé of former featherweight world champion Barry McGuigan, piques the interest.....a pressure fighter with good power, the charismatic superbantamweight, boasts an unbeaten record and sits on the cusp of fighting for legit regional titles. I would also keep an eye on Ivan Morales (yes, Erik's younger brother). At the tender age of 19, Terrible II already has 15 pro fights under his belt and will likely have close to 40 come his 21st birthday. The southpaw, not unlike older brothers' Diego and Erik, throws a lot but seems more defence-oriented than the bold, even reckless, Erik. Should he win a world title in the coming years, Ivan will cement the Morales brothers' place in pugilistic history as the first trio of brothers who boast that distinction.

I have a list of boxing go-to reads.....anything by The Queensberry Rules' Tim Starks and Patrick Connor, two of boxing's most cerebral and hilariously irreverent voices.

Add to that, the Ring's Lem Satterfield, Dan Rafael of ESPN, and Ryan Maquinana for breaking news; Mark Ortega and Gabriel Montoya of Maxboxing.com, for incisive features. Shaun Brown, for updates on the UK fight scene.

Jessica Sinyard, contributor to Undisputed, Primetime Live UK, and Boxing Monthly among others, has been an inspiration from inception. In boxing, long a man's world, a female journo/analyst whose knowledge matched her passion (*and* rivalled most pundits on both sides of the pond) seemed a needle in a haystack—and then I discovered Jessi's work. Last but not least, the venerable Glyn Leach of Boxing Monthly. He is to a boxinghead as Jann Wenner is to a rock-and-roll fanatic.

Matt Christie

Matt is a reporter for Boxing News magazine and previously enjoyed a fruitful spell over at KOTV.

My grandfather used to box and he remained a huge boxing fan until his dying day.....I was bought a Muhammad Ali figure at a young age and I was fascinated by it. By the age of seven I was reading boxing history books and soon forcing my parents to buy me every magazine available. Back then there were five or six available! Once the boxing bug attacks, there is no point fighting it.

As a fan, the Bernard Dunne-Ricardo Cordoba scrap was the best I witnessed.....and the first fight I attended live was the first Chris Eubank-Nigel Benn fight at my nearby Birmingham NEC. It was an incredible experience. Heading out to Las Vegas to report on Manny Pacquiao-Shane Mosley fight was a very special experience and fulfilled a dream I'd had for a long time. The fight, however, was disappointing. Unlike the Ricky Burns-Roman Martinez scrap from September 2010. That fight will take some beating for drama.

As a youngster I used to attempt to create my own boxing history books with my own words and drawings.....I grew up loving both writing and boxing. I had my first article published when I was 16 but my writing went by the wayside for a while. After leaving university I spent 18 months searching for a job in boxing – I got lucky and started to work for KOTV, the Channel 4 show. Before long I had worked my way up to producer but my passion remained in writing. Two years ago I was deliriously happy to get a break with Boxing News. I spent four wonderful years with KOTV. During that time I watched more boxing than at any time in my life. Each day

would be spent searching through footage from all over the world and turning them into half hour shows. I did a lot of commentary and voiceover work, too. I also got to work behind the scenes of outside broadcasts of massive events such as Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton.

Carl Froch is always great value in an interview.....as well as, George Chuvalo, Angelo Dundee, Evander Holyfield, Henry Cooper, Jeff Harding, and Johnny Tapia. It's hard [for aspiring writers] because the newspapers don't give much coverage to the sport. But the world is changing and the internet is the most accessible, and most read, platform for writers young and old.

Every now and again a trip will go horribly wrong.....the one that sticks out is a trip to Peterlee. It was a hellish journey there, the hotel was above the most raucous club in the North East, and I got done for speeding in my haste to leave the following day.

Boxing is becoming more marginalised.....the roots of the sport are strong and I believe the quality - at the top - is as strong as in the past. Pay television has badly affected the public's awareness of the sport and as more channels are introduced, it is going to be harder and harder to create household names. It's a shame, because boxing remains a thrilling spectacle. There should be a regular Saturday night fight on the terrestrial channels, preferably BBC or ITV who would heavily promote it. I would abolish all governing bodies; they're all as bad as each other and we need to look after boxers after they retire - it is a tragedy to see a once-proud fighter fall on hard times.

I like the look of John Ryder, but he's yet to encounter a test.....on the Irish side, Stephen Ormond has impressed every time I've seen him. And being a sucker for a heavyweight, I can't wait to see how Anthony Joshua gets on at the Olympics.

And finally for Matt, the writers whose work he most enjoys reading.....Hugh McIlvanney, Donald McRae, William Detloff.

Terry Dooley

Manchester writer Terry is a familiar face on the UK boxing scene. A contributor to the Boxing News website and magazine, he currently serves as the UK editor of Boxingscene.com and also holds an auxiliary member spot in The Boxing Writers Association of America.

One of my earliest boxing memories involves looking at photos of Muhammad Ali in a boxing manual at my local library.....as well as watching fights with my dad and granddad. I soon cleared out the boxing section of my nearby libraries, exhausted our family tape collection and was pretty obsessed by the sport from a young age, spending a disproportionate amount of time reading about the techniques and training regimes.

When it comes to live fights, three stick out for me.....I was lucky enough to attend Michael Brodie's first fight with In Jin Chi, the war between Jamie Moore and Matthew Macklin as well as Moore versus Ryan Rhodes. My favourite fights of all time would have to be Sugar Ray Leonard versus Thomas Hearn for the switches in approach from both men, Marvin Hagler against Roberto Duran, Mike Dokes rematching Mike Weaver, any number of Joe Louis KOs, James Toney's inside war with Prince Charles Williams and Rocky Marciano's first meeting with Joe Walcott.

The Moore-Macklin meeting would be the most memorable fight I have reported on.....as I was relatively fresh to this writing malarkey and was surprised by how many print journalists failed to see what was happening, one guy had Macklin in a massive lead going into the final round and still felt he was going to win. The fight turned against Matthew fairly early and although he did win some

rounds he had to sacrifice a lot to take them. It was tough but Moore was in control for the most part.

I read a few terrible online boxing articles and thought.....'I can write just as badly as that and twice as fast', so decided to give it a bash! I have worked for a number of websites, most notably www.boxingscene.com, where I am the UK Editor, and www.boxingnewsonline.net. I have provided text for press releases, programmes and promoters as well as contributing to Boxing News and Boxing Monthly. I am currently working for Boxingscene in the main and have provided articles for the last three issues of Boxing Monthly with one in the pipeline for early next year.

Aspiring writers need to have a thick skin.....but do not make the mistake of thinking that because boxing is a tough sport you have to go around shouting at everyone. Write 'strong', often self-aggrandising, criticisms of fighters or promoters and generally act like a bit of a fool. Bring your manners, set your mind to 'cynical but happy' and just go all in. Try not to doff your cap to the print guys, if you put them on a pedestal you will never aspire to be one of their peers. Above all else, try not to make mistakes, newspaper guys can make them and get away with it, online guys do not have this luxury.

Billy Graham stands out as an interviewee, for his honesty, forthright views and open nature.....I went to his Phoenix Gym when Ricky Hatton was at his peak to speak to Graham, it was supposed to be a one day thing, I ended up spending the full week there and was around for all of Hatton's fights between Luis Collazo and Floyd Mayweather. Tony Bellew, Moore, Macklin, Kerry Kayes, John Murray, are amongst my favourite interviewees but to be honest most people in the sport of boxing are approachable and friendly.

I was once mistaken for John Murray in Widnes.....a guy spent a while talking to me thinking I was the British

lightweight champion and I didn't have the heart to put him right. Although I'm not sure how he mistook a 6' 1", 12 stone guy for the Murray Monster. In my first day at the Phoenix I had to interview Graham as his lizard, Liston, prowled the office. Billy kept telling me not to worry then jumped on the sofa when the animal made a dash across the floor, Bill's reaction worried me.

Boxing's in the same state it has always been in, a mess.....people look back with nostalgia to ages that never existed. Anyone who wistfully says, "It was never like this in ... (pick an era)" has obviously not read up on the sport through the eyes of historical documents as reports from bygone days feature all the things we discuss now, splintered titles, champions who aren't as good as their predecessors and the state of popular coverage. Following boxing is the equivalent of taking A Levels in nostalgia, whinging and hypocrisy. The best thing about the sport is the fights, which barely get a look in on most message boards as they are clogged up by political nonsense/speculation. What would I change? It is hard to say, any one change can impact on other things. I would like a return to the days of 15 round fights but am not sure that the modern fan has the attention span for this.

Kieran Farrell may become a British star.....he is part Irish, a little firecracker and is working with Bobby Rimmer and Ricky Hatton. Given a run of decent fights, Peter Quillin could be the next big thing internationally. Bury's Scott Quigg also looks one for the future as does Billy Joe Saunders.

Reporting the News: Irish Boxing Online

In the 2011 edition of this review we celebrated 10 years of Irish-boxing.com and I am pleased to report that it is still going strong. I also briefly touched upon some of the other websites currently providing online content for the local boxing scene and we are going to catch a word or two with some of those providers and catch up with the exploits over at Irish-boxing.com, under new editor Jonny Stapleton, who provides extensive boxing coverage to the Irish version of the Daily Mirror newspaper. Seeing as it has been a whole year since we last spoke to Jonny, just what has he been plotting in the meantime?

“Irish-boxing.com blew out 10 candles this year and the manner in which the site is being supported there is no reason to believe we won’t be celebrating a 20th Birthday in 10 years’ time,” Jonny begins.

“Tomas Rohan, Cormac Campbell, Steve Wellings, Mark Doyle and other contributors put in a mammoth’s amount of unpaid work to ensure Irish fight junkies continually got their fix over the years. Indeed their efforts not only kept the masses informed but contributed greatly to healthy state of boxing in Ireland today. Granted, Irish fight cards are becoming as rare as positive balanced Irish credit cards, but the number of Irish pugilists has significantly increased since the launch of www.irish-boxing.com back in 2001.

“The great Bernard Dunne can take a great deal of credit for reinvigorating the domestic game but those involved in the site can claim some form of Irish boxing revival assist. Unfortunately for our contributors a facelift wasn’t an option, but we felt the site deserved a makeover after 10

years of a hard slog. However, we were determined to ensure Ireland's longest serving online news source remained renowned for its substance more and not its style.

"The fact that we amass over 500,000 hits from around the globe each month suggests we are doing something right and we really like to think we play our part in what is a sensational Irish boxing community. The support we have received is our form of payment and the team would like to thank all those who read a story on our site and those that got in touch."

Jonny has made some subtle but welcome changes and has brought back an amateur page. He was not left short of things to write about in that respect with the Olympics hiding just around the corner, the controversy surrounding World Championship selection, Katie Taylor's continued rise to greatness and the Irish influence in the WSB; it certainly played a part in bringing in the readers.

"The pros have also kept our keyboards busy," Stapleton remarks. "Again, of late, there hasn't been a feast of home fight menus, but Irish fighters have played significant roles in massive fights this year. Brian Magee (twice), Willie Casey, Matthew Macklin and Paul McCloskey all had tilts at world crowns. Granted, the win to loss ratio wasn't too favourable, but Irish fighters got international exposure and many of our top names are being linked with the biggest names in the sport at present.

"Irish boxing really has an international identity again and so in turn has the site. This year, Ricky Hatton, Amir Khan, Sergio Martinez, Lucian Bute, Lou Di Bella, Kiko Martinez, Marcos Maidana, Freddie Roach, Manny Pacquiao amongst others gave exclusive interviews to the site re Irish boxing issues."

However, whilst world names have received plenty of coverage across the site, Jonny follows a socialist boxing ethos and tries and ensure that every fighter gets the column inches or web exposure they deserve.

“No fight card is too big or too small. With the amount of fights abroad at present it is harder to keep completely up to date, but we try our best. We also took a conscious decision to keep the site updated daily. We wanted to keep it fresh and a daily must visit for all Irish fight fans across the world. The team have tried to embrace social media too. We have benefited from Facebook and Twitter significantly and used the new media vehicles to help spread the Irish boxing gospel.”

We touched upon the growing influence and uses of social media in the last review. What does the future hold for the site and which avenues does Stapleton plan to explore?

“We will look to embrace change further and hope to explore audio and film avenues over the next 12 months. Over all it has been a very fulfilling start to our second century. We are proud of our achievements but will strive to improve and play our part in a sport we love and feel passionately about.

“As editor I would like to thank the people that went before and anyone that contributed to the site this year. Also we would like to thank the boxers, managers and promoters for being so accessible and helpful. But most importantly we would like to thank the tens of thousands of people that visit the site each month. We hope you enjoyed the last decade we certainly have enjoyed spreading the news.”

A touching end there, to what could have been an acceptance speech for an award. Who knows, perhaps Jonny could be taking to the podium someday soon. But what of the other site owners doing their bit for the scene?

In June 2010 Leonard Gunning laid the foundations for Boxing-ireland.com. Having previously penned articles for Boxingscene.com and Irish-boxing.com Leonard decided that the time was right to ‘go it alone’.



*Headliners: Leonard Gunning (left) Jonny Stapleton
© Kevin Finn*

“Our aim at Boxing-ireland is to bring Irish boxers maximum exposure to the market and going alone meant that I had more freedom to write what I wanted,” Gunning reasons. “Our ethos is to give a voice to fighters who are maybe not as well-known and rather than focusing on the big fighters all of the time, we tend to wait until they have a fight and then give them blanket coverage.”

Being based in England (Manchester to be more precise) Gunning thrust into the spotlight regional fighters who boasted an Irish connection and followed the likes of Kieran Maher, Patrick Liam Walsh, Kieran Farrell, Jason McCalmon and Chris O’Brien. Leonard also made a point of targeting an audience by way of various social media initiatives and has built up a solid following as a result of his endeavours through the likes of Facebook (with over 6,000 friends), Twitter and YouTube.

“We would do a lot of multimedia work and video interviews,” he says. “We are now well past the 500,000 views mark for our YouTube channel videos. The Paul McCloskey-Amir Khan fight brought in a lot of views and

we put up plenty of videos from before the fight right through to the post-fight reaction. Boxing-ireland also organised a well-attended after party.”

Gunning has close links with Stephen Sharpe who formerly ran the Green Jab website. Boxing-ireland has since moved over to occupy Green Jab’s online space, parting company with the initial website that Gunning built himself. Sharpe has returned to Boxing-ireland after a spell away and forms part of an established network that keeps operations ticking along.

“Stephen would be out Dublin correspondent and Kevin Finn takes photographs for the website and is basically my right hand man,” explains editor Gunning. “We also have Ashley Jarno Ball who covers fights for Yorkshire media outlets, Grant Tissot who covers the London region, Sean Lynch in Cork and Nathan Clarke. Ricky Gardener does stuff for us in the Belfast area, as does Greg McLarnon, and we have Paddy Appleton in Derry.”

Leonard also presides over an extensive domestic ratings system which serves to organise all active Irish boxers into a more orderly fashion. The Boxing Union of Ireland also runs a ranking system of its own; being the official governing body over Irish boxing (excluding Northern Ireland which operates under the wing of the British Board of Boxing Control’s regional outreach). The BUI’s official site (which can be located at www.boxingunion.ie) contains photographs, information and also some articles that have found their way over from Irishboxers.ie.

We later grabbed a word with David Walshe who is the brains behind that Waterford-based Irishboxers website. The Portlaw native was an integral part of the Irish Professional Boxers Association (IPBA) and now busies himself within the World Boxing Federation (WBF), recently helping to bring a new Celtic/Gaelic Championship into existence.

“I set up the site three years ago (in 2008) because I had so much information on Irish boxers that I wanted to share it with fans,” says Walshe. “Our main aim is to promote Irish boxers and show the world how the Irish contributed to what we see today as boxing.”

David has enlisted a willing team to help run the site and they have even branched out into the printing business, producing mugs, t-shirts and other memorabilia. In fact, the site provides a variety of functions.

“We do feature articles, videos, live streams, photos, ringside reports and fan meet-ups,” David explains. “We cover all aspects of boxing and will be adding more over time, we do have a facility where we stream live fights from the USA, we also have exclusive video interviews with our Irish boxers along with ringside reports and promo products available. I have a number of boxing writers involved in the site, from the UK, USA and Ireland. Gareth Hayes looks after several sides of the site and is my right hand man, so to speak, in Ireland. I have several avenues I’m looking at which are still at an early stage but the future looks great for Irishboxers.ie as we will be adding new sections as time go by.”

Walshe is optimistic when discussing the general health of domestic boxing and was strongly involved in the IPBA, alongside Chris Rock and the other assembled members.

“Irish boxing is in good condition considering the economy, but something has to be done with regards to the cost of running shows as this seems a major obstacle for promoters. The days of the big shows are over so the German system of small but regular shows is the way we must go. We must do more for our Irish-based boxers to keep them here and try and prevent those becoming opponents and journeymen. We have some top class fighters that need help.”

Timeline of the Year's Events

Brian Magee: 'I want Lucian Bute's shot at the Super Six winner - 7th January

Brian Magee will get the chance of a lifetime on March 19 when the Lisburn super-middleweight travels to Canada for an IBF title shot at reigning champion Lucian Bute.

It had appeared increasingly likely that the 35-year-old would garner a WBA crack at Dmitry Sartison in Germany, after being named as mandatory challenger for that crown. Instead Magee will now journey to the Bell Centre in Montreal and attempt to pull off a win that, if achieved, would be rated as one of the biggest upsets in Irish boxing history.

"I'm over the moon that this opportunity has come along," beamed Brian. "Bute is a fantastic fighter and a worthy champion - he can box a bit or slug it out. He's a southpaw like me so I know what to prepare for. This will probably be the hardest fight of my career and my job now is to train hard and get into the best shape of my life."



Magee is intensely focused on his big chance

© Kevin Finn

Magee is no stranger to traveling abroad for a big title opportunity. The man trained by Bernardo Checa won the European strap in 2010 with a fantastic seventh round knockout of former world title challenger Mads Larsen. He followed that up in September with a stoppage win over Roman Aramian in Dublin's National Stadium. In Bute though, he faces a formidable champion. Lucian is patiently waiting for a money-spinning bout with the winner of the innovative Super Six tournament. This fight, however, will be the first of his new deal with US broadcasting giant Showtime.

"They are talking about Bute fighting the winner of the Super Six tournament if he gets past me but I'm aiming to put a spanner in the works and get that chance for myself," continued the former British title-holder. "If I win then it opens up a world of possibilities for my own career. Going over to Canada holds no problems for me; I was expecting to travel over to Germany anyway. There will be worldwide coverage of this event and cracking the American market would be an achievement in itself."

Manager Pat Magee (no relation) also deserves great credit for securing his charge yet another major title assignment. Pat was just as enthusiastic about the prospects of bringing home a world crown.

"The fight will be televised live on Showtime," he explained, "coast-to-coast across America and we have the rights to show it in Ireland and the UK. We don't know who will take it yet: SKY, RTE, Setanta etc. that is to be negotiated.

"There will be a slight break, including a trip out to Canada, and then the real hard training will start. We are planning on bringing top-class sparring partners to Belfast. Bernardo Checa has studied Bute's style on DVDs and we will tailor the sparring to suit. Bute hasn't fought many southpaws in his career."

Pat revealed that negotiations for a crack at WBA king Sartison had hit a brick wall and the Bute fight made sense at this stage.

"The negotiations became prolonged with the German camp and they wanted the fight in Germany and wouldn't budge on that. They wanted to go to purse bids which would have obviously given them the upper hand. We were never overly keen on going back to Germany after being robbed against Vitali Tsypko [in 2005] and we were also considering our options. Brian's in good shape already because we were preparing for Sartison as early as January 29 so we kept ticking over.

"There were discussions with Lou DiBella, Gary Shaw and Golden Boy while we explored all of our avenues. Sartison still appeared the best option, despite having contact from Bute's people last summer and Brian wanted a European title defence first. When the WBA fight stalled, Bute's people came back to us and the negotiations were quick and effective, our monetary terms were agreed to and it was an attractive proposition. The money is in America and with their TV stations."

Pat believes that he is presiding over some exciting times for the Northern Irish hero.

“The fight will take place in a big arena that holds in excess of 16,000 people and will make for a fantastic occasion. This is great exposure for Brian – he wants it badly.”

'Storm' Sweeney banishes thoughts of 2010 - 10th January

Irish light-heavyweight Michael Sweeney is looking to put a nightmare 2010 behind him and reignite his career under the DolPhil Promotions banner. The 27-year-old recently put the word out about his availability and DolPhil jumped in with a four-year contract offer.

"I've signed for four years with DolPhil Promotions," confirmed Michael, "and I'm hoping to fight on January 30 in Dublin and March 19 on the Willie Casey-Guillermo Rigondeaux undercard.

"2010 has been an unlucky year for me. I've had three title fights fall through due to various injuries to myself or my opponents. The EU, Irish and IBO title fights all went by the wayside so it was hard for me to adjust and now I want to leave that all behind me and move on to a successful 2011. Fighting in January would be a good start to the New Year but I'm definitely down to fight Ian Tims on March 19 at cruiserweight, a fight that was meant to happen last May, then I will move back to my more natural light-heavyweight limit."

Sweeney has enjoyed spells in Germany sparring Arthur Abraham and in Austria working with Wladimir Klitschko and Manny Steward. He is keen to keep in contact with Steward despite establishing a new training set-up at home.

"I'll be splitting my training between regular coach Sean Mannion and Phil Sutcliffe," Michael confirmed. "Manny Steward is still there for advice when I need it and he will help me in any way he can, I want to thank Manny for what he has done so far."

Michael insists he is now settled after putting his long-term future in the hands of DolPhil. Ireland's fastest-growing promotional team comprises a combination of Don O'Leary and Phil Sutcliffe. Sweeney started his pro career under the wing of Tommy Egan and benefited from

Tommy's links with Art Pellulo's Banner Promotions. He recently worked with manager John Hesnan before this new start.

"I didn't have a contract with anyone, other than Banner Promotions but that's sorted," he said.

"My main focus is now on what happens inside the ring. I am looking forward to the fight with Ian Tims, it's a fight that was scheduled to happen in Limerick last year but five days before the fight Ian pulled out injured so I think it's a natural to be made. It should happen for the fans and it will be the better man that wins."

DolPhil are busy expanding their ever-growing stable, having now secured the signatures of the McDonagh brothers (Paddy and JJ). Recent debutants Noel O'Brien and Paddy Ward and Ireland's only registered female professional Christina McMahan have also put pen to paper in recent months. Head honcho Don O'Leary is delighted with his latest capture.

"With Michael we have signed a fantastic young boxer right in his prime," enthused Don. "He has a good head on his shoulders and knows exactly what he wants. He has seen just how far boxers who have trained under Phil Sutcliffe can go in their careers, so together I believe DolPhil Promotions and Michael Sweeney can go all the way."

Finally, Michael made it known that he would still be interested in challenging Nadjib Mohammedi, the Frenchman who extended Nathan Cleverly at short notice for the WBO interim light-heavyweight crown in Liverpool last month. Sweeney was due to tackle Mohammedi on October 8 for the EU crown before an injury forced the fight from the schedule and a premature end to his year.

"Nadjib Mohammedi versus Nathan Cleverly was a good fight," admitted 'The Storm'.

“I have to say Nadjib is a very good fighter but it just didn’t happen for us on that occasion and I can’t really say much else other than that.”

**Andy Lee -John Duddy scheduled for March meeting -
12th January**

For years Ireland's premier crop of middleweights have shimmied and feinted around one another while fans salivated upon a big domestic showdown. It now appears that two of the big names are ready to engage in hostilities, but on away soil. It has been reported that Limerick's Andy Lee and Derryman John Duddy will meet in Connecticut on March 12, in what promises to be an explosive way to usher in the St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

"The fight is just about definite," legendary American trainer Emanuel Steward told the equally legendary Gerry Callan of The Irish Daily Star. "I am convinced Andy will beat John Duddy - I think he will knock him out - and then Andy goes for the [world] title, even if he has a warm-up fight beforehand. Connecticut's a good choice of venue - an hour and a half away from Boston so there'll be plenty of Irish there."

Lee had been hoping to face off with Sergio Martinez, who is scheduled to meet Sergey Dzinziruk in the Connecticut March 12 headliner.

A European title battle with either Darren Barker or Matthew Macklin was also looked at for Andy towards the end of last year. Both Barker and Macklin are still embroiled in their own on/off saga for the same belt and Lee has taken himself back to America to look for big fights. Duddy meanwhile was last seen dropping a wide points decision to Julio Cesar Chavez Jr in June but his manager Craig Hamilton still insists that a world title fight is within grasp.

Whatever happens next, the best way to get into a world title fight (in theory at least) is to beat a hungry fellow contender, with the loser sent right back to the drawing board. This is what is at stake for these two on March 12.

Oisín Fagan on the comeback trail - 19th January

For many retired boxers the lure of the ring remains too much to resist and they end up returning to pursue past glories. Some leave it a matter of weeks, while others last a little longer before the urge kicks in - German light-heavyweight Henry Maske, for example, pulled on the gloves a full 10 years after supposedly packing the sport in for good.

Former Irish lightweight title holder Oisín Fagan last fought in February 2010, suffering a fifth round stoppage loss to Cavan starlet Andy Murray in a National Stadium headliner. Aggravated by the defeat and with a proud career behind him Fagan announced in March of that year that he had thrown his final combination. Taking up an offer with the IABA he cut a trim and contented figure out of the ring when attending many of the domestic shows on offer in 2010.

Oisín has consistently given his all in every contest since turning professional in 2003 and after a period of reflection the proud warrior now feels he has more to offer the fight fans.

"I'm looking forward to the buzz of being back in the ring," admitted 'Gael Force' who features on Dolphil Promotions' January 30 show.

"I can't wait to excite the fans again. I've always been the first to say that I am a very limited boxer, but when it comes to a fighter's heart I cannot be beaten. When people come to see one of my fights they go away happy, win or lose, because I give it my all every second of every round. I've had many complements from legendary fighters about my heart and toughness and I guess that's what comes natural to me, so what you see is what you get.

"If the odds are even and I'm fighting on a neutral card anything can happen because nobody puts as much

pressure on their opponents as the 'Gael Force'. For someone who had no amateur experience and then fought former world champions to controversial split decisions in their hometown [Paul Spadafora in 2007] it must mean that I am doing something right. It's certainly not my skills, but more to do with my Irish heart, desire and determination that puts me on a par with anyone in the world."

Fagan linked up with Phil Sutcliffe's Crumlin boxing team for what appeared to be his final few fights. Now the 36-year-old will return to the gym and battle on, hoping to recreate the form that saw him excite the crowds against the likes of Eddie Hyland and Jeff Thomas.

"To be honest I never let my guard down," Oisin elaborated, "I continued to train every day so that I could take a fight at any given time, pending a deal with my bosses to allow me to compete again. They were kind enough to make the compromise and smart enough to see that having a profile actually helps when you are dealing with kids in your everyday job, as they seem to listen more intently if they have seen you fight on the telly. That said, I am only having two or three more fights and that will be that.

"During my lunch breaks I have time to run so I take a 10km trek every other day. I also jump rope and shadow box to keep myself ticking over. Now that I have been approved to fight I will be sparring at the Crumlin Gym with Willie Casey, Phil Sutcliffe Jr, Micah Stevens and Dean Byrne so there is plenty of work for me to do."

Naturally, potential contests and suitable opponents have already been sounded out, ever since Fagan made public his desire to return to the fray. With former foe Eddie Hyland seemingly retired, it appears that his two fighting siblings could now be on the Fagan radar - recent European super-bantamweight title challenger Paul or undefeated featherweight Patrick. Weight discrepancies, however, could be a tricky issue.

"I wanted to fight Patrick but his camp turned down the fight with me," lamented Fagan. "I guess they are trying to be smart about things and please don't think I'm being facetious when I say that either. I like the kid and all his family but I guess if he has been promised 'big time' fights in the future then he can't risk those opportunities with someone like me. He knows it would be a war and a very hard night's work so why take the fight if there are other fighters he could get rid of in a flash, while continuing to raise his own standing. I guess that's just him using his head to be honest. However, for the record, I'd still like to fight him at a fair catch weight for us both.

"I was then offered Paulie Hyland instead, but only at 9 stone 2lbs. It's impossible for me to melt down to that weight. I'd certainly be interested in the fight, but things have to be done fairly. I'm sick of having to be the one who makes all the concessions. I mentioned to someone in an interview that I haven't been 9 stone 2 lbs since I was 14 years old. How on earth could I make that now?"

As candid as ever, yet with a manner of good sense about him, Oisin is someone who has always done things the hard way. Whether it be conceding weight, stripping down to it or travelling into an opponent's back yard, the likeable Dubliner is returning on his terms...well, sort of. The veteran did of course fight Eddie Hyland at a lesser weight though.

"When I fought against Eddie it was at 9 stone 4 lbs," he reasoned. "But honestly, that was truly a full-time job [getting so light]. It was extremely hard because I'd not been that light since I was 16 years old. Now that I am back close to my natural weight after the Christmas break it would be impossible to make 9 stone 2lb, so I would hope that Paulie could come up and meet me at 9st 7 lbs. At that, it's still a big stretch for me, but I feel that I could make a good go of it at least. I really think it would be a smashing fight with the different styles on show. I would also love a

chance to take on Eddie Hyland again but he told me that he's taking a break for a while so that may not happen unfortunately. I know the fans really wanted to see that rematch on neutral grounds."

Failing that, the old warrior will turn his attention elsewhere, with recent Frankie Gavin victim Michael Kelly a possible candidate.

"Michael Kelly would be a great fight," concluded Fagan. "That was supposed to happen a long time ago but it never materialised. However, I would be interested in that fight too if we could get it going. Other than that, we shall see what materialises."

**Middleweight contender John Duddy quits the ring -
20th January**

Just days after a money spinning all-Irish clash with Andy Lee was agreed in principal, middleweight John Duddy has taken the surprising decision to retire from boxing. The 'Derry Destroyer' has admitted that his love for the sport has disappeared and released a statement further explaining his motives.

"After a great deal of soul-searching, I have decided to retire from boxing," said the 31-year-old. "In many ways, continuing to fight would be the easy course of action. I have been offered the opportunity to fight Andy Lee on HBO for a purse in excess of \$100,000. A win would put me in position to fight for a world championship. This is not an opportunity that I cast aside lightly.

"I started watching my father train in the gym when I was five years old. I began fighting competitively at age 10. For more than 20 years, I loved being a boxer. I still feel that it's an enormous honour to be a boxer.

"But I don't love it anymore. I no longer have the enthusiasm and willingness to make the sacrifices that are necessary to honour the craft of prize fighting. I used to love going to the gym. Now it's a chore. I wish I still had the hunger, but I don't. The fire has burned out. And I know myself well enough to know that it won't return."

As we recently debated with the return from retirement of Oisin Fagan, sometimes the fire starts to burn again and Duddy may find the urge to give it another shot too great to resist. His manager Craig Hamilton is erring on the side of caution: "We had a conversation about this [at the end of last year] and I said, 'Look, if you want to retire be aware that if you do it, you will be leaving some good fights and money on the table and I don't want you to do it and then say, 'I made a mistake.'"

“I didn’t want him to come back three years down the road and say, ‘what if?’ He made his decision. I would hope he never comes back because to leave with opportunities in front of you, they won’t be there when you come back.”

American promotional powerhouse Lou DiBella is reportedly pursuing undefeated Scotsman Craig McEwan as John’s substitute for the Lee fight. With Matthew Macklin now scheduled to face Ronald “Winky” Wright on April 9 there is seemingly a vacancy at European level. A Darren Barker-Andy Lee fight in Limerick would be a good matchup, for my money at least.

Meanwhile, Derryman Duddy retires with a 29-2 (18 KOs) record and will be remembered for his rough-and-tumble brawls with the likes of Yory Boy Campas, Anthony Bonsante and a losing effort to Julio Cesar Chavez Jnr. The cracks had already started to appear in April 2009 when a seriously under-motivated Duddy dropped a decision to Billy Lyell.

Few Irish fans who were present at the King’s Hall in December 2007 will forget the raw atmosphere he brought to Belfast when defeating Howard Eastman. That now appears to have been his final bout on these shores.

Fitzgerald and Murtagh primed for Dublin showdown - 25th January

When Anthony Fitzgerald and Lee Murtagh meet for an Irish title rematch on January 30 the super-middleweight pairing will be hoping to hit it fourth-time lucky. The duo finally locked horns on November 6 in Limerick but the bout was curtailed in the second round when Murtagh sustained a nasty cut. This was after two previous attempts to match them had failed as unlucky Lee damaged his knee and it seemed that the fight would never come to fruition.

Leeds-based Murtagh, originally from the Short Strand area of Belfast, travels into Fitzgerald's Dublin backyard for this one, on another bumper show from DolPhil Promotions.

"Training is going well and I'm looking forward to my first appearance in the capital city," said Murtagh. "I expect much of the same as last time but hopefully with no head-clashes!

"I have a crowd of around 40 supporters coming from Leeds, Belfast and Mayo to cheer me on and watch me finally take the title, in his backyard too. I've been sparring with new pro Jody Meikle who's a tall and rangy cruiserweight, weighing around 13-and-a-half stone. Matt Doyle of York [3-0-1 welterweight] has also been providing good sparring, especially with his intensity and body-punching skills."

Reigning champion Fitzgerald is arguably the most improved fighter on the domestic scene. The 25-year-old, trained by Phil Sutcliffe, claimed the Irish title in February 2010 with a points win over Ciaran Healy.

He defended it successfully in September when finally settling the score in a rubber match with Dublin rival Robbie Long (the pair had one win apiece). The title-retaining verdict over Murtagh in November was heavily

tainted by the fact that the ending came via a bad gash to the away man's forehead. Anthony reckons he was bossing matters until the premature finish and believes that the referee's scorecard will not be needed in the rematch.

"Murtagh will be stopped inside four rounds," he boldly proclaimed. "I won't be looking for it but I know it will come. I'm really looking forward to headlining the first Irish show of 2011 - I can't wait."

Fitzgerald enjoyed a busy 2010, fitting in five fights in total including a 12-round points verdict over Kevin Hammond at the Tallaght Basketball Arena in December.

"I was very happy with the Kevin Hammond bout," he affirmed. "I showed everyone that I can box and I just controlled the whole fight. His eyes certainly opened after the first clean shot I hit him with. Everything is going very well in training and I've been sparring the McDonagh brothers [Paddy and JJ], amateur prospect Luke Keeler and a few other lads."

Anthony recently made a point of linking his name to light-middleweight Gary O'Sullivan. 'The Pride' tried to goad the undefeated Cork puncher into a showdown at middleweight, where O'Sullivan holds the Irish title. Fitzgerald also took aim at John Duddy. The Derryman has since retired.

For now his focus will remain on southpaw Lee Murtagh and another successful title defence. Murtagh's plans, meanwhile, include no heady talk of money-spinning fights, but a modest ambition of finally claiming a coveted Irish crown.

"His predictions are as predictable as he is," Murtagh retorted to Fitzgerald's four-round knockout claim. "There's nothing else to concern me right now, this is it. The Irish title is my whole life."

Khan bout a non-starter for McCloskey - 27th January

European light-welterweight champion Paul McCloskey will not be the opponent facing Amir Khan in Manchester on April 16. Despite prolonged negotiations, McCloskey's promoter Barry Hearn labelled Team Khan's offer as "totally derisory" leaving Amir to consider an alternative option after Lamont Peterson previously ruled himself out due to monetary concerns.

Hearn even went so far as to accuse Khan of using McCloskey's profile to get in a cheap world title defence. It is widely expected that Amir will face the winner of the upcoming unification clash between Tim Bradley and Devon Alexander, with Paul turning his attention to a scheduled March 5 EBU defence against Italian Michele Di Rocco.

"The deals placed on the table were an insult to Paul, an undefeated fighter and a European champion," bemoaned Hearn. "Amir cannot fight himself, and I'm afraid you have to pay opponents to step in the ring with you and pay them fairly."

It appears that Khan's team were guilty of failing to pay due credit to McCloskey as a co-headliner and underestimating his ability to draw in pay-per-view revenue from the Irish market. Hearn suggested that Khan sees his future largely in America, while occasionally jetting back to the UK to appease British fans with fights against domestic fighters.

Khan's father Shah weighed-in with his own statement, saying, "We have offered him almost three times what he got paid for his last fight and the ball is in their court - it can happen if they agree to the terms."

McCloskey's advisor Francie McNicholl responded with his reasons for not accepting the contest: "The cash amount offered was way below what one would expect for

an unbeaten European champion in a world title fight," he stated.

"Shah has said they gave in to so many of our demands but obviously had they agreed to any of our requests we would not be in this position. We were never going to sell Paul short; he is no walkover in the ring and we will make sure he is not outside it either. Paul really wanted this fight and we feel that we did everything in our power to make it happen. Our requests were very reasonable in the circumstances. We regret that the Khan team could not agree. The general boxing public are the ones who are missing out on a great fight for this part of the world."

Francie also revealed details of clauses that Khan's team wanted inserted into the contract if McCloskey were to be successful. Firstly, that Khan got a rematch and Paul would be paid a cash amount. Secondly, that Paul's next fight would be promoted by Khan and they take a percentage and thirdly that Paul's next fight again after that would be promoted by Khan and they take a percentage. McNicholl added that the steadfast belief within Paul's camp was that he would have dethroned Khan and retained his unbeaten record. The team also wished Khan and his people all the best in the future.

Rather than ponder on what might have been, Barry Hearn, meanwhile, is already pursuing alternative options. "We have a huge fight lined up for Paul at King's Hall in the spring and who knows, not long down the line he could face Amir as a world champion himself in a 50-50 split fight," concluded the Matchroom supremo.

Fitzgerald retains title after bloody maul with Murtagh -
31st January

Only as recently as November 2010 had **Anthony Fitzgerald** and **Lee Murtagh** fought to an unsatisfactory no-contest decision in Limerick. Anthony kept his belt that night when a vicious cut to Murtagh's forehead curtailed a promising Irish title clash in the second session. This time the pair made it to the seventh round when a similar gash to the challenger's scalp bled too profusely for referee David Irving to allow matters to continue. The official BUI line was that a punch had opened the fight-ending wound although Leeds native Murtagh alleged it had occurred on one of the many occasions that the heads came bumping together.

Propping up the main event was a further nine fights as DolPhil Promotions underlined their growing commitment to domestic prize fighting with a Sunday afternoon extravaganza in Dublin's City West venue. While the line-up may have been more quantity than quality, at least it gives their rising stable a chance to flex their muscles and stay active.

Two of those potential stars of the future are Mullingar duo **JJ** and **Paddy McDonagh**. Both recorded points wins over a couple of stubborn survivors. JJ squared off with a familiar face on the Irish scene, Belfast warrior **Phil Townley**, who was last seen in this venue soaking up a beating from headliner Fitzgerald. The Alan Wilton-trained journeyman took all that classy JJ had to offer and was never in serious danger of suffering a second pro stoppage loss on his lopsided 1-7 slate. Paddy, meanwhile, faced a man who had only had his hand raised on three occasions during an eight-year career. 36-year-old Hungarian **Titusz Szabo** had been halted 21 times but dug his heels in to last the six round course in this one.

Former European gold medallist (1991) **Paul Griffin** returned to the ring following a near two year hiatus and marked his 29th contest with a stunning 46-second knockout. **Janos Vass** was the opponent assigned with the task of ruining 39-year-old Griffin's comeback. In his heyday Griffin was a neat and tidy boxer who never hit the heady heights of his unpaid days. Stoppage losses to Jackson Asiku and Dean Pithie cast him aside as a nearly man, but the native Dubliner – who spent a large chunk of his career in Australia – is back for one last crack at stardom. Talking of comebacks, veteran lightweight campaigner **Oisin Fagan** is back in the ring, less than a year since he announced his retirement. Fagan beat **Karoly Lakatos** on points over six rounds in this one and is now taking aim at a variety of domestic operators, including all three Hyland brothers.

Gearing up for a title crack against Michael Sweeney in March, **Ian Tims** rubber stamped his credentials with a second round dismissal of **Viktor Szalai**. Hyland protégé **Robbie Long** outpointed Doncaster journeyman **James Tucker** over the four round distance, while flashy prospect **Darren Cruise** defeated **Mick Doherty** via the same route.

Lightweight buzzsaw **Finbarr Eade** continued to remain active with a third round beating of **CsabaToth**, while Gary Hyde's Georgian hope **Levan Ghvamichava** dropped **Konstanins Sakara** twice in the opener before removing him permanently in the second session. Hyde has high hopes for 25-year-old Ghvamichava, including an EU title crack, and the Poti native was certainly in no mood for hanging around on his debut.



All smiles: Things were looking rosy for DolPhil Promotions
© Kevin Finn

Jamie Kavanagh: The latest fighting Irishman in America
- 31st January

Jamie Kavanagh is by no means the first Irishman to cross the water and ply his trade in the US and he certainly won't be the last, but the decision was an easy one to make for the Dublin native. Now sporting a 4-0 record, the transplanted pugilist has been making waves under the watchful eye of Freddie Roach.

"I got the opportunity to train with Freddie Roach when I met my manager Steven Feder in Vegas and he said to come over," explains the 20-year-old.

"Steven probably didn't think I was going to come but I just showed up on the Wild Card doorstep one day! I always wanted to turn pro and there was the option of trying for the Olympic Games but it never really stuck in my head to go for it."

The opportunity to work with legendary trainer Roach in his Los Angeles base was too good to resist for the light-welterweight, who had already relocated from Ireland to Spain as a youngster.

"I train with Freddie but I also have my amateur trainer [Sedano Ruiz] here with me to keep me on top of my game when Freddie isn't around. Freddie is a busy guy but always finds time for his fighters."

Jamie now finds himself mixing with the likes of Manny Pacquiao and Amir Khan on a daily basis.

"The best sparring in the world is available at the Wild Card gym," he enthuses, "with the big names and also smaller names moving up in class. I have been sparring José Benavidez who is a kid with a big future. Ray Beltran, a skilful Mexican boxer, brings the best out in me. I also train with David Rodela, who acts as Amir Khan's sparring partner. Then of course there is Manny Pacquiao who is the biggest name in boxing right now. It was a great day that I

worked with him and a hard spar because his speed is unreal.

“Being in the ring with Manny gave me so much confidence. You have to think that he’s just another fighter and you’re in there to get the work done. I realised how much it meant being in with the best pound-for-pound boxer. I hadn’t had a pro fight when I first sparred with him and it gave me a big eye opener.”

Kavanagh was no slouch in the amateur game either, boasting a reported record of 168-12 with seven Irish National Championships along the way and a silver medal at the World Youth Championships in 2008.

“That was my best year,” continues ‘The Nuisance’, “as I also won the Intermediates, Under-21s and Junior Championships. I am perhaps a better boxer than a fighter because of the experience from my amateur days. I’m now working with Freddie on my skills and he is teaching me all the tricks and giving me the right spars to help me mature as a boxer.”

“Jamie faces off against world-class fighters every week and he is just totally relaxed in the ring,” adds Steven Feder of Standing Eight management. “Along with his promoter Golden Boy we look forward to big things and hope to fight on the east coast again, as we did for his pro debut, so that the large Irish communities can get to know Jamie. New York, Boston, Chicago are all on our list and of course eventually a trip home to Dublin to fight in front of his homeland fans.”

Kavanagh’s Wild Card gym mate, and fellow Dublin native, Dean Byrne has recently contested two bouts back in Ireland. Jamie could follow suit and square off for an Irish belt in the near future. He enjoyed a taste of the big time in his last contest, finishing off Jacob Thornton in just 43 seconds on the Amir Khan-Marcos Maidana Mandalay Bay undercard.

“It was a great experience for me in such a big venue, featuring on Amir’s undercard. The fight itself was a quick finish, if it had lasted a bit longer then I could have really sampled the atmosphere but it was still great to get one at Las Vegas so early on in my career.”

Kavanagh’s exhausting schedule leaves little time for recreational activities. This is a man who lives and breathes the boxing game and is soon eyeing title opportunities.

“To tell you the truth I just come home after training and sleep because the gym gets a bit intense,” he says. “I train twice on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays then once on the remaining days. I do yoga in the afternoons which is great for my flexibility.

“I’m just learning my trade at the moment and the Irish title is always an option. The NABO and NABA are possibilities but there are a lot of steps to be taken before I start fighting for titles, I’m only 20 years old with four wins so there’s no rush,” he concludes.

Shamrock Shorts: Finbarr Eade is eager to make up for lost time and plans to punch himself into Irish title contention in 2011..... The Ian Tims-Michael Sweeney grudge match is finally sealed for the Irish light-heavyweight belt in March..... Paulie Hyland will have to bide his time before getting a second shot at the European super-bantamweight title..... The EBU confirms that Paul McCloskey will make a voluntary defence of his European light-welterweight title against Michele Di Rocco in Belfast on March 5.....McCloskey has other things on his mind though and believes he has earned the right to fight world champion Amir Khan for a substantial pay day..... Andy Lee’s chances of challenging Sergio Martinez for the WBC World title this spring hinge on WBA strap holder Sergey Dzinziruk’s pay demands..... Kiko Martinez has told Willie Casey that he can forget about another European title shot if his crack at Guillermo Rigondeaux proves unsuccessful..... Martin Lindsay will get the chance to take

back the British featherweight title and avenge his sole career defeat after agreeing to a rematch with John Simpson..... Former Wild Card prospect Dean Byrne is adamant he will still fulfil Freddie Roach's World Championship predictions but is struggling to secure a promoter and fights at present..... Byrne did not feature on the January 30 City West card because he did not want to sign full-time with Dolphil Promotions as they had proposed..... Martin Rogan claims the only reason he won't get in the ring against 6ft 8in heavyweight prospect David Price is because a bout with the Liverpoolian would represent a step back at this stage of his career.....Quality sparing sessions with European champion Willie Casey and continental contender Patrick 'Pajo' Hyland have inspired Irish amateur boxing legend Paul Griffin to make a pro comeback at 40..... Irish super-middleweight champion Anthony Fitzgerald wanted to fill the March 12 void left by John Duddy's retirement and challenge compatriot Andy Lee. However, Scotland's Craig McEwan is ready to accept the call.

Ulster Elite Senior Championships Finals - 4th February

Paddy Gallagher was the golden boy of India, claiming the highest accolade in the Commonwealth games boxing tournament. However, Delhi seemed a million miles away as the Gleann pugilist was outfoxed by Illies Golden Gloves prospect **Willie McLaughlin**. Willie was sharp and skilful in posting a 15-3 scorecard for his deserved 69kg victory. The Donegal native also claimed the Best Boxer of the Night award to help cement the belief that he is Ireland's number one welterweight.

Controversy reigned in the 52kg final as St. John Bosco mover **Michael Conlan** -brother of undefeated pro flyweight Jamie - was ousted 6-3 by **Declan Milligan** of St. Paul's. Conlan, who also competed at the Commonwealth games in India, was the clear winner in the eyes of most ringside observers, but the infamous computer scoring system worked out differently. Conlan vowed to rectify the erroneous decision with an Irish senior title win. The 64kg king is now Oliver Plunkett boxer **Tyrone McKenna** after the youngster triumphed over **Ethan Audley** of the Holy Trinity club 9-7. Audley's Trinity club mate **Cathal McMonagle** prevailed at heavyweight, dismissing Ligoniel's **Damien Ramsey** via a second round stoppage.

There was an Immaculata double over Holy Trinity. Immaculata starlet **James Fryers** scored an impressive 4-3 win over Holy Trinity's Mark O'Hara in the 60kg class, while Trinity man **Sean McComb** was narrowly bested at 56kg by classy **Ryan Lindberg**, who claimed his sixth Ulster title. In the only female contest of the evening **Joanna Barclay** of the Holy Family gym outscored **Caroline Connelly** of Raphoe 7-4 at 69kg.

In a 91kg affair Dungloe man **John Sweeney** toppled Derrylin's **Sean Crudden** 18-4. Holy Trinity hard-hitter **Conrad Cummings** had too much for **Alfredo Meli** of the

Immaculata at 75kg, prevailing 6-2 for his first title. Gleann's **Raymond Ginley** had no opponent at 81kg and claimed his medal via walkover.

Fitzgerald's career on the way up - 10th February

Things are looking decidedly rosy for super-middleweight Anthony Fitzgerald. The 25-year-old is currently enjoying an 11-fight unbeaten stretch and the domestic belt holder was named Irish Champion of the Year at the recent BUI affiliated national boxing awards. 'The Pride' joined coach Phil Sutcliffe and standout gym mate Willie Casey on the winners' podium.

"I'm delighted with the award and it's great for Willie and Phil as well, having three winners out of the same gym," beamed Anthony, who has emerged as arguably Ireland's most improved professional boxer over the past year. "The Crumlin club will keep getting bigger and bigger all the time. We have the most pro boxers at the moment [in Ireland] and it's just getting stronger."

Fitz has successfully repelled the challenges of Ciaran Healy, Robbie Long and Lee Murtagh over that time period. Although recent victim Murtagh would like another crack at the belt as Lee disputes the cut ruling of their last contest, believing he was gashed by a head clash and not from a punch. Fitzgerald thinks the score has been settled and sees nothing more of interest at domestic level.

"There are no other Irish fighters out there looking for fights. Some boxers are giving out but won't defend their titles after winning them. I'm moving on past domestic level and fighting on the Casey-Rigondeaux undercard for the EBA title. Hopefully I can improve on the Irish Champion award and get boxer of the year next time. I hope that by winning the EBA title I can get a top 15 world ranking. The title is currently vacant but it's the step-up that I've been waiting for."

For those unaware of the EBA title, it is the brainchild of the WBA and runs as a rival to the regular, established European Boxing Union (EBU) crown. For Fitzgerald it

could prove a stepping stone to bigger nights. He was busy offering his services as a replacement for John Duddy recently when the Derryman retired ahead of an all-Irish showdown with Andy Lee.

“Some praise you and others give you stick,” Anthony responded, to the mixed reception his proposal received. “But I should be commended for wanting those fights.”

Whatever comes next for the confident Dubliner he has proven plenty of critics, who wrote him off early on in his career, that he can mix it in higher circles. This looked even less likely when the local man lay stretched across the canvas courtesy of the fists of Latvia’s dangerous Janis Cernouskis back in March 2009 on the Bernard Dunne-Ricardo Cordoba undercard in the O2 arena.

“At the start of my career I wasn’t putting in the training,” he admitted. “Getting knocked out in front of 9,000 people, just two minutes away from my house was a big shock. I had to either quit boxing or pick it up. I picked it up and here I am now.”

**Eamonn Magee gives his take on Rogan split - 15th
February**

Belfast's former Commonwealth light-welterweight champion and European title challenger Eamonn Magee has lifted the lid on the reasons behind Martin Rogan's decision to walk away from Magee and John Breen. The news sent ripples throughout the Irish boxing scene at the time and despite several rumours doing the rounds it was never fully substantiated as to why the parties went their separate ways.

Speaking to the Sunday Life newspaper, as candidly as ever, Eamonn recalled events from the night of the first Sam Sexton bout from his perspective.

"I was so confident [that Rogan would win] that I had a sizeable bet on Martin and even though he didn't have a good fight he should have won it. He had Sexton on the ropes - he was out on his feet. We were screaming "hit him, f***** hit him" but for some reason he backed off, waiting for the referee to stop it.

"The last time I had a proper conversation with Martin Rogan was when we landed back in Belfast after winning the title. Me and 'Rogie' were hiding behind a pillar so that John [Breen] wouldn't see us having a fag. I told him he had done the easy bit in winning the belt, now every f***** in the division would be after him. He was a prized target - the title holder. Now the real hard work starts and defending your title is 10 times harder."

Magee was warning Rogan about the pitfalls of title success and reading from a lengthy book of his experiences both in and out of the ring. Eamonn was always a controversial character who remarkably recovered from a brutal assault to not only resume his career, but campaign once again at title level after the attack. He was a talented

operator in his day and believes that every challenger is aiming to hunt down the new champion.

"You go on to a different level, people train harder to fight you," Magee said. "You need to give it 150 per cent. 'Rogie' had a couple of great scalps under his belt. He had beaten Audley Harrison and then Skelton, two good fighters, and he had set himself up and the age thing didn't matter. People say success came late in his career but because he was a heavyweight and he hadn't had many pro fights so the timing was perfect for him. He could have made millions."

Magee also claims that Rogan was on the verge of a £1.5 million three-fight deal that he and trainer John Breen had been negotiating before Martin walked away.

"Rogie walked up and down the road carrying that f***** belt showing it off to people. I don't think I've looked at my belt more than a dozen times since I won it. Rogan said I had had a couple of pints before taking his corner, which is true. But everybody, including 'Rogie', knows that is my routine. I have two pints before any fight. It was never a problem in the past. He was just looking for an excuse; it had come to the stage where everything was his way or no way. He was star struck and his head was turned. The fact is 'Rogie' had no ability, he had no skill but he had plenty of balls and plenty of heart and that carried him through. We [Breen's gym] knew how to get the best out of him."

There's no doubting the honesty and truthfulness resonating from Eamonn's interview and Rogan has never enjoyed the same level of success since leaving the Lombard Street gym that he did on his meteoric rise from undercard side note to *Prizefighter* winner and big-name headhunter. Rogan said at the time of the split that Breen and Magee had taken him as far as he could go.

"He's gone through three or four trainers since leaving us and his last fight was on the undercard down in

Limerick," reflected Eamonn. "Like a lot of fighters he thought he had done it all himself and forgot about the people who got him a championship belt."

**Paul McCloskey eyes pot of gold at the end of Khan
rainbow - 21st February**

After addressing the sizeable audience that packed in to the Ulster Museum big-fight press conference, European champion Paul McCloskey made a slip of the tongue. The Dungiven light-welterweight, who challenges Amir Khan for his WBA title on April 16, wrongly encouraged fans to buy their tickets for September 12.

As Khan's spokesperson Asif Vali jokingly reminded supporters to turn up on the correct date, veteran trainer John Breen quipped, "Don't worry, September will be Paul's first defence!" Such is the confidence in the challenger's camp, Breen's light-hearted response was no joke. The Belfast coach has always believed in his charge's ability to tackle, and beat, the best fighters in his division and Team McCloskey sense a date with destiny in the MEN Arena.

"Paul will excel on the night, I promise you that," assured Breen.

McCloskey has trudged the traditional route of British and European titles to reach this career-defining moment and feels that he is deserving of a shot after gaining a solid world ranking.

"I've worked hard to get to this point in my career," said Paul. "It hasn't been easy securing a fight like this, but we've crossed the line now and we will be ready."

Indeed, discussions between the two camps quickly broke down and the damage done to a potential contest looked irreparable when both teams accused each other of untenable financial demands. But in this sport, relationships can be quickly mended when the price is right.

"I would like to thank Team Khan for picking me as an opponent; they could have picked other guys but

geographically it was the perfect fight against me," McCloskey explained. "He could have fought Peterson but Lamont got a draw in his last fight and people wouldn't have been looking forward to seeing that one."

The 31-year-old holds a perfect 22-0 (12 KO's) record and, unlike his more illustrious opponent, has yet to taste defeat. McCloskey sees an improved fighter in Khan, since the Bolton boxer was dramatically halted by power-punching Colombian Breidis Prescott in September 2008.

"Amir Khan has proved since the Prescott loss that he is a great fighter and a great champion," opined Paul. "He's developed greatly under Freddie Roach and in his last fight with [Marcos] Maidana he was asked a lot of questions and he came through well.

"My aim is to be in the best shape of my life and firing on all cylinders on the night. I can't talk publicly about our tactics; I will make a plan with John Breen and take it from there. Every fighter has strengths and weaknesses. Amir is a superstar in world boxing and I'll have to be better than my best to do a job on him.

"Going into camp is an option and the preparation will be top-class. I've never used a conditioner as a professional but I'll use one to get stronger and it's all about changing the way I deal with my preparations. There's a possibility that I could switch styles and it's up to me to change a few things if necessary and alter my style a bit. I think that the ticket demand will need to be discussed. I want all the Irish fans to be sitting together, of course."

Trainer John Breen is relishing the opportunity to pit his wits against opposite number Freddie Roach. Breen says that McCloskey's preparation will be as meticulous as ever and he is confident that the level of sparring he is readying for Paul will ensure that his man is razor-sharp on the night.



Ricky Hatton (centre) co-promotes McCloskey-Khan headline attraction

© Kevin Finn

“I’ve never seen Paul tired in his life and I think we’ll see the biggest performance of his career,” declared Breen.

“The better the opponent, the better Paul will perform. It will be a good fight and people say that Amir has a bad chin but every time he gets put down it’s always from shots around the side of the head or on the temple.”

McCloskey had Tim Bradley down as the best fighter in this top-heavy division, but changed his mind after seeing the Michigan man labour against Devon Alexander recently. He now rates Khan as the head honcho.

“He’s the main man now and we’ll get sparring partners to replicate his style,” Paul outlined. “At the end of this rainbow there is a pot of gold. Styles make fights and sometimes two good styles can make for a poor fight. I’m at my peak as a fighter and in two years’ time I’ll not be any better. This is the right time for me at this stage of my career.”

It is hard to see McCloskey getting a bigger chance to upset the odds and claim a world title. This is the pinnacle of his six-year career.

“I’ve been a boxer my whole life and trained hard since the age of six; it’s been a dream of mine to fight for a world title. I’m ready to grab it with both hands,” he concluded.

**Willie Casey primed for Rigondeaux challenge - 23rd
February**

Willie Casey is busy preparing for the biggest night of his short career on Saturday March 19 when the Limerick southpaw faces off with star Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux. Both Casey and his team accept that they cannot compete with Rigondeaux's hugely impressive amateur slate but they are leaving no stone unturned during a rigorous training camp.

"All the preparation has been excellent, already I'm at the peak of my fitness and things are getting better and better," confirmed Casey. "I need to maintain my levels of fitness and I've even been sparring 20 rounds in the first week - everything is fitting into place.

"I always try to train as hard as I can for every fight and this fight will be a little trickier than usual because Rigondeaux is so skilful and technical. We'll change the tactics a little bit to suit."

Willie boasts an undefeated 11-0 (7 KOs) record, since turning pro in 2008, and bettered Paul Hyland for the European title last November. It has been a meteoric rise to fame for the 29-year-old, who has adopted a good old-fashioned style of intelligent aggression, using his work rate and punch output to overwhelm opponents. Those same tactics will be used in the City West headliner, but not in a reckless fashion according to trainer Phil Sutcliffe.

"Willie will come forward and be aggressive but it will all be done smartly; he won't be gung-ho," said Sutcliffe.

"The preparation is going along fantastically well. Willie's going to be sparring [amateur pairing] David Oliver Joyce and Eric Donovan which will be a top-class workout. He'll also spar my son Phil Sutcliffe Jnr who's turning southpaw to suit Rigondeaux's style. A few other lighter guys are coming in to help us prepare for

Guillermo's antics. He's very elusive, hard to catch, but it will be extremely hard to run for 12 rounds and I don't think any fighter can run from Willie for 12 rounds."

Phil also explained that the promotional team has a high-quality undercard planned. Michael Sweeney-Ian Tims is part of that and the possibility of Paul Hyland tackling another unbeaten Cuban, Alexei Collado (formerly Acosta), was being talked about before Hyland balked at the pay on offer. Other members of the DolPhil camp will feature on the big Dublin card and Phil foresees good times ahead for the fledgling outfit.

"We are trying to bring champions and belts into the camp to expand our set-up," he affirmed. "Paddy McDonagh has already beaten Ciaran Healy over six rounds and there's no doubt in my mind that he would beat Healy again. If they don't fight for the Irish title then we'll get Paddy a WBF Intercontinental title fight instead and with the help of Don O'Leary and Daniel Halpin we've got a good system going.

"Anthony Fitzgerald put in an exceptional performance against Kevin Hammond at the end of last year and that did not surprise me because I saw him sparring the two McDonagh brothers. They are tricky southpaws - both up sparring with Brian Magee at the moment - and now signed with the DolPhil crew, so you will be seeing some magic out of those two."

One point of contention that has arisen is the potential lack of TV coverage for the show. National broadcaster RTE no longer have a budget for boxing and even though other avenues are currently being explored, it is hard not to see somebody pick it up for viewing across Ireland. The TV3 station had shown initial interest, but that appears to have since cooled.

"I'm not sure if TV will pick up the fight, so if people are planning on sitting down and watching it in the comfort

of their own home, they might have to think again," said Willie Casey.

"Whenever a fighter gets in the ring it's up to them, but our success is not down to one person. In training camp it's all down to DolPhil Promotions, the whole team effort. March 19 is going to be an exceptional night, tickets are selling well."

Phil Sutcliffe believes that a deal can be struck before fight night: "We're still optimistic on RTE and even though it said in the papers that the government is cutting the budget we are giving RTE the fight for nothing, because we want the show on national television.

"It'll be up to their executives to get behind Willie Casey. We haven't seen a fight like this since Bernard Dunne and Steve Collins before him so they should realistically get behind us."

Winky the Wright move for ambitious Macklin - 23rd February

Matthew Macklin has finally landed himself a big fight with the 28-year-old travelling to the bright lights of Las Vegas to tackle Ronald 'Winky' Wright on April 9. The southpaw veteran has shared the ring with the likes of Felix Trinidad, Jermain Taylor and Bernard Hopkins during an illustrious 21-year career, spent mostly at the top end of the sport. Despite a recent spell of inactivity the Florida man has been training hard in preparation for the former two-time European middleweight champion.

"I'm ready to reclaim what's mine, but first, I'll have to show Matthew Macklin some new tricks in Vegas," proclaimed Wright. "I'm training hard and pushing hard because I want to give fans the best 'Winky' Wright on April 9. I can't wait to get back in the ring. I feel stronger, faster and sharper than ever."

Macklin is often linked with the likes of Andy Lee and Darren Barker, and the Birmingham boxer looked set to face Barker on Frank Warren's Magnificent 7 bill last December before the Barnet man withdrew through injury. Matthew endured a frustrating 12 rounds trying to pin down plucky Spaniard Ruben Varon who stepped in as Barker's replacement. While lack of motivation could easily be cited for that below par performance, the fires will certainly be burning when he meets Wright, on a big Golden Boy event.

"I have the utmost respect for 'Winky', he is a legend of the sport and his achievements speak for themselves," said Macklin. "This is exactly the kind of fight I've been looking for and I believe it will bring out the absolute best in me. He's been in 15 world title fights and fought the likes of Bernard Hopkins, Jermain Taylor and Paul Williams as well as having a pair of wins over 'Sugar' Shane Mosley and a

shutout win over Felix Trinidad. That's a hugely impressive résumé and he has been consistently considered amongst the best pound for pound fighters in the world over the last 10 years. He's someone I've looked up to throughout my career but this is my time to make a big impact in the U.S. and this is the perfect fight to do that in. I know that it will be a huge challenge but that's what appeals to me about this fight and I'm very confident about the outcome."

The MGM Grand show will be receiving prime time coverage with Oscar De La Hoya's promotional arm placing Erik Morales-Marcos Maidana as the headline attraction. Macklin's slot will garner massive publicity for the man with Tipperary roots and promises to open up doors on the world scene if he wins. This fact is not lost on manager Brian Peters, who views it as a massive opportunity.

"This will arguably be the biggest fight involving an Irishman in Las Vegas since that infamous night when Barry McGuigan lost his world title in the desert heat back in 1986," ventured Peters. "Matthew's fight will at least be indoors so he certainly won't have to worry about the heat but he will be up against one of the finest fighters to step into the ring in recent times. Matthew won't be fazed by fighting in Vegas though. He's already boxed in the States on a number of occasions and was around Ricky Hatton for the build-up to a lot of his big fights in the U.S. so he will know what to expect. Matthew has always been hugely ambitious and this deal with Golden Boy gives him the platform to go on and realise those ambitions."

Golden Boy's Richard Schaefer is clearly enthused the prospect of these two men doing battle: "The winner is set up for a middleweight world championship fight. For each guy this is an extremely important fight," said the promotional powerhouse.

"I think the story here is that you have Matthew Macklin, who has worked himself up the rankings and put

together a pretty impressive streak of wins and now is considered one of the best contenders from Europe, so for him this is a big step up. A win over 'Winky' Wright will make him a serious contender for the one of the world titles. For 'Winky' Wright to come back and fight against an opponent like Matthew Macklin shows he is serious about coming back. If he wins, he's in line for one of the middleweight world titles. Winky understands this won't be an easy fight, but he also knows if he wins, he is perfectly positioned. Winky didn't want just a tune-up fight."

"I originally agreed to fight Winky last summer but for whatever reason he never agreed terms then but thankfully it's on now," said Matthew Macklin. "I've always believed I've the ability to go right to the very top in the sport and where better to prove that than against a living legend of the sport on a big HBO fight in Las Vegas."

"This is one of the most lucrative deals for an Irish boxer in the last 25 years," added Brian Peters.

JJ McDonagh bounces back - 24th February

Mullingar stylist JJ McDonagh insists that two back-to-back wins have reignited his confidence and all but erased memories of the shock loss he suffered to Tommy Tolan last August. Speaking from his new Crumlin gym base in Dublin, JJ is hopeful of snaring a slot on the big March 19 title showdown between Willie Casey and Guillermo Rigondeaux.

"I don't know for sure whether I'll be on the show in March, I'm just waiting for something to come up," stated the 25-year-old, who fights alongside brother Paddy. "I'm pleased with my performance on both of the previous shows, in December 2010 and then my most recent outing in January of this year."

Irish Champion of the Year Anthony Fitzgerald headlined both of those events, with wins over Kevin Hammond and Lee Murtagh respectively. JJ took just four rounds to knock the resistance out of Latvia's Denis Sirjatovs in his pre-Christmas outing. The prospect, trained by Tom Ward, then achieved six good rounds against perennial punchbag Phil Townley in the January contest. With Tommy Tolan recently losing to Tony Jeffries in Belfast, it is conceivable that McDonagh may look to settle the score with the man who handed him his only professional defeat thus far, via a chilling third round knockout in Dublin's City West.

"Tommy came forward and applied a lot of pressure on Jeffries, with plenty of headwork thrown in," McDonagh commented, on the Lindsay-Simpson support act. "He got caught with a good punch in the end and, seriously, there's no point in me going back in and fighting him for nothing. If there was an Irish title on the line then I would get in again with him; I'd fight anybody for an Irish title. I've

done the scheduled rounds already so I'm eligible for a shot. I'm ready for whoever comes next."

Both McDonagh brothers are stylish southpaws who were employed as sparring hands for Brian Magee last year prior to the Lisburn man's European title crack at Mads Larsen in Denmark. Brian of course stopped Larsen for that crown and now meets Lucian Bute in Canada on March 19. Brian's manager Pat Magee was suitably impressed with the workout that the McDonagh siblings offered his charge on that occasion and have asked them back for more, as Magee trains for the biggest night of his life.

"I've been helping Brian Magee prepare for Lucian Bute, along with my brother Paddy and it's been going well," JJ confirmed. "I helped Brian prepare for Mads Larsen last year and it's always great experience to work with someone like him. I've also been sparring Anthony Fitzgerald, so the preparation is good."

**Amir Khan not underestimating Paul McCloskey - 26th
February**

Amir Khan believes that the rough-and-tumble 12 rounds he shared with Marcos Maidana in his last bout have improved him as a fighter, while silencing the doubters who still question his punch resistance.

“The Maidana fight did me the world of good and confidence is high, coming back to fight at home will boost me,” claimed Khan, who scoffed at suggestions that victory over the Argentine may have taken something out of him.

“Maidana was strong and I proved my chin and proved I could fight under pressure. The fight was big for me, it was hyped up as a 50-50 battle. It made me a better fighter, it was a war and I suppose you don’t need too many of those; I said that I want to walk out of this sport the same way as I walked in. I’ve learned a lot and feel a more mature fighter since my last fight. This next one, against McCloskey, will be as tough as Maidana. Paul’s strong and he loves a tear-up so we’ll be ready for him.”

As usual Khan received a warm welcome in Belfast as he joined various members of both fighters’ promotional and management teams to help build up the April 16 pay-per-view attraction. The 24-year-old has not fought in England for 14 months and is looking forward to impressing his home crowd. However, with tickets selling fast in Ireland, Matchroom’s Eddie Hearn believes that the challenger could have the bigger crowd support come fight night.

“The Irish public are true boxing fans and huge into the sport,” agreed Khan. “Irish fighters are strong and come forward but Paul’s also slick and skilful and will make me think a bit more.

“I’ll do what Freddie [Roach] tells me, he’s watching the videos and knows everything we need to do. We’re going

to be working on Freddie's gameplan and I fought differently in the [Paulie] Malignaggi and Maidana fights. Paul is by far a better fighter than Junior Witter or Lamont Peterson. I want to fight the best fighters and at this stage of my career I think Paul is the best opponent out there. I want to unify the division but I'm not looking too far past April 16."

Khan paid homage to McCloskey's slick southpaw moves and lateral movement, but believes he will be able to call upon a unique sparring partner for extra help.

"Freddie says I'll be doing a bit of sparring with Manny Pacquiao," he said. "Manny's the best southpaw on the planet and in the Wild Card Gym there are so many young, up-and-coming fighters walking in all the time, plus plenty of world champions too so it should be easy getting good southpaw sparring.

"All the odds are on me to win the fight but this is a tough opponent. We're going to do our homework and meet up with Freddie Roach for training in LA, then off to the Philippines for a training camp with Pacquiao. I always train like a challenger, knowing that someone wants to take my title."

Much has been made of the recent split between Khan and expert strength and conditioning coach Alex Ariza. The title-holder does not see an issue however and is even talking of a possible showdown with a pound-for-pound giant in the future.

"Freddie's got another strength and conditioner in and he always told Alex what to do anyway, so he was the brains behind all that and advises the conditioner on what's what. Roach thinks that the new conditioner is very good.

"Floyd Mayweather is also a possible fight for the future. It's 12 months or so away though because I'm still learning, fighting different styles and gaining my confidence. One day I want to fight for that pound-for-pound title and be experienced when I do that."

Focused, articulate and ready for an intense training camp with one of the great modern-day boxers. All of which makes Amir Khan a frightful proposition for any challenger - even a supremely confident one like Paul McCloskey.

"I've tasted defeat before and I don't want to taste it again," Khan firmly stated. "I've got to be smart, stick to my instructions and then it will be a good fight. The underdog could cause an upset, but not on this occasion because I'll be totally focused."

Irish Seniors report - 26th February

There was no doubting the biggest story of the 2011 Irish Elite Championships, as 17-year-old **Joe Ward** ripped up the form guide and denied **Kenneth Egan** an 11th consecutive light-heavyweight title. Ward excited the vociferous crowd, packed inside a roasting National Stadium, to defeat the 2008 Olympic silver medallist by a score of 11-6. In truth Egan looked listless throughout the contest and was bullied and bruised by the strength and aggressive determination of his vastly less experienced opponent. The Moate rookie may have been a little raw in the technical department but his desire was never in question.

Ward took the first round 2-1 as Egan lacked his usual accuracy. In fact, the Neilstown native struggled all night with a head guard problem with referee Sadie Duffy motioning him to the corner on numerous occasions to have the string retied. These untimely interruptions further served to disrupt Egan's rhythm but he did land some nice shots to open up a one point advantage by the close of the second round. Ward upped the ante in the third round and dropped the seriously tiring multiple champion with a sweet left hook. Four more points were deducted from Egan during the duration of the bout for various infringements and the seemingly exhausted former champion took his loss with dignity.

"The more the crowd get behind me, the better I box," said a delighted Ward post-fight. "I always knew I could beat Egan and my dream came true tonight. I'm aiming for the world championships and then London [Olympics 2012] hopefully; I'll be nearly 19 and even stronger then."

Despite having long written his name into the history books, Kenneth Egan was understandably upset over the defeat. "It's heartbreaking after winning ten in a row," he

said, "but Joe's very strong and the best man won. It was a close fight with pressure on both of us. I'm going back to Miami [for the World Series of Boxing tournament] and will take things from there. It's not over for me yet."

It is usual at these championships that a real star emerges from the growing pack of talent. Step forward 2008 European bronze medallist **Ross Hickey**. The Grangecon southpaw earned a 14-4 decision over Crumlin's **Phillip Sutcliffe** in a barnstorming contest that probably didn't do Sutcliffe's efforts justice by the lopsided scoreline. Hard-hitting Phillip looks a professional boxer in the making; shuffling forward and preparing to unload at every possible opportunity. Unfortunately for him he was up against a classy mover who kept his discipline and maintained a tight defence before flashing in combinations to snatch valuable points. Round one produced a 3-3 tie, both men landed cleanly, it was nip and tuck and the quality levels were high. In the second round Sutcliffe paid the price for rushing in head first as Hickey picked him off to force a standing count. Sutcliffe, who had bettered Anthony Upton to reach the final, suffered again in the third and was counted following a well-placed Hickey counter shot. Ross used his speed and skills to shut the bout down and the expulsion of Phil Sutcliffe Senior from ringside only exacerbated the woes of a frustrated Crumlin team.

I had high hopes for the **Darren O'Neill-Jason Quigley** 75kg final. As it turned out, there were few fireworks as southpaw O'Neill (Paulstown) perfectly used the range and his array of skills to blunt the raw enthusiasm of Finn Valley's Quigley. Well supported Jason enjoyed a raucous following and loaded up on the big right hands as he sought to overcome a 5-1 deficit. O'Neill's tight defence was breached on a couple of occasions in the closing round but Darren was good value for his 7-4 win. O'Neill later paid tribute to his corner team before admitting that the

silver medal he achieved in Moscow at the 2010 European championships has taken his game on to another level.

Olympic bronze medallist (Beijing 2008) **Paddy Barnes** underlined his class when claiming a routine fifth successive senior trophy. Even though opponent on the night **Evan Metcalfe** of Crumlin BC gave his all throughout the contest, Barnes was always in control and boxed his way home to another 49kg victory.

Youthful Metcalfe was game for a scrap but found himself getting picked off by Barnes who glided in and out of range, altering the tempo at will. Evan bulled forward in the third round but Paddy reeled off some vicious ripostes to rouse the interest of the fans. The Holy Family man took a resounding 9-1 win and stated post-fight that he was closing in on Kenneth Egan's ten senior titles record. He also praised the endeavour of his young opponent, who can improve under the watchful eye of Phil Sutcliffe and his team.

Michael Conlan (St. John Bosco) made up for the disappointment of losing in the Ulster senior finals recently as he claimed his first Irish Elite crown (52kg). Opponent on the night, **Chris Phelan** of Ryston, was participating in his first senior tournament, having eliminated 2009 flyweight king Declan Geraghty in the semi-final. Chris came to give it a go and sailed into a 5-1 lead after the first session. Conlan used his snaking left lead to open the way for points-stealing combinations as he swept the second round 6-1 to open a two point advantage. Michael employed his skills and elusive moves to close the show out 11-7.

In the 91kg showdown Clonmel's **Con Sheehan** showed good mobility for a big lad as he blunted the attacks of **Patrick Corcoran** (Olympic). Honours were even at 2-2 after round one and the crowd groaned and sighed during round two as some meaty shots from Corcoran failed to register. He was two points down when the bell sounded for the third round and Sheehan took the last stanza 5-1

with some well-placed flurries. The promising heavyweight appears to have a bright future.

David Oliver Joyce is no stranger to a senior tear-up (as former rival Carl Frampton would certainly attest) and the St. Michael's Athy pugilist was eager to engage with St. Mary's mover **Michael McDonagh**. His title challenge ended in ignominy, however, when David Oliver was disqualified in the final session for a low blow. Joyce's style is not dissimilar to Frampton's, the way he maintains a high guard and rolls forward, slamming in right hooks to the torso is impressive. McDonagh elected to navigate the circumference of the ring in round one, picking and pawing while conceding every inch of ground and losing the round 2-0.

It was seemingly a routine night's work for Joyce until his fleet footed adversary decided to stand and trade in the second round. McDonagh suddenly showed that as well as being a gifted sprinter he could also box a bit too and started to recapture the sort of form that saw him beat defending lightweight king Eric Donovan to book this final spot. In the third round, an increasingly frustrated Joyce was becoming wayward with his shots and the 2009 EU gold medallist offered McDonagh a thorough testicular inspection with a crunching hook below the waist line. The red vested man rolled around on the canvas for several seconds before rising with a grimace on his face, prompting the referee to call a halt and disqualify Joyce. David Oliver was none too happy, patrolling the ring and growling before ripping off his headguard and gloves.

Holy Family starlet **Tyrone McCullagh** was unable to emulate the success of his gym mate Paddy Barnes with the youngster being comprehensively handled by talented former Olympic representative **John Joe Nevin**, at 56kg. McCullagh pawed with a portside jab that was intended to dissuade Nevin more than punish him. Tyrone tried hard and motored forward until the last but the experienced

Cavan native was slick and clever. Nevin used his class to control the pace and rack up points; punishing McCullagh often enough to see through a 5-2 championship win.

Surprise package **Adam Nolan** outpointed St. Saviours representative **Karl Brabazon** 13-4 in their 69kg affair. The pair paid little heed to the old boxing adage that two southpaws make for a dull fight as they met in centre ring for a good old fashioned battle. Brabazon's tight defence was loosening up by the end of the opener as he tried to claw back a 3-0 deficit. Lanky Nolan was making use of his long reach and the Bray boxer whipped in his shots effectively, leaving red vested Karl with a mountain to climb on the scorecards. Returning former champion Brabazon had shocked John Joe Joyce to reach the final and he rallied in the last round, but Nolan held firm and was a worthy winner at 13-4.

Going on last were the two big boys, **Cathal McMonagle** (Holy Trinity) versus **Kenneth Okungbowa** (Athlone). Muscular Okungbowa had made his intentions clear at the pre-fight introductions when he met McMonagle with a cold stare. He started fast and took the first round by a 3-1 score. McMonagle has a wealth of super-heavyweight experience and used his ring smarts to drag himself into the contest and claim the 91kg+ crown via a 12-5 total.

In the only female contest of the evening Drimnagh's **Sinead Kavanagh** beat **Patricia Roddy** of Bray 13-4 to deservedly take the 75kg award. In a fight filled with clinches and unclean work, Kavanagh was more economical with her output and used her jab well to keep Roddy -who lost her cool towards the end- at arm's length.

As usual, a rapturous reception greeted the immensely popular **Katie Taylor** to the ring as she accepted her 60kg prize via walkover. The Bray girl was also rightly lauded for having claimed four European, three world and three EU championships so far during her illustrious career.

Shamrock Shorts: Veteran campaigner Paul Griffin wants to roll back the years by becoming a 40-year-old *Prizefighter* tournament winner..... Severe financial cutbacks enforced on RTE Sport are the sole reason the National Broadcaster is unable to show Willie Casey and Guillermo Rigondeaux's WBA interim world title fight, according to RTE chief Ryle Nugent who blames severe financial cutbacks as the reason for his channel's decision to decline the Casey-Rigondeaux title fight.....Paul Hyland may face Cuba's Alexei Acosta on the above card.....Declan Trainor has left Australia and returned to Ireland in a bid to pursue his assault on the cruiserweight division.....Robbie Long is calling for another crack at Irish super-middleweight king Anthony Fitzgerald..... Promoter Frank Warren has made an offer to Ashley Theophane to fight Irish champion Frankie Gavin.....According to some quarters, Amir Khan is in danger of overlooking and underestimating the threat posed by WBA light-welterweight title challenger Paul McCloskey.

Murtagh wants another shot - 2nd March

Now that Anthony Fitzgerald has signed to box Affif Belghecham on March 19 for the EBA title, it is conceivable that the Dubliner will drop his hard earned Irish super-middleweight title.

One man spying an opportunity is former challenger Lee Murtagh. The southpaw based in Leeds fought Fitzgerald twice for the national crown and each time his challenge ended early due to nasty cuts. After realizing that a rubber match with Fitz is off the menu, Lee is willing to tackle any available co-challenger for a chance to claim the coveted prize.

"I've read that Fitzgerald is boxing for an EBA middleweight title which is something I've never heard of, but he is boxing against a quality opponent," conceded Murtagh. "I don't see how he can just dump the Irish title after what has happened in our last two fights. I'm more than happy to fight Robbie Long, either McDonaghs or have a rematch with Ciaran Healy. I do feel that I should be next in line because of the unsatisfactory ending to the last fight."



Murtagh has suffered from cuts in recent fights

© Kevin Finn

Lee was stopped in seven rounds by Fitzgerald in Dublin's City West on January 30 after the cut he sustained was deemed too nasty to allow the bout to continue. A BUI representative told Irish-boxing.com that the cut had clearly come from a punch and that Fitzgerald was well ahead at the time of the stoppage anyway. Lee, however, sees a different version of events.

"You can clearly see on the picture that the cut on my head wasn't from a punch," he contested. "The cut was inspected several times from rounds one to four and I felt at the time of the stoppage the cut hadn't got any worse. Had the fight been stopped then it would have been another no contest.

"I'm unhappy about some of the reporting I read on the fight. It was a good scrap and I spoke to people who had me ahead on the scorecards. They [the powers that be] obviously didn't want another no contest result. It wasn't clear whether the official word was that the cut was caused by a punch or a head clash. To me it was a head clash and the wound was deep."

Fighting through the pain barrier seems to be something Murtagh will have to contend with from now until the day he decides to hang up the gloves. The 36-year-old, who won and successfully defended a Central Area middleweight title in his heyday, was forced to withdraw from two previous Fitzgerald fights with separate knee injuries. When they finally got together, in Limerick late last year, the fight was ended from a similar head wound.

"I also dislocated my left shoulder in the first round of our rematch and had to fight on for a couple of rounds with a numbing sensation," he revealed. "My corner man pushed it back into place and I hadn't even realized. I wished Fitzgerald all the best for his career and I sincerely mean that. That said, I want another fight to settle the score

- 100 per cent I'd take this again as soon as I'm fit and well."

That won't be on March 19, as the soft tissue around Lee's latest laceration has not sufficiently healed to accept a bout on that date. But other options could yet materialise.

"Phil Sutcliffe mentioned to me about boxing Robbie Long or JJ McDonagh although I'd prefer a third fight with Fitzgerald as its unfinished business from the way I see it. After the fight, Phil told me there wouldn't be a third one though. I told Phil that because our first fight had ended in a clash of heads, which was a no contest, and then this fight ended unsatisfactorily on my part with a cut to the head, that I thought a third fight would have been a natural."

Earlier in his career Lee challenged Ciaran Healy for the Irish light-middleweight title in the King's Hall, Belfast, as an eager crowd waited for John Duddy-Howard Eastman. After being stopped in five rounds, it was another three years before he received another Irish title chance. It may be that the man originally from Short Strand never gets to realize his career dream, but he's not ready to quit just yet.

"It [the Fitzgerald fight] was a good, honest scrap, but I'm not a complainer. I'll dust myself off and come again."

**"I'd fight Jason Booth tomorrow," states Carl Frampton -
2nd March**

Undefeated Belfast boxer Carl Frampton returns to the ring in Huddersfield on Saturday, March 5 when the super-bantamweight provides support to the Gary Sykes-Carl Johanneson British title headliner. The 24-year-old from Tigers Bay faces rugged Bulgarian Alexander Vladimirov, a 30-year-old who sports a 9-4-1 (4 KOs) record.

"It would be good to get some rounds under my belt and he has been in some good company," stated Frampton. "He's a tough boy, never been stopped. It is an eight-rounder and hopefully he can take me into the later rounds."

Despite Vladimirov's reputation for durability (never stopped in four defeats), Frampton has dismissed his previous two opponents inside the distance. Gavin Reid lasted two rounds in a Celtic title challenge last December and Ukrainian Yuriy Voronin managed three rounds in the same Ulster Hall venue in September.

"Training has gone well and I believe I can fight for eight rounds. Jason Booth is the British and Commonwealth champion and I would fight him tomorrow. Kiko Martinez is another option because I am currently ranked in the top ten in Europe."

Carl will be keeping a close eye on Willie Casey when the Limerick man tackles high-class Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux in Dublin on March 19. Hard-hitting Spaniard Martinez is now also a realistic target and the idea of Frampton facing off with unbeaten Bury starlet Scott Quigg remains a mouth-watering prospect. While the options line up, Eastern European tough guy Vladimirov is next on the agenda. Having gone the 12-round distance with an unbeaten fighter in his last outing, the Sofia native could prove a tricky customer for Carl. Now sporting an 8-0 slate

with five victories via the early finish, Frampton is already eyeing the big time.

“I feel I am ready to fight for these titles,” he said. “All I have to do is keep winning and I will get a shot at a belt.”

Frampton-Chacin report - 6th March

Carl Frampton registered an impressive stoppage victory on Saturday, March 5 when the Tigers Bay brawler halted Venezuela's Oscar Chacin inside four rounds. 'The Jackal' is already pushing towards British title honours and could add a second trophy to his cabinet (to complement the Celtic super-bantamweight crown) before the end of the year.

Frampton was originally scheduled to repel the challenge of Alexander Vladimirov but found himself faced with the prospect of cutting down the wiry 32-year-old South American instead. Fighting in Huddersfield, on the undercard of Gary Sykes-Carl Johanneson, the 24-year-old managed to do what former two-time European champion Kiko Martinez had failed to do back in February of this year and finish the rugged Maracaibo native inside schedule.

Chacin sauntered back to his corner at the end of the third round sporting a nasty slash above the left eye. Refusing to allow his vastly more experienced foe any time to regroup, Carl set about him early in the fourth session whipping in his trademark flurries of left and right hooks to head and body, trapping Oscar in a whirlwind of leather. Ref John Keane summoned the doctor and the officials agreed that Chacin could continue. Only briefly, however, as Frampton increased the tension, third man Keane called it off with the cut gradually deteriorating.

Carl already holds the Celtic title and the youngster is seeking to prove why he was chosen as one of Sky Sports' '11 to watch in 2011'. He could now be in line for a shot at the vacated British or Commonwealth titles and also has 2011 European or EU belt aspirations.

"I would hope this is the last fight before Carl challenges for the British or Commonwealth super-bantamweight title," Barry McGuigan told Irish-

boxing.com post-fight. "He's ready to go right now. He can do 12 rounds flat out. He is coming to the point when it is the right time for him to fight for a major title."

"Everything went to plan and I'm happy with the result and the performance," added Frampton. "I caught him with a few body shots and I knew I hurt him but he is a tough lad. I was hurting him that much that I think if the cut had not happened I would have stopped him in the next round anyway.

"I will leave what is next up to Barry. He is in talks with Barry Hearn and Matchroom about where we go next. I will wait and see what they say. There are lots of big fights in the super-bantamweight division now and I am confident I can beat anyone they put in front of me. I know I am ready to fight for titles."

Big Fight Preview: Casey ready to prove everyone wrong
- 18th March

It's fair to say that there is no great number of fight followers giving **Willie Casey** much of a chance on March 19. The Limerick man tackles Cuba's **Guillermo Rigondeaux** in Dublin and a quick glance across the websites and forums shows that a consensus has been made, with debate and chatter focusing on which round Rigondeaux will finish the job, rather than whether Casey has the tools to complete another famous victory.

Even though Rigondeaux's superb amateur pedigree, seemingly unflappable demeanour and vast array of skills make him a frightening prospect for any opponent, I would also be cautious of writing his WBA interim title challenger off too quickly. Casey thrives on being the underdog, has resoundingly improved - not only from his debut in 2008 but noticeably since his win over Tyson Cave last year - and will be whipped into career-best condition on fight night, primed and ready for his powerful engine to keep rolling for 12 hard rounds.

The mood in the camp is unerringly positive. There is high confidence in head trainer Phil Sutcliffe's tactical nous and his coaching teams' ability to meticulously prepare Casey behind the scenes for the City West showdown.

"Everything's on schedule and Willie is 100 per cent, in the form of his life," says Don O'Leary, head player at DolPhil promotions. "It's all about the way Phil trains his fighters. There's absolutely no talk of Rigondeaux winning this fight, in Willie's mind or in any of our minds - we will win."

Don sees the vociferous, packed out crowd being able to roar their man on through the difficult moments and upset the former two-time Olympic gold medal winner. The fact

that Rigondeaux is managed by Cork businessman Gary Hyde only adds further spice to the proceedings.

"It's a complete sell-out and the atmosphere will be unreal," continues O'Leary. "Ian Tims-Michael Sweeney is going ahead as planned, that should be a great fight and the fans will get Katie Taylor as well. The casual boxing fans love watching Katie fight. I reckon the pick of the undercard will be **Anthony Fitzgerald** versus **Affif Belghecham** though."

He might be right there. Affif Belghecham is far and away the toughest test of Fitzgerald's career so far and a genuine threat to the impressive 11-fight unbeaten run 'The Pride' has put together since getting knocked out in Dublin almost two years to the day. Even though the EBA title (on the line for this scrap) is a bit of a head scratcher, Belghecham is the acid test that DolPhil have been craving for Fitz, who has outgrown Irish title level and is now eager to prove himself on the European circuit.

Amateur queen **Katie Taylor** is expected to be added to the card and her immense popularity will further boost viewing figures. It's perhaps no real coincidence that her name was linked to the bill just as broadcasting heavyweight RTE finally agreed to give this card the airtime it deserves. It seemed for a while that it would run without TV coverage, as RTE initially cited budget cuts as the reason they couldn't take it on and then, one-by-one, the likes of TV3, Setanta and ESPN ruled themselves out of the running.

It was a frustrating time of uncertainty and Don O'Leary realises the importance of nationwide coverage: "It's great having RTE on board. All of our efforts will be rewarded and the fighters will be showcased across the country. A superb main event like this deserves to be televised."



Three wise men: Dowling, Dunne and Rock will be analysing Casey's chances
© Kevin Finn

One grudge match that will finally be settled on fight night features **Michael Sweeney** against **Ian Tims**, with the pair clashing for the vacant Irish cruiserweight crown. Tims was a multiple title winner in the amateur game and has strung together eight wins in the professional ranks. He has, however, been crippled by spells of inactivity and that could hurt him whenever this fight inevitably shifts into the trenches. Ultra confident Sweeney, on the other hand, sees it playing out only one way.

"Speak to me after the fight to see what damage 'The Storm' has done on Saturday night in Dublin!" he proclaimed. "Training went well and I can't wait for the fight now," added the man who has sparred Arthur Abraham and Wladimir Klitschko prior to past assignments. "I'm really looking forward to it because a good win will move me on to bigger things. This fight has been a long time in the making. Ian got injured five days before the last time we were supposed to fight."

Sweeney ended up outpointing Tommy Tolan when the Belfast slugger ended a five-year ring exodus to step in as

Tims' replacement in Limerick that night. Neither man is too keen to admit it but there is a begrudging respect between the two. Sweeney has now signed with DolPhil on a long-term contract and is busy training hard with Sutcliffe in the Crumlin gym. Tims had not fought in over a year before stopping Viktor Szalai this January, but the 31-year-old is enjoying good sparring down in Cork under the watchful eye of ex-pro Paschal Collins. The team was so desperate for a fight at the end of last year that Tims was considering a move up to heavyweight and looking to challenge Martin Rogan. As expected, nothing materialized for big Ian on that front.

Ever since Sweeney knocked out Jamie Power in 2009, and a fight between him and John Waldron was made irrelevant when Waldron fell to Ciaran Healy, this has appeared the natural next step for both men.

"No problems this time," Sweeney guaranteed, "things are looking good and I want to fight for the EU title when I get this one out of the way. I'm taking it one step at a time though, I'm only focused on March 19 and Ian Tims at the moment."

Dublin disappointment as Casey feels the 'Big Bang'
from Rigondeaux - 20th March

Willie Casey was dealt a resounding 'Big Bang' last night as the Limerick hero suffered a resounding one round demolition at the hands of Cuban **Guillermo Rigondeaux**. Both men were undefeated entering in to the City West Hotel, Dublin showdown but Willie found the speed, power and accuracy of the former two-time Olympic gold medallist just too much to handle.

Having followed Casey's career from the start it was difficult to watch as the Southill man was comprehensively handled by 30-year-old Rigondeaux in this WBA interim super-bantamweight duel. Rather than cutting a despondent figure in the dressing room post-fight, Willie was his usual upbeat self as he sat in the corner of the room, having his hand tape cut by a disappointed training team. Chatting cordially to members of the press, microphones and tape recorders all thrust in his direction, Casey went over the post mortem.

"He's so skilful and clever, which we knew beforehand," lamented Willie. "His shots came from every angle. Good chin or bad chin, if you get caught with shots like that then you're going down."

The first bell had barely sounded and Casey was already backed up against the wall and in a desperate battle for survival. He tried to roll the head - a trait that trainer Phil Sutcliffe demands from all of his fighters; he wanted to move from side-to-side, work into punching range and apply the intelligent pressure that his team believed would garner success. But it was obvious from the first 20 seconds that Rigondeaux's speed was phenomenal. A left hook to the body started the downfall. Casey backed off after taking it, he tried to shake off the effects and circle out of danger. Guillermo was nonchalant, stalking into distance with his

hands coiled like a spring waiting to unload. Willie was immediately wary, his ribs tingling from moments earlier he tucked his hands down to protect the bruised torso from another onslaught. No problem for Rigo, he just moved upstairs, slamming a left uppercut into Casey's jaw and forcing the 29-year-old to touch down briefly, his legs dipping to the canvas.

"He showed that he can fight and really punch too," Casey said afterwards. "In boxing it's you or them. Unfortunately it was me tonight."



Rigondeaux dishes out the 'Big Bang' to Casey
© Kevin Finn

Casey responded to defeat with the same gracious manner that has endeared him to fight fans throughout a quite amazing rise to prominence. From undercards in Killarney to bill toppers in Limerick and Dublin, in front of thousands of screaming supporters and fighting for European and 'world' title bodies' belts. No wonder he's been labelled the Cinderella Man of Irish boxing.

But as the old saying goes, all good things must come to an end and knockdown one was the beginning of the end of this unbeaten thrill ride. Casey dragged himself vertical

and bounced on the spot; Rigondeaux had already raised an arm aloft as he paraded to the neutral corner. Another lightning bolt flurry reined in on Willie. There was an uppercut, a right to body thrown in there too - who knows which particular blow did the damage. He was down again.

This time it was no flash knockdown. Casey was hurt, but rose bravely and stumbled around the ring on jelly legs, trying to regain his balance. Vastly experienced referee Stanley Christodoulou gave him the benefit of the doubt but clearly signalled that one more trip to canvas and he would rightly call a halt to proceedings. As it happened Casey wasn't strictly on the floor when he did jump in. It was just moments later, Rigondeaux was teeing off on the ropes, his punches landing with alarming regularity. The South African official held on to Casey and Phil Sutcliffe jumped in to the ring to cradle his charge.

The fans applauded Rigondeaux as he jumped onto a corner man's shoulders. The supporters in attendance may have seen their hero's run come to a shattering conclusion but they had also witnessed something special in the ring. Rigondeaux was arguably one of the greatest amateurs of all time and now looks to have all the tools to emulate that success in the professional ranks.

"He was the best amateur and will be just as good as a professional," lauded Cork manager Gary Hyde, a man who has enjoyed mixed success in bringing Cubans over to Ireland. "Rigondeaux was nervous beforehand but I was even more nervous because I knew that Casey was a warrior and it would take something special to stop him. Guillermo is something special."

Phil Sutcliffe also had a word post-fight: "Willie is still European super-bantamweight champion [he had in fact been stripped] so we'll be back again. We just ran into an exceptional fighter tonight. Willie was caught early (from

body shots); he stepped back and was hurt. Rigondeaux knew this immediately and just stepped in for the kill.”

“A true champion gets back up and recovers from these setbacks,” avowed Casey.

Gary Hyde had two other prospects from his stable on the undercard. **Mark ‘Kid Dynamite’ Heffron** stopped **David Pulido** in the third round. Pulido had already tasted canvas from a body blow in the second session. Technically proficient Heffron looked useful and has been around a bit already, fighting in varied locations while he looks to establish himself in the pro game.

Georgian light-welterweight **Levan Ghvamichava** isn’t the easiest name to remember but it could be worthwhile trying after he dominated former European title challenger **Mihaita Mutu** over four rounds. Mutu was dropped from a left hook and lost 40-35. It was scheduled as a six-rounder in the official programme and Mutu’s corner were a little perplexed when it was wrapped up after just four.

Former bareknuckle pug **Paddy Ward** used his huge size advantages to tame **Igoris Borucha** over four rounds. Paddy secured a 40-36 verdict behind his left jab and has shown great improvements since losing on his debut.

Paddy McDonagh outpointed colourful Latvian **Jevgenijs Andreevs** 60-54 in an all-southpaw encounter.

Christina McMahon opened the show with a fourth round stoppage of **Julia Cvetkova**, but suffered a badly cut left eye in the process. **Katie Taylor** received the second loudest cheer of the evening. She outpointed Spaniard **Maria Del Carmen** over four-twos in a female amateur affair.

Tims wins Irish crown and Fitzgerald is EBA king - 20th March

Ian Tims is the new Irish cruiserweight champion after defeating co-challenger **Michael Sweeney** on the big March 19 City West undercard. Tims dug deep, gritted his teeth and never stopped motoring forward, claiming a deserved 97-95 win on Emile Tiedt's scorecard.

Question marks will no doubt hover over Sweeney's conditioning, with the Ballinrobe man coming in just one pound under the cruiserweight limit of 14st 4lb, sporting a bulging midriff. Tims immediately set about testing it with right hooks to the body. He maintained this approach throughout the fight and stuck rigidly to the game plan devised by an extremely vocal Paschal Collins, working his corner. Sweeney failed to hit any real rhythm until the third round when he raked in an impressive combination. Both men were warned for liberal use of the heads and elbows and Collins was barking at the ref constantly throughout the fourth round. Third man Emile Tiedt eventually tired of the ringside commentary and leaned his head through the ropes to ask the question, "Do you want to referee this fight?" Collins declined a response but he did have a point. Proof of this came in the sixth when Tims came out of an exchange with a cut to the right eye.

The corner dealt with it well and despite the bleeding, it never became a major issue. Sweeney's nose was dribbling claret in round seven and he found himself gasping for breath at times. Tims was also slowing down, crowding his work and pushing Michael on to the ropes but lacking the energy to capitalise. Sweeney's left hook came into play but made only fleeting appearances in what was an absorbing battle, proof of the extra levels fighters are willing to travel to when national pride is at stake.

Tims dug in well for the remaining two rounds and blocked the majority of Sweeney's ripostes. This would make for a good rematch, particularly if Sweeney was in better shape.

"Sweeney did well and I take my hat off to him but I felt comfortable in there," said Tims. "I thought he would have come out faster but the plan was to win the early rounds. I was fit, trained hard for 10 rounds and I wasn't even worried about the cut. He was getting caught so he came in with the head looking for a split but he ran out of steam in the end anyway."

Anthony Fitzgerald claimed the EBA title on the main support bout. Opponent **Affif Belghecham** represented a steep incline in the quality of Fitzgerald's CV and the Dubliner dealt with it admirably, even if the ending was controversial. Belghecham seemed surprised by Anthony's aggressive start and covered up immediately, lying on the ropes and giving plenty of ground to his marauding opponent. He was cut on the bridge of the nose and rode out the storm of the opener.



In control: Fitzgerald used his jab to control Belghecham

© Kevin Finn

By the second he had a taste for the fight and started moving into range, becoming the fight-forcer and pushing out the jab. Fitzgerald looked lean at 11st 5lb and introduced a snappy jab of his own, proving he can box and move off the back foot and showing that he is maturing into a more rounded professional. Affif's cut on the nose was worsening but the fun and games were yet to come. Midway through the fifth round Fitzgerald found a lease of life and unleashed a flurry of blows. Belghecham covered up tightly and was pushed back to the ropes. Fitz continued to throw and in fairness the Frenchman did not fire back – a grave mistake of any fighter under pressure and about to be stopped. The referee decided that he was under reasonable duress and dived in to halt the bout. To say that Belghecham was annoyed is putting it mildly. He had never been stopped before and held a proud reputation for toughness; he will now be facing a lengthy ban for his after-fight antics.

Screaming like a man possessed, Belghecham charged the referee and pushed him across the ring. The bemused official attempted to stay cool and hope that the irate visitor would cool down – fans were no doubt wondering why Belghecham was more aggressive after the fight than during the action. He punched the ref in the throat and got in another shove before security intervened and Affif's trainer stood around the referee, creating a barrier to protect him. It was a distasteful ending to a good scrap.



*Unbelievable! Affif is livid after ref ends his EBA dream
© Kevin Finn*

I think that the man who lasted the distance with Andy Lee and Darren Barker should have been allowed to continue, as his experienced record suggests he can last the course at championship level. He should not, however, have given a referee -unaware of his reputation for durability- the opportunity to jump in and stop the fight, by not returning any fire to ward Fitzgerald off. Either way,

his reaction was disgraceful and reminded me of the time Merqui Sosa flipped out and attacked the referee after Roy Jones Jr stopped him, way back in 1996.

“We knew from the first round that he was afraid and expected him to go, but we just didn’t know when,” Fitzgerald beamed, clutching his EBA strap. “What was that reaction all about? Was he trying to say that he shouldn’t have been stopped? He wasn’t throwing any punches back at me. I think that I can beat both Darren Barker and Andy Lee and I proved it tonight by beating Belghecham like that. People were saying I didn’t belong up at that level but I stopped him in five rounds and they couldn’t stop him. I’ll leave my next move to Phil and the team.”

Introducing Mark Ginley - 23rd March

Former Oliver Plunkett club man Mark Ginley has decided to ditch his head guard and vest and join the ever growing number of Belfast-based pugilists turning pro under Graham Earl's fledgling promotional outfit. Ginley will make his first paid appearance on April 2 in the King's Hall complex as part of the 'Fists of Fury' show where a number of exciting prospects will showcase their skills to the Belfast faithful.

"I didn't box too well in the Commonwealth Games box-offs, because I was just back from a holiday in Mexico and that was one of the main reasons I decided to turn pro," Ginley explains. "I had a few fights after that one though and it was the result in a fight against Cyprus that really made my mind up for me. I boxed the head off the Cypriot guy and I was on the losing end of the decision. It was then that I got chatting to Graham Earl and things started rolling from there."

Ginley wouldn't be the first fighter to lose heart with the amateur game after losing a bout, in his eyes unfairly, on the points scoring system. He did however enjoy enough success in that code to persuade the 23-year-old that he had the talent to make it as a pro and, more importantly, give former British champion Earl reason to add Mark to his burgeoning stable.

"I boxed for Ireland's senior team against Russia and England, won a bronze medal in the UK CYP's in 2006 and was Intermediate champion that year," he continues. "I also won five Ulster gold medals, four Antrim gold medals and four Northern Ireland CYP golds during my time. I got a victory against the USA in June 2009 in New Jersey and later won a silver medal in Cyprus at the Limassol cup in October 2009. Other countries in the competition were

England, Greece, Russia, Cyprus and then Northern Ireland.”

Ginley describes himself as an exciting fighter with a busy style who likes to keep it long and counter punch his opponents. The prospect is still awaiting confirmation of an opponent on debut night but is unfazed by whomever Earl places in front of him. “It doesn’t really matter who I fight because he only has two hands like me and I’ve trained too hard so far to lose this bout.”

Now based in Gleann BC, located off the Glen Road in west Belfast, two men with growing reputations will oversee Ginley’s progress. Former Immaculata boxer Gerard McManus will take on main coaching duties while Paul McIlroy will handle strength and conditioning.

“I have a great team around me and we all work very well together,” enthuses Mark. “We are working out of the Gleann boxing gym but I still call into my amateur gym, the Oliver Plunkett, just to see all the lads and coaches. I get on very well with my former coaches Patsy McAllister and Jimmy McGrath; they will be there at the King’s Hall cheering me on. Tommy McCarthy and Tyrone McKenna [former Plunkett gym mates] are good friends outside boxing and I still see them all the time.”

Working with Graham Earl is already starting to benefit Ginley as he looks to make a smooth transition from amateur achiever to professional hopeful. Some good intense sparring, which currently sees him enjoying a spell of training in London, will help ready the Belfast native for his big hometown debut.

“The camp in London is going brilliantly,” he confirms, “and I’m getting plenty of rounds done. I will hopefully get to spar a few rounds with Graham before the training is finished. I have been sparring Mark Morris and Eddie Nesbitt who are both preparing for their professional debuts and train in the same gym as me. I’ve sparred

Commonwealth gold medallist Paddy Gallagher and Paul Hyland and James Fryers from the Immaculata club.

“My brother ‘Sugar’ Ray Ginley is over in London too for some sparring. Ray boxes with Gleann now; he’s won Antrim and Ulster Intermediates and was crowned Ulster senior champion. He’s a very good kid and when we train together it’s great because we push each other even harder.”

Mark competed in the 64kg weight class as an amateur but was naturally light for the weight, having found 60kg a struggle. Oliver Plunkett coach Patsy McAllister was also understandably keen to keep Ginley away from another of his prized assets, Tyrone McKenna. Mark is eyeing the lightweight 9st 9lb limit when he begins punching for pay on April 2. Another promising career will begin at the famous King’s Hall (in the adjoining Nugent Hall) that has held fights involving so many great champions of yesteryear. Ginley will star alongside the next batch of eager boxers, aiming to become the Belfast boxing heroes of tomorrow.

“My career aspirations are to become the best I possibly can be – I didn’t turn pro to make up the numbers,” he declares. “My eyes are set on a British title just because from boxing as a novice amateur, I always viewed the Lonsdale belt as a big deal. That’s the one I want to win and then I can move on to bigger things, but at the minute my sole focus is on my debut and getting that important first win.”

Introducing Joe Hillerby - 23rd March

Sandy Row slugger Joe Hillerby is reckoning on a glorious homecoming when the Belfast middleweight features on Graham Earl's April 2 King's Hall show. Some of the local fighters are making their professional debuts on the fight-heavy card dubbed as 'Fists of Fury' but Hillerby has punched for pay twice already. Joe followed up a first round debut knockout of Luton's Gavin Putney with a four round points success over Lincoln warhorse Ryan Clark. Both wins were registered over in England but next stop will be Belfast for the 23-year-old.

"With two wins on the trot already, April 2 will see win number three for me, all being well," Hillerby told me. "Fighting in Belfast at the King's Hall in front of my fans will make it an even greater experience."

Joe's opponent on the night will be Lancaster's Ian Jackson, who has lost his only two professional contests thus far, including his debut in a single round. He did recently go the four round distance in his last bout, against Danny Brown, so knows how to hang in there. However, you would expect a rising prospect like Hillerby to deal with him fairly comfortably.

"It is going to be exciting because I have an explosive style," said Joe. "I like to work behind my jab, with bursts to the body and head; always on my toes and ready for what comes back at me. I don't think the current point scoring system in the amateurs suited my style and believe the pros are more for me. Most of the time now in the amateur game the fighter doing all the punching gets defeated because the opponent just covers up and steals points.

"When Graham Earl handed me the chance to turn professional and told me of his plans, especially that I would get the chance to fight both here [in Northern

Ireland] and across the water, I viewed it as a great opportunity. It is good to see boxing in Northern Ireland starting to blossom again and I enjoy my training in the Sandy Row gym as the trainer [Ian McSorley] knows how to get the best out of me. Over the last year I have sparred Neil Sinclair, Willie Thompson, David Rosbotham, Manny Oshunrinde and Ian Boyd."

The latter three are all set to feature on the show. Rosbotham is making his pro debut while Boyd and Oshunrinde have enjoyed mixed fortunes so far as professionals. Manny was a reasonably touted prospect when he turned over, but was stopped in three rounds by another familiar face to Irish boxing fans in Saintfield's Brian Cusack.

The aforementioned wins over Putney and Clark helped Hillerby feel his way into the pro ranks. Joe explains each bout from his own perspective.

"In the first fight against Putney I went out to stick to my boxing, stay calm and work behind the jab but after a few jabs I let a right hand go which stunned him and I knew I was going to put him away. I picked up the pace and Putney wasn't throwing shots back, so the fight was stopped.

"Fighting against Ryan Clark in the York Hall was a great experience for me as the York Hall is the pinnacle of boxing and every great fighter to come out of Britain has fought there. I felt a bit nervous at first but I was in good shape and all the nerves left as soon as I got into the ring. In the first round of the fight I overwhelmed him with a really fast start, working in bursts and winning that round easily. When I went back to the corner my trainer told me to work on my boxing for the next three rounds so I just stayed behind the jab and out boxed him. I was 'over the moon' winning every round. Overall I'm happy with my progression in the pro ranks so far and I'm just going to keep up the hard work from here."

The man nicknamed 'The Faith' cites Arturo Gatti, Nigel Benn and Joe Calzaghe as three of his boxing idols, as all three showed great deals of heart and determination throughout their respective careers. Joe also tells of how he first caught the boxing bug: "The Sandy Row gym opened and my Dad said to me I should go up and try it and from that point I just kept at it. When I'm not boxing I like to go for a game of pool, watch the football or chill with my mates. I enjoy getting a break."

He was no slouch in the amateur game either: "In the amateurs I won many titles, including the Antrim, Ulster, Boys' clubs, Irish, Four Nations and a multi-nation tournament. I was a finalist in the UK school boys representing Northern Ireland and also have represented Ireland and my county.

"I am enjoying the training that Graham has us involved in, because we go over to Luton for training camps before fights and enjoy intense workouts. Maybe I can fight for an Irish title or Celtic title by the end of the year. I believe that would be a good base to build on and get up the rankings."

The next objective is to impress the fans on April 2 and pave the way for more exciting nights in some of Belfast's famous old boxing venues.

"I can't wait to finally box in Belfast. It's a long hard road in boxing and I am just going to get my head down and keep working as hard as I can - hopefully then I will get my rewards."

Mark Morris preparing for professional debut - 23rd March

The last time I interviewed Mark Morris, the aspiring amateur was posing in a Gleann BC ring with a cheque from the ASDA supermarket. That windfall provided the west Belfast club with much needed funds and Morris is now looking to boost his own cash flow by moving on to the professional circuit. Mark is one of Graham Earl's golden group and the 22-year-old was hoping to turn pro on April 2 in Belfast's King's Hall complex. Unfortunately a hand injury has ruled him out of that one but he is hoping to get in the ring sooner rather than later.

Mark's come forward style means that he leaves little to chance in sparring and training, and the hand just gave way on this occasion. Regardless, Morris believes that his come-forward style will ultimately serve him well in the professional game.

"I'm an aggressive fighter, always going forward and I love a good fight with strong hard punches. I was an aggressive amateur boxer, throwing lots of shots and only getting one point for all my work [was frustrating]. When I met Graham Earl he was impressed with me and loved the way I fought. He asked me to sign and because I've always wanted to box professional then I saw this as my big chance to do just that."

An impressive roster of honours accompanied Morris as he handed in his head guard and vest for a stab at professional glory. Five Antrim titles, five Ulster, three boys' club and one Antrim intermediate triumph complete the haul. Mark also starred in international bouts, including a particularly fruitful trip to Canada for a multi-nations style tournament.

"Three fights, three wins and the boxer of the week award plus a fight of the night award," he proudly

remembers. "I fought in the UK's too, but was beaten in the semi-final on that occasion."

Mark will continue to train under amateur guru Gerard McManus, with Paul McIlroy handling strength and conditioning duties. He enjoys the same set-up as one of our previously featured fighters Mark Ginley who trains alongside Morris at Gleann boxing club on the Glen Road. Morris, nicknamed 'The Reaper', has been busy sparring Ginley as well as his brother Raymond, plus Gleann starlet Paddy Gallagher. Eddie Nesbitt and Terry Holmes have also helped keep him razor sharp in preparation for fight night.

"We have a lot of experience in the team. Gerard is one of the best coaches around and Desi Hill [Gleann's main man] has been like a father to me; he's looked after me for a long time and got me to training when I didn't want to go. We're a family up at Gleann with everyone looking out for each other."

Contrary to the usual tales of a youngster sitting down watching old video tapes of favourite fighters or tapping the bags with a hero in mind, Morris isn't a huge boxing fan. He wasn't raised on the fistic art and actually fell into the sport by chance.

"I found out that a boxing club had opened just up the street from me and a few of my mates were already there," he recalls. "So I was supposed to meet them outside the club but they didn't show up; I was freaking out about whether to go in after them or just go home, but after a good 10 minutes outside I decided to go in and it was the best thing I've ever done in my life. I don't have any favourite fighters because I don't watch boxing. I just love training hard and fighting hard."

Outside of the ring Mark subsidises his income by working as a labourer and is a keen participant in a variety of sports. "I especially enjoy playing football in the local leisure centre every weekend and I do a bit of swimming

during the week. I also go out a lot with my fiancée, for food and to the cinema."

But when he enters the squared circle, Morris is all business and looking to make a name for himself with immediate effect.

"I want to win everything I possibly can," he concludes, "by starting at the bottom and working my way quickly up the ladder."

**Brian Magee beaten but unbowed after Lucian Bute
defeat – 23rd March**

Super-middleweight title challenger Brian Magee was unable to topple IBF ruler Lucian Bute last Saturday but after a determined effort the Ulsterman has vowed to fight on and challenge again for major 12st honours. The experienced southpaw may not have too much time left on his side at 35 but he proved that he can mix it with the very best, taking the fight to Bute for 10 rounds before the champion's heavy blows took their toll.

"He punched hard and is a very good fighter," admitted Brian, who tasted the canvas three times in Montreal's Bell Centre venue. "He was better than I thought; very elusive and hard to get to. Every time I tried to unload, he moved out of range. His movement was very good and we always knew that a left to the body was his main weapon."

Talk is already surfacing of a possible challenge to James DeGale, the red-hot British champion who meets Commonwealth king George Groves on May 21 in London's O2 Arena. That is not a foregone conclusion by any means for the cocksure Londoner and Magee may instead try and tempt the WBA's 'regular' belt-holder Dmitri Sartison into a bout.

"I believe I have more to offer and will keep going," said Brian. "I did well against Bute and we will sit down and see where I go from here, but I think I proved a point in there. I was a huge underdog and people said it would be a mismatch, but it wasn't. I gave my best but sadly fell short."

The arena held over 12,000 people on the night and was televised by American television big-hitters Showtime, who were impressed by the Lisburn man's efforts.

"This is what it is all about," Magee explained. "The week before the fight was a great experience and the

atmosphere in the stadium was electric. I have to say I have been treated really well since I got here and apart from the result this has been a great experience. Fighting at this level is a massive buzz and I want more of it."

Manager Pat Magee was equally impressed with Brian's resolve: "We are disappointed not to have won, but Lucian Bute is a special champion. Clearly he's the best in the world at super-middleweight. Brian gave him a great fight. Brian has done himself proud and now he should take six months to really think about what he wants to do. I'm sure he can get another title shot but it's up him."

Brian proved on his European title-winning night in Denmark over one year ago that he possesses the style and ability to give any champion a tough night's work. The former star amateur will now dust himself off and try again.

"I would have loved to have lasted the 12 rounds, but it was not to be," he ruefully remarked. "Bute was just better on the night, but I have no regrets in taking the fight as I wanted to test myself against the best in the division.

"He was just better than we all thought. He is a great champion," concluded Magee.

Casey ready to bounce back after Rigondeaux defeat -
23rd March

Willie Casey's dressing room was a pretty solemn place to be in on Saturday, March 19. As the Southill southpaw got his hand wraps cut, by an equally disappointed corner team, the 29-year-old lamented his loss to quality Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux. Just as candid and honest in defeat as he had been during an amazing journey to the fringes of world class, Casey picked the bones of his first round mauling at the hands of a fighter of the highest calibre.

"Sometimes it's about whoever gets caught first and I was the one who got caught tonight," said Willie. "Rigondeaux has everything, he's a world-class operator and I didn't realise just how strong he is. I got in there and he caught me with a couple of shots and then I quickly realised what I was up against."

Many pre-fight predictions had reached the conclusion that Casey would lose, most likely by stoppage, but few thought it would occur in such a brutal fashion. The Limerick man enjoyed huge vocal support from over 4,000 fans packed inside Dublin's City West venue, but he was unable to get into the fight. Is there a chance that the bout came too soon for a man with only 11 professional fights?

"I don't think that this fight was too soon for me," Casey countered. "I trained extremely hard for it and you can't sum it up in one single round because I've spent the last ten weeks preparing for this moment."

He admitted that a savage body shot early in the opening round hurt him and took a good minute to come back from. "I didn't think I was going to recover from that but I did and then I got hit with a hook to the head straight away," stated DolPhil Promotions' golden goose. "You tense up after taking a good body shot and find it hard to breathe. Some guys go down from those shots and never

get back up again. I thought I could see it through, by getting on the bike and moving around the ring but he got to me again shortly after."

Casey was a complete unknown to many boxing fans this time last year, until he answered a short-notice call to replace Wayne McCullough in the *Prizefighter* tournament. He has been on board a rollercoaster ever since.

"To walk into a packed stadium with such an amazing crowd made it all worthwhile," Casey said. "They were roaring my name and I hope in the next fight I can get that sort of support again. I suppose the longer it went on, the better chance I would have had but it's hard to predict things, you have to just get on with it.

"Rigondeaux landed the 'big bangs', he came on strong and I immediately realised that he was at a higher level than my previous opponents. He wasn't moving on to the back foot and threw his shots from all directions. He brought all of his amateur experience with him and he's a worthy winner."

Vastly experienced referee Stanley Christodoulou gave Casey every opportunity to recover but the speed and accuracy of the Cuban master was just too much.

"If the ref had let me go on then I would have continued but he did his job well and played by the rules," Casey mused. "I'm not frustrated; I didn't get a 12-round battering anyway.

"I'm fighting for a 'world' title after only 11 fights and I still feel it was the right time. I'd take another big fight without a doubt. I was 110 per cent positive that I would win tonight but I never came into boxing thinking that I would remain unbeaten. The real test is what I do next."

Quite what that is will be open to speculation. Casey may yet try and force his way back into European title contention, but his route could be blocked if Spaniard Kiko Martinez defeats Jason Booth when the pair clash for the EBU title in March. Martinez and his team are still seething

that Casey reneged on an agreement to defend the European crown against him earlier this year. Kiko was due to defend against Casey in 2010 but suffered an injury and vacated the title to allow Willie and Paul Hyland to contest it in Limerick last November. Casey won, agreed to defend against Martinez and then dropped the belt to face Rigondeaux instead. The rest, of course, is history.

Willie remains unperturbed by the whole situation and is instead seeking inspiration from the fortunes of another former Irish boxing legend: "Bernard Dunne came back from a big defeat and won a world title," Casey recalled. "I'm not afraid of being beaten and yes I got knocked out, but this happens to the best of them. It's not the end of Willie Casey.

"I just have to pick myself up and see where I go from here."

**Rogie says no to *Prizefighter* tournament spot - 27th
March**

Veteran heavyweight Martin Rogan has opted against taking part in the forthcoming International Heavyweights *Prizefighter* contest scheduled for May 7, 2011 in London. The 39-year-old self-styled 'Iron Man' feels he is too rusty to enter the innovative Matchroom tournament, despite winning the inaugural event back in 2008.

"I am grateful to Matchroom Sport for the opportunity to compete in *Prizefighter* again but the timing is not right for me," stated the former Commonwealth champion. "When I received the call I was naturally excited and jumped at the invitation. But my heart sank hours later when I realised the preparation time was much less than what would be expected before a big fight."

Just over four weeks' notice was not enough for Rogan to join the likes of unbeaten Irish-based Cuban Mike Perez, American jabber Kevin 'Kingpin' Johnson and Germany's Konstantin Airich in an exciting deviation from the usual domestic format.

"Make no mistake about it, *Prizefighter* is not an easy touch and it is a platform that can make or break a fighter," continued Martin. "I would be in it to win it, no second measure would do. I simply could not cheat myself into believing I could win it without the right preparation behind me.

"At the same time, I would not be happy to see my family and fans travel to London to support me when I am not fully prepared to go hell for leather and bring the title home. I am now back in full-time training but it is with the aim of fighting in Belfast in late May or early June."

Undeterred by the withdrawal, Rogan feels that he can bring big time heavyweight action back to the Northern capital and recapture the imagination of the public. The

Clonard native has recorded two low-key victories since hitting the comeback trail in Limerick on November 6 last year, after a one-year hiatus following a spinal operation.

“It’s high time I was fighting in Belfast on a regular basis but I will bring something new to fight fans – much more than a boxing show. I am excited about the future.”

Earl show cancelled – 30th March

Former British lightweight champion, turned promoter, Graham Earl announced earlier today that this Saturday's 'Fists of Fury' event, at the King's Hall in Belfast, has been postponed. The event, which was to be headlined by Scottish lightweight Willie Limond taking on Jay Morris, was intended to showcase many of the Belfast boxers Graham recently signed.

On making the announcement Earl said, "I'm really disappointed that we have had to postpone 'Fists of Fury', it had all the makings of being a really fantastic show. It's been one of those weeks, various circumstances conspired to put the show at risk early in the week, but when we started to get fighter injuries as well we couldn't see any other option but to postpone the show."

The list of fighters who were set to feature included: Joe Hillerby, Mark Ginley, Padraig McCrory, Terry Holmes and Manny Oshunrinde. Some enthralling matchups were also being mooted, with Omagh ticket seller Damian Taggart set for a meeting with Belfastman Paddy McGarrity. Tommy Tolan was also busy preparing for a six-threes clash with Phil Townley.

"We're disappointed for the fans, who had been showing their support and getting behind the local fighters," continued Earl. "We're disappointed for all the fighters that were going to take part, especially the lads that were going to be debuting. We're hoping to reschedule the show for later in the year, unfortunately it can't be for a few months as we already have shows scheduled for the coming months."

Shamrock Shorts: Irish-based Cuban heavyweight Mike 'The Rebel' Perez impressed UK fight fans on Friday March 4 when he outpointed former two-time European title challenger Ismail Abdoul over eight rounds in the

Doncaster Dome.....Fresh from a victory in Los Angeles over Mexican Ramon Flores, Irish Prospect of the Year Jamie Kavanagh will next showcase his skills in Manchester on April 19.....Irish subscriber TV station Setanta Sports are back in the boxing market and planning to broadcast some big US cards in the coming months.....Matthew Macklin's scrap with Ronald 'Winky' Wright was cancelled after Wright injured his hand..... Stephen Ormond stopped Mickey Coveney in the seventh round of their bout, featuring on the undercard of fellow super-featherweight Ricky Burns's WBO title defence in Scotland on March 12.....Prospect Dean Byrne has inked a promotional deal with Frank Warren.....A furious Kiko Martinez has said that he will not fight Willie Casey following Casey's decision to trade a Euro title defence for a WBA interim tilt.

Cuban sensation ready to conquer the world after Casey mauling - 2nd April

It's been a few weeks since Willie Casey's Dublin mauling at the hands of Guillermo Rigondeaux. The Limerick man is already talking of a May return and fight fans are salivating over the next move of the red-hot Cuban. On the night, the despondent mood in Casey's dressing room post-fight was paralleled by a mixture of elation and inevitability in the opposite camp. Rigondeaux's corner team whooped and roared as their man discussed the fight through an interpreter, answering each question with a machine gun fire of rapid Spanish. The Cuban's tongue was almost as quick as his dazzling combinations.

"I wanted to finish it early because I knew he had the whole crowd behind him and even though I wasn't looking for the knockout it just came," said 'El Chacal', now 8-0 (6 KOs). "The body shot is one of my honey punches, that's how I knock out everybody. He watched my videos and trained very hard to try and take my punches."

As you would expect from a man used to winning medals, Guillermo had no qualms about travelling over to Ireland to defend his WBA interim crown. The 30-year-old expects to see even more of the world now that he has established himself as a serious threat to the major belt holders in the 122-pound division.

"I'm the champion and I'll fight anywhere in the world. You can send me to Europe, Canada or wherever my next fight is, I'll fight anywhere at all."

After all of Rigondeaux's many amateur achievements and immediate success in his fledgling pro career, does this win rank as his best day at the office?

"I've had better days," he laconically responded.

Cue another burst of enthusiasm from the cheerleaders. One of whom - although in a slightly more reserved

fashion - is Cork manager Gary Hyde, the man who trumped the big guns to sign this multi-talented former two-time Olympic gold medallist when he inked professional terms.

"I knew from the way he was performing in the gym that he would put on a stellar performance and he's always promised to defend his title like a true champion," lauded Hyde.

"I've got huge respect for Willie Casey. I was the most nervous man in the dressing room tonight because I knew that Rigondeaux was facing something he had never faced before. In the end he just took Willie apart and dominated; I'm thrilled with that performance."

Hyde also explained that as an Irishman, and more importantly as the promoter of the show, he wanted the main event to last longer but operating as Rigondeaux's manager first and foremost he was delighted that Casey was dispatched in such clinical fashion.

"Pre-fight talk had surrounded a fight with Nonito Donaire but I said to wait a while, because we needed to get past Casey first," he said.

"I told everyone that I wasn't being negative but Casey is a different animal to Guillermo's previous opponents. I was afraid that the Bernard Dunne who beat Cordoba would turn up and frighten the living daylights out of us."

When Hyde mentions Nonito Donaire he is talking about a serious level of fighter, in pound-for-pound class.

"Exactly, but the guy I have is a pound-for-pound fighter," Gary suggested. "Willie Casey is such a hard, tough young guy and Rigo walked through him, took him apart really, and the minute he sensed the blood and hurt him, it was all over."

Hyde stated his desire to return to Ireland and as journalists scratched around for a viable opponent, super-bantamweight prospect Carl Frampton's name was thrown into the mix.

“If Carl Frampton is up to that level by next year, when we return, then of course we would consider him. I have Rigondeaux on a five-year contract with extensions, so we’re tied for the next seven years.”

Following an initial stint with the ultra-busy Freddie Roach, Rigondeaux linked up with highly-respected American trainer Ronnie Shields. The man who has worked with the likes of Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Pernell Whitaker during a lengthy, successful career is already envisaging the way Rigondeaux’s next moves will play out.

“He’s going to clear out the 122-pound division, then clear out 126 and 130, before retiring. I have all the confidence in the world in him and he has more confidence in himself, so it’s going to be extremely hard to beat Rigo,” said Shields.

Irish fight fans, and a wounded Willie Casey in particular, would find it hard to bet against that prophecy coming true.

Luke's back on top at the Holiday Inn - 8th April

Belfast flyweight Luke Wilton will headline the latest Belfast Promotions show, to be held on May 28 at the Holiday Inn venue. Luke will be joined by debutant, and longtime spar-mate, Stevie Quinn Jnr, along with Tony Nellins, Ryan Greene and Michael Harvey, as well as a further list of pugilists yet to be announced.

It's been a frustrating time of late for headliner Luke. The 22-year-old scored a career-best win on December 18 over Usman Ahmed, as part of the cast supporting Martin Lindsay in his unsuccessful British featherweight title defence at the King's Hall. Wilton dropped Ahmed and dominated the Derby stylist, gaining revenge for a previous defeat at the hands of the slippery ex-British title challenger and enhancing his own credentials in readiness for a crack at that very belt. Unfortunately nothing came to fruition, until he was offered a chance to clash with Ashley Sexton on the upcoming April 30 card featuring Darren Barker's European title defence.

Ordinarily, Luke insists he would have jumped right into a scrap with 'Flash Ash'. A recent illness, however, meant that his preparation would have been less than stellar and Wilton knew that a pop at Sexton -most likely televised on Sky Sports- would have required nothing less than 100 per cent care and attention in the build-up.

"I was offered the Sexton fight but I wasn't well for about a week so I couldn't take it," lamented Luke. "I'd have taken the fight only I had the flu and I couldn't get out of bed for three days and they will get someone else now. You need to be right for a fight like that and do yourself justice. The big undercards are on Sky so if I didn't put in a big performance it might not come around again. I hadn't been doing much sparring either because of the illness.

“There’s talk of Lee Haskins moving down to flyweight and fighting Paul Edwards so that means I’ll be pushed back in the order even further, along with everybody else. My headliner will be an eight-rounder and we are looking at getting somebody who’s above me in the European rankings. I only had two fights last year and this will be my first fight this year, so I’m getting a bit frustrated.”

Alan Wilton’s Holiday Inn fight nights have proven popular with the Belfast boxing fraternity. The last one took place in May 2010 with Luke topping the bill in an eight-rounder. Hapless opponent Sali Mustafov failed to make it out of the first round and it is unlikely that Wilton will tolerate a soft touch for his next promotion.

After Luke dismissed Usman Ahmed at the end of last year local rival Jamie Conlan also featured on the bill, stopping Francis Croes later in the evening. Talk continued to brew about an Irish title showdown between the pair and with promoter Frank Maloney on board, it suddenly appeared a realistic proposition.

“I’ve heard nothing of a fight with Jamie Conlan since the last show on December 18,” a disappointed Wilton admitted. “Things might dry up a bit over here now. The show on May 28 should be a good one anyway, so we’ll focus on that for the time being.”

McCloskey and Khan finally set to do battle - 14th April

In another fascinating twist to the plot, the Amir Khan-Paul McCloskey world title showdown is once again scheduled to be screened via pay-per-view, but with the Primetime organisation now throwing their hat into the ring as the TV provider.

This is a contest that has been fraught with difficulties from the very start. Even before the April 16 headliner was signed there were discussions, disagreements and accusations over a variety of provisos - as usual, money was the main stumbling block. The strength of the bout was lambasted in some quarters, with McCloskey's status as a credible pay-per-view challenger seriously thrown into question. Thousands of Irish fans have splashed the cash to be in the MEN Arena to cheer the Dungiven man on in his biggest night. The WBA light-welterweight title may be at stake, but the bout itself is once again faltering along the bumpy road that it has travelled since the first official announcement.

As the undercard crumbled away, the powers-that-be at Sky Sports got cold feet. Tyson Fury, Matthew Macklin and Gavin Rees fell by the wayside and the voices of complaining fans, still hurting from the Haye-Harrison debacle, echoed into Sky headquarters. Khan insists that the switch from Sky Sports 3 to Primetime (ppv price £14.95) has nothing to do with money, but rather a promise he made to UK fans. Great news for them. The Bolton man, who claimed a silver medal in the 2004 Olympic Games, went on to explain why we are lucky to have him: "I could have gone back to America and fought there. I chose to come home and fight in front of my loyal fans that've followed me since the Olympics. I want to build my career in America but I did promise the UK fans I'd bring them a big fight. I'm doing this for my fan base. I'm not making as

much as I did for my last few fights, but I'm doing it for them."

While Khan and his team are doing their best to add a touch of shine to the shenanigans that have played out over the last week, Eddie Hearn, from McCloskey's representatives at Matchroom Sports, took a different view. He described the TV switch as "commercial suicide".

"This whole thing has been a shambles from start to finish," Hearn blasted. "Sky is the most important television station in the UK when it comes to boxing, and in my opinion this has killed Khan's credibility here."

Despite the distractions over various aspects of the show, Khan is towing the line and claims to be fully focused on the task in hand. Both of the headliners' pay packets are set to suffer as a result of the TV situation. Compromises have been made to hold the show together.

"There are going to be times when there are pay cuts," countered Khan. "You know, it's a big lump sum that's been cut but what can you do? That's boxing for you. I'm still young. My job is to get in the ring and fight. I just have to stay focused and bigger paydays will come."

Whether the Team Khan stance has dented the association with Sky remains to be seen. In the boxing game strained relationships can be easily remedied when there is money to be made and if Khan successfully negotiates a way through his unbeaten challenger on Saturday night, he will probably face Tim Bradley next in a world title unification.

Meanwhile, by enlisting the help of a nutritionist, challenger McCloskey has drilled his body into career-best shape and will have his tactics devised by Belfast veteran trainer John Breen.

"Paul has no worries and we never told him anything about the rumours [that the fight may be cancelled]," Breen told Irish-boxing.com. "There were talks about the purses over the weekend and a possible drop, but we kept that

from Paul. His main focus is the fight and we are keen to keep it that way. Believe me he is focused on next week and we haven't let any of this put him off."

Amir Khan's mental state is in a similar place: "There was not one day where I thought the fight would be off," he said. "I've been training hard for the fight. They (his advisers) kept me out of the way. I've always been in the limelight from day one and you get ups and downs. I knew we were going to get to the bottom of it."

Sky's latest quality control stance is wholly welcomed by a sport that has seen diluted titles and meaningless main events find a way into the homes of boxing fans over recent years. The broadcasting bigwigs issued their own press release earlier this week:

"Khan vs. McCloskey will not be shown on Sky Box Office or any of the Sky Sports channels as it has not proved possible to reach an agreement on TV scheduling. Financial terms were agreed and a solution was offered for the fight to appear on Sky Sports 3 and Sky Sports HD3 following the decision not to broadcast on Sky Box Office. It was not accepted. The Khan vs. McCloskey bill had been announced as a Sky Box Office event two months ago. Since then there were several changes to the bill so we made the decision - before the main promotional campaign started and Sky customers booked the event - to give it to Sky Sports viewers."

So, it's been a long time coming for both WBA king Khan and reigning European light-welterweight champion McCloskey. I'll leave it to others to speculate on the outcome of this attraction. It's quite possibly now or never for 'Dudey', as he aims to severely rock the applecart and bring the coveted world crown back to Ireland.

Murray motivated for Manchester matchup - 15th April

Unbeaten Cavan lightweight Andy Murray will get the chance to showcase his skills in Manchester's MEN Arena on Saturday April 16 against Blackburn's Dezzie Higginson. Murray will tap into the legion of fans set to travel across the water to offer their vocal support to Paul McCloskey who will be bidding to relieve Amir Khan of his WBA light-welterweight title.

Just as Brian Peters Promotions pointed out in their most recent press release, Murray is one win away from equaling the longest ever winning streak in Irish professional boxing, that of Belfast bantamweight Johnny Caldwell who was 25-0 before suffering his first defeat in a world title fight against Brazilian great Eder Jofre in 1962.

Murray has studiously worked his way into European title contention and now sits as number one ranked contender, breathing down champion John Murray's neck in anticipation of his shot.

"Another Irish fighter, Jamie Kavanagh will also be on the bill so there will be huge Irish support in the MEN Arena and hopefully we can give them something to shout about," said Andy, who will be eager to avoid a slip-up in Manchester. "It's great to be fighting on such a big card and hopefully it will be a great night for Irish boxing with Paul McCloskey taking on Amir Khan in the main event."

Murray has been busy sparring McCloskey under the watchful eye of trainer John Breen, with Breen nursing two unbeaten records on April 16. Andy reckons his gym mate has a great opportunity to upset the odds and claim a famous victory over Khan.

"Paul's in great shape for this," Andy said. "I've done some rounds with him in sparring and he's very, very sharp. He is really up for the fight, it's a massive chance for

him and he is very confident of doing the business against Khan and I think he is in with a great shot."

John Murray returned to the ring recently following a seven-month break and was less than impressive in outpointing rugged Spaniard Karim El Ouazghari on April 2. The below-par display did nothing to diminish Murray's belief that he can rip up the script and take his namesake's belt should the pair eventually meet in the future.

"I rate John Murray as a very good fighter but I certainly don't have any fear about getting in a ring with him," Andy amicably explained. "To prove you're the best you have to go out there and beat the best and I wouldn't be in boxing if I didn't think I was good enough to win the major titles. I'm number one in Europe now and it's great to get that kind of recognition. Murray has to deal with his mandatory defence against Gavin Rees first but as long as I keep winning then I will be next in line and I'll be ready to grab that chance with both hands when it comes along.

"I think it was a case of John grinding out the win last time out but he admitted himself that it wasn't a vintage performance. I don't think he was firing on all cylinders that night, he didn't appear to have his usual aggression but I'm sure he will up his game again next time around."

For now, Andy Murray's sole focus remains on his Manchester assignment against a potential dangerman in the form of Dezzie Higginson: "I'm familiar with Higginson, he turned pro around the same time as me and there was talk of us fighting earlier in my career but it never came off," Murray expounded. "He's on a good run of form since joining Ricky Hatton's stable and he's won 10 of his last 12. I'm sure he sees this as a big opportunity for him and it's effectively a home town fight for him so I don't expect anything easy over there."

Khan's gift is no consolation to McCloskey - 17th April

Amir Khan packaged his April 16 clash with Paul McCloskey as a gift to the fans. But like an unwanted pair of socks at Christmas, many will not be overly concerned if he forgets about them next year. If it wasn't enough that the pre-fight preparations failed to run smoothly, the main event descended into a chaotic conclusion that left no one greatly satisfied. Although it's possible that the powers-that-be at Sky TV kicked back with a wry smile as Barry Hearn stormed across the ring to confront the referee and ringside doctor, both of whom had combined to end McCloskey's challenge in the sixth round after the Dungiven man was cut.

The pair smashed heads, each reeled away and the doctor clambered into the ring almost immediately, strolling over to McCloskey to inspect the damage. He shook his head ominously as experienced third man Luis Pabon hovered, awaiting instructions. The camera panned in and revealed that the cut, despite sitting across the left eyebrow, was trickling blood down the nose and showed itself to be by no means the most vicious ever witnessed in a title fight. No matter, it was waved to a finish and over to the scorecards, which meant the fight was as good as finished for the reigning European champion.

60-54 on all three judges' cards may have seemed a little harsh to the Irish contingent but Khan was undoubtedly in front. However, this fight was not about the early rounds for McCloskey and his plan, as John Breen had reminded us in the pre-fight build-up, was to soak up the pressure and come on strong late. Paul said he felt Khan was tiring (OK they all say that!) but the former Olympic silver medal winner had looked tense and upright from the start. Pushing his punches rather than letting them flow, hitting plenty of arms and gloves as McCloskey swayed in and out

of range from his customary southpaw shell. Khan claimed post-fight that the contest would have been stopped two rounds later, that he would have knocked his man out and Paul could have got badly hurt. That all remains hypothetical and despite Amir's statistical dominance there appeared no overwhelming evidence to suggest that such a brutal finish was on the horizon.

Watching the fight on Primetime TV (pay-per-view price £14.95) was a new experience, having only encountered this station before for the Carl Froch-Mikkel Kessler bout. It turned out to be a mixed bag. The sterling work of roving reporter Andy Kerr on the ground was solid as usual, while Jim Rosenthal kept things ticking over in the studio. Steve Collins provided the pro-Irish slant and Robin Reid, the surprise package of the evening, offered sound, constructive analysis showing that he could (and probably should) ably swap the gloves for a microphone. Duke McKenzie acted as co-commentator and you know what you get from him (I'll leave the reader to decide whether that is a good or bad thing) while American commentator Benny Ricardo often got fairly excited over nothing in particular.

While things may have been moving along at a fairly pedestrian pace in the studio, back in the ring it was heating up a little. But despite the irate reaction of Matchroom's Barry Hearn (expertly restrained by son Eddie and John Breen) and the subsequent complaints due to fall on the doormats of both the BBBofC and the WBA over the handling of the whole affair, a rematch is unlikely to materialise. De La Hoya, Roach, Khan and the entourage will now look to enhance their fortunes and re-build the Khan 'product' over in America - they love him after the Maidana fight, you see. It would seem that a healthy stint of sparring with Manny Pacquiao, in readiness for the southpaw elusiveness of McCloskey, had still left Khan ill-equipped to conclusively deal with the plucky portsider.

The 24-year-old Bolton native stood ominously square-on at times and his movement was uncomfortable. Luckily Khan's renowned hand speed bought him enough time to flurry in range and move away before the 31-year-old Irishman could effectively respond.

Timothy Bradley will most likely be Khan's next opponent, on July 23, televised by HBO in a US venue. I favoured Bradley to prevail in that one before the McCloskey scrap and nothing that happened in the MEN Arena has changed that opinion. McCloskey's next move will be decided when the dust settles and the post-fight shenanigans will not have done any great deal of damage to his stock. Thousands of passionate supporters packed into Manchester to cheer him on and this need not be the culmination of an already successful pro career. Hopefully, Paul will get another crack at a major world belt and I expect that he will. In the meantime he can still mix it at European level if required. When and where the Dungiven man returns to the ring will certainly not be determined by how long it takes the now infamous cut to heal.

Paddy Hyland plans Dublin show in June - 23rd April

Paddy Hyland has once again turned his hand to promoting, with a show lined up for June 4 in Dublin's National Stadium. All three of Hyland's fighting sons will feature, including super-featherweight Eddie who is returning after a period away from the sport. Paddy's no-nonsense brawler Robbie Long will headline, as the Dubliner vies for Gary O'Sullivan's Irish middleweight title. Andy Murray was set to get a run-out but the Cavan lightweight has since been put forward to face Gavin Rees for the European title, also in June.

"I've done a deal with the National Stadium," explained Paddy Hyland. "It's the 21st anniversary of our club which was actually formed on June 4, 1990 so it will be bang on the day. We will be running a pro-am card so there will be four amateur bouts opening the show. Make no mistake, the amateurs on it will be good boxers; hopefully some senior champions will be the opponents, fighting lads out of our gym."

The last time Paddy hired out the Stadium was in April 2008 when Eddie and Patrick co-headlined in Irish title fights on an action packed bill. Eddie narrowly outpointed Kevin O'Hara and Patrick emphatically halted a returning Paul Griffin in three rounds to send the crowd into raptures.

"Paul Griffin was talked about for this show but he won't be on," said Hyland. "It's a seven-fight card so one more fighter will be added; it will probably be either Finbarr Eade or Ian Tims. There will be a bit of a theme to the show, celebrating the Golden Cobra anniversary."

Paddy makes a habit of sticking all of the Hyland siblings on together, always in decent scraps. Eddie Hyland went to war with Oisín Fagan in Tallaght back in July 2009 for a minor IBF belt and Paddy tried to bring the ever-

popular Fagan back again, for a blast at Patrick Hyland this time.

“It’s so difficult finding an opponent for Patrick, we initially thought it might be an Irish title defence or even a move up to super-featherweight. We could have agreed terms with Oisín Fagan but he didn’t feel he could make the weight, despite having a couple of months to boil down. It’s not at all easy getting Patrick matched and in his last fight with Suat Laze [November 2010 in Castlebar] he had his man going, in the seventh round, and I told him to hold back because if he keeps knocking people out then nobody at all will want to fight him.”

The youngest member of the trio, Paul, challenged Willie Casey for the European super-bantamweight crown in November last year. The short notice Limerick assignment proved a bridge too far however as Willie overwhelmed ‘Paulie’ in the fourth round. As Paddy previously explained it has been a frustrating time trying to get Patrick into meaningful contests, although his activity level has dramatically increased since a link-up with Brian Peters was forged.

“Some people have said that we aren’t afraid to take chances with our boys and that is true,” Paddy stated. “If the opponents come over and make weight then we’ll fight them. Tomás Rohan is doing the matchmaking and Brian Peters is watching over things, as Patrick’s manager, so we’ll see how it goes. All in all, it looks like being a good show.”

Shamrock Shorts: Trainer Phil Sutcliffe still insists that the Guillermo Rigondeaux fight was a risk worth taking for Willie Casey.....Khoren Gevor’s associates claim that contract issues were not the underlying reason behind Matthew Macklin’s decision to opt away from their proposed fight.....DolPhil Promotions are planning to continue running shows but need financial backing and sponsorship to enable them to function effectively.....16-0

Stateside prospect Ryan 'The Irish Outlaw' Coyne fancies a crack at domestic cruiserweight ruler Ian Tims.....Carl Frampton will not face Joaquin Cespedes for the EU super-bantamweight title in the immediate future, according to manager Barry McGuigan, but that avenue is not a dead-end..... Former Sacred Heart, Newry amateur boxer Patrick Murphy turned pro in Brisbane, Australia with a points victory..... Legendary Irish *prizefighter* Dan Donnelly (1788-1820) has been inducted into the Bare Knuckle Boxing Hall of Fame..... Marcus Maidana has expressed an interest in defending his WBA interim strap against Dungiven's Paul McCloskey.....Bantamweight hope Paul Quinn looks set to make his professional debut in Craigavon at the end of June according to coach John Breen. Meanwhile, former Irish international amateur boxer Dennis Hogan has also signed over to become a professional pugilist and registered a debut win in Queensland, Australia.....The WBA have no authority to order a Paul McCloskey-Amir Khan rematch and therefore the former European king will pursue an alternative route to world glory.....Andy Lee will fight for the NABF middleweight belt on May 18 against Alex Bunema.

**Cuban rebel rules International *Prizefighter* tournament -
7th May**

Unbeaten Irish-based Cuban **Mike Perez** followed in the footsteps of Belfast heavyweight Martin Rogan and claimed the latest *Prizefighter* crown. Perez travelled to London to take part in the inaugural 'International Heavyweights' installment of the immensely popular series and swept away the competition with relative ease.

The bookmakers predicted that 25-year-old southpaw Perez would take home the £32,000 prize money and the savvy odds-makers were once again proved correct. 'The Rebel' started his campaign with a 30-25 unanimous verdict over lumbering Trinidadian Kertson Manswell. The big West Indian did not have the speed to match his size and was easy prey for the flashy in and out attacks of Perez.

In his next bout Mike, who took his overall record to 16-10 (12 KOs) on the night, came up against once-beaten Frenchman Gregory Tony. Gregory had outlasted gigantic Russian Evgeny Orlov - known as 'The Molecule from Hell' - in the opener but appeared fortunate to prevail in the eyes of some educated observers and was roundly booed by the crowd. Perez exposed his limitations in their semi-final, smashing the Frenchman to defeat inside a round without breaking sweat.

In the final of a tournament that had promised so much when first announced (until the likes of Kevin Johnson, Juan Carlos Gomez and Fres Oquendo all withdrew) Mike was faced with the amiable Tye Fields. Canadian-based Fields (originally from Montana) was again a sizeable proposition but slow in the hand and footwork departments and clearly fatigued after a life-and-death battle with Reading's Michael Sprott in a grueling quarter-final. Fields had impressively felled German Konstantin

Airich with a peach of a body shot in the semis, before securing his decider against the Cuban sensation.

Mike took just 42 seconds to dismantle Tye, catching him early with a big right hand to the head, he reined in blows to body and head as 'Big Sky' tried to cover up on the ropes. Resistance was futile as the referee intervened and crowned the latest *Prizefighter* winner, saving Fields from an inevitable beating. On a night with an international twist, 25-year-old Mike Perez raucously announced his presence on the domestic heavyweight scene.



Fields is stopped and Mike Perez crowned Prizefighter king
© Chris Royle

Jamie Conlan discusses 2011 plans - 9th May

Jamie Conlan has big ambitions for 2011 and the Belfast banger is ready to explode back on the scene and take over the flyweight division. The 24-year-old fought off a post-Christmas illness to return to John Breen's gym and whip himself into fantastic shape ready for a May 13 appearance, in Kent. Jamie is set to feature on the undercard of Sam Webb's British light-middleweight title defence against Manchester mover Prince Arron.

"Kyle King has been talked about as an opponent but that's not 100 per cent confirmed, I just know that I'm definitely on the bill," Jamie explained. "I was actually scheduled to fight King on Barry McGuigan's bill last year but it didn't come off on that occasion and it doesn't matter who I'm fighting next because I'm feeling amazing at the moment."

Jamie's outing will be a six-rounder and he aims to build up some momentum before challenging the likes of Paul Edwards, Shiny Bayaar and Ashley Sexton. Former British kingpin Sexton laboured to an eight round points win over unheralded Mike Robinson on the Darren Barker-Domenico Spada undercard recently and Conlan was relatively unimpressed by the display from 'Flash Ash'.

"Sexton was terrible, I'd fight him tomorrow," stated the 5-0 (3 KOs) starlet. "I'm ready for him and for all the rest of the flyweights. Ashley's a good fighter but he had a bad night and I reckon I'd beat him, no problem. Robinson couldn't miss with the right hand and Sexton thinks he's a big puncher but it wasn't happening for him on that night. He hit his opponent with some good shots and he didn't budge.

"I can't wait to get back into the ring. I got swine flu shortly after Christmas and I've just had to keep ticking over until now. Frank Maloney promised me a date and he

came up with this one so I'm itching to get going. Sam Webb-Prince Arron is the headline act and Frank said he'll take a good look at me, so I'm looking forward to impress. There are three title fights on the show and I probably won't get on the TV but if the Sky cameras are there then I could maybe get on the Ringside show."

Veteran trainer John Breen puts Jamie through his paces in his Belfast base and the former amateur standout has smoothly morphed into a well-rounded pro. All he needs now is the ring time and exposure to showcase his skills to the wider public and hopefully snare a shot at the one of the division's big boys. Some quality sparring, from two new additions to the Breen team, have helped keep Conlan sharp, as well as working out with some of the gym's more established names.

"Training's going really well, I've been sparring with Andy Murray as well as a couple of guys who are turning pro with John Breen - Marc McCullough at featherweight and Paul Quinn at bantamweight. This is the best shape I've ever been in my life."

So as far as Jamie Conlan's concerned, back with a bang on May 13?

"I'm back and ready to take over," he confirmed.

**Stephen Haughian to defend Irish title in Craigavon -
14th May**

Stephen Haughian returns to the scene of his 2009 Irish welterweight title triumph on June 25 when he defends that same crown in the Brownlow Leisure Centre, Craigavon against Manchester challenger Jeff Thomas.

26-year-old Haughian has won two fights on the spin since a lopsided points loss to Kevin McIntyre last June, when attempting to claim the Celtic title. Stephen is keen to stay busy and build some momentum which will hopefully edge him towards another title tilt.

"I've had two wins since the McIntyre loss and I'm eager to push on," he said. "I turned professional at the same time as Paul McCloskey and Martin Rogan and Rogan has won the Commonwealth belt and *Prizefighter* tournament, while McCloskey fought Amir Khan recently for a world title. So at 26 this is my time to shine. I've got a lot more strength and experience behind me now."

Haughian rode out the relentlessly aggressive start from Cork bruiser Billy Walsh when winning the Irish belt over two years ago. He wore Walsh down in the third round for an impressive stoppage, using the understated skills learned during a career of high-class sparring in John Breen's gym. Brian Peters promoted the last show in Craigavon, but this time a new face will handle the domestic title affair.

"David Murphy is a friend of mine and a big boxing follower," said Stephen. "He's ringside at all the shows and knows the game. The venue is actually about five miles away from my home and it's nice to get back to the same place that I won the Irish title."

Bizarrely enough, last year, Stephen was rumoured to be defending the title against gym-mate Willie Thompson, but rather unsurprisingly that failed to materialise. He was

also listening to the verbal barbs dished out by another pretender to the throne, Chris O'Brien.

"We originally offered the fight to Chris O'Brien because he was talking about me avoiding him. His trainer turned it down because O'Brien's hand was still broken from his last fight, but he said there was another guy in the gym who'd take it. That was Jeff Thomas and I've seen bits and pieces of him in action, including his fight with Oisín Fagan for the Irish title (a seventh round knockout loss for Thomas in June 2006). He seems tough enough and before Oisín stopped him on that night only Steve Murray had done a real job on him."

Haughian has been enjoying his usual levels of sparring and feels fresh and fully focused on another charge towards British or Commonwealth honours. The old cliché about staying active rings true yet again.

"I've been sparring a few heavier fellas, including super-middleweight Brendan Fitzpatrick and a Scottish light-middleweight called Paul Allison who's 4-0. I've got a good variety of amateurs as well for speed. I'll step it up with about six weeks to go.

"The last time I fought was in December 2010 so I need to build some momentum again and after this Irish title defence I want to crack on for another title shot."

Blackpool man Thomas qualifies for a shot at the title because his mother is Irish. The 29-year-old made his debut in 2001 and went 6-1 before dropping a decision he still disputes in 2003 when facing Lee McAllister in the Scot's Aberdeen backyard.

Thomas won more than he lost over the next three years when he decided to hang up the gloves in 2006 with a record of 9-6-1. Since then, Jeff worked hard on gaining qualifications allowing him to be a fitness instructor, a career he now pursues. He came back as a pro in March with a draw against Rick Boulter, which several ringside observers said was the very least Thomas deserved.

A popular lad with an engaging sense of humour, Thomas will have lots of online fans wishing him well on his big night.

O'Sullivan takes the Long route back - 25th May

One fighter who has seemingly fallen off the radar over the last 12 months is exciting Cork puncher Gary 'Spike' O'Sullivan. The forgotten man returns to title action on June 25 when he travels to opponent Robbie Long's Dublin backyard for a National Stadium title affair.

Long's manager and trainer Paddy Hyland will promote the Irish middleweight title headliner, a crown 'Spike' claimed back in December 2009 against Ciaran Healy, on a night that was supposed to provide a springboard for further success.

"I feel like a lion that's been locked in a budgie cage for 12 months," said Gary, who took out his frustrations on Ryan Clark recently, as part of the Nathan Cleverly world title undercard. "It's been an unbelievably frustrating time for me but I was training and sparring all year so I don't see ring rust as a problem."

O'Sullivan has been busy preparing for his clash with rugged campaigner Long by sparring recently crowned Irish cruiserweight king Ian Tims, as well as a couple of Eastern European fighters. He is also hoping to fit in a stint with Limerick-based light-middle Alan Donnellan and a trip to Tenerife to work with Ryan Rhodes before fight night.

"I'm really looking forward to getting in the ring again and this wouldn't usually be the right fight for me as I'm ideally a light-middleweight but I'm just glad to get a fight at this stage," he said. "I've known Robbie for a long time, right back to the amateurs. He's a good fighter, we know what to expect from him, and he had good battles with Anthony Fitzgerald so I won't be taking him lightly.

"To be honest I never really thought about fighting any of these guys [fellow domestic operators] and when I sparred Fitzgerald I knocked him out. I was going well for

a time, with 11 wins but I've fallen off the radar all right. I was supposed to be fighting in Scotland but things fell through for one reason or another."

O'Sullivan's trainer Paschal Collins (brother of former WBO super-middleweight champion Steve) had forged a link-up for Gary and lightweight prospect Stephen Ormond with promotional heavyweight Frank Warren. But while Ormond has made the most of the big card exposure, O'Sullivan has been left twiddling his thumbs on the sidelines.

"Between one thing and another I just couldn't fight and I have a deal with Frank [Gary did feature on Warren's most recent pay-per-view bill] so hopefully I can get the ball rolling again after this next fight," O'Sullivan explained.

"I'm eligible for the Commonwealth title because my mother was born in England. She left when she was three years old but she can get hold of a British passport so that could present an opportunity to me. I'll take any fights at this stage, mainly at light-middleweight."

While the champion trains away down on Ireland's south coast, up in Dublin Robbie Long has been enjoying the bright early morning runs as he readies himself for another crack at a domestic name. Long made his name in three tremendous battles with nemesis Anthony Fitzgerald. Robbie won the first contest but dropped decisions in the following two.

"This will be my second show headliner after topping the bill against Fitzgerald in our second fight," he stated. "I didn't feel any pressure in that fight and it doesn't bother me at all going on as the main attraction. It's just another fight as far as I'm concerned, whether we're going on first or last. There is guaranteed to be a good crowd in the Stadium on the night, with all three Hyland brothers on the bill which means it will hopefully be a sellout."

Long holds his adversary in high regard and the two have sparred each other before, so know what to expect.

“Spike’s obviously very good, he’s tough and you don’t get to 12-0 for nothing. I don’t think that he’s a natural middleweight; he’s probably better suited to light-middle. I am a natural middleweight and I only went to super-middleweight in the past to get fights. If I have a bit of notice then making middleweight is no problem.

“Before I fought Fitzgerald for the third time [September 2010] I had been out of the ring for 11 months and before that one, my previous bout was our second fight. I was out for a long time and I thought I won the last meeting despite my inactivity in what was a hard fight for both of us. Fitzgerald won our second fight because he scored a knockdown and it made the referee’s job a little easier. I’m not finished with Anthony yet! I definitely think I have the beating of him, so I will be going after him again.”

But for now all of Robbie’s focus lies on upsetting the applecart and claiming the Irish middleweight title in front of his home supporters.

“I’ve been sparring Patrick and Eddie Hyland, as well as some good quality amateurs, in preparation, so I’ll be ready. It will mean the world to me to win that Irish title on June 25 and throughout my career I’ve always believed that there is a title in me.”

**Wilton gets Holiday Inn win and targets Britain's best -
29th May**

Belfast flyweight **Luke Wilton** is eager to share the ring with Britain's finest and the 23-year-old racked up another impressive victory, on Saturday May 28 in the Holiday Inn.

"Bring on the winner of the Paul Edwards vs. Chris Edwards fight," said Luke. "I think Chris will win it and I'm ready for it as my next fight. I'm going to be ringside for that one. I think I'd have beaten Sexton on his last performance as well and we want to fight him on the Haye-Klitschko show but he already has an opponent."

Victim on this occasion, Bulgaria's **Salim Salimov**, seemed competent enough in the early stages and used his height and reach advantages effectively to keep Luke off balance with his jab. Wilton has shown maturity in his recent performances, stepping in behind his own range finder and picking the assaults rather than rushing forward and smothering his work as was commonplace in earlier outings. Working with Brian Magee's trainer Bernardo Checa is certainly helping to mould a more compact style and the Panamanian is pleased with what he sees in Luke's progress.

"I'm pleased because he followed the instructions that we gave him in the corner," said Bernardo. "The opponent was tall so we told him to go to the body. I think another one or two fights and he's there [at British title level]. I would like to see Luke fighting more often because there is a big gap between fights at the moment. A few rounds in the bank is always good too and he is fit and works hard in the gym. There is plenty of room to learn and improve."

Salimov's rangy technique was causing minor issues until the third round when Wilton burrowed in close and doubled a left hook to the away man's stomach. Salim hit the deck and tried to stretch his torso out to relieve the

pain. Referee for the evening Paul McCullagh tolled out the count and when the Eastern European failed to rise in the required time frame, he was stopped at 0-34 of round three. Wilton was obviously delighted post-fight and pleased that this opponent had offered more of a threat than the last man he faced at the Holiday Inn. Sali Mustafiov failed to see out the opening round on that occasion.

"The guy came to fight tonight so fair play to him, he was strong," added 'Winky'. "My style has changed because sometimes I was taking shots that I didn't need to take and boxing is a skill or an art. I thought the opponent would go the distance and I wanted the eight rounds. I'm punching harder and I'm still young, just getting used to the weight now and sitting down on my punches.

"I love the body punching and I used to enjoy watching Ricky Hatton landing those double left hooks to the body. It's a lot sorer getting hit down there than up in the head."

Jane Wilton's Belfast Promotions organisation and BBBofC matchmaker Gareth Thompson are commendably trudging forward with shows despite a lull on the domestic scene of late. This bill clashed with the Champions League final but that did not deter a healthy flock of punters who roared their heroes on to success. One such competitor was **Tony Nellins** who had made a winning start to his pro career last December on the Martin Lindsay-John Simpson undercard. Nellins is a big Mike Tyson fan and even has a tattoo of 'Iron Mike' on his back. His short, explosive style also suits the small hall venues and it wasn't long before he was laying in to Trowbridge journeyman **Dan Carr**. The visitor engaged in a Holiday Inn stinker against Paddy McGarrity last year and I feared he may clutch and grab his way to a points defeat again this time. Tony was having none of it and, for better or worse, dragged Carr into a scrap.

Surprisingly enough Carr relished the battle and gave as good as he got throughout the four-rounder. Nellins

decided against employing a jab and ripped away with hooks to head and body – some landed, some didn't and it was of little concern until mid-way through the third round when he was noticeably blowing. So was Carr and the pair traded all manner of leather for the remainder of the bout. The ref's 40-36 scorecard did not do justice to Carr's efforts. Both ended with bloody noses and Nellins, who partly trains in England, had a nick to the forehead.

When Lurgan ticket-seller Ryan Greene hurt his back and was removed from the bill at late notice Belfast light-middleweight **Gerard Healy** stepped in for his debut. He got a victory too, under slightly controversial circumstances. Veteran coach Paul McCullagh (who trained Martin Rogan for the Sam Sexton rematch) advised against Healy diving in to a bout with such little preparation time but the novice wanted to get stuck in. Quite literally as it turned out, with Healy racing straight out of the blocks and into Wiltshire's **Aaron Fox**. Both corners shouted instructions to their men. Healy's implored him to take it easy and pace himself for the four-twos distance, while Fox's told him to cover up and ride out the storm, waiting for Healy to tire.

They were both right and Healy did feel the pace as this one progressed, allowing Fox back in. Both went for it, in a good natured affair, with Healy showing flashes of ability, especially with the uppercut. The referee's card was announced as a draw at 39-39 which was fairly accepted by both men. However, two fights later BBBofC official John Campbell scaled the ropes and brought both men back into the ring, informing the crowd that a miscalculation had occurred (surprising seeing as there were only four rounds to add up). The revised total revealed that Healy had in fact prevailed at 39-38. He seemed slightly embarrassed by the new verdict and raised Fox's arm to the crowd in a sportsmanlike gesture. The away man shrugged his shoulders and took it in remarkably good spirits. The Area

Council, meanwhile, may be on the lookout for a new calculator.

A re-score wasn't needed in **Stevie Quinn Jnr's** debut fight. He won a six-twos bout and staked a claim for most impressive performer of the night. Quinn's father - watching nervously from his corner- was a solid pro in his day who fought the likes of Kevin Mitchell, Martin Power and Michael Hunter during a six-year career. Quinn's final fight came in 2004 against ubiquitous performer **Delroy Spencer**, the Wolverhampton journeyman who turned up as the opponent on this night as Quinn's son started his adventure in the 'wonderful world of professional boxing' as MC Harry McGavock professed. Quinn Jnr is tall for the bantamweight limit and used his swiping portside jab to keep Spencer at bay, while adding in straight left hands and hooks when required. Nothing Delroy did fazed the languid demeanour of Quinn who stuck to his task and showed a cool temperament even when the pair frequently grabbed and wrestled.

Ref Paul McCullagh often let them work away on the inside but there were occasions where he could have split the pair quicker when a holding deadlock occurred. This was frustrating Spencer, who patrolled the ring in disgust after various clinches. He did land a couple of right hands but was buzzed in the fifth when Quinn landed a classy combination. Del smiled, shook his head and bulled back in - that's what the veteran does. Quinn Jnr showed plenty of potential and can go places.

In the show opener east Belfast lightweight **Michael Harvey** was battered and bruised en-route to a 40-35 points defeat at the hands of **Radoslav Mitev**. The extra point came when Michael - arguably a little off balance - was dropped in the third round by a left hook. He was always second best in his one, failing to use his height and reach to good effect. Mitev slammed hooks into Harvey's high guard at will, hounding him across the ring. Radoslav was

powerfully built and found Michael, over anxious and leaning in, all too easy to find with his wide shots. Harvey agreed that he had neglected the basics and revealed that he had suffered from the weight advantage that Mitev brought into the fight.

Gary Hyde's Georgian light-welterweight prospect **Levan Ghvamichava** is clearly a talented operator. The former amateur world championship participant was set to face former European title challenger Daniel Rasilla in an interesting litmus test. When Rasilla withdrew at the eleventh hour, Hyde and his team drafted in Hungarian **Karoly Lakatos** for a scheduled six-threes. It was soon obvious that Lakatos was overmatched and at 0-38 of the opening round he was stopped after shipping a body shot. Levan shrugged and celebrated his win. Hyde knows that he needs stiffer challenges and has promised to deliver.

Shamrock Shorts: Jamie Conlan is hot on the heels of Britain's top flyweights following a comprehensive third round stoppage of Kyle King on May 13.....Breidis Prescott, or even Zab Judah, could meet Paul McCloskey in September if all goes to plan for a proposed Belfast super show.....Matchroom's Eddie Hearn has told Carl Frampton and Mike Perez that he is ready to make deliver big fights for both men.....Martin Lindsay believes that club mate Eamon O'Kane will make a big impact on the pro game when he turns over.....Peter McDonagh will take part in the June 7 welterweight *Prizefighter* tournament.....Pat Magee has dismissed talk of a George Groves-Brian Magee showdown.....Ryan Clark is raging after Irish super-middleweight king Anthony Fitzgerald labeled him a 'bum'. Fitz, meanwhile, is off to the Ukraine for some high-class sparring with Avtandil Khurtsidze Andy Lee claimed the NABF and NABA middleweight titles after beating Alex Bunema via a unanimous 10-round decision in Rosemont, Illinois on May 18.

Murray and Rees set for Euro title battle in Cardiff - 3rd June

Cavan stylist Andy Murray finally gets the European title chance he has craved for so long, on Saturday June 4, when the 28-year-old travels to Cardiff, Wales to face off with former WBA light-welterweight king Gavin Rees. Murray has steadily built an impressive winning record since his professional debut in 2005 and has been feasting on international opposition while waiting for his big chance. Having originally turned professional under London manager Mickey Helliet, Murray's career really took off after linking up with Brian Peters, during which he has claimed Irish titles at two weights and an EU lightweight belt. After defeating Dezzie Higginson on the Amir Khan-Paul McCloskey undercard in April (on points over eight competitive rounds) Andy got the call to face Gavin 'The Rock' Rees and despite having to travel into Gavin's backyard Murray is relishing the chance to prove his worth to Sky Sports viewers and the whole of Europe. Manager Brian Peters has expertly maneuvered his man into this fight and believes Andy can serve up a big night for the Irish fans.

"It's a massive fight but Andy has earned this opportunity," stated Peters. "He's there on merit as the number one challenger and he's left no stone unturned for this fight. He's a fanatical trainer and being down in Connemara has allowed him to focus 100 per cent on beating Gavin Rees. We've imported great sparring and Andy's also worked with a strength and conditioning coach for this fight so we're very confident that he can pull off a famous victory in Cardiff and bring the European title back home. I think you only have to look at the buzz around Cavan for this fight to see just how popular Andy is there.

His story is an inspirational one and I think everyone will be willing him to victory on Saturday night."

Former amateur standout Murray has often spoken at length about suffering from the debilitating Perthes disease that struck him down during his formative years. His training team of John Breen and Brian McKeown will have left nothing to chance in preparation for the biggest night of his professional life, with Andy enjoying a training camp in deepest County Galway. He will be whipped into premium shape, has the confidence of a long undefeated stretch and the experience of defeating a solid roster of opponents. The likes of Daniel Rasilla, Oisin Fagan and Jonny Nolasco have all found Andy a tough enough proposition but there is nobody in the same class as Gavin Rees adorning his 24-0 (12 KOs) slate - make no mistake, this is a leap up in levels.

"It was my first proper training camp as a pro so being away from home for so long has been tough," said Murray, reflecting on the Connemara experience. "But when I was an amateur I did it so I knew what to expect though and being in the middle of nowhere has helped - there were no distractions and it's a really peaceful place so I've been fully focused on my training with everything I need around me.

"Training's been great - it's been really tough but I've reaped the benefit and I'm in great shape, so I can't wait to get in there."

It may appear that Rees is viewing Murray and the European title merely as a stepping stone back into world title contention, but the 34-1 (16 KOs) man, who defeated Souleymane MBaye to lift the world crown back in 2007, insists this is not the case: "I've a lot of respect for Andy Murray. He's unbeaten and I'm sure he sees this as his big chance. I haven't watched that much of him as I never watch all that much of my opponents, I leave that to my trainer, Gary Lockett.

"From the little bits I have seen he puts his combinations together well and he seems to be a nice little

boxer but I'm experienced enough now not to worry too much about my opponent. It's great to have home advantage and it's up to me now to make the best of it," said the former WBA light-welterweight champion.

Murray has the ability to win the EBU belt, but on away territory against a rampant fighter like Rees he may find himself outworked over the 12-round distance.

Other Irish interest (of the Northern variety) on the card sees Tigers Bay super-bantamweight Carl Frampton take another step towards the British title as he faces off with Welshman Robbie Turley. Carl will be defending the Celtic title that he won when stopping Gavin Reid last December in Belfast's Ulster Hall. Both men are 24 years old and Frampton boasts a nine-fight unbeaten slate with six men failing to hear the final bell. Turley, meanwhile, has lost three out of 13 and has only knocked out one opponent, so is more of the boxer than puncher in this one. The Cefn Forest man was stopped in nine rounds by Dai Davies back in 2009 (albeit through a cut) and Frampton can repeat the trick in a similar time frame.



Eamon O'Kane is aiming to make a big impact on the professional scene

© Kevin Finn

2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Eamon O'Kane has resisted the lure of The World Series of Boxing organisation to turn pro on this Matchroom card. He dumps the amateur head guard and vest for a four-threes super-middleweight encounter against Joe Jones. Three men used to mixing in title class, Jason Cook, Steve Williams and Tony Dodson, will also feature at various points on the bill.

Mixed results for talented trio in Cardiff - 5th June

There was European title heartache for previously undefeated Irishman **Andy Murray** as he dropped a unanimous decision to Welshman **Gavin Rees**, in Cardiff on Saturday, June 4. Murray held the physical tools but was offset by the marauding local man's stinging assaults and despite a near collapse in the final stages Rees held strong and left Murray ruing a lack of devilment in his work. 31-year-old Gavin exited the Motorpoint Arena with the EBU belt by scores of 115-112, 115-112 and 116-112. Murray's trainer John Breen was left frustrated by his charge's showing.



Murray lands in these pictures but falls short overall

© Kevin Finn

"It is the worst performance I have witnessed Andy produce," bemoaned Breen. "I thought Andy started well, faded in the middle and came on strong near the end, but he did not do enough. It was not our day and it was disappointing."

Belfast super-bantamweight **Carl Frampton** enjoyed better fortunes as he successfully defended his Celtic crown but was made to work harder than expected by tough Welshman **Robbie Turley**. Frampton was installed as a heavy betting favourite by the bookmakers and Carl did secure a lopsided decision by scores of 98-91, 96-93 and 98-92. He was the first to admit that he neglected his skills and tried to bomb out the resilient Welshman.

"I won easily enough on the judges' scorecards, but I could have made it easier for myself," said a slightly deflated Frampton post-fight.

There were also wins for **Eamon O'Kane**, Jason Cook, Tony Dodson and Steve Williams.

**Post-fight reaction from Andy Murray and Carl Frampton
in Cardiff - 5th June**

There were contrasting emotions in the Irish camps on Saturday night, with Carl Frampton retaining his Celtic title following a hard fought battle with Robbie Turley. Andy Murray, meanwhile, let his opportunity sail by rather tamely when he passed up a chance to stamp his authority on a rapidly tiring Gavin Rees in the latter stages of their European lightweight encounter.

"I thought Andy had won the first two to three rounds, but the guys on Sky were giving it to Rees," said Murray's trainer John Breen following the Motorpoint Centre clash. "I thought Andy started well, faded in the middle and came on strong near the end, but he did not do enough.

"It is the worst performance I have witnessed Andy produce. It was not our day and it was disappointing. I don't know where he goes from here."

The Cavan man, who had whipped himself into career-best condition for this chance, concurred with Breen's assessment. He summed it up in his usual concise manner: "It is very disappointing, I did not win the fight, but that is boxing. I did not really get started and I am just hugely disappointed. Yeah, I am gutted," conceded Murray.

Carl Frampton managed to win and preserve his unbeaten record but the Tigers Bay man was also a little disappointed with his display. Carl neglected his sound jab and opted instead to fire in heavy blows in a bid to knock his stubborn opponent out. Swift moving Turley used his ring smarts to survive the fight but lost widely on points.

"It went alright, just okay. I am happy enough to get the win," said 'The Jackal', who suffered a cut above his right eye.

"I won easily enough on the judges' scorecards, but I could have made it easier for myself. In the early rounds I

was trying to knock him out, but at times in there you saw my boxing skills as I got on the back foot and showed a wee bit of flair and a few skills. I got cut and it was the first time I have had to deal with a cut. I also went 10 rounds which is good and I came on strong in the last round which shows I have a lot left in the tank. Those are the positives I am taking from the fight.”

The fight doubled as a British title eliminator and Frampton paid tribute to game Turley after the fight.

“He is an awkward guy and I knew he could have made me look bad, but I was happy enough with the performance. I was satisfied,” admitted Carl.

“It was not an amazing performance, but I got the job done. I was coming on strong at the end and the last round was probably my best one. I hurt him in the last round, but he was tough and durable. He was also dangerous with his head and he hit me a few times with it. In fact he probably hit me more with his head than his hands. It is now time to move upwards and onwards. I have kept hold of my Celtic belt and I still want to be fighting for a British title within the next couple of fights. I am still ready for any of these guys in the division and I am ready for anyone.”



Frampton lays in to Turley and secures a points win

© Chris Royle

There were even some harsh suggestions on various fight forums that the Frampton bubble had been burst but mentor Barry McGuigan dismissed such claims. He was content with Frampton's display.

"It was a tough fight, but I am pleased with the way Carl performed," said the former world champion. "This guy was very awkward and difficult to hit, but if you look at the stats of the number of punches thrown and those that connected, Carl was streets ahead. I thought he handled a few things well. He did well when he was cut above the eye. He responded very well."

Barry believes that lessons will have been learned by his young charge, who is trained by veteran Gerry Storey and his Holy Family team.

"He is also learning that you cannot knock everybody out and he will gain experience from this. He had Turley hurt a few times, but he won easily on points, so I am. It is great that he got to go 10 rounds and I was pleased with the performance. Yes it would be great if he had got him out of there, but he won the fight and that is the main thing. He has learned a lot from this fight and he will only improve because of it," finished McGuigan.

First time lucky for classy Eamon O’Kane – 5th June

Eamon O’Kane made his name on a wider scale last summer when the talented middleweight won a gold medal at the Commonwealth games in Delhi, India while representing Northern Ireland. The 29-year-old has since turned professional and achieved the first tick on his paid score sheet in Cardiff on June 4.

The second most popular pugilist in Dungiven, behind light-welterweight talent Paul McCloskey, stopped overmatched Dimitrijus Kalinovskis in the first round with a fusillade of body shots. A product of the same Immaculata club that has spawned recently deposed British featherweight king Martin Lindsay, O’Kane will not be hanging around as a pro.

“I enjoyed it and I thought it was a good performance,” buzzed Eamon. “I didn’t know what to expect and when I saw him [Kalinovskis] at the weigh-in, he was tall and skinny. He could box a bit so I had to get on top of him from the start. I just stayed close because he had that long reach and I let the punches go and I am happy. I was hurting him to the body as his head was not as easy to get to. It is as good a start as I could have hoped for and I am delighted.”

O’Kane’s Lithuanian foe took a standing count in the opening round, before a succession of body blows left Dimitrijus crumpled on the floor searching for a breath. Referee Clark Joslyn was left with no option but to call a halt at time 2-33 as the Francie McNicholl-managed boxer recorded a routine debut success.

The former amateur standout is already looking ahead and plans to remain active over the coming months: “I am due out on June 25 in Craigavon,” he revealed, “so all I want to do is keep fighting and keep winning.”

“I really enjoyed that out there and cannot wait to get in the ring again. But I know there is more work to be done and I want to move on to bigger and better things. I will have to work and train hard if want to do that.”

**Sweeney spars Chad Dawson and targets Tims rematch -
10th June**

Ballinrobe's Michael Sweeney is ready to place an Irish title defeat behind him and concentrate on putting his stuttering career back on track. Sweeney dropped a 10-round decision to Ian Tims in Dublin recently for the national cruiserweight belt and Michael is next scheduled to appear in Galway's Salthill Leisure Centre on the innovative June 18 show, organised by Chris Rock and the Irish Professional Boxers Association (IPBA).

"Things are going well for Galway, it's great to get back in the ring again and at home," Sweeney enthused. "I'm coming back from training in Detroit which was a great experience so it's going to help me a lot. The Galway show is good for the other fighters on the bill and great for the west of Ireland to see professional boxing. Many thanks to the IPBA, which sounds like a good idea because like all fighters I just want to keep busy. These events will keep us ticking over until something big comes along, so the more fights the better."

The IPBA has been put together as a means of keeping fighters active and tuned-up while they wait for bigger opportunities to arise. The shows will be promoted with the co-operation and ticket selling abilities of the participating boxers who themselves receive an equal percentage of the show profits at the end of the night. The organisation are planning to hold more events over the next 12 months and hope to keep Irish boxers busy while they wait for bigger opportunities, such as title fights or even *Prizefighter* positions should the opportunity arise.

Michael, meanwhile, has never found top-class sparring difficult to come by, enjoying sessions with Wladimir Klitschko and Arthur Abraham, among others, since turning pro in 2007. His latest assignment as part of the

Manny Steward camp came in Detroit, when the 28-year-old helped Chad Dawson limber up for his clash with Adrian Diaconu.

“Sparring with Chad Dawson was fantastic and a great boost for my career. It was great that Chad won against Diaconu and he was very happy with the sparring he got, so I’ll be back for his next fight. The Kronk gym is always busy, with Andy Lee and other top fighters in there, preparing for big fights. I went to see Andy fight in Chicago [a 10-round points win over Alex Bunema] which was an experience, especially as I did live online commentary for the card which really put the icing on the cake. Castlebar light-middleweight Henry Coyle won on the night as well, to make it an Irish double.”

Sweeney also offered his views on the upcoming heavyweight mega-fight between spar-mate Wladimir Klitschko and his nemesis David Haye.

“Wladimir wins the fight in my opinion. I don’t say that just because I’ve been sparring with Wladimir but because he is a top-class athlete with a long jab and the ability to get out of danger at ease if need be. I think it is going to be a good fight but Klitschko gets the win. I’d like to see him fight more aggressively but he will have a good game plan on the night. Haye is fast and will be dangerous moving in and out of range but I believe Wladimir has the edge.”

Sweeney is also seeking a rematch with Ian Tims, the Dubliner who pulled out all the stops and inflicted a second professional defeat on Michael on the Willie Casey-Guillermo Rigondeaux support card.

“I want the rematch so badly and I’m asking Ian to step-up and give it to me,” stated Sweeney. “I had injury problems before the first fight and I’d sold a lot of tickets, plus I’m a proud boxer, so I didn’t want to pull out. Trust me in this I’ll be back and ready to go. Everybody who supports me, all the fans at the fight, know it wasn’t me in there that night.

“Let’s get Sweeney vs. Tims on again because I’m the real champion.”

IPBA ready to rock Galway in debut show - 12th June

It's full steam ahead for the Irish Professional Boxers Association (IPBA) and their co-promoter Chris Rock, with June 18 fast approaching and the chance to showcase some of mid-West Ireland's boxing talent to an eagerly awaiting Galway public. The bill is being tweaked all the time, as fighters move on and off, but Rock is convinced that his show will get the ball rolling and pave the way for a series of IPBA events later in the year and beyond.

"We've been getting great local and national publicity," expounded Rock. "There's a few potential crackers on the bill."

Chris and his team have opened up the arena balcony, releasing a batch of €25 tickets in the process. The more affordable price range takes capacity up to around the 1200 mark and it is expected to be full, or thereabouts, come fight night. 2004 Olympic bronze medallist Bobby George (who competed as an amateur under his birth name of Boris Georgiev) has now been added to the roster, as the Luton-based light-welterweight looks to build on his only pro win so far, a first round knockout over Lanquaye Wilson way back in June 2009.

"Bobby George is a great addition and we want to bring boxing to local fans who until now have had to travel up to Dublin or over to England to see their heroes in action," Chris further explained. "I'm friendly with [former Olympian] Francie Barrett who ran Galway's first professional card [a five-fight attraction in April 2009] and it's fair to say that boxing in Ireland does not make any money but we've seen an area where we can run shows and break even. It's so far, so good really and we recently got a couple of sponsors on board."

While JJ McDonagh was always the preferred headliner, his original opponent was supposed to be

Ballymena's Joe Rea but after that fell through it was decided that Belfast battler Tommy Tolan would be the ideal replacement. Tolan, however has since decided to fight Eamon O'Kane on the Craigavon show a week after. The undercard in Galway has changed around too, but at the time of writing JJ's boxing sibling Paddy McDonagh is also on the bill, alongside debutant Martin Hannan, a returning John Waldron, Michael Sweeney, Alan Donnellan and Colm Keane.

Many boxing fans may not have previously heard of Chris Rock, so the fledgling promoter explains his own history in the sport: "I boxed for a couple of years myself but never had the talent to turn pro," he honestly professed. "I've been involved in promotions out in America and a bit of white collar boxing. We really saw a niche in the market and formed the Irish Professional Boxers Association (IPBA) as a result of that.

"This is my way of giving something back to the sport and offering the boxers a platform to showcase their talents. Long term we plan to run four-five shows a year in the boxers' backyards. We would be delighted to run a show in the North and if you take all 32 counties alone then there are some great fights to be made. Any fighter can get involved in this project, if any are interested then give us a shout. We are not managers but we are there to offer fighters help and advice or give someone a start if they want to turn pro, things like that. We are totally non-profit and the guys involved are volunteering their time."

Rock has enlisted some solid names to help live out his dream and his brand of communist boxing (as it has been amusingly branded in some quarters) will offer a refreshing shot in the arm to pugilists struggling to get a fight.

"We have people like Ken Moore and Tom Ward on board, good boxing people," Chris added. "We are doing it for the love of boxing and looking to publicise the fighters because they are the main focus here."

IPBA forced to cancel Galway show - 17th June

The Irish Professional Boxing Association (IPBA) has cancelled a proposed June 18 venture into the world of paid pugilism but the main players are adamant that the bill will still run at a later date. Things started to fall apart last week but first-time promoter Chris Rock and his team motioned on. However, following more withdrawals from the fight card and other out-of-the-ring complications, the axe has fallen - for now at least.

"We will definitely continue and run more shows," stated a defiant Rock. "It is a case of learning the lessons and coming back stronger. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger as they say and we are definitely not dead. Something will be put in motion very soon. A meeting will be held at the weekend and we will discuss matters in relation to the future."

Chris believes strongly in the principles of the IPBA and will endeavor to get the share-all-profits idea back up and running. He did not want to offer fans a sub-standard card and when Colm Kane became the latest fighter to withdraw, Rock decided enough was enough.

"I decided to call things to a head all that with the withdrawal of Colm Keane on Monday evening. Losing the Irish title fight was also a huge blow. It's hard to make a decision like that but the sport is so niche that the fans' happiness is paramount. A bad show would be way worse than no show in my opinion."

Rock was ultimately unable to secure an Irish title fight for the main event, which was set to feature JJ McDonagh and Tommy Tolan. Rock believed that detractors and naysayers were in the minority and his show had the support of the people, proof of which lay in strong ticket sales.

“People did get behind the show and everyone that I asked for help did more than their duty, in the media, professional boxing and in the governing body (BUI),” he said. “I would like to thank all those who helped out especially all the boxers, Ken Moore, Tom Ward and all those in St. Nicholas boxing club who provided sparring sessions.

“People like Alan Donnellan, Marty Hannan and others are the kind of people that bring honour and dignity to this sport. What occurred today was regrettable, disappointing and heart wrenching for all involved, especially the boxers who took so much time and effort into training and selling. I’d like to thank all those people that supported us, especially the fans Facebook and everyone will of course be refunded.”

**Macklin discusses the past, present and future in Sturm
teleconference – 21st June**

Teleconferences are all the rage now in professional boxing and innovative broadcaster EPIX ran one for the Macklin-Sturm title clash, where both fighters answered questions about their upcoming showdown. Some of the finer details are printed here. Three-time middleweight champion Felix Sturm (35-2-1, 15 KOs), of Germany, makes the 10th defense of his WBA middleweight title against top-rated contender Matthew 'Mack the Knife' Macklin (28-2, 19 KOs), this Saturday June 25 in the Lanxess Arena in Cologne, Germany.

EPIX will broadcast a closed-captioned simulcast of the world championship rumble on a jumbotron screen in Times Square, New York. The broadcast team will include former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, ESPN.com senior boxing writer Dan Rafael with former middleweight contender John Duddy at ringside providing live post-fight interviews with the combatants.

Mark Greenberg, Felix Sturm and others were involved in the conference, but we are mainly interested in Matthew Macklin's responses which are recorded below:

Matthew, how's Germany? And how are you feeling as you approach your first world title fight?

In Germany it's raining – I was expecting better weather, but not to worry. I'm sure I can bring some sunshine on Saturday. I'm excited, getting ready for my first world title shot. But, you know, I'm pretty experienced, as well. I've won the European title twice, won the Irish title, the British title, and I've fought some really good opponents along the way. And, yes, I'm just really looking forward to the fight now. The training camp's gone brilliantly. The biggest fight of my life, you want it to be the best training camp of your life, and it has

been. Also, I think the challenge of Felix will bring my game to another level. I'll have to be at my best, but no doubt I will be.

Matthew, what concerns you the most in terms of your challenge with Felix?

He's very experienced, always finds a way to win, has a great defense, a very good jab, and I think that they're two things that when I've watched him on tape consistently jumped out at you with his left jab, his left hook, and, you know, also his defense. When he got hurt against Javier Castillejo in the first fight, he stood toe and toe and showed a lot of heart. Obviously, with it being in Germany, people say you're going to have to knock him out to get a draw. But I'm not really dwelling on that. I'm sure I'll get a fair crack at the whip.



Macklin is putting in the hard work for his big title challenge

© Kevin Finn

So it's been a little bit of an interesting ride for you. At one point, you were going to fight 'Winky' Wright on the undercard of one of the Golden Boy shows here in the United States. 'Winky' pulled out because of an injury. Then you were going to get moved to fight on an undercard a week later. And then all of a sudden, this opportunity fell in your lap. So can you sort of take me

through the ups and downs of your ever-changing schedule to culminate here with an opportunity to fight for one of the major world titles?

I'm one of those fighters – I'm prepared to fight anyone to prove what I believe that I'm capable of. I believe I can go all the way in this division, be a champion and stay there for quite a while and defend against all the other top guys. The 'Winky' Wright fight I was excited about. I thought it was a perfect name to just sort of launch me in America on a big Pay-Per-View card over there. I was gutted when it fell through, because I really saw that as a big opportunity for me to get my name out there.

But when that fell through it looked that the Khoren Gevor fight was on, which it wasn't – it wasn't as good a fight as the 'Winky' Wright fight, but he had fought Sturm before and gave Felix a good fight. He also had a good fight with Arthur Abraham before getting knocked out and he's a very good fighter in his own right. So it was still a good opponent. Then slightly out of the blue, the Felix Sturm fight comes up. Why take a tough eliminator when you get a straight shot at the world title, especially when it's one that you truly believe you can win?





Matthew has engaged in quality sparring
© Kevin Finn

Matthew, you're not only fighting the champion, but you're basically fighting him in his backyard. You talk about having to get a knockout in order to get the draw, but also the fans maybe – the fans or the so-called experts see you as a big underdog. Is that something that you use in your training as an inspiration or something to push you a little harder, for this Saturday night?

Yes, definitely. I have always respected Felix – this is his third reign as world champion, he's beaten some big names in the division. This is my first world title shot, so it's only natural he's going to be the favourite. But I'm twice European champion; I've beaten some good fighters and to be honest, when I've had the best performances in my career is when I've been in against the best fighters.

Matthew, what was your toughest win in your career so far? And what did you learn about it?

I'm not sure. My last fight was a tough win. I didn't perform well, really. And to be honest, I thought it would be a fight that would be a lot easier. A few things went wrong in preparation. I had a flu, caught the flu eight weeks out, so that shortened the camp down to six weeks

straight away. And then I came down with a bit of a chest infection the week of the fight. A few rounds I just had to nick. But I found a way to win not feeling well, so that was a tough win. I beat Ruben Varon who's not a bad fighter, but to beat him when I wasn't in the best of health, it showed me that I'm way beyond the level but it probably didn't look that way, because he gave me a tough fight, so maybe it looked like that's the level I was at, but I know the background situation.

You've had a lot of different trainers – Buddy McGirt, Billy Graham, Floyd Mayweather, now Joe Gallagher. You know, a lot of people would say that could be sort of a detriment, but at the same time, you can learn a lot. What's been your experience with having so many trainers?

Well, like you said, there are pros and cons. You certainly get a different outlook. For example, Billy Graham tended to train you to be aggressive, to work the body a lot, to throw a lot of hard single punches, to be gung-ho-ish, really. But on the other side of that, Buddy McGirt was very jab-oriented. Everything has to jab, lots of jabs, and you take a bit from each one. But it's good to be comfortable with the trainer and have faith in your trainer and be comfortable and be happy and familiar in your surroundings. All my best wins from a title point of view have come with Joe Gallagher, who I've been with for nearly three years now, so I'm pretty set up at the moment. So you're always learning. You always take new ideas from people. But from a fight point of view, my last fights have been with Joe Gallagher and I've won the European title twice with him, and the British middleweight title. I think at the moment I have the best of both worlds.

Felix Sturm's greatest attribute is obviously his jab. It's probably one of the best in the entire sport. How do you deal with that? And are you of the agreement that it is an excellent jab?

Oh, it's an excellent jab but it's not an awkward jab. He doesn't shoot it down from his hip. It's a pretty orthodox, textbook jab. It's hard and fast, he gets a lot of rhythm off it and he hooks off it well. He goes to the body off it well and it's constant. But you can always nullify the jab, especially if you've got a good jab yourself. I think sometimes I've neglected my jab in the past and other in fights I've used it really well. I'm pretty sure I'm going to match him for jabs and head movements. We've worked on a few things and I've got a good game plan.

**Patrick Hyland headlines 'Clash of the Capitals' in
Dublin - 23rd June**

The pathway is rapidly clearing for unbeaten Irishman Patrick Hyland as he closes in on a shot at the European title. Featuring once again as one of the star attractions on a bumper fight card, the 27-year-old aims to add the WBF featherweight title to his collection but will need to move past a tough opponent if he is to push his way up the rankings and on to the Euro scene.

Hyland's adversary on the night, Frenchman Philippe Frenois, is a competent boxer who has yet to be halted on the professional circuit. 'Pajo' holds an even more impressive CV, he has never tasted defeat in 22 contests and 10 opponents have failed to hear the final bell. Exactly how hard does Hyland punch? Just ask tough Londoner Mickey Coveney who challenged Patrick for the Irish title in the National Stadium, February 2010. Coveney held a reputation for staying power and resolve and had taken many current and former champions the distance. In the seventh round Patrick uncorked a fierce right hand that removed Mickey from his senses. Coveney later admitted that it was the hardest single punch he had taken during his career.

By and large, there is something special about Paddy Hyland's Dublin shows. The packed crowds, intriguing title fights and competitive spirit from top to bottom of the bill leaves fight fans wanting more. The last Hyland show, in the Tallaght Arena back in July 2009, saw Eddie Hyland and Oisin Fagan engage in warfare for 12 rounds of boxing that will stick long in the memory of all who were there to witness. But while the evenly matched pairing may have stolen the limelight that night with their barnstorming encounter, Patrick showed his quality on the undercard by diffusing the threat of dangerous African opponent Abdu

Tebazalwa to claim the IBF International featherweight title. If that bout served to reinforce his abilities on the international circuit, 'The Punisher' had already cemented his place as Ireland's best featherweight with a third round stoppage of Paul Griffin in April 2008 at a raucous National Stadium. The same groundswell of support that rushed into the ring to celebrate his breakout moment will be back in force tonight, rocking the home of boxing once again as Patrick bids for a fourth professional title.

It's been an interesting journey thus far for all three Hyland brothers, who began their professional careers in England under the stewardship of former heavyweight contender Jess Harding. They were released from their contracts in 2007 and have not looked back since. Patrick enjoyed another taste of the London fight scene in his last outing, posting an impressive six round points win over rugged Togo native Daniel Kodjo Sassou on the undercard of Darren Barker's European title defence. It was a chance to showcase his skills to the UK fight fraternity and illustrate the massive strides he has made in the game since he last fought across the water, back in 2005.

Best laid plans are there to be ripped up and Hyland will need all his focus and determination to stave off the very real threat posed by his opponent this evening. As usual, good sparring in the build-up has not been an issue with fighting siblings Eddie and Paul on hand to offer quality preparation, while Stephen Ormond and Finbarr Eade have added much needed variety.

The standard of opposition has steadily risen as Hyland has matured, and his record would suggest he is a man in possession of the necessary experience to take on any sizeable challenge. Patrick's win over Suat Laze in Castlebar helped cement his place in the EBU featherweight rankings and current champion Sofiane Takoucht turned down a lucrative offer to come to Ireland at the end of last year to defend his title against Hyland.

“Any title fight that comes my way I’m ready to take it,” Patrick assured. “I’m nearly 28 years old and peaking as a fighter. I’m in this game to accept challenges. I’ve always loved fighting at the Stadium, as a professional I won the Irish title there against Paul Griffin and defended it against Mickey Coveney. Both of those fights were knockouts so it would be nice to keep that run going but Frenois has never been stopped so I’m more than ready to go 12 hard rounds and if the stoppage comes it’s a bonus. I’ve seen a few of his fights and he’s a tall, rangy guy who likes to stand up and box but I’m confident that I can get to him and start breaking him down. His only defeats have come against good, undefeated fighters and he’s been mixing in very good company so it’s a good test for me.”

June 25 will be a massive night of boxing for the Irish fight fans in both the North and South and over in Germany with Matthew Macklin facing the unenviable task of attempting to wrestle a version of the middleweight title from Felix Sturm. Paddy Hyland Snr believes he has put together a good value show ready to entertain a willing crowd.

“It will be a busy night with my own lads and some of our amateur boxers are kicking off the show with three amateur fights,” said Hyland Snr. “The chief support will be the Irish middleweight title fight between Spike O’Sullivan and Robbie Long. That will be a cracker and you have another all-Irish fight on the bill with Brendan Fitzpatrick from Finglas taking on Belfast’s Ciaran Healy and then you have two other undefeated lads on the bill in the shape of Stephen Ormond and Finbarr Eade.

“Patrick will be the main attraction and although people say that the WBF is not one of the bigger titles the likes of Evander Holyfield and Roy Jones Jr. have held that belt so that’s not bad company to be keeping. Frenois is a quality opponent for Patrick. He’s only one place behind him in the European ratings so that shows you that it’s a 50-50 fight on

paper and once Patrick comes through we will be looking at Patrick possibly defending the belt against some big names.”

2011 is destined to be a defining year for ‘Pajo’ and with promoter Brian Peters now fighting his corner, it is only a matter of time before the belt holders in the featherweight division give the Tallaght man his opportunity. As you would expect, for most boxing talents, the road to major titles is long and fraught with difficulty. The next step Patrick Hyland takes on that route will be on June 25, in the National Stadium.

Craigavon Show Report: 'Battle at Brownlow' - 25th June

The life of a boxing promoter is anything but easy. If debutant David Murphy didn't realise that before running his 'Battle at Brownlow' show then he certainly will do now. Luckily Murphy managed to pull it off and run a good value seven-fight card at the Craigavon Leisure Centre on Saturday, June 25.

Headline attraction **Stephen Haughian** last graced this arena in 2009 when the 26-year-old stopped Cork's Billy Walsh in three rounds for the Irish welterweight title. Murphy tried to pitch him in a defence of that belt against Jeff Thomas on this bill but Jeff suffered an injury, as did Haughian's gym mate Willie Thompson when he stepped in to fill the gap. Jay Morris briefly jumped in and then out, before Polish punch bag **Arek Malek** accepted the gig. He was never likely to trouble classy Haughian who used his left jab and sharp combinations to rack up the points en route to a 60-54 victory.

Enjoying his first fight on Irish soil **Eamon O'Kane** had his hands full with **Tommy Tolan** over six-threes. Tolan was last seen getting sparked out by Tony Jeffries in his native Belfast. After withdrawing from the recent IPBA show in Galway (which was cancelled anyway) Tolan found himself in with the man some see as the next golden boy of Irish boxing. More work is needed if that prediction is to reach fruition, however, as O'Kane neglected his jab in a bid to remove Tolan's head. To be fair, that head was mostly stuck in O'Kane's face, butting and probing as Tommy rushed forward, dropping his body and grabbing Eamon's arms, in messy clinches.

A tasty body shot slowed Tolan in the fourth round and he sagged into the ropes for respite. His clinching tactics, coupled with O'Kane's inaccuracy, enabled the veteran to see out the round but it was no surprise when he retired

before the beginning of the sixth session. O'Kane needs to get a move on as he turned pro late -following a brief stint in the World Series of Boxing- but some more learning fights are needed before he is truly let off the leash.

Jamie Conlan is past journeyman stage and ready to test himself against the best in Britain. A fight with fellow Belfast boxer Luke Wilton looks further away than ever but a win on Frank Maloney's show in May should have pushed Jamie into the frame and he would fancy his chances with Chris Edwards or Ashley Sexton. Conlan went through the motions a little here, understandably so, outscoring **Delroy Spencer** over six rounds. Del smiled his way to another points reverse with Jamie never looking likely to send him home early.

Damian Taggart brought his usual band of fervent support from Omagh and did not disappoint the travelling fraternity, outlasting **Giuseppe Daprato** over four-threes. Stranraer's Daprato was game and not prepared to surrender his unbeaten slate easily. Taggart always ends up in a war and this fight was no different. Both took plenty of leather but it was Daprato who slowed late on. He managed to hear the final bell and only won a share of one round on referee Paul McCullagh's score sheet, going down 40-37.

Tall Belfast lightweight **Mark Ginley** got his second win since turning pro recently. The Gleann youngster topped **'Rockin' Robin Deakin** of Crawley 60-54. Rangy Ginley used his tools to keep Deakin at bay and the away man offered little more than plenty of bravado and some impressive footwork. It was neat and tidy throughout for the home fighter who coasted home.

Marc McCullough stopped **Eddie Nesbitt** in the fight of the night, between two men making their debuts. Cairn Lodge product McCullough has relocated to John Breen's gym and former Lodge star Stephen Kirk looked on as the latest hope pummeled Nesbitt to defeat in front of some

passionate support. Nesbitt was rocked in the opener and his wide blows were too predictable for McCullough who slotted his replies down the pipe. Eddie turned his back in the second round and the referee was slow to intervene, allowing McCullough to blast away. When Paul McCullagh did jump in, he inexplicably pushed them back together again. Marc reined in more hurt until referee McCullagh's father -Paul Snr, who bizarrely was working Nesbitt's corner- stepped up to the apron and called time.

Former amateur achiever **Bobby George**, a Bulgarian plying his trade in England, beat durable **Billy Smith** over the six round distance. The talented Eastern European has been grossly inactive and needs to get a move on if he is to do anything in the paid ranks.

**Macklin denied by Sturm in typically German outcome -
25th June**

Birmingham-based Irish boxer Matthew Macklin appeared to be dealt a cruel hand in his WBA middleweight title crack at Felix Sturm in Cologne. The German fighter eked out a split decision by scores of 116-112 (twice to Sturm) and a 115-113 in favour of Macklin.

Matthew made the faster start, pushing Sturm back with hard hooks to head and body, establishing a fierce workrate. Unlike his contest in 2006 with Jamie Moore Macklin's high tempo approach did not falter and he was still pushing hard down the stretch. Sturm curiously elected to stand inside and trade instead of moving off to the side and using his world-class jab. He did start to land with classy combinations as the fight neared the championship rounds and some of his head-snapping single punches were of real quality.

Felix is enjoying a five-year unbeaten run and was making the 10th defence in his second reign as WBA middleweight champion, having reclaimed the title from Javier Castillejo after an upset knockout defeat to the Spaniard in 2006. Sturm, who on this occasion had the away man in bother after landing a flush 10th round uppercut, insinuated that he would offer Macklin a rematch and admitted that the fight was close but that he deserved the verdict. Macklin obviously saw a different outcome.

"Even the German TV had me winning by four rounds. I won the fight by at least three rounds, no doubt. I thought I strolled the first six or seven," 'Mack the Knife' said post-fight. "I should be champion. I believe I was the better fighter, but it is not Felix's fault, he wasn't a judge."

Hyland leads the way on packed Dublin card - 26th June

On Saturday, June 25 **Patrick Hyland** took another step towards a European super-featherweight title shot with a virtual shutout of Frenchman **Phillipe Frenois**, at the National Stadium. The WBF crown he takes home for his troubles may not be recognized as one of the powerhouses of the world boxing belts but 12 rounds will do 'The Punisher' no harm at all - better to be winning these type of fights than sitting at home going stale. All three judges handed in lopsided scorecards, which read 120-108 (twice) and 119-109.

Patrick's mother has English roots and that could open the door to a possible British or Commonwealth shot.

Like any savvy pugilist with his head screwed on, Hyland isn't about to rule that opportunity out. On this occasion he was faced with a rugged and determined, if slightly limited, operator, in the form of Frenois.

"I am delighted with my performance against a tough guy," the Dubliner told Jonny Stapleton of www.irish-boxing.com. "He has only lost to [recognised] names and I was comfortable against him. That gives you a confidence boost and proves this is the level I am at.

"After this fight I know European and world level is where I belong. Maybe we will have a defence of this title in September and then I will see what Brian (Peters) and my father have planned for me. Hopefully bigger names will want to fight for the WBF belt. Maybe the likes of Stephen Smith would be tempted by it and I could challenge for the British and Commonwealth title. I would go any route to get a belt. If you go the British title route then you are live on Sky. There is no TV here so I would have no problem going there."

This well-supported 'Clash of the Capitals' show saw two Dublin favourites pit their wits against fighters at

varying stages of their career. First of all, middleweight battler **Robbie Long** had the unenviable task of derailing the **Gary 'Spike' O'Sullivan** freight train. O'Sullivan likened his situation post-fight to a lion trapped inside a budgie cage and he unleashed all of those frustrations on to unfortunate Long who found himself trapped in an opening-round haze of leather.

It took just 2-43 of the introductory session in this Irish title encounter for 'Spike' to knock any pretensions of victory out of Long. A temple shot splayed Robbie's senses and despite O'Sullivan's vaunted power (nine early wins out of 13 now for Gary), few people envisaged such a premature conclusion given Long's perceived durability.

'Spike' will now hope to further cement his relationship with big-time promoter Frank Warren and start appearing on some shows across the water. O'Sullivan has added a calm and calculating approach to his boxing and no longer wastes energy attempting to smash his opponent to bits. His chilling power flows naturally and the body punching is working a treat. All factors are testament to the coaching skills of underrated Cork trainer Paschal Collins who is building a tasty stable down on the south coast.

If the first high-profile matchup ended unexpectedly early for the fans, there was no comfort for another home town hero in action. In what was a minor upset, Belfast road warrior **Ciaran Healy** uncorked a stunning combination to brutally smash the unbeaten record of now 3-1 (1 KO) **Brendan Fitzpatrick**. It was a bitter pill to swallow for Brendan, who hails from nearby Finglas and always brings a healthy pocket of support to his fights. Only two minutes of the first round had registered when Healy produced the finishing shots, reminiscent of the time he upset the applecart in Castlebar last November when knocking out Irish light-heavyweight ruler John Waldron.

In typical fashion Healy did not attribute his victory purely to hard work and determination but to the fact that

he had stayed off the drink for a sufficient time period in the lead up to fight night! It was Fitzpatrick who was lurching like a drunk on the canvas after the finishing flurry and Eamonn Magee –a man partial to the odd drop himself- clambered into the ring to call it off before referee David Irving had time to administer a count. The fight was scheduled for eight rounds (optimistically as it turned out) and despite the nature of this loss, credit to Fitzpatrick for meeting such an experienced campaigner, and double Irish champion, in just his fourth outing.

Lightweight **Finbarr Eade** claimed a 58-54 win over compact **Radoslav Mitev** in a six round affair. Mitev closed the scoring gap with a last-round knockdown but Eade mostly had it his own way. The Bulgarian recently beat up Michael Harvey in Belfast and does not come to lie down. Finbarr should be due for an Irish title shot in the near future.

Paul Hyland took his first step on the road back from European title heartache against Willie Casey as the talented super-bantamweight stopped **Hyusein Hyuseinov** in the fifth round of a scheduled six.

The third Hyland sibling to feature was former super-featherweight **Eddie**, who had taken 18 months out of the ring. Now campaigning at middleweight (as he slowly burns off any excess he has accumulated during the break) the Tallaght man stopped **Asen Vasilev** in round three. Eddie said in the build-up that he got the buzz back after sparring Robbie Long and even offered to step in to the supporting bout if either Long or O'Sullivan had withdrawn.

Stephen Ormond once again showed why Frank Warren coveted his signature. Ormond is looking for a title shot later this year and the classy lightweight had too much for brave **Valentin Stoychev**, slamming home a powerful right hand just before the bell for the fifth round. The

Clondalkin man would be an enticing proposition for any domestic or UK fighter willing to take him on.

Haughian itching for McIntyre return - 27th June

Lurgan welterweight Stephen Haughian is desperate for a chance to avenge last summer's Celtic title defeat. On June 25 Haughian won his third fight in succession since conceding a 10-round decision to the former British title holder Kevin McIntyre, in a fight that doubled as an eliminator for that very title. Perhaps the strangest thing about that loss was the way Haughian struggled with McIntyre's elusive southpaw stance. It was surprising given the fact that Stephen has sparred many rounds with Paul McCloskey, the very embodiment of an obscure right-hander.

"I would love a rematch with McIntyre to put the record straight. It would also look good on my record," said Haughian, who insists he has learned the lessons from their first meeting.

"That is three wins since the McIntyre defeat, so I am back up there in the rankings. I would love another title shot and if I could get it on the next McCloskey bill in Belfast that would be great."

Haughian's 60-54 main event win over Arek Malek in Craigavon was a routine affair, with the 26-year-old using his trademark jab and sound technical skills to keep the away man at distance. Malek was by no means an ideal co-headliner but when more esteemed opposition withdrew, Stephen would have just been glad of the run out.

"Malek was tough and he has hardly been stopped, so my trainer John Breen told me just to box him and if the opportunity came along to take it," he said. "My shots were coming together and I won the fight easily enough."

When the reigning Irish welterweight champion lost for the first time, in December 2007 to Italian mover Gianmario Grassellini, Haughian appeared unlucky to be on the wrong end of the decision for the IBF Intercontinental strap.

In front of an impressive following, on the undercard of John Duddy's fight with Howard Eastman in the King's Hall, Belfast, Haughian suffered a split decision defeat. However, he learned from the defeat and regrouped. Four fights later in Castlebar, the former quality amateur showed his improvements and out boxed Grassellini over eight rounds.

There was no controversy in the first McIntyre fight, as the man himself admits, but Haughian and trainer John Breen believe they can once again right the wrongs and assemble the correct game plan needed to master McIntyre. Whether that fight moves on to the radar or not, impressive wins over Dee Mitchell, Dave Ryan and Arek Malek have helped steady the ship and push him back into title reckoning.

"I am pleased with my performance and we will just try to stay busy and keep on winning fights. I know I have to keep pushing forward and get myself back into contention for a title shot."

O'Kane and Conlan wrack up Craigavon wins - 27th June

Eamon O'Kane introduced himself to the Irish fight fans in style on Saturday, June 25 when the 29-year-old former amateur standout forced Belfast hard nut Tommy Tolan into a fifth round retirement at the Craigavon Leisure Centre show.

'King Kane' made it two wins out of two, following up on a first round knockout debut victory in Cardiff in early June. Body shots put paid to his Lithuanian opponent on that occasion and once again O'Kane's energy sapping torso assaults paid dividends as he literally knocked the wind out of Tolan's sails, causing the 37-year-old to bail out prematurely.

"The fight turned out the way I expected it to," O'Kane admitted after the bout. "We thought Tommy would be about for the distance, but thankfully he opted out of the sixth round. I thought I hurt him a few times with body shots. The game plan was to go for the body and it worked well - I never lost composure and I never lost my head."

While Eamon never lost his head, Tolan was guilty of using his cranium to full effect throughout the untidy contest. Tommy had cut previous opponent Tony Jeffries with a head butt when the pair clashed in Belfast late last year. That gash was rendered irrelevant just moments later though, when the former Olympian reeled off a classy combination that quickly removed Tolan from his senses. Luckily, there were no cut issues here.

"He was tough and durable and it was a difficult fight," credited Eamon. "Tommy held on for most of the contest, but I am happy with the performance and it's another win."

Taking on someone like Tolan -who proved how dangerous he can be in Dublin last year with an upset knockout of JJ McDonagh- in only his second outing was a solid statement of intent. Eamon also appears to have the

capacity to draw a healthy crowd. That's something not to be sniffed at with times of economic uncertainty in every walk of life, not the least the small-hall boxing business where the ability to shift tickets is becoming nearly as important as an individual fighter's talent or potential.

"I have to say the support tonight was fantastic and you would have thought I was the home town fighter," O'Kane added, reminding us that Lurgan local Stephen Haughian was the main draw. "It was great to be fighting back home [in Ireland] again and the fans gave me great support."

O'Kane acknowledged that age is not on his side and manager Francie McNicholl will no doubt look to move him on swiftly.

"I want to keep winning and fight for a title. I think I am strong enough, old enough and I believe I am ready for that step-up. I want to move up the rankings as quickly as I can and to do that I have to fight often and keep on winning. I was happy with tonight's performance and gained a lot of experience from the fight. It is onwards and upwards from now on."

So when will the Irish fans get to see him in action next?

"I am hoping to be out on the next Darren Barker bill and of course on the Paul McCloskey show in Belfast in September."

Further down this seven-fight card, flyweight prospect Jamie Conlan kept his unbeaten record in one piece when he saw off Walsall veteran Delroy Spencer 60-54 on points. Conlan now puts more spite into his punches and is truly planting his feet when slamming in the left hook to the body and right uppercut to the head. Experienced campaigner Delroy smiled whenever Jamie pushed him out of the comfort zone and the savvy survivor lasted the course once again. Despite the victory, critical Conlan was not impressed with his performance and it was apparent that the west Belfast slickster wanted a stoppage.

“I thought I did alright, it wasn’t brilliant but it is one of those fights you learn from,” Jamie said. “I am not 100 per cent happy with my performance, but I won the fight. I am never happy with the way I perform and I always want to do better. I will learn from this, get back in the gym and start working for my next fight. I will be sparring Willie Casey next week, so that will be a good learning experience for me. The sparring in Breen’s Gym is fantastic and I am learning all the time.”

Mark Ginley pushing on after Deakin win - 28th June

Belfast's Mark Ginley scored a second professional victory on Saturday, June 25 when the lightweight, managed by Graham Earl, outpointed Robin Deakin over six rounds. Ginley has been learning his trade in the Gleann gym under the watchful eyes of Gerard McManus and Paul McCullagh Snr and showed steady improvements in his work on a successful homecoming bout.

"Everything I tried on the night worked and I felt like I boxed well," enthused Ginley post-fight. "My timing was good and the jab worked a treat. I got cut in the third round after a clash of heads so I got on my toes and fought smart for the next three rounds to ensure it never became an issue."

Ginley's opponent, Robin Deakin, may have a record that is rather unpleasing to the eye (a single win in 33 attempts) but he is the type of fighter that can give any prospect a rough ride.

"People see all the losses on my record and label me as a journeyman, which is understandable," said Deakin," but I see myself as a guy who is ready to give it a go and test prospects out - I give 110 per cent in the ring for every fight. My toughest opponent to date was Stephen Smith, he hit hard and I was wary of his power. Ricky Owen was a big puncher as well.

"It was a good, enjoyable fight tonight. I always love coming over to Ireland, even though I can't always understand what people are saying to me! I fought Eddie Hyland over here and also Patrick Hyland. I don't rate Patrick and I'd fight him again tomorrow. I was drained when I fought him, after taking off a lot of weight at short notice. Mark Ginley's a good kid though, we are friends and I'm coming back over to spar with him at some point. I

don't know how far he will go but he does have a good team behind him and does the basics well so we shall see."

Ginley received a solid amateur grounding in the Oliver Plunkett club under the watchful gaze of veteran trainer Patsy McAllister and his right hand man Jimmy McGrath. Mark's brother 'Sugar' Ray is also still involved on the unpaid scene. A sizeable contingent followed Mark to Craigavon, where Stephen Haughian and Eamon O'Kane were the star attractions, and the fans gave this Belfast novice plenty of vocal encouragement.

"It was great fighting in front of fight fans from Belfast I hope I impressed them," added Ginley. "I was due to be out next month but with the cut I won't be fighting now. Graham [Earl] was happy with the performance, he said I looked a lot more relaxed and I was sitting down on my punches more. He's keeping me busy, which is what I want. Robin came in at five days' notice and I was due to fight Damian 'Dee' Taggart [who faced Giuseppe Daprato on the show] but he pulled out for some reason and somewhere down the line I will hopefully get him."

Impressive Marc McCullough shows he is one for the future - 28th June

Featherweight prospect Marc McCullough wasted little time in announcing his arrival on the paid scene with a comprehensive second round stoppage of fellow debutant Eddie Nesbitt in Craigavon. Hailing from the Shankill Road, McCullough boxed out of Cairn Lodge as an amateur, the same gym that spawned Stephen Kirk who claimed light-heavyweight bronze at the 1997 World Championships.

“Marc’s a very smart boxer and he’s getting better and better and I think if he really pushed himself he could be exceptional,” Kirk told the Belfast Telegraph back in 2009. Moving on and just over two years after that prophecy McCullough has now dropped the head guard and vest in favour of a space in John Breen’s professional gym in the heart of Belfast.

Well-supported Marc got off to a flyer on this occasion, immediately punishing the noticeably slower Nesbitt with rasping combinations. Eddie tried to fight back but was unable to land the telling blows, instead resorting to untidy swings. To give him his due though, the youngster had a good go. McCullough was pleased with his first showing and praised his voluble following before assessing the overall display.

“I am pleased with the job I did in there, but it was tough,” he said. “I thought it would take a few rounds to break him down, so to stop him in the second was great. He was strong, came out swinging and I knew it was going to be a tough fight as I had sparred him a few months ago. But I loved every minute of it and now I just want to stay busy and hopefully get on the McCloskey bill in September.”

McCullough’s former amateur haunt Cairn Lodge Amateur Boxing Club proudly proclaims on its website that

it has produced some the most outstanding amateur boxers in Northern Ireland. Club instructors Tommy Waite Snr, Tommy Waite Jr, Tom Dunn, Paul Smyth and Derek Owens have formed an elite squad of amateur boxers within the Hammer Community Centre in Agnes Street and the club continues to grow from strength to strength and is now one of the fastest growing boxing clubs in Belfast.

Based on this display Marc is one to keep an eye on and we shall monitor the youngster's progress with interest over the coming months.

Shamrock Shorts: Paul McCloskey is eyeing a September 10 mega-fight in Belfast. The Odyssey Arena is being mentioned, with Alberto Mosquero mooted as a potential opponent for part of the fractured WBA belt.....Jamie Kavanagh celebrated win number seven in the Club Nokia, Los Angeles on Thursday, June 23 when the Irish Prospect of the Year stopped John Willoughby inside three rounds..... WBA middleweight champion Felix Sturm claims he has agreed to a rematch with Matthew Macklin.....Barry McGuigan has issued a 'get in touch' call to Brian Peters if Peters wants to pit Kiko Martinez in with Carl Frampton.....Stephen Ormond is eyeing a headlining title shot on an Irish bill in September.....Ex-European title ruler Willie Casey has split from DolPhil Promotions and is seeking a fresh assault on the European scene.....Meanwhile, former Casey opponent Paul Hyland claims that he has overcome the mental scars from his defeat at the fists of the Limerick warrior and claims he is ready to move on to bigger and better things.....Belfast bruiser Ciaran Healy wants to extend his recent run of surprise wins and take on Anthony Fitzgerald in a rematch.....Andy Lee won't be fighting Matthew Macklin seeing as Macklin came up short (on the score cards at least) in his recent German excursion.....Peter McDonagh was stopped by eventual tournament winner Yassine El Maachi in the June 7 welterweight *Prizefighter*.....'Irish

Lightning' Dean Byrne will finally fight under the Frank Warren banner on July 9 in London.....Frankie Gavin and Curtis Woodhouse are engaging in a war of words in anticipation of their July 16 WBO Intercontinental title meeting in Liverpool.....Logan McGuinness, a Canadian of Irish extraction, took a majority decision over Daniel Ruiz in Ontario on June 24. Logan retained his NABA lightweight title in the process.

**Magee heading to Panama City for final preparations -
8th July**

Brian Magee is aiming to extend his stay in world level boxing on July 30 when the Lisburn super-middleweight ventures out to the exotic location of Costa Rica for a WBA interim shot at local hope Jaime Barboza. Brian has been busy sparring middleweight Eamon O'Kane as part of the preparation.

"The thing about Barboza is that he's a lot smaller than Brian and, since most of his career has been at light-middle and middleweight, he's quicker than Brian's recent opponents, so that's the type of sparring Brian needs," explained manager and namesake Pat Magee.

Brian and his team will arrive in Panama City on July 15, set up camp until July 27 and jet off to nearby Costa Rica ready for July 30. Brian's coach Bernardo Checa is from Panama and the team will tap into his knowledge of the fight scene to ensure Magee settles into a gym as part of his final preparations for fight night. The July 30 show, in the Gimnasio Nacional, San Jose, is a 'KO drugs' event organized by WBA president Gilberto Mendoza and Magee-Barboza will share the stage with the home town fighter's hard-hitting compatriot Bryan Vazquez (super-featherweight) and Nicaraguan Elvin Perez (light-welterweight).

The away assignment is a very winnable proposition for the Irishman. Barboza holds a rather modest 17-4 (8 KOs) record and has done most of his work in and around the lesser weight regions, challenging (unsuccessfully) for the WBC Youth light-middleweight title just two fights ago. Quite what the 33-year-old was doing contesting a youth title is the WBC's business, but Barboza was stopped for the first time in his career, by Jose Pinzon in eight rounds.

Meanwhile, Brian Magee's sparring hand Eamon O'Kane is fresh from a fifth round retirement win over Tommy Tolan in Craigavon. O'Kane's heavy body shots eventually wore down the rugged 37-year-old after a rough start and the Dungiven man is a good stylistic fit. Pat Magee has guided his own charge into some lucrative fights and this could prove to be a handy assignment, despite the fact that the team are required to travel.

"We've had two sparring sessions with Eamon," added Pat, "whose style is not unlike the Costa Rican, he's a middleweight and he is quick. The sparring has been very good and it's been good for Eamon too."

If Magee can pull off the win in Central America then a fight with WBA 'regular' champion Dmitri Sartison could be on the agenda. Brian's stoppage loss in Canada to Lucian Bute has done minimal damage to his credibility and the 35-year-old former British and European kingpin can still force his way into the title mix.

McCloskey puts Khan in the past and focuses on Prescott challenge - 19th July

The next prize on offer for Paul McCloskey is a shot at the WBA world crown if he can defeat dangerous puncher Breidis Prescott on September 10. Even though Paul and his team are anxious to distance themselves from Amir Khan, a name which in Irish boxing is almost synonymous with McCloskey since their fight in April, the 31-year-old will look to put one over on the only man to beat Khan thus far as a professional.

“It’s time to move on from the Khan fight and one of the pluses from that night was the proof that Paul can perform on the world stage,” said Matchroom’s Eddie Hearn who formally announced the WBA light-welterweight eliminator, which take place in Belfast’s impressive Odyssey Arena. “McCloskey is a hugely popular name in Ireland and this will be his homecoming event. After the Amir Khan post-fight press conference I thought about one of the things Khan said; when he challenged us to go off and beat some of the guys he had beaten before we asked again for a rematch. Well we decided to go one better than that and get the person who knocked him spark out.”

McCloskey himself is relishing the chance to mix it with a hard-hitting world level operator like Prescott and Hearn insists that if (or when as they strongly insist) the Dungiven man is successful he will fight for the WBA ‘regular’ title in his next bout. With Amir Khan attempting to unify with IBF ruler Zab Judah he has been elevated to ‘super’ championship status therefore leaving Amir’s former victim Marcos Maidana to contest the vacant WBA title against an as yet unnamed foe. McCloskey will fight the winner of that bout if he negotiates his way past the livewire Colombian on September 10.

“Prescott’s dangerous, very capable and he’s the kind of fighter that I want to test myself against,” stated the former European light-welterweight champion. “Prescott’s got a good dig on him, he’s gone in with quality levels of opposition and been particularly impressive in his most recent fights [three consecutive victories]. He comes to fight, there won’t be any chasing after him and he’ll be there in front of me. It’s a big test and I’ll work out my tactics and game plan because he brings power to the table but he can also be outboxed and I need to stay focused throughout the fight. His record speaks for itself, he can punch hard and knows how to win. I’m looking forward now, not back and Eddie’s got the right man here for me. In Manchester [against Khan] I felt like a home fighter because of the support that followed me over.”

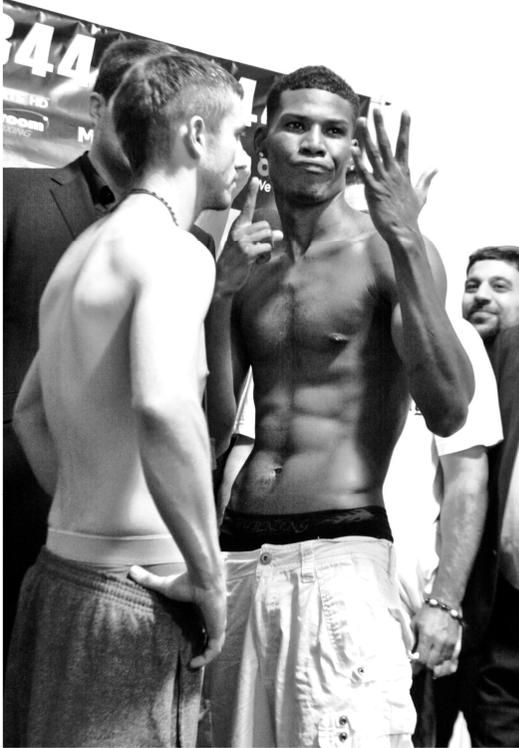
After the television debacle involving Primetime and Team Khan’s rigid negotiating skills, Eddie Hearn was vocally critical of their handling of the whole affair. Eddie believes that being back on Sky is the natural fit for McCloskey.

“It’s great to get back on Sky Sports and with such a big profile-building fight as well. It will be a WBA eliminator and we are looking forward to an extra special atmosphere. This will be the perfect fight to silence any critics and catapult Paul into world title contention. The world title fight will come next when we beat Prescott. Breidis is a tough and hungry fighter, but Paul’s world class and he will be ready. Ticket prices will start from £30 so we expect a great turn out from the ‘Dudey Army’”.

If both Maidana and McCloskey win their respective bouts it could set up a mouth-watering world title collision for early next year. But will the venue for a proposed showdown once again be in Belfast?

“Depending on money and who’s about at the time with what belt, we would hope to bring that fight to Belfast,” affirmed Hearn. “When people see what Paul brings to the

table [in terms of fan base and pulling power], we can face any champion. Bredis Prescott is an opponent that will make people stand up and take notice. We are moving down the WBA route but that doesn't mean we are ruling out the other governing bodies."



Ready for battle: McCloskey and Prescott are fighters hungry for success

© Kevin Finn

Hearn believes that Prescott is the perfect opponent for his charge and is eager to move on with McCloskey's career. One of his main aims is to firmly place all controversies and talking points of the Khan fight into the past and do anything necessary to secure a crack at one of the major titles.

“People continue to discuss Amir Khan but we aren’t fighting to chase Khan, we’re aiming to fulfil a world title dream,” he stressed. “Paul was so calm and relaxed before his last fight and handled the pressure superbly. He was always composed and never took any big shots. Can he operate at world level? Absolutely, I’m 100 per cent sure that he can. We will certainly fight for a world title after we beat Prescott.”

**McCloskey: Judah is a potential banana skin for Khan -
19th July**

Paul McCloskey believes that Amir Khan could come unstuck in Las Vegas on Saturday July 23 if he is taking the threat of Zab Judah lightly. McCloskey sees Judah as a refreshed force and thinks Amir could be underestimating his powers.

“Judah-Khan depends on circumstances and if Khan’s taking him lightly then Zab could spring a surprise,” opined Paul, who was in Belfast revealing details of his own WBA elimination bout with Breidis Prescott.

“Judah seems to be rejuvenated training under Pernell Whitaker and it will be an interesting contest – a potential banana skin for Khan.”

Inevitably, McCloskey was quizzed at length by the media about his own tussle with the Bolton star and the fight-ending circumstances that are still subject to much debate across the Irish boxing scene. Both Paul and promoter Eddie Hearn appear to be tiring of the fiasco and are keen to push forwards and back into world title contention, starting later this year with big punching Prescott.

Paul claims that all roads do not necessarily lead to Khan and he is pursuing every avenue in a bid for world stardom: “I don’t dream of a Khan return,” he said, “I dream of being a world champion in my own right, beating whoever is in front of me and I’d fight King Kong or Mickey Mouse to achieve that!

“I felt comfortable against Khan and that I belong at that level. I didn’t feel like a beaten fighter when I left the ring and I was fresh and strong when the fight was stopped on the cut.”

If Judah pulls off the upset win this weekend and inflicts a second professional defeat on Khan then further doors could open for McCloskey. At least that is what promoter Eddie Hearn believes and the fast moving Matchroom man wants to pull some strings with his American connections and make an all-southpaw mega fight.

"We have strong relationships with American promoters and we're already talking to champions in Paul's weight division. Kathy Duva has been a friend of my father's for many years and we have a close relationship. If Judah beats Khan then it's a fight we can definitely make. Khan's possibly off up to the 147-pound division after he fights Judah and defends against Erik Morales; he's talking of taking on Floyd Mayweather Jr up there."

Both Hearn and McCloskey were present at the Odyssey Arena, Belfast to announcing Paul's WBA light-welterweight elimination bout with Breidis Prescott when the subject of Khan inevitably raised its head. McCloskey's manager Francie McNicholl was also seated at top table, in front of some sizeably impressive posters proclaiming Prescott as the perfect opponent. Both men on September 10 will have met Amir Khan in the professional ring and left it experiencing vastly differing emotions.

"There are a lot of unanswered questions from the night of the Khan fight," said Hearn, looking to put the matter to bed.

"The BBBofC wrote to the WBA and spoke to the doctor and the referee and got the same answers as we did. Sky wanted Khan to fight Prescott again before he accepted McCloskey. We can go over the issues a million times but the fight is over and we have to pursue other options. We need to focus on the next job and make sure we don't get stuck in the past."

The immediate future for this thriving partnership is Breidis Prescott and a packed September 10 fight card. Fights with Zab Judah and Marcos Maidana could materialise at some point in the future, but for now all focus moves to a certain Colombian banger.

Eddie Hearn keen on Frampton and Martinez bout - 19th July

A strong headline act on September 10, in the shape of Paul McCloskey-Breidis Prescott, is not enough for promoter Eddie Hearn who has vowed to pack the undercard tightly with solid matchups to give the expected 10,000 crowd ultimate value for money. Part of the package will include reigning Celtic super-bantamweight champion Carl Frampton, who will appear on the bill no matter who the opponent turns out to be, although many are hoping that all parties can put pen to paper and make it a European title scrap with Kiko Martinez.

“Carl will definitely fight on the show regardless of who the opponent is and I don’t see the Martinez fight falling through to be honest,” reassured Hearn. “Carl wants the fight and Barry McGuigan wants it. They understand that it’s a chief support and not a main event so the money won’t be as high but that’s fine and Brian Peters and Kiko Martinez both want this fight to take place. It’s a great opportunity for Frampton, without ties or options and a chance to go out and show what he’s all about. A lot of people think that it’s coming too early for him but Barry really fancies it.”

Eddie’s right when he proclaims that the bout is worthy of being a headliner on its own but insists that it is this type of bold matchmaking that defines not only the Odyssey extravaganza but Matchroom shows in general. Kiko Martinez is an extremely live champion who reaffirmed his punching credentials with a stoppage win over quality operator Jason Booth recently. Given the world title achievements of Bernard Dunne it is now easy to forget how devastatingly clinical Kiko was when he arrived on Irish soil in 2007 to brutally dismantle the Dubliner inside a single round. Rendall Munroe showed that ‘La Sensacion’

can be outboxed, but Carl Frampton will have to stay fully focused if he is to outlast the Spanish slugger.

Some other tasty domestic names are being mooted for undercard slots. Although free agent Martin Lindsay will not appear -as he is getting married close to the date- popular heavyweight Martin Rogan fancies a return to the Belfast ring and another quality big man Mike Perez could also find his way on to the show. In fact, who wouldn't mind seeing the two former *Prizefighter* winners thrown in with each other.

"We want to bring big fights to the bill and give the passionate supporters their Irish fighters in meaningful fights," added Eddie Hearn. "Martin Rogan wants to be on the bill and I told him I want him on but in a proper fight, no six-rounders with a South African or a Polish guy who will drop. I want him to fight Albert Sosnowski who took on Vitali Klitschko in his last fight. I never get complacent about ticket sales; we want to get people in and give them a great night with value for money. Eamon O'Kane will be on the bill, Mike Perez is another possibility and there will be others. All with prices starting from £30; you can't beat that, it always works well at the darts. The atmosphere will be electric with 10,000 people packed in on the night."

**Henry Coyle leads a strong supporting cast on Mayo
show - 25th July 2011**

Henry 'Western Warrior' Coyle will headline at the Royal Theatre, Castlebar on Friday, August 12, with Italian Elio Cotena providing the opposition. In a curious trend among Irish fighters of late, the WBF belt will once again be on display - the light-middleweight version in this case as Coyle continues to quite literally punch above his weight.

Henry's father and manager Gerry Coyle believes his son can go all the way to major honours, "When you look at the calibre of competition Henry came up against in the amateurs and the guys he has sparred since turning pro I have no doubt that he can compete with the best," salivated Gerry. "As a pro he's sparred the likes of Carl Froch and Matthew Macklin along with the best in the States and as an amateur he fought the likes of Jean Pascal, Andre Berto, Anthony Dirrell, John Duddy and James Moore while he beat the two-time Thai Olympian Manon Boonjumnong to win the World Military Championships.

"The pro game is a hard one and nothing comes easy in it but Henry is training very hard for this fight and with the atmosphere that a full house at the Royal Theatre will generate he will be a very hard man to beat. We have a lot of respect for Cotena, he will want to bring the WBF title back to Italy but Henry will have a lot to say about that."

The undercard is not too shoddy, featuring another man not unfamiliar with the WBF, featherweight Patrick Hyland. Westport's unbeaten Finbarr 'The Rock' Eade steps up to title class for the time as he mixes with solid southpaw Mickey Coveney for the Irish super-featherweight crown. Coveney was stopped by the aforementioned Patrick 'Punisher' Hyland for the same domestic honour, back in February 2010.

Mayo boxing is currently riding on the crest of a wave, having enjoyed huge success in the amateur ranks. Ray Moylette won a gold medal at the European seniors in Turkey last month to add to the World Junior title he won in Mexico in 2008. That followed on from Katie Rowland's bronze medal at the World Junior Championships in April with the Geesala club woman adding to the silver she won at last year's European Juniors.

Another of the fighting Hyland clan, former European title challenger Paul, has also secured himself a slot on the card and he will share the limelight with talented Michael Sweeney who faces off with Ballyhanunis's John Waldron, in a battle of former Irish champions. Leeds-based southpaw Lee Murtagh, originally from Short Strand in Belfast and now boxing off an Irish license, pits his wits against DolPhil Promotions boxer Darren Cruise.

**Magee claims interim crown in Costa Rica after mastering
Barboza - 30th July**

Brian Magee is the new WBA interim super-middleweight champion following a 12-round points victory in San Jose, Costa Rica. Southpaw Brian was always likely to be a class above his challenger Jaime Barboza and so it proved as the Lisburn man landed all the quality shots in a messy affair, with the three judges (two from America and one from New Zealand) recording scores of 116-112, 117-111 and 118-110 all in the Ulsterman's favour.

Panama's Gustavo Padilla did a good job refereeing the spectacle which was marred slightly by Barboza's insistence on throwing a blow (usually a wild right swing) and immediately falling into a clinch and wrestling. Regardless of this, manager Pat Magee was delighted with his man's display and wasted no time in throwing some names into the hat, with potential mega-fights now looming.

"Brian is a great position now," beamed Pat, when Irish-boxing.com cornered him in Dublin airport. "We don't have to look for fighters, they are looking for us. We have had an approach from Kelly Pavlik's people already and there is a possibility of Kessler too. Those are two of four names we can mention today.

"Brian will most likely make a voluntary defence in November. For that fight to be in Belfast we would need another top 10 Irish contender and there is none out there at present. We have no problems travelling but let's just hope it's not as far next time."



*Brian Magee battled searing heat and a tricky customer to prevail
on away soil*
© Kevin Finn

It was quite far indeed, with the team venturing over to Central America for this assignment. Barboza had done most of his campaigning at light-middleweight and it showed. The squat powerhouse was a little fleshy around the waistline and lacked Magee's technical refinement, built up over 40 professional fights and a successful amateur career before that.

"It was very physically demanding for Brian," agreed Pat. "Jaime Barboza fought above himself and why wouldn't he? He had a chance to make history. The president of his country was there. It has to be said the Costa Rican crowd were very fair and they appreciated the performance Brian put in. Brian would have liked the stoppage but we can't travel that far away, under those conditions, win the fight and be disappointed."

The bout was televised on Setanta Ireland which enabled a home audience to witness the 36-year-old's triumph, achieved in blazingly hot conditions. There was a slight taint controversy at the close of the second round when one of the lower ring ropes came undone and a

lengthy delay ensued whilst a maintenance operative did his best to tighten the screws. Luckily none of that deterred Magee from his quest for interim title glory. It seems that the former British and European champion will be motoring along in world class company for a little while longer.

Shamrock Shorts: Jamie Kavanagh defeated Marcos Herrera over six rounds on the Amir Khan-Zab Judah undercard in Las Vegas.....John Breen believes that his fighter Andy Murray can come again despite an EBU reverse to Gavin Rees.....The Carl Frampton-Kiko Martinez Euro title scrap is confirmed for the Odyssey Arena on September 10.....Fresh from taking Dereck Chisora's British and Commonwealth titles, Tyson Fury wants to fight Kevin McBride. Coleman Barrett and Martin Rogan are also on his list.....BDR Promotions will promote a show in Dundalk on Saturday, October 22 with Paul Hyland on the running order.....Anthony Fitzgerald says that he would retire if he ever lost to former sparring partner Darren Cruise.....Cruise responded by welcoming a fight with Fitz but claiming that his sole focus is next opponent Lee Murtagh.....Christina McMahon will face Maxine McCarthy in an all-female Irish title affair.

Castlebar goes crazy for Coyle - 12th August 2011

Geesala light-middleweight **Henry Coyle** certainly raised the roof in Castlebar's Royal Theatre when his Italian opponent **Elio Cotena** suffered a cut eye and was unable to progress past the fifth round. Coyle employed his tried-and-tested style of tucking inside and assaulting his man with flurries before moving away from any counter shots. The WBF title was on the line and Henry's fans delighted in their man's minor belt success.

"We put bums on seats tonight and of course I would love to come back here," said Coyle. "This is my home and I enjoy fighting here. I am based in Chicago and the lads out there got me in great shape for this fight, but there is no place like home."



Coyle (right) is WBF light-middleweight king

© Kevin Finn

Patrick Hyland is now enjoying regular outings and the Tallaght talent made sure that Italian **Fabrizio Trotta** was not going to hear the final bell of this scheduled eight-

threes. Trotta, whose nickname is 'Popeye' got to the fourth round, but no further, as Patrick planted his feet and dished out punishment on the away man. 31-year-old Fabrizio had fought in Dublin back in 2008, making it into the fifth round before then-European super-bantamweight king Rendall Munroe cut short his challenge. He was never likely to possess the skills sufficient to extend Hyland into the later sessions. Currently enjoying the longest unbeaten stretch in Irish boxing at 24-0 (11 KOs), 'The Punisher' is fast closing in on an EBU crack himself.

Michael Sweeney-John Waldron is a fight that has been talked about for a good while now. Unfortunately it never came about when Waldron held the Irish light-heavyweight crown and when the pair met here -in a non-title eight-rounder- some of the gloss had been taken off the contest, given that Waldron had been stopped early in his previous two outings. Make that three consecutive outings when the Ballyhaunis man retired at the end of the third round. Referee David Irving accepted the call and it looks like 36-year-old John (now 5-5 as a pro) will hang up the gloves having fulfilled his Irish title dream. Talented Sweeney, meanwhile, is now targeting a European title shot.

Plucky Londoner **Mickey Coveney** is a little too good to be labeled a journeyman and the West Ham battler won a professional title at the third attempt. Coveney was stopped heavily by Patrick Hyland in Dublin (back in 2010) when he challenged for the Irish featherweight belt. Add that to a 10-round points reverse to Rocky Dean for the Southern Area featherweight title in 2005. Mickey's luck turned in Castlebar when he claimed a narrow 96-95 win over **Finbarr Eade** for the Irish super-featherweight belt. Eade pushed him hard but Coveney's greater economy saw him over the finishing line on Paul McCullagh's score sheet.



Coveney (left) scores a career-best win over Eade
© Kevin Finn

Paul Hyland eased back into action with a six round points verdict over former Welsh Area title holder **Dai Davies**. **Lee Murtagh** was probably drafted in as a yardstick to gauge prospect **Darren Cruise's** progress but it's back to the drawing board for the now 3-1 Roscommon native Cruise as the wily old fox from Leeds outpointed the home fighter by a score of 40-37.

**Belfast Jackal primed to stun Spanish import - 15th
August**

Carl Frampton is ready to deliver the performance of his career on Saturday, September 10 and the red-hot Tigers Bay super-bantamweight is not taking the threat of Kiko Martinez lightly. The Spanish title holder arrives at the Odyssey Arena with a fearsome puncher's reputation yet Frampton revealed that whenever manager Barry McGuigan first approached him with the prospect, he did not think twice about accepting the offer.

"This fight has been talked about for a while and when Barry asked me I immediately said that I wanted to fight Martinez," affirmed 'The Jackal'. "I want to test myself; I won't improve if I'm handed knock overs. It's going to be a tough fight and I have the utmost respect for Kiko Martinez. He's the strongest opponent of my professional *or* amateur career. This will be the biggest night of boxing in Belfast for a number of years, with a proper title on the line and after some top defences then I'll be ready to move on to world level fights. The European title will help me get to the top."

Martinez rolled into Dublin four years ago as an unknown quantity to take on home town hero Bernard Dunne for the very same belt. Three knockdowns and 86 seconds later, every fight fan knew his name following a whirlwind one round blitz. Barry McGuigan is adamant that an intense training camp and meticulous preparations will ensure that lightning does not strike twice.



Class act Frampton is ready for a formidable Martinez test

© Kevin Finn

“We have a lot of respect for Bernard Dunne but Carl is a different fighter. It’s a different set of circumstances here, we are thinking about a long fight and the ability to digest punishment, all of those things will be looked over and we just know that we can beat him,” assured the former WBA featherweight world champion.

“Of course there is a risk attached to this fight. Some say that we are taking it too soon, which is fair comment. The game has changed though over the last 20 or 30 years. In my own career I was fighting professionally for just under two-and-a-half years when I fought for the European title. Carl is just coming up to two years and guys take greater risks these days.”

24-year-old Frampton has amassed 10 wins so far as a professional, with six opponents falling by knockout. Kiko 'La Sensacion' Martinez has stopped 18 victims himself and therefore represents the stiffest test so far along Carl's projected route to world title glory.

"How can you turn down a European title fight in front of your home crowd?" asked the current Celtic title holder, who insists that he has learned from a frustrating night's work against Robbie Turley in his last bout.

"Robbie Turley was very awkward and maybe I took him for granted a little bit, thinking that it would be a little easier than it turned out to be. I was marked up but I was a bit hard on myself - it was an OK performance overall. I'm ready for a big fight now so why wait for things; I believe I am the best in Europe. Expectation brings pressure but that spurs me on."

Frampton has been over in Kent preparing with Barry McGuigan's son Shane who will be working the corner with Gerry Storey on the night. Barry describes veteran Storey as "a very clever coach and tactician who has been watching and analysing every asset and weakness that Kiko possesses."

Barry also sees his protégé as a young man who thrives on pressure: "Carl wanted the fight as soon as it was mentioned and Martinez has not fought anybody like him yet. Maybe he has fought people just as powerful but not with the same technique or style as Carl. Kiko is a seek-and-destroy merchant who walks forward, comes right at you and hits hard.

"Styles make fights and this has the potential to be a fantastic battle," concluded McGuigan.

Storey reckons Frampton can be his first professional European champion - 15th August

Veteran trainer Gerry Storey has handled many top-class fighters during his lengthy boxing career. The experienced coach believes that Carl Frampton can become his first professional European champion and join club mate Paddy Barnes who holds the same honour at amateur level. Storey even mentioned the name of Belfast great Johnny Caldwell (who won a world title at bantamweight in 1961) when gauging Carl's progress as he aims to topple European champion Kiko Martinez.

"One of our great fighters was Johnny Caldwell and when I saw Johnny at around the same age, the class he had with him then stayed with him throughout his career," mused Storey.

"Johnny Caldwell never really improved beyond that, but Frampton has shown continued improvement. He's boxed all the big nations at all the top competitions as an amateur and mixed with the best. People have said that Carl is taking chances as a professional, but he has been too clever and too good for his previous opponents and the same will happen with Kiko Martinez. The fans will get something to be proud of; these are the type of fights that pack the hall. He'll be ready and he will win."

Gerry is a vastly experienced hand who has formulated game plans and tactics for his fighters in title contests at the height of the amateur and professional codes for many years. He points to Tommy Waite's early-career British and Commonwealth title opportunities as proof that Frampton's Euro chance is not coming a moment too soon.

"Carl is ready for this opportunity and he will fully prepared when fight night comes around. I've always admired him ever since I first saw him box at nine years of age [a smiling Frampton says he was aged seven]. Carl

learned a lot when fighting Robbie Turley in his last bout, who was one of the most awkward kids that we could have boxed. Frampton can fight, box and punch all in one and will become my first European professional champion. I'm looking forward to him joining his mate Paddy Barnes who is amateur European champion."

The big show promoters, Matchroom Sports, have announced some exciting additions to the Odyssey undercard on September 10. Cairn Lodge product Marc McCullough will feature, as will east Belfast flyweight Luke Wilton and Omagh light-welterweight Damian Taggart. Former Commonwealth Games gold medallist Eamon O'Kane of Dungiven faces off with Ballymena's Joe Rea at middleweight.

Fury headlines 'The Only Show in Town' but Rogan is not the opponent - 24th August

Tyson Fury will headline in the King's Hall on September 17 but Martin Rogan will not be in the opposite corner. Promoter Mick Hennessy was unable to name the opponent but stated that negotiations were still taking place, with a sturdy test being lined up. Tyson is British and Commonwealth heavyweight champion but it is strictly international opponents under scrutiny at present. Even though it appears that Fury and Rogan will not meet in the ring anytime soon, there were some heated exchanges between the two camps when Fury rolled into Belfast to promote 'The Only Show in Town'.

"When I started in this game I wanted to promote in great venues like Wembley Arena, Madison Square Garden and here at the King's Hall," said Mick Hennessy. "I believe over the next 18 months that Tyson Fury will not only become the biggest star in world boxing but he will be the biggest sporting star in the world. Tyson is proud of his Irish roots and he wanted to fight in the King's Hall. There is a shortlist of opponents, we are negotiating with people and will announce something shortly. We will get a solid opponent for the fight and it will be backed up by good fights and good fighters on the undercard."

Despite a collapse in negotiations, former Commonwealth ruler Martin Rogan was in attendance and it was not long before the verbal barbs started to fly. Uncertain money offers, disputed phone calls and a variety of other disagreements were discussed in front of a captivated audience.

"We've offered you huge money for this fight. If you've got the audacity to say that you will knock out Tyson Fury then step up," growled Hennessy.

Conflict between the fighters themselves was kept to a minimum with both men complimenting one another on their fighting heart.

“Martin and I have always got on well before now, I came over and sparred when I was 17 years old,” said Fury. “If I’ve got something to say to a man then I’ll say it to his face. My Irish heritage is all sorted as well now and I promised myself that I wanted to win the Irish title. I am eligible to fight for it and I want to win the belt before I move on to European or world titles.

“I didn’t know I would be fighting so soon again [after the double-title win over Dereck Chisora] but it’s an honour to fight at this historical hall. I’m really looking forward to headlining in Belfast and I would like to be fighting Martin Rogan but the situation didn’t work out. That side of things is nothing to do with me, we have been friends for a few years and I’ll fight any man put in front of me. We spoke after the Chisora fight and agreed that we should fight at the King’s Hall. Coleman Barrett is the Irish champion and Kevin McBride just lost a fight (by knockout) so who else is there? Whoever I fight, it won’t be as big as if I fought Rogan. Still, there’s time yet, we can maybe sort things out.”

That seems unlikely but at least those in attendance were treated to some light relief when talk turned to potential bouts further down the line. Even promoter Hennessy had a sly chuckle when Audley Harrison’s name was mentioned as a possible future adversary for Fury.

“With all due respect, in my opinion, we have just brought Channel 5 into boxing and we don’t want to lose them already,” he quipped.

“We are looking to run two shows this side of Christmas. We needed to square venues with TV and it has been a priority for us to box here. The King’s Hall was booked up after the 17th and this was the only suitable date

so we went with it. Belfast is a fight city; it has an incredible boxing reputation."

An amicable Fury ended with this message: "I've seen Rogan fighting, and beating, top men on TV in what was a Cinderella story. Regardless of whether we fight or not, I respect him and I can't wait to show the Belfast public my skills on September 17."

Willie Thompson will fight Ryan Greene on the undercard, while Tommy Tolan faces off with Phil Townley. Kevin O'Hara is still awaiting confirmation of an opponent, with both Paul Griffin and Finbarr Eade on the waiting list. Luke Wilton also features, in a flyweight contest.

Haughian and Witter in crossroads battle - 24th August

Stephen Haughian is looking to gatecrash the domestic title scene and could move one step closer to the mix if he successfully negotiates a way past Sheffield-based welterweight Junior Witter, in a real crossroads affair. The away man arrives with an impressive CV, having once held the prestigious WBC light-welterweight title. Lurgan's own former Irish title holder is still aiming to make an impact and Haughian assures his fans that no stone will be left unturned in preparation for such a big night.

"Witter's fought at the higher level and it's up to him to prove that he is still at that level," reckoned Stephen. "It's a massive step-up for me and I am looking forward to the opportunity. He can say all he wants that he believes strongly in himself but I believe in myself. We'll see on the night who is the hungrier fighter and the pressure's all on Junior."

Laid back in his demeanour and laconic in delivery, Junior Witter speaks in sound bites rather than sentences. He lost in the final of the welterweight *Prizefighter* tournament recently (to Yassine El Maachi, who Haughian will be sparring in his build-up) but Junior dismissed claims that he is nearing the end of a lengthy, distinguished career.

"As long as I don't end up through the ropes then I'm okay," he grinned. "This is my first proper fight back at welterweight. Stephen's a nice kid with a good record but when the bell goes, 'The Hitter' will be back. I'm bigger, stronger and possess the skills, speed and knowledge. I believe that when I enter the ring I will come out a winner.

"The whole *Prizefighter* competition is a completely different entity to boxing. You go in and perform for three rounds and cool your body back down again. It is separate from normal boxing and I can do 12 or 15 rounds if I have

too. I've still got the tools and Mick will get me title shots as he has done in the past."

Haughian's sole trainer throughout his professional career has been Belfast veteran John Breen who believes that this fight is make-or-break for his charge.

"I have always said that Stephen Haughian has the ability to go to the top and it's up to Stephen to rise to the occasion on fight night - it will be a very exciting fight. Mick Hennessy is a gentleman and hopefully boxing can take off again in Belfast."

Breen also indicated an interest in training Tyson Fury in the future: "I would love to work with Tyson and help him improve his game. It's a shame that the Martin Rogan-Tyson Fury fight isn't happening because it would be a good fight. Maybe it will happen sometime."

Tolan views Townley as a stepping stone to titles - 24th August

West Belfast warrior Tommy Tolan has his eyes firmly fixed on Irish titles and the 37-year-old believes that a move down to middleweight could see him realise a career-long dream. 'The Tiger' meets oft-beaten Phil Townley on the Tyson Fury September 17 undercard and he views the bout purely as a stepping stone to bigger things.

"I know a wee bit about Phil Townley, he's been talking on YouTube, saying that he will knock me out but not to worry, I'll be too strong and punching too hard for him on the night," said Tommy. "This will be a stepping stone on to Irish titles. I'm moving down to middleweight and I'll take on any of the fighters down there. Gary O'Sullivan or even Robbie Long, at the drop of a hat I'll be in the ring. My weight is bang on and I'm shedding the rust. I'm firing on all cylinders; you'll see the real me in my next fight."

His last fight was a retirement loss to Dungiven starlet Eamon O'Kane in Craigavon. Tommy rates O'Kane but reckons he could be in hot water for his next contest - a scheduled six-rounder with Ballymena's Joe Rea.

"Eamon's a good kid, a good puncher but he has his work cut out in his next fight. Joe Rea's tricky and if he gets his training right then O'Kane will do well to beat him. Joe's smart, slick and switch hits a bit. I'm not predicting an upset but it will be a tough fight."

Tolan has increased his fitness regime of late and is steadily shedding the excess pounds he had gained prior to returning to the ring, in Limerick (May 2010) at cruiserweight, when facing Michael Sweeney in an unforgiving comeback assignment. A consistent training schedule and some intense sparring sessions with reigning Irish light-heavyweight champion Ciaran Healy is helping mould Tommy into a more rounded fighter.

“I’m based in St. John Bosco with Gerard McCafferty and Alec Doherty. The circuit training is great and we use the Black Mountain twice a week for runs. I’d fight either of the McDonagh brothers [Paddy and JJ] as well, absolutely, let’s get it on. There’s an Irish title in me and I’ll have a go at whoever they put in front of me.”

**Thompson glad to be home and ready to rumble with
Ryan Greene - 24th August**

Ballyclare's Willie Thompson is delighted to be back fighting in Northern Ireland and the welterweight contender is looking forward to a good old fashioned domestic tear-up with Lurgan's unbeaten puncher Ryan Greene. The Northern Ireland Area title –last seen in 2007 when James Gorman defeated Gary Hamilton for the light-welterweight version- will also be making a welcome re-appearance.

"It's a great honour to be fighting for the Northern Ireland Area title and it's definitely coming home with me," buzzed Willie. "I'm still up in Breen's gym, training away and getting great sparring with Joe Rea, Stephen Haughian and a younger boxer who's on his way up. I don't know much about my opponent Ryan Greene and they say he's a puncher. Stephen Haughian's sparred with him and he said he comes forward a lot so we'll see what happens. Ryan is a southpaw so maybe I'll get sparring with Paul McCloskey or another southpaw because they can be difficult to fight."

Willie reeled off an impressive run of wins after turning professional but his career has been relatively stop/start since the unbeaten record was popped by former British welterweight king Michael Jennings. Thompson even linked up with ex-referee Paul Graham who has turned his hand to promoting over in Scotland. Taking short notice scraps, all away from home, made Willie think twice and return home to continue his career.

"I'm finished with Paul Graham now," he confirmed. "Boxing away from home was tough and I thought I won three of the four fights that I lost. When you're the away fighter you nearly have to take the opponent's head off with a sword to win! I dried out for 36 hours before one fight and it was heavy going. I'm a natural welterweight

and I wanted Greene to budge down in weight for this fight, but he couldn't so I'll move up [to light-middleweight] to meet him."

Thompson held no reservations in his most recent outing about stepping in with reigning British light-welterweight champion Ashley Theophane, a man who has carved out a reputation as a quality sparring hand in American gyms.

"Theophane wasn't that great and I did six rounds with him no problem," said Willie. "I was suffering with the weight loss issues in that fight but I put my hands up, I lost the fight but I was genuinely weight drained. Putting all that aside I'm really glad to be back home and fighting in Northern Ireland again."

**Frampton's Euro dream put on hold as Martinez
withdraws - 29th August**

Carl Frampton's European super-bantamweight title fight with Kiko Martinez is off. The champion was set to defend against Carl on September 10 in the Odyssey Arena but his father has fallen ill and the Spaniard has been forced to withdraw.

"I have spoken to Kiko and he has pulled out," confirmed Martinez's representative Joe Forbes. "Obviously this has to do with his father, who has been very sick and has just had his leg amputated. He is very close with his family and that is the reason. After agonising with the problem for a few weeks the decision was made."

Shortly after the pull out, Willie Casey's name was immediately thrown into the mix as a possible replacement. The Limerick man was set to fight Martinez earlier this year but opted instead to meet Guillermo Rigondeaux in a WBA interim title fight. Casey had been set to make his ring return this weekend in his native city but the show was called off and Casey subsequently found himself added to the Tyson Fury undercard, set for September 17.

Willie is keen on accepting the bout and renewing his amateur rivalry with Frampton but says that a firm offer must arrive before Tuesday evening (August 30) so that he can begin some short notice preparation and bring in the right sparring partners.

"I want the fight, definitely, but I also want a good offer," said Casey. "We are entitled to a shot at the European title anyway and after one win I could be number one challenger. It's a bit short notice but when opportunity knocks you take it. We don't need to jump the gun but if the offer is good then I'll accept and I said that to my manager [Gary Hyde] and trainer [Paul McCullagh]. But if the offer isn't good then we will hang about and wait for

our own opportunity at the end of the year or early next year.

“Me and Carl Frampton could headline our own show in Belfast anyway. I’ve been training up in John Breen’s gym and getting some great sparring so I’m fit enough. I was really disappointed that the Limerick show was called off but these things happen in boxing.”

If ‘Big Bang’ does not step in, former WBC super-bantamweight title challenger Rendall Munroe is highly ranked but unlikely to bite with such limited preparation time.

“Just because somebody offers you a fight then it doesn’t necessarily mean that they want it,” continued Willie Casey. “It depends what’s being offered at the end of the day and it will just go on record that I refused it but I will take it if it makes sense for me to take it.”

Kiko’s withdrawal is a disappointing development but ‘The Jackal’ will still get a chance to please his vast following, if not in an EBU title fight then possibly another belt could be on the line or a non-title bout.

**The search continues: Casey-Frampton a non-starter -
30th August**

Carl Frampton's search for a suitable opponent on September 10 continues after Willie Casey ruled himself out. Show promoter Eddie Hearn of Matchroom Sports has assured fans that negotiations with potential opponents are on-going and a name will hopefully be announced within 48 hours.

"Irish fight fans can be assured that Carl will remain on the bill," said Hearn. "He has trained for a big fight and that's exactly what we are going to deliver for him, and we hope to name his opponent within 48 hours. Our thoughts are with Kiko and his family at this time and we wish them well."

That name will not be former title holder Casey, who will re-focus his ring rehabilitation to the September 17 show in the King's Hall against African Daniel Kodjo Sassou.

"I told my manager to see if he could arrange Frampton and I for the EBU title fight, but the offer wasn't good enough," said Willie. "Considering I only had a week to get ready you would assume they would have factored that into the offer. I presume they are not too upset with not having to fight me. Now they can get a few more fights under their belt before fighting me or fighting for the EBU title."

Rendall Munroe is also out of the running after stating that he does not have sufficient time to safely make weight for the contest. One man who is keen to meet Frampton is former European title challenger Arsen Martirosyan, whose last attempt at winning the crown ended in a 12-round points defeat to Kiko Martinez. The main problem with the Armenian's claim lies in the fact that he will not be ready to

fight on the Odyssey bill and his request for a postponement is unlikely to be accepted.

“I encourage Matchroom to contact us,” said Martirosyan’s manager Saadi Mechiche. “We are willing and qualified to challenge for the European title. We would fight Carl Frampton with pleasure, but 10 days’ notice is very short. We would prefer if Team Frampton would postpone the fight for a few weeks so that our champion can prepare. Arsen has just returned from holiday. We would be happy to come to the beautiful city of Belfast, a city that has a rich pugilistic culture, but we would like to put back the date.”

Meanwhile, former Commonwealth cruiserweight champion Darren Corbett has weighed in to the Tyson Fury-Martin Rogan saga by offering to fight either man on September 17. The ‘Raging Bull’ was last seen dropping out of the *Prizefighter* tournament back in April 2010 and is nearing 40 years old but still fancies his chances of a successful return.

Shamrock Shorts: Tyson Fury will headline at the King’s Hall, Belfast on September 17 but Martin Rogan will not be the opponent. He turned down “a highly lucrative offer” according to Fury’s promoter Mick Hennessy.....ex-Irish title challenger Jeff Thomas has talked himself in to the light-middleweight *Prizefighter* on September 15.....Ciaran Healy wants to fight Michael Sweeney, in defence of his Irish light-heavyweight title, on September 10.....Willie Casey’s Limerick homecoming was called off after problems with the venue.

Hillerby now meets Tolan on Fury's King's Hall debut show - 1st September

Sandy Row pugilist Joe Hillerby is reckoning on a glorious homecoming when the Belfast middleweight features on Tyson Fury's King's Hall debut show. Hillerby's name has been linked with a slew of different opponents for the September 17 undercard but he now appears destined to meet Tommy Tolan in a tasty six-rounder.

"My opponent has definitely changed to Tommy Tolan," Hillerby confirmed, "after we were originally trying to get a fight with [Tyson's cousin] Phill Fury. That didn't happen but hopefully it will at some point in the future. Tommy and I should have a good fight because he's a come-forward fighter, as am I, so it will gel into a great scrap."

There was also fleeting talk of reigning Irish light-heavyweight champion Ciaran Healy being in the opposite corner but after Phil Townley withdrew from his scheduled clash with Tolan, Hillerby was presented with a natural match.

"I have been in London preparing for this fight, sparring every day and conditioning myself for the big occasion," continued Joe. "It's a chance to fight on home soil for a change. I will have a load of tickets sold by the 17th and the more support the better."

Hillerby believes that his style will excite the neutrals and leave the Belfast fight fraternity wanting more: "It is going to be exciting because I have an explosive style. I like to work behind my jab, with bursts to the body and head; always on my toes and ready for what comes back at me. I don't think the current point scoring system in the amateurs suited my style and believe the pros are more for me. Most of the time now in the amateur game the fighter

doing all the punching gets defeated because the opponent just covers up and steals points.”

Hillerby contested 104 amateur fights, winning 88 of those and conceding just 16. He won a multi-nation gold medal, nine county titles and a silver medal in the UK schoolboys as well as claiming other honours. He has won all four professional fights so far and is enjoying working under the tutelage of former Commonwealth lightweight champion Graham Earl.

“When [trainer/manager] Graham Earl handed me the chance to turn professional and told me of his plans, especially that I would get the chance to fight both here [in Northern Ireland] and across the water, I viewed it as a great opportunity. It is good to see boxing in Northern Ireland starting to blossom again and I enjoy my training in the Sandy Row gym as the trainer [Ian McSorley] knows how to get the best out of me. Over the last year I have sparred Neil Sinclair, Willie Thompson, David Rosbotham, Manny Oshunrinde and Ian Boyd.

“That’s great experience, but for now my main focus is on September 17 and producing a good show for the fight fans.”

Fighting frustration: Dean's Byre-ing ambitions - 2nd September

Unbeaten light-welterweight talent Dean Byrne is desperate to end a frustrating lack of action and the Crumlin native is eyeing an October return to the ring. Some high-class sparring with the cream of the domestic scene, along with Gary Hyde's Georgian talent Levan Ghvamichava, is helping to keep the tools relatively sharp, but Dean sees gym sessions as no substitute for the real thing.

"You can have all the sparring in the world but you need a fight at the end of it," he said. "It is a little bit frustrating but I took a rest after some hard sparring with Kevin Mitchell and I didn't have that goal to aim for; that fight to finish off the hard weeks of training. Levan is really good and I could see him going on to be a strong fighter and one to watch out for. I want an eight-rounder to remove any ring rust and then get in for a title."

Byrne is now based in Anthony Farnell's Manchester gym and mixes with the likes of Matthew Hall, Ronnie Heffron and Frankie Gavin on a regular basis. He views Gavin as a sound technical boxer who possesses the ability to go far.

"The sparring with Frankie is very good," he admitted. "Gavin's a good up-and-coming prospect but I have my own dream and I want to be champion of the world, just like he does, so we push each other along. I was over in America for three years and it brought me on mentally and physically. After training with Manny Pacquiao, Amir Khan and the best in the world you feel mentally prepared. You could turn up in the gym one day and Freddie Roach says who you are sparring and you might not even know who the guy is and next thing you find out he's a world champion. Mexicans, Russians and all other nationalities go

to train in the Wild Card and you certainly learn your trade there.”

Three years in the Wild Card gym and rubbing shoulders with the boxing elite on a daily basis will improve any fighter. Dean had fellow Irish prospect Jamie Kavanagh for company, but the need to move closer to home soon eclipsed any Stateside ambitions and Byrne relocated to England to pursue his dream under the Frank Warren banner.

“When I was training at the Wild Card I was just waking up every day and living boxing but I was missing my son. I’m a family man and I also wanted to be with the best promoter in the business so I signed with Frank, but I haven’t had the best of luck over the past eight months. Hopefully I can get fighting again and change that run. I’ve had a few weeks off since the July 9 fight was cancelled and I’ve just been spending time with my family. I’ve been told that I won’t get back out until October so I’m enjoying some good, competitive sparring at the moment with Levan. I’m not as fit as I should be but we’re learning off each other and it’s good experience for both of us.”

Byrne also offered insight into why former trainer Freddie Roach is widely recognised as one of the best coaches in the world and has so many top fighters clamouring for his services.

“Freddie Roach is the best trainer in the world,” affirmed ‘Irish Lightning’, “but he wouldn’t be that without really good fighters. He was a boxer himself, not a top fighter, but a tough guy who never reached that elite level. He knew though what it took to get to the top, learned from old-school trainers and took his knowledge into life as a trainer. He always has a good game plan for every opponent, looks at things from different angles and checks out that the opponent is right. I haven’t said that I wouldn’t go back to the Wild Card, me and Freddie parted on good terms and who knows when I win a world title or get into

the pound-for-pound rankings I might want the master back in my corner. Right now I'm just concentrating on my next fight."

The exact date of that fight has yet to be decided, although the new season gets under way shortly and the 26-year-old, who now holds a 14-0 (6 KOs) record, is eager to muscle on to the big fight undercards and add some more silverware to his trophy cabinet.

"This coming season I'd like to put a belt around my waist and be called a champion. In Australia I won belts and I've been a pro since 2006 so just I want to step it up and fight anybody. I've fought in Vegas, fought Mexicans and sparred with the best in the world so I'm ready to step up and win belts.

"Training is going well with Anthony Farnell and I'm settled. Farnell's a nice guy, he's good on the pads and great for getting you into shape. He's a motivator and I'm enjoying it but we haven't had a fight together yet so I can't really say what happens then. It's different sparring and being in an actual fight but I've been learning a lot and I'm taking Arnie's advice and using it in my sparring, so hopefully I can implement those things into my next fight."

Michael Sweeney becomes an 'Assassin' - 6th September

While all eyes will be on Belfast this Saturday, Ballinrobe light-heavyweight Michael Sweeney also gets some much-needed ring time on September 10, over the water in Hove Town Hall, Brighton. The show will be run by fledgling organisation Assassin Promotions and Michael will share centre stage with unbeaten prospect Ross Payne, debutant Alex Gibbons and light-middleweight hope Nicky Jenman.

"I fight Billy Boyle in an eight-threes and training has been going very well," enthused Sweeney. "It's quite long ago now that I beat John Waldron in three rounds and things are looking very good for me and my career, with fights scheduled for October, December and then January 2012."

Jay Morris, a familiar face on the British fight circuit, is the brains behind Assassin Promotions. The Isle of White native is still active on the scene and Belfast fight fans may recall that he posted a surprise six round points win over Curtis Woodhouse in the Ulster Hall back in April 2009 (as part of the Lindsay-Appleby support card). Sheffield's Boyle may have seen better days but was once a decent slugger, mixing (rather briefly) with current WBO light-heavyweight champion Nathan Cleverly, back when the Welshman held the Commonwealth strap. Billy is truly suffering from a reversal of fortunes. After winning his first 11 pro contests he hit a sticky patch and is now going through a seven-fight winless streak, including two first round knockout losses tucked in to that unfortunate statistic.

"Billy Boyle has been in with Nathan Cleverly and Tony Oakey but that won't bother me because I've been in with the best," stated Sweeney. "I've sparred with Arthur Abraham, Wladimir Klitschko and Chad Dawson. Assassin Promotions are new to the game but are planning on

running shows in Ireland. Kaz Evans and Jay Morris are the promoters and both are passionate about boxing. They have a young, fresh approach. Even though they are Brighton-based they will be putting on regular shows in Ireland. The first one being in November or December. They have Irish connections and they are looking to build a stable with Sean Mannion."

More shows in Ireland sounds good to me and will no doubt spark interest among the boxing enthusiasts down in Michael's neck of the woods. Sweeney is now targeting European title honours and must be favoured to increase Billy Boyle's luckless run by adding another stoppage loss to his CV on Saturday evening.

Rogan is back and he's bringing the WBU title with him!
- 6th September

Martin Rogan is back headlining Belfast venues and this time he's bringing the WBU title along with him. Martin has been entrusted by the organisation to help revive their fortunes and Rogan will follow in the footsteps of George Foreman and Hasim Rahman, no less, when contesting their belt on Thursday, October 27. Panama's Luis Andres Pineda will be the opponent as 'Rogie' hopes to change his luck and claim an overdue victory at the Odyssey Arena - the scene of his two Commonwealth title defeats to Sam Sexton.

"I've been working on this for two months and I wanted to really challenge myself," said a relieved Rogan. "I had to seek-and-find something special for Belfast and it was hard to keep it from people. I've been slated in the newspapers and on social networking sites for decisions that I have made and people were calling me a bully and making various comments. All of a sudden Tyson Fury became an Ulsterman but I'm the only Ulster-Irish heavyweight champion and that's the way it is."

Rogan's placard, sitting among a plethora of microphones and recording devices, simply read 'The next heavyweight champion of the world' and it wasn't long before his daughter unveiled a gigantic poster at the back of the function room that revealed he would be fighting for the WBU version of the many 'world' belts currently on offer.

"I want to help any promoters and fighters get a fair crack of the whip and we're holding back ticket sales so as not to interfere with the McCloskey and Fury bills," he revealed. "This will be the first ever 'world' heavyweight title fight in Ireland and the WBU picked me and Pineda to fight because they think that I am the man to revive this

belt. I don't make the belts, I just play by the rules. Pineda is experienced and I haven't seen any of footage of him yet but then again I hadn't seen much footage of Audley Harrison or Matt Skelton. Pineda is going to get a hiding, just like they did."

At 37, Pineda is three years younger than Rogan and sports a 22-10-1 (18 KOs) slate, compiled over a 15-year period. He has flitted around the cruiserweight circuit for the majority of his career and has been in with some decent names along the way. A 2003 WBC cruiserweight tilt ended in a first-round stoppage loss to Guyanan talent Wayne Braithwaite. Luis later fought respectably against both Valery Brudov and Tomasz Adamek, but was ultimately stopped both times and wins over the likes of Tito Mendoza proved to be the exception rather than the rule.

"Pineda will have had 10 weeks' notice by fight night and that's the proper way to do it," said Rogan, taking a side swipe at promoter Mick Hennessy, his most recent verbal sparring partner.

"The only fighters who jump in at short notice are journeymen and they are doing the job they need to do; boxing could not survive without them. I wasn't frustrated at not getting fights. You can't give a heavyweight fighter four weeks' notice for a two-title 12-round fight; they [Tyson Fury's team] just wanted a quick scalp."

Martin has drafted in Brian Magee's Panamanian coach Bernardo Checa to oversee his training regime and things appear to be gelling nicely for the pair.

"We are expecting a tough fight and Martin will be ready for his opponent," stated Checa. "The name of this game is to hit and not get hit. Pineda is a good fighter who's been around a bit and fought for the cruiserweight title two or three times."

Rogan later paid homage to former trainer John Breen, the man who helped mastermind his momentous rise from undercard hopeful to headline attraction. For Rogan and

his newly formed JRL Promotions outfit, the aim of October 27 is to simply work out opportunities for him and the Belfast fighting fraternity.

“The door is open for all fighters to get on this bill if it suits them to do so,” concluded the ‘Iron Man’, “and this is all about opening doors. The Odyssey Arena is our Madison Square Garden and why can’t we go and fill it every six-eight weeks?

“I’ve always got great support throughout my career. Everybody loved the way that I fought and supported me along my way and I know that they will all be there in the Odyssey on fight night.”

Checa-mate: Rogan's found his match - 6th September

Martin Rogan has worked with a varied bunch of trainers during his short, but relatively successful career, and now the 'Iron Man' firmly believes that he has found his match in the form of Panamanian magic man Bernardo Checa. 'Rogie' of course motored along under the tutelage of John Breen and Eamonn Magee for so long, before infamously breaking free and joining up with veteran coach Paul McCullagh for the Sam Sexton rematch. Immaculata man Gerry 'Nugget' Nugent was most recently seen manning the corner but now Checa is on board.

"Bernardo Checa has taught me so many new things and I have a strength and conditioning coach on board for the first time," waxed Rogan, at the Balmoral Hotel press conference organised to announce his October 27 headliner.

"Bernardo is a magical trainer and will get me in the best shape of my life; he's travelling from Carrickfergus to Belfast every day to train me. I don't just want to win this fight for myself or my family, I want to win it for the people of Belfast."

It must be said that teaching an old dog new tricks is easier said than done and at 40 years of age it is difficult to envisage Rogan coming out for his Odyssey main event and trying to outfox opponent Luis Andres Pineda. There are always exceptions to the rule and former Rogan victim Matt Skelton did remarkably pull that trick out of the bag back in 2006 when achieving rematch revenge over Danny Williams by adopting a counter punching, box-and-move style. Rogan may not be willing to go as far as that though.

"My style of fighting centres around hitting the opponent as many times as I can until he drops," the Clonard brawler chuckled. "Bernardo is keeping the forceful anger but also bringing out the skill that I have locked inside. For a long time I was using my face as a

barrier. I got into boxing late and I was trying to learn everything quickly. I'm trying to develop a bit of technique and do things that I should have been doing a long time ago."

Martin turned professional way back in 2004 with a first round stoppage win over Lee Mountford in the Ulster Hall. His meteoric rise was aided by the aforementioned Breen and despite their tenuous break up, Rogan holds plenty of admiration for his ex-mentor and his methods.

"I respect John Breen for his patience and guidance," Martin confessed. "Trainers don't get enough appreciation and John Breen lives and sleeps boxing - he never lets his fighters down. He has a stable full of fighters who could fight on this undercard."

However, whether or not Rogan's style is anyway altered on fight night, main man Bernardo Checa, who also calls the shots in Brian Magee's corner, holds on to one key boxing philosophy.

"The name of this game is to hit and not get hit," extolled Checa. "Pineda is a good fighter who's been around a bit and fought for the cruiserweight title two or three times. We are expecting a tough fight and Martin will be ready for his opponent."

Lindsay's back on the title trail...but he's getting married first - 10th September

Former British featherweight title holder Martin Lindsay has not completely fallen off the radar but the 29-year-old did not feature on last night's big Belfast bill nor will he be in action on the Fury undercard next week - because he is busy getting married.

"I was tempted to fight on one of the bills that are going on at the moment but my missus wouldn't let me!" chortled Lindsay.

"If I got 10 weeks' preparation time then I'd actually take a title shot without a warm up. Throughout my career I've been fighting every six-eight months and when I train I train hard and make sure that I'm ready for a 12-round fight."

Martin is no longer contractually obliged to promoter Frank Maloney but insists that he is prepared to work with whichever promotional outfit can best match his ambitions. Injury and inactivity have stifled his progress of late, but a fight before Christmas could push him back into the title picture.

"I was going to fight in March but I injured my ankle, which put me out of action for a few weeks. Frank Maloney offered me a fight in June but we couldn't agree terms and I'm getting married shortly so once the wedding and honeymoon are out of the way I'll get my head down and hopefully get a fight towards the end of the year.

"My options are open, I'm not finished, as such, with Maloney and offers are on the table. I'm a free agent, so I can fight on any bill and that suits me. I'm a good ticket seller so I'm sure anyone would jump at the chance to stick me on."

Lindsay was present at the Balmoral Hotel last week to witness Martin Rogan's latest ring venture and the 'Mac Man' is hoping that Belfast will get the boxing buzz back.

"Rogan's fight is interesting and will generate a buzz," reckoned the Immaculata man. "If he can get some young talent on the bill then it means they don't have to travel across the water to build up their records. Most of my fights were anywhere else bar Belfast. The October 27 show is a possibility for me but it's not ideal preparation time with only being back from my honeymoon. I'm coming off a loss and 10 months out of the ring so if I got the right fight in October then I'd consider it; something to brush off the cob webs perhaps."

Martin suffered his first professional defeat in 18 contests, last December in the King's Hall, when plucky Scot John Simpson finally hit the scorecard jackpot and wrestled away Lindsay's British crown. The west Belfast boxer is open to a rematch with Simpson but only if it makes sense for both men.

"The Simpson rematch only makes sense if there are titles on the line because then there's money to be made," he said. "I'd have loved to have been more active when I was champion. I held the British title for just under two years and I never got a voluntary defence and I can't explain why. I took my number one contenders and I never got any handy touches. They were all fighters at the top of their game. You train hard and it all depends on what happens on the night - but that's boxing for you. I only had one defeat and it was on points over 12 rounds against a good fighter."

The night Lindsay won that British title was a raucous - and sometimes volatile- affair in the Ulster Hall when Paul Appleby succumbed after six rounds of toe-to-toe action. Martin had earned that chance with a come-from-behind knockout win over Derry Mathews. A successful defence against Jamie Arthur in Leigh, nestled in between lengthy

gaps outside of the ring, led to the Simpson fight and prior to that matchup Frank Maloney was discussing possible European and world title opportunities. Lindsay believes that he can still aspire to that level.

“I want to redeem myself and there’s plenty more that I have to offer. I’m still number six in the EBU ratings and highly ranked by other organisations. One more win and I’m right back up there.”

McCloskey moves closer to world title dream after gutsy win over Prescott - 10th September

Paul McCloskey moved one step closer to his world title dream after the southpaw stylist outpointed **Breidis Prescott** in a WBA light-welterweight title eliminator at Belfast's Odyssey Arena. It was a fight that swung back and forth, flowing in favour of each man until McCloskey finally prevailed via a unanimous verdict.

Colombian stringbean Prescott eventually dragged his frame down to 9st 13lb 6oz and judging by the size of him on fight night, suggestions that he had blown up past 11 stone did not seem too wide of the mark. At the pre-fight press conference the Miami-based visitor vowed to remove McCloskey within six rounds and his bold prediction began to look surprisingly accurate when the home fighter endured a sluggish start.

McCloskey's task was big enough before the bout but after the opening three minutes it was looking even tougher, especially after a dubious knockdown compounded Paul's misery. It appeared that Prescott's left arm had nudged McCloskey (9st 13lb 12oz) off balance before a right hand eased his path to the canvas. Doncaster referee Howard Foster saw the knockdown as genuine and doled out the count.

McCloskey later admitted that he was surprised by the snap in Prescott's left jab and Amir Khan's sole conqueror used his long arms and reach advantage to good effect, fizzing in with overhand rights. Paul fought from the second round with a badly broken nose; blood gushed profusely and impaired the Dungiven man's breathing. The John Breen-trained fighter had enjoyed an intense training camp, quality sparring and added strength and conditioning work - he needed all three to make it through to a 12-round victory.

Often cast as a one trick pony, Prescott had been outsmarted over the distance in his two defeats, by Miguel Vazquez and Kevin Mitchell respectively. The South American was expected to do his best work in the initial sessions and fade late. Indeed, his arms were dropping from as early as the fourth round and the gumshield poked out as McCloskey landed a confidence-building flush left-cross in the opening stages of the fifth. Usually so adept at drawing leads and countering, McCloskey became the aggressor from round six onwards and he pushed Prescott back. He was still getting tagged by the right hand, however, while dropping the guard and trying to make the Colombian miss.

McCloskey was often throwing powerful single shots – much to John Breen’s chagrin – in an attempt to claw back the perceived deficit. It was still a finely balanced affair moving into the final third of the fight; Prescott was cautioned for landing a low blow and, shortly after, pulled away from a clinch with a nick on the bridge of the nose. Judging by previous form Prescott was likely to be the aggressor for the most part and pre-fight he told McCloskey not to bring his bicycle and try to run for 12 rounds. But in a reversal of roles it was Breidis who was suddenly circling the ring and glancing at his corner while McCloskey unusually pressed and bullied. Paul’s timing steadily improved too, he was having more success and Prescott’s one-twos began to lack snap. It was an absorbing contest from start to finish, the crowd helped grind McCloskey through the many tough moments. Heads threatened to clash on occasions, which is often a problem when an orthodox fighter mixes with a (particularly awkward) southpaw.

A raucous reception greeted the bell for the final round, but multiple distractions, from loose tape, delayed the start. The issues were soon resolved, the combatants rushed to centre ring for a final effort and three minutes of honest

endeavour followed. Former European champion 'Dudey' was virtually out on his feet for the last 20 seconds, sagging to waist height and grabbing at Prescott's lean torso. The bell could not have come a moment sooner for McCloskey and John Breen hastily entered the ring to support his unsteady charge.

The tense wait for scorecards ensued, with many at ringside calling it either way - such was the close nature of the contest. Italian Giuseppe Quartarone and France's Jean-Louis Legland recorded scores of 114-113, while Birmingham's Terry O'Connor went wider at 115-113, all three in Paul McCloskey's favour. The crowd erupted as their hero, now 23-1 (12 KOs), scaled the ropes. They will eagerly await the possibility of a world title fight coming to Belfast.

"We'll go wherever we need to go to win a world title but I'd love the next fight to be here," said promoter Eddie Hearn, with regular WBA champion Marcos Maidana being discussed as the next opponent.

"Why go to America when we can pack out arenas here?" agreed McCloskey. "Tonight was probably the hardest fight I've had, for attrition and determination. Credit to Prescott, he dragged me into the type of fight that I wasn't thinking about. This is one of my top victories but it wasn't my best performance. I had to fight a fight that wasn't natural to me."



McCloskey endures a tough battle to pull through on points
© Kevin Finn

Carl Frampton was supposed to meet Kiko Martinez in a mouth-watering chief support contest for the European title but after the Spaniard's late withdrawal in stepped Australian **Mark Quon**, with the vacant Commonwealth super-bantamweight belt on the line. In stereotypically Aussie fashion Quon was in good shape and needed little invitation to trade. Unfortunately this led to his downfall, as Frampton tamed his man early on and made him immediately fearful of exchanging. 'The Jackal' was allowed to do what he does best – plant his feet and reel off the combinations.

Quon (8st 9lb 6oz) was gutsy and tried to jab his way inside during a tentative opening round where neither man committed a great deal. Things heated up in round two and after shipping a left hook-right hand combination Quon held the facial expression of a man starting to realise the size of his mission. Frampton (8st 9lb 4oz) stalked with calculated menace, choosing his attacks wisely and using the sharp jab he so often neglected in a Celtic title defence against awkward Welsh mover Robbie Turley.

After a commanding third session, Carl upped the tempo in the fourth round and landed a decisive right hand straight down the pipe that dropped Quon heavily and signalled the beginning of the end for his vacant title challenge. The Aussie proceeded to haul himself vertical, shaking his head and sporting a rueful grin, but as soon as referee Terry O'Connor pushed them back together Frampton leapt back in. Repeated right hands landed and Quon, staggering desperately around the ring, was rescued at 1-11 of the fourth. The Melbourne man was in no position to continue and the three unused judges were Howard Foster, Steve Gray and Dave Parris.

"You've got to give the guy a lot of credit, he stepped up to the plate but I was comfortable in there," admitted Frampton post-fight. "I want the big fights now, I've got the Commonwealth title and if anybody wants to take it off me then they're more than welcome to try."

"Carl's not the finished article yet but I believe that he can beat all the guys out there," buzzed mentor Barry McGuigan. "I see marvellous things in the gym and some fighters don't always transfer that form into the ring. Scott Quigg said he was interested in a fight and we are happy with that. Regardless, I'd definitely like Frampton to be out again before Christmas."

Eamon O'Kane wants a fast track to titles and that mindset brought Ballymena's slippery **Joe Rea** into the opposite corner, in an eight-threes affair. Turning professional after an impressive amateur career and an unbeaten stint in the World Series of Boxing, O'Kane's style is noticeably suited to the paid code.

Hailing from Dungiven, like his friend Paul McCloskey, O'Kane is a compact brawler who trains out of the Immaculata gym in Belfast - club mate Martin Lindsay was working the corner. His rasping hooks and come-forward style will make for exciting fights but he does tend to neglect the jab and often moves in straight lines. More

overall variety is needed, but Eamon (11st 7lb 12oz) managed to master Rea (11st 8lb 14oz) for large parts of the contest. Credit goes to Rea for hanging in there, sucking up the powerful body punches, and always making it competitive. Referee Steve Gray totalled 80-73 in O’Kane’s favour.

Eamon was upbeat after his third pro win: “I’m glad to get the eight rounds and this is my first time past five,” he said. “I needed to get the rounds in the bank if I’m going to push for titles, which is my aim. I’m 29 years old and I don’t want to hang around.”



*Good friends: O’Kane (left) and McCloskey are in it together
© Kevin Finn*

East Belfast flyweight **Luke Wilton** may have half an eye on a mooted super-flyweight *Prizefighter* but his latest assignment was all about marking time and staying active. Martin Rogan’s new coach Bernardo Checa has worked hard on Luke’s technical abilities and he was able to tame Hungarian import **Arpad Vass** en route to a 59-54 win on referee Steve Gray’s scorecard. Vass (8st 4lb 6oz) did arrive with a statistically pleasing 3-0 (2 KOs) record but was

blowing hard by the end and fiddled his way through to the bell.

Wilton (8st 2lb 2oz) was cautious about throwing his pet left hook to the body after some early infringements resulted in a one-point deduction in round two. That was the only blemish in a comfortable outing for Luke.

Shankill Road featherweight **Marc McCullough** suffered an early-career setback, finding himself on the wrong end of the scoring against Welshman **Dai Davies**. Davies (9st 1lb) was a tough enough proposition for McCullough (9st 1lb 2oz), who was having only his second pro contest, yet it seemed from ringside that Marc had done enough to prevail. McCullough left his right hand hanging too low enabling Davies to frequently land the left hook and ultimately put an end to a seven-fight losing streak. Referee Paul McCullagh's announced 38-37 total was later amended by the Northern Ireland Area Council to 39-37.

Two fights went on after the main event (both refereed by Paul McCullagh), resulting in mixed fortunes for the 'home' fighters. Australian welterweight **Liam Hutchinson** (10st 11lb 12oz), a relation of the McCloskey family, outpointed Westbury's **Aaron Fox** (11st 1lb 4oz) 40-36. It was Hutchinson's debut, while Fox is now winless in 11 attempts.

Omagh's **Damian Taggart** dropped to his knees under the sustained pressure of journeyman **Sid Razak** in round two of a scheduled four-threes. Razak (10st 8lb 8oz) doesn't win too many and it's hard to see where 5-2 Taggart (10st 1lb 4oz) goes from here.

Ringside Notes: Frampton's mentor Barry McGuigan was disappointed that Kiko Martinez was not the opponent on the night but a European title showdown remains on the agenda. Barry's son Shane, a former Ulster amateur champion, was assisting Gerry Storey in the corner.....Unbeaten super-bantamweight Scott Quigg was ringside to assess Frampton's performance. The Bury man

is open to fighting Carl and if he beats Jason Booth for the British title in October then a mouth-watering double-title battle could be on the cards for early next year.....Paul McCloskey and co certainly know how to sell tickets and the Northern Ireland faithful were out in force once again. Eddie Hearn estimated a healthy crowd of just over 6,000 in attendance, with the arena set up for 7,000.....Eamon O'Kane has only been in the pro game for a short while but he's brought some rather unorthodox moves over with him. Punching with both gloves at the same time brought a reprimand from the referee and later in his fight with Joe Rea, in a bid to test his own chin, O'Kane dropped the gloves and let Rea repeatedly hit him without response.....Low blows were a common feature of the weekend's boxing action. Fresh from Jamie Cox's Friday night fight with Obodai Sai there were a fair few instances of punches straying south in fights on this card.

Eamon high: O'Kane on a title fast track - 12th September

Facing an experienced, tricky customer like Joe Rea in only your third professional outing is a reasonable statement of intent and that is just what Eamon O'Kane was hoping for on Saturday night. Supporting his good friend Paul McCloskey, both in and out of the ring, the Dungiven native has turned pro relatively late at 29 years of age and is not prepared to hang around on the domestic circuit.

"It's onwards and upwards for me now," grinned Eamon, with sweat dripping off his head and body, shortly after recording an 80-73 win over Ballymena man Rea. "I'm glad to get the eight rounds, this is my first time past five and I've got good experience from the World Series of Boxing so I needed to get the rounds in the bank if I'm going to push for titles."



*Joe Rea (left) is a good stepping stone for prospect O'Kane
© Kevin Finn*

Not content with merely testing his skills out on the big Odyssey undercard, O'Kane was equally as keen to test out his chin. At one point he dropped the gloves and invited

Joe in for a few free digs. Rea duly obliged and O'Kane revelled in the ring warfare.

"He took some big shots and I stood on the ropes and let him hit me because I wanted to see what he had in his locker. I liked getting hit with a few shots because it makes me feel like I've been in a fight. I like to give the fans a fight which is what they come to see.

"Joe had a good defence, he was slippery and held the gloves high so the body was there to be attacked. I felt great in the later rounds. I'm 29 and I've had my tough introduction into the pro game so I've done it at the fast amateur pace. I was ready to move on past six rounds, I've never stopped training since my second fight."

So how did Eamon warm to the big venue and Sky-televised attraction?

"I enjoyed it, it's a great stadium and Paul McCloskey is my idol, I've looked up to him for all my days. It's great to be on his undercard."

The 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist has few requests when choosing his opponents but preferably somebody who meets him head on for a tear-up would do nicely.

"Whoever I get I want them to come and fight me," O'Kane enforced. "I want to get on the Gavin Rees undercard in three weeks' time, so hopefully Matchroom can make that happen."

Tyson ready to unleash the Fury on Firtha in Belfast debut – 15th September

Tyson Fury has long been seeking a big challenge and judging by the size of giant American Nicolai Firtha, promoter Mick Hennessy has found him just that. On September 17 in Belfast's King's Hall Fury will literally come face to face with his latest challenge. It's been a promotional experience fraught with problematic issues for Hennessy. From the initial uncertainty over Fury's headline opponent to fighters routinely disappearing from the undercard, he has had his fair share of headaches. But in the form of behemoth Firtha at least he has a man who on previous form at least, will stand up and take his lumps.

"I'm so glad it's happening and I'm happy it wasn't just some big fat Bulgarian!" Fury half-joked. "It will be a stiff test and if I get through this then the sky is the limit – Klitschkos, I'm coming."

That will certainly be for a different day but Tyson was craving another testing scrap, after popping the unbeaten record of Dereck Chisora and unifying the British and Commonwealth titles in his last fight.

"We tried to get Mike Perez because we thought he would be a test. We tried to get David Price and a few different fellas. They all pulled out or there was something wrong with them. Now this guy has come over, so it's just around the corner and we are all really excited. I know he is a big fella. I stood next to him and he is about 6'6" and around 17-18 stone. He went the distance with Alexander Povetkin and he has fought some top heavyweights. He fought a guy called Tony Grano – a top American – and knocked him out in two rounds so he is a dangerous fighter. He is big and can box so it should be a good fight."

The Chisora contest was screened live by Channel 5, on a juicy Saturday night slot, and an all-action affair left the

broadcaster hungry for more. TV Fans would likely have been less enthused had a strapping young guy like Fury been put in with a smaller opponent, no matter what his credentials and Hennessy really had to get someone who matches up physically on the night. Not that size particularly mattered when Tyson faced off with squat brawler Chisora.

"I had two weeks off after the (Chisora) fight then I was straight back into training. I'm not a big drinker and I don't smoke or anything so it's quite easy for me to get back into training and stay in good shape all the time," said Tyson.

"It means a lot to me to fight in Belfast because I boxed for the Holy Family club and there was a lot of stuff going round about me not going to the Olympic Games and that. Now it's sorted I'm eligible for the Irish title. Hopefully I get over this fight because I want to get back over here in November for another fight. If this all goes well I will be back for another big fight against maybe the European champion Alexander Dimitrenko or someone like that."

Mick Hennessy is already planning a November return and has recently talked about putting Tyson Fury on in Madison Square Garden on St. Patrick's weekend, next year. Hennessy is suitably honoured to be gracing the legendary King's Hall venue on Saturday night and says that two in-shape heavyweights will clash in the attractive headliner.

"Tyson doesn't underestimate anyone and is looking for the best out there," promised Mick. "It is a special occasion for both of us and something we always wanted to do in our careers so we are very excited about Saturday night. Nicolai has fought the majority of his career in the United States. He has done things the hard way throughout his career and he is a handful to say the least and if he is given the opportunity he can turn things around."

So what of Nicolai Firtha? Appearing outside the famous old hall sporting a Kerry GAA shirt, Firtha has dug up some Irish ancestry just in time for the big fight.

"I got in touch with family over here and they know I have been fighting as a pro for seven years now," said Firtha. "I was meant to come over a couple of years ago but it just wasn't the right time in my career but now it is a good time. This is going to be a great contest and even thinking about it now, it is going to be a backyard brawl and I'm really looking forward to it.

"I know Tyson comes in good shape, is very skilled and athletic. That's pretty rare in the game and especially in the heavyweights. I will be wearing very symbolic trunks on Saturday. I wore them four years ago just a week before my father passed and I lost the fight. It was a tough time and I wasn't sure whether I would box again or not. I brought those shorts over with me and I made a promise to myself I would never lose again while I'm wearing them so this is a very symbolic fight for me.

"This is a big fight for me and I'm looking forward to a good backyard brawl and I can't wait for it," he added.

Firtha looks strong and in good nick and most importantly has the physical attributes to take some big shots. He could be taking too many around the latter stages of the contest when I reckon Fury will score a stoppage win. The final word though goes to the big man himself.

"Don't blink because it is going to be an all-action showdown between two big heavyweights and we are both coming to win," Tyson concluded.

Irish boxing: The sanctioning bodies' latest battleground
- 16th September

When Martin Rogan pulled back the curtain to reveal his latest venture, quite a few eyebrows were raised when the logo of the World Boxing Union (WBU) appeared on the fight poster. For better or worse, the WBU and the International Boxing Organisation (IBO) were part of boxing fans' weekend diet for a good few years before Sky TV decided to give them the shove and revert to only televising bouts that were being contested for the more traditional belts on offer - British, Commonwealth, European etc.

Much has been written, spoken and discussed about the merits of multiple titles in boxing over recent years and debate has reignited off the back of various title organisations filtering into Irish boxing. In particular, opinion has been fiercely polarised over the WBU heavyweight scrap scheduled for October. So perhaps it is only fair to investigate the facts and let the sanctioning bodies speak for themselves before we pass judgement on their actions.

On October 27, in Belfast's Odyssey Arena, the World Boxing Union will be in business once again, in one form or another. But whether this latest incarnation is a direct descendant of the body that graced our shores at the start of the 'noughties' is a little more difficult to determine. It seems that the 'alphabet boys' are gaining a foothold once again, but this time Ireland is the fertile ground they wish to tread. Quite simply, the sanctioning bodies are back, but just when you thought that 'world' title belts could not become anymore diluted, the acronyms are starting to split themselves even further.

On December 10, 2010 in Tallaght's National Basketball Arena, Dublin, Anthony Fitzgerald fought Kevin

Hammond for the WBF Intercontinental middleweight title. Following on from that, in June of this year, Patrick Hyland beat Philippe Frenois over 12 rounds for the WBF featherweight title. Then Henry Coyle made it a trio of WBF belt holders on August 12 in Castlebar with his fifth round stoppage win over Elio Cotena. Sound about right? Well, sort of. The title Coyle won was actually the World Boxing Foundation belt, as opposed to the previous two who had claimed the World Boxing Federation titles.

While the WBF may have a double identity crisis, the WBU is also suffering from the same ailment. When I first explored the entertaining world of alphabet bodies in the 2011 Irish Boxing Review book I interviewed Don 'Moose' Lewis, then president of the International Boxing Union (IBU). Since then 'Moose' has moved up in the world and now claims ownership of the WBU.

Unfortunately for Lewis there is another WBU, based out of Germany, doing the rounds and sanctioning 'world' title fights under the same esteemed banner. Lewis claims that it is his body that traces itself back to George Foreman's 1995 win over Axel Schulz in Las Vegas, the first recorded WBU heavyweight title fight. Corrie Sanders, Hasim Rahman and even Johnny Nelson later held that particular belt, which was last seen in action in 2005 when Matt Skelton removed Fabio Moli in six rounds. So, much to 'Moose's' annoyance, the German-based body also claim to be the real WBU and list Gene Pukall as their champion, although there is no clear indication on Pukall's record of when he actually won the title. The last recognised belt Gene won, back in 2006, was the 'world' heavyweight crown of the IBU - the administration that is also run by Lewis.

"No we are not linked to the Germans," rages 'Moose'. "They started the WBU version when I stripped Gene Pukall of the WAA 'world' title after he did not pay sanction fees. Yes, we claim the proper lineage since we

resumed it after the last party who used it and then we published notice. We are sanctioning the Rogan fight conditionally on all paperwork being in order and all commissions and boards approving it - which is in the works. At this point the title is contracted for and we are not taking offers for it. I will be the representative coming to Belfast."

So, Belfast fight fans will get the chance to meet Lewis in person on October 27. But hold on a minute...where did the WAA title come from? The World Athletic Association was in fact set up in 1981 by Pat O'Grady when his son Sean was effectively stripped of the WBA title. In 1996 a group based in Georgia, USA took control of the WAA. That group was the IBU, headed by, you guessed it, Don 'Moose' Lewis.

'Moose' also states on his WBU website: "I assure you that we are the original WBU and the titles will not only be filled again but faithfully defended with boxers from around the world having the opportunity to 'grab the gold' - where otherwise they are denied due to boxing politics. We recognize and embrace my predecessors as well as the history of the WBU before our management. We are thrilled to have the great championship lineage of those who came before us. We proudly add to the heritage."

Not all of Lewis's endeavours are restricted to the world of professional boxing. In 2010 he branched out into basketball by attempting to form the All-American Basketball Alliance (AABA). This would be a venture with a difference - an all-white basketball league, with players reportedly required to be "natural-born United States citizens", and whose parents must both be "of the Caucasian race".

Meanwhile, the German-based WBU of course dispute 'Moose's' statements and question whether he even owns the lineage of the WBU at all.

"I have been in boxing for 10 years and I am working closely with the big federations like K2 and Universum," spits back Torsten Knille, president of the alternative group.

"We are very serious and work for the good of the sport. Mr. Lewis said to some managers and promoters that he is with us in the WBU and that we will do unification fights but that is untrue; I never spoke with him and I don't want too.

"We have many champions and I think in this year we will have more fights than the IBO...I hope. We want to be the number five next year [fifth highly rated of the 'world' titles] and we have very low sanction fees to work with small promoters without TV, but we have our rules and regulations."

Some of those fees are as low as £1,000 for overseeing a title fight under their banner. Knille also claims that since July 2010 he has held the only WBU registration. Torsten later went on to throw another 'world' title organisation called the World Boxing Board (WBB) into the mix. Maybe we should leave that one alone, however, before we get buried in a pit of belts, but apparently Herbie Hide fought for the WBB once, back in the early 1990s in Norwich.

With Northern Ireland preparing to welcome 'Moose' Lewis's brand of the WBU, could a second body soon be hot on his heels and looking to peddle their wares across the Emerald Isle?

"Certainly, in fact we have a title contest planned for Ireland in December," Torsten Knille verifies, "with Michael Sweeney fighting at light-heavyweight."

The WBU are serious in their activities and are actively seeking a UK and Ireland representative. After I politely declined a chance to get involved I duly contacted Sweeney, busy preparing for an eight round assignment in England, to see what his thoughts were on this surprise title shot.

“The plan is to fight in October and hopefully again in November then fight for the German WBU title in January so it is too early to say anything about their title shot until after my next fights. It’s a great chance though – the only way forward.”

It is extremely easy to poke fun at the multiple organisations and their whacky ways but sometimes they can stoke up a bit of positive debate. Take the aforementioned Henry Coyle fight for example. I wasn’t down in Castlebar myself on that particular occasion but by all accounts a buoyant crowd were suitably enthused when Coyle’s victory was confirmed. Irish-language broadcaster TG4 televised the main event, and some of the undercard, giving the boxers valuable exposure from a new angle and via a broadcaster that had not previously shown any great deal of interest in the fight game. Did the presence of the WBF title play any part in persuading the channel to show the Castlebar show on a prime time Saturday slot?

“Absolutely, the bigger the fight then the more attractive it is in terms of broadcasting it,” confirms TG4’s Ronan O’Coisdealbha. “There was a great atmosphere and attendance in Mayo; it was on Henry’s home soil and it all added to the occasion.

“The Coyle show was our first ‘world’ title fight and the second time we’ve had live boxing on. We broadcasted the European Amateur Boxing Championships live from Liverpool in 2008 and we’ve produced and broadcasted our own boxing documentaries. We were very pleased with the Castlebar bill, we got very good viewing figures and we were happy with the feedback that we received from viewers all over Ireland.”

So, a positive reaction from the broadcaster and the WBF belt was a factor in the fight being shown live across Ireland. Would O’Coisdealbha and his team consider televising another boxing event?

“We would be interested in running live boxing again,” he says, “but it depends on who’s fighting and if there is space on the TV schedule. We are always on the lookout for different things and we broadcast a lot of live sport on our station – like rugby or Gaelic games- so if it was right for us then we would certainly look at boxing again.”

As we mentioned earlier, the WBF brand also has a conflict in its ranks. The World Boxing Federation trace their roots back to 1988 and were formed in Tennessee, USA by the late Larry Carrier. According to the Federation’s version of events, Ron Scalf held presidency from 1999-2003 before a disagreement and subsequent breakaway saw Scalf form the World Boxing Foundation alongside Australian Mick Croucher. The Federation’s spokesman Clive Baum unequivocally separates the two companies.

“We are clearly distancing ourselves from the World Boxing Foundation,” enforces Baum, “which in fact is nothing but a private company with the only purpose to earn its owner money on the pretense to be a legitimate boxing organization. The World Boxing Federation, in contrast, is a non-profit entity properly registered as a sports organisation in the state of Luxembourg.”

Baum sees little credence in Henry Coyle’s Foundation title and feels that their own upcoming title bout in Spain will determine the true WBF light-middleweight king.

“Our world super-welterweight [light-middleweight] championship is scheduled for Spain on October 8 between Saul Roman and our Intercontinental champion Sebastien Madani – with all respect to Mr. Coyle, but this fight is much more deserving of its tag,” scoffs Baum. “On the whole, if you simply compare the quality of our fights and our champions to those of the “Foundation”, you will understand. Nothing more needs to be said.”

OK, that's that then. But is there really room for two WBF sanctioning bodies operating in Ireland at the same time?

"As for Ireland, we would be happy to get more active there and I think with our world featherweight champion, unbeaten Patrick Hyland, as well as our Intercontinental middleweight champion Anthony Fitzgerald, we are off to a great and very promising start," adds the Federation spokesman. "Our president Howard Goldberg also enjoys a very cooperative and friendly relationship with BUI president Mel Christle."

In the spirit of our search, it is only fair that World Boxing Foundation supremo Mick Croucher gets his chance to pitch the organization to Irish fight fans. Here is what Mick has to say in return: "I don't wish to make any comment on the Federation issue and our lawyers have it in hand," he responds.

"As we are working worldwide at present, we have many bouts planned worldwide and, just as always, being President of the World Boxing Foundation I want to make sure everyone is enjoying working with our foundation as an ethical sanctioning body."

A fairly ambiguous reply but it seems that the World Boxing Foundation are certainly not finding work hard to come by.

"We have bouts planned in Ireland, UK, Australia and USA as well as four bouts in Europe," boasts Croucher.

Fans who witnessed Henry Coyle's homecoming win were certainly not fussed over the main event's World Boxing Foundation title status. They figuratively raised the roof of the Royal Theatre that night.

"It was a great show and the atmosphere was unreal, you'd swear that he had just knocked out Floyd Mayweather in there," said Irish boxing journalist Jonny Stapleton shortly after the fight.

The people who are caught up in the middle of all this are the fighters. If spurious titles put bums on seats and result in a more successful promotion, and subsequently more cash in the boxer's pocket at the end of the night, then who's complaining? Dublin middleweight Anthony Fitzgerald has won WBF Intercontinental and EBA titles during his short career and the latter victory has seen him ranked more highly with the EBA's creator organization, the World Boxing Association (WBA).

"Of course they're good to win, because this is what everyone is in boxing for - to win belts," says Fitzgerald. "The EBA is a good belt because it put it me at number 10 in the WBA rankings so what's not good about that? The WBF it's not a great belt but it's a belt nonetheless. I'm not too sure about the WBU but Eamonn Magee had it and Micky Ward had it so I wouldn't mind having it myself. There are many more good fighters that have held it too."

Fitzgerald's former opponent Lee Murtagh is well informed on the sanctioning bodies and thinks that Martin Rogan has pulled off a smart move: "On the scale of things the WBU is higher up than the WBF and I think there's two WBF's anyway, the Federation and the Foundation," Lee correctly surmises.

"I applaud Rogie's lateral move after Hennessy Sports tried making him look a mug by announcing the King's Hall and Tyson Fury then making everyone in Belfast believe that 'Rogie' was the opponent. Also, when Ricky Hatton was WBU champion not one person questioned its validity and he was always called a world champion. I think once the title is won Rogan can bring some top class heavyweights to Belfast. I'd love to be on the bill and I've already sent Rogie a message wishing him luck and offering him any help with the matchmaking as I hear he's involved with the promotional side."

So, we have delved into the world of the sanctioning bodies and hopefully a fairer opinion has been formed. Are

the multiple organisations good for boxing, or a hindrance to matters, and more specifically should domestic boxing fans be prepared to embrace them? Well, boxing always divides opinion and the answer to those questions will no doubt be different depending on who you ask. Whether you like them or not, the sanctioning bodies evolve, revolve and consistently reinvent themselves to retain their relevance in the sport.

**McCloskey goes to the well in world title eliminator -
16th September**

There comes a time in every fighter's career when they have to suck it up and grind out a victory. Paul McCloskey had already experienced that feeling once before and it took a surprise right hook to finally remove the nagging annoyance of Giuseppe Lauri when the pair met for McCloskey's European title last year. Lauri had dragged Paul into an ugly brawl and his boxing skills went out of the window - pure guts were required to seal the W on Paul's record that night. In his Saturday, September 10 fight with Breidis Prescott - a WBA light-welterweight eliminator no less- McCloskey returned to the trenches and engaged in close-quarter warfare to outlast his dangerous Colombian foe.

"It was a hard fight and the crowd took it up a notch, inspiring me on to victory," said the battered and bruised victor post-fight.

"His jab was unbelievable but after the first couple of rounds I dealt with it. I caught him with a couple of body shots that slowed him down. I could feel his power diminishing as the bout went on. He did tire later on and John [Breen] wanted me to throw more combinations but it wasn't as easy as it looked in there. We felt that we were a couple of rounds up by the last stage but John said 'go and win it' anyway. He was more effective coming forward and I controlled the fight and did my best work when he was on the back foot. He didn't like behind backed up, I saw that on the videos. I felt that I won the last few rounds clearly so I did enough overall. The first time ever I have a broken nose. It doesn't feel broken but the blood was annoying me and I couldn't breathe right."

Prescott performed to type, starting strongly and fading down the stretch. Some perfectly planted body shots from

Dungiven's latest star helped slow Breidis down and draw the wind from his sails.

"The power left him after four or five rounds, he was stronger in the early rounds," confirmed the 32-year-old former European title holder. "He caught me on the side of the head with left hooks and there was one time he caught me and I felt it but mostly I rode the power out. The knockdown annoyed me, it could have been scored as a 10-8 round. I was off balance and touched the ground."

McCloskey described Marcos Maidana (the newly installed WBA 'regular' champion) as a nice, honourable guy and added that he wished to work with such fighters. Naturally, Maidana appears in the driving seat as the next opponent. Promoter Eddie Hearn is the man pulling the strings.

"We deserve another title shot and we bring something to the table, the backing of Sky, the great fans and superb atmosphere," lauded Hearn. "Whether it's Khan, Maidana or whoever, we want a world title shot. Khan will probably move up in weight after his next fight anyway. Maidana is the WBA champion and it's a fight that makes sense in Belfast or Las Vegas. We'll push and push for the world title fight. Maidana doesn't sell tickets or bring a huge amount to the table. We can make that fight and we'll be on the case immediately, the work starts now. It depends what comes up, whatever the opportunity that's out there.

"I couldn't be prouder of Paul tonight. I don't believe it was a genuine knockdown in the first round and it was a poor start but he shouldn't have been two points down after the first round. He got back in to the fight and then lost his way again, showing unbelievable heart and desire along the way to make sure that this wasn't the end of the road on his quest to become a world champion.

"The broken nose came early and it was a concern for us. The right decisions will be made for Paul's career. This

was a profile fight that made people stand up and take notice – everybody avoids Breidis Prescott.”

Hearn said the arena was opened out and set up for 7,000 people and the attendance was around 6,100. He also admitted that he had got the ticket pricing wrong. Eddie then talked tactics and described how Paul’s body shots worked a treat.

“Prescott spat his gumshield out and winced from the body shots. He spoke about us running from the fight beforehand but Paul had him on the back foot for every round. We all know that McCloskey has the ability but he showed the steel and guts to get to the end. He took some huge shots and Prescott punches harder than anybody in this division. He was around 160 pounds in the ring tonight and we know he was 155 pounds last night after dinner. Prescott is a beast of a man and we took a big gamble tonight. We could have fought another opponent, but this was the perfect fight against one of the most dangerous fighter’s in the division. I had Paul a three point winner,” Hearn said.

McCloskey agreed, “My body shots were working in sparring every day and I could hear Prescott struggling to cope with them when we were in close. I totally felt the benefit of my strength and conditioning work. I never felt tired and I brought my training up a notch.”

Finally, another relieved member of the McCloskey camp, veteran trainer John Breen, was glad to see that a change of emphasis managed to push Prescott back and force him into doing things that were unnatural to his game.

“Paul pushed Prescott back and had to win the late rounds to pull the fight out,” said Breen. “Outboxing him wasn’t going to work and we put him on the back foot. He fought like a Trojan tonight and showed that even though he is a great boxer, he can also fight too. Prescott was even more tired than Paul and we forced the fight, it was

Prescott who ended up on his bike. I told Paul he was behind and he had to knock his man out to win.

“Nine months ago I told McCloskey was made for him but Paul had to go looking for him tonight. Every round was a better round and he dug so deep. At the end of the fight Paul was tottering everywhere I thought he was going to fall through the ropes!”

**Rogan's WBU title fight will not be sanctioned by the
BBBofC - 16th September**

The British Boxing Board of Control have refused to sanction Martin Rogan's WBU heavyweight title fight, scheduled for Belfast on October 27. Given the confusion surrounding the legitimacy of Don 'Moose' Lewis's organisation, the UK's premier governing body of boxing will not recognize the bout.

"This has come as a bolt from the blue for me," said Rogan, who said that he was "puzzled" by the BBBofC's position.

"I got word that the Board was meeting to discuss the fight and the WBU on Wednesday night. This is the same body that recognised the WBU when Ricky Hatton was a champion, Eamonn Magee and Micky Ward. So I am at odds to understand why it's good enough for some but not for me. I have done everything by the book; I have paid all the fees asked of me and I have paid for a promotional license too. I am asking why but I have not been given any answers. I tried calling the Board many times without success but I am sure I will find out in the next few days.

"How come it is okay for the likes of Ricky Hatton to fight for and defend a WBU title in the UK but not okay for a guy from Belfast to fight for one in his home town?"

In line with Sky's decision to refrain from televising WBU bouts (and those of other 'lesser' organisations) the BBBofC have not been tested of late with applications from such bodies to start working in the UK and Northern Ireland again. Rogan also confirmed, through press officer Alex McGreevy, that his date at the Odyssey Arena next month remains booked and it is understood the fighter is looking at other options. Perhaps Tyson Fury's name could now re-enter the equation?

Not if the infamous 'Moose' Lewis has anything to do with it! He wants to take 'Rogie' and the WBU belt over to the United States.

"The title fight featuring Martin Rogan of Belfast will take place in the United States by year's end," said 'Moose'. "Due to the British Boxing Board of Control's (BBBofC) decision to not reinstate the WBU as a recognised sanctioning body, the only viable alternative is to stage the event in the USA. I am disappointed with the decision of the BBBofC to not reinstate recognition of the WBU and do not fully understand its decision. As everyone knows, politics and underhandedness plays a huge part of who receives the opportunity to fight for a 'world' title.

"How they could deny Martin Rogan the chance of a lifetime to become the first true Irish World Heavyweight champion in history mystifies me. The fans in Ireland want this and Mr Rogan has jumped through all the rings to get to this point."

Lewis continued to huff away in his own understated manner and believes that a strong WBU will return in full glory for future title events.

"Let me ask anyone out there - who oversees the boxing titles the BBBofC sanctions?" 'Moose' ranted. "As a commission, they compete with the sanctioning bodies - which is not good business - yet they deny a qualified boxer a world championship fight in his own country? They should be investigated by Scotland Yard.

"The loss of Ireland will thrill the Irish people in the United States. While I look forward to this championship fight, I wish to express my disappointment to all of Ireland and the WBU will not stop the fight to sanction world title contests in the UK, you have my word.

"The WBU and I ask for the support of Martin Rogan's fans to speak out about this travesty and injustice. When Mr Rogan returns to Belfast, I will be there with him and we will have a press conference with film clips of this

historic moment. Pray for change in the corrupt world of professional boxing.”

Well said from ‘Moose’, the true upholder of boxing fairness.

Fury survives rocky round to stop brave American Firtha
- 18th September

Tyson Fury promised his Belfast fight fans some heavyweight excitement and duly delivered on Saturday, September 17, halting brave American **Nicolai Firtha** in the fifth round. Fury now craves a swift King's Hall return in early November. Firtha (17st 9lb 12oz) suffered a nosebleed in the first round and shipped plenty of leather but showed commendable courage to hang in there. "The Stone Man" also caused Fury (18st 1lb 2oz) moments of discomfort before succumbing to the British and Commonwealth champion's heavy artillery. Fury had to withstand a rocky third round when Firtha landed a solid right hand to the temple that buzzed Tyson and sent him staggering on to the ropes. The visitor piled in but Fury grappled and held on, weathering the storm.

As Firtha later acknowledged, he failed to grasp his big opportunity and spent the rest of his challenge frustrated at range, stuck on the end of Fury's lengthy jab. Tyson whipped in overhand rights and some hurtful uppercuts throughout round four before Nicolai sagged to the canvas and received a count. The spiteful blows continued to land in round five and John Keane waited patiently for his chance to step in. Keane decided at 2-19 of the round that he had seen enough.

"That's heavyweight boxing for you. You get hit and you recover, it's a test of fitness," said 23-year-old Fury, reliving the torrid third round, backstage. "Hopefully I can move on and do big things - like winning the world title."

"[Tyson] needs maybe two years' more experience before being ready for the Klitschkos," opined Firtha. "I had him ready to go in the third round, I was thinking 'this is over baby' but it didn't happen. I thought that the fight

could have gone on but I can't take anything away from the referee because it's his call and I respect it."



In too deep: Firtha feels the Fury
© Chris Royle

Last seen being out-mauled by Yassine El-Maachi in *Prizefighter*, **Junior Witter** returned against Lithuania's **Arvydas Trizno**. Witter (10st 11lb 2oz) was supposed to meet Stephen Haughian but the Lurgan man suffered a neck injury. It is difficult to see what Junior has left until he is pitched in with a genuine threat. Trizno (10st 9lb 4oz) was always involved in this one but Witter's superior quality saw him home 60-54 on Mark Green's card.

Willie Casey was set to headline against Togo-born French resident **Daniel Kodjo Sassou** in Limerick earlier this month. That bill got cancelled and "Big Bang's" comeback scrap was quickly moved to this show. Casey (9st 11lb 8oz) has added some patience and variety to his work but had to dig deep at times before stopping Sassou (8st 12lb 2oz) at 0-44 of the eighth and final round. Sassou was decked by a left-cross in the seventh round and remained competitive right up until Mark Green's intervention.

Sheffield slickster **Kid Galahad** briefly flexed his muscles against Dublin veteran **Paul Griffin** in a six-threes. Griffin (9st 5lb 12oz) is now 40 and the sort of form that saw him win a European amateur gold medal in 1991 has long since deserted. Galahad's (9st 4lb 8oz) freshness shone through quickly and Griffin was down twice and out in round one. Decker initially by a straight-right; a well-placed bodyshot saw bloodied Griffin fall again and he was stopped by Paul McCullagh at 1-31 of the opener.

There was very little to choose between **Joe Hillerby** (11st 12lb 12oz) and **Tommy Tolan** (11st 13lb 8oz) in a crossroads clash. Referee Mark Green preferred Hillerby's jab-and-move tactics over Tolan's tenacious assaults, recording a score of 39-38 in Joe's favour.

Debutant **Dee Walsh** had too much in the locker for **Gerard Healy**. 21-year-old Walsh (11st 2lb 14oz) impressed with his punch selection and maturity. Healy (11st 3lb 6oz) drops to 1-1 and Paul McCullagh scored it closer than expected at 39-37.

Tyson's cousin **Phill Fury** (11st 3lb 12oz) scored a never-easy 58-56 win over **Richard Troupe**. Fury's intense workrate proved the difference but Hull's Troupe (11st 6lb 12oz) played his part.

Donegal southpaw **Michael McLaughlin** (10st 8lb 10oz) uncorked a perfect right hook to depose **Mark Betts** (10st 13lb 12oz) at 0-43 of round four (scheduled for six-twos). Paul McCullagh refereed both fights.

Quality Georgian **Levan Ghvamichava** (11st 2lb 4oz) was in full control when opponent **Joe Rea** (11st 5lb 10oz) withdrew with a left shoulder injury after one-round of their show closing encounter. Mark Green officiated.

Fury survives Firtha scare and remains open to Klitschko challenge - 21st September

Sitting on an undersized couch in the overflow section of his dressing room, donned in the vibrant yellow shirt of Antrim Gaelic Football Club, Tyson Fury hoped that he had provided the Irish fight fans with an action-packed night. His American adversary Nicolai Firtha arrived in town hailing from a fairly cosmopolitan background and Fury has struggled for a while to prove his own Irish heritage. In a boxing stronghold like Belfast nobody particularly cares where the boxers come from, so long as they give their all in the squared circle. On this occasion, neither man's desire could be called into question.

The bout had barely moved out of its embryonic stages when Fury found himself fighting through a third round haze; stunned by a temple shot, hurt and pushed briefly into survival mode. The Wilmslow slugger recovered sufficiently, regained centre-ring control and bludgeoned Firtha for long enough that John Keane stepped in and called it off in the fifth round. Tyson was genuinely shaken by "The Stone Man" yet showed his mettle to recover and believes he will become stronger for the experience.

"That's heavyweight boxing for you. You get hit and you recover, it's a test of fitness," he said. "Firtha caught me on the side of the head while I was off balance but I was alright. He took some big shots and I'm glad that the referee stopped it when he did because sometimes injuries can occur at that point. All the people got behind me tonight and I'm very proud to be the first heavyweight headliner at the King's Hall. Hopefully I can move on and do big things - like winning the world title."

That dream is best postponed for the immediate future and if the Klitschkos were to stun him as badly as Firtha managed then it is difficult to imagine that either brother

would let Tyson off so lightly. Firtha thinks that the giant Ukrainians are a bridge too far at present.

"He needs more experience before fighting the Klitschkos, maybe more than a year to be really sharp and ready," opined Nicolai, now 20-9-1. "If Tyson trains 365, gets his nutrition right and hangs around the right people then I think he can be ready for the Klitschkos within two years. It was an emotional night for me. He's tough, he's got a nice long jab and whips the shots in well. He's a game guy and I wanted to test his heart. I thought that the fight could have gone on but I can't take anything away from the referee because it's his call and I respect it. I wanted to make the Irish fans proud and I'm a little disappointed. I was posing a bit too much there, standing off at range and that was frustrating."

During the pre-fight shenanigans, Fury called upon Irish-based Cuban Mike Perez to step up and take him on, in what would be an attractive showdown if made. Perez has since responded and the verbal barbs are expected to continue flying back and forth for a good while longer. Negotiations for a scrap with Martin Rogan are now believed to be taking place, with a November 12 date in mind. Regardless of the opponent, Fury says that his ring ethos is simple.

"I'm not avoiding anybody and I'll fight whoever they put in front of me. I'm asking Mick to come back in November. I want to win the Irish title but it's looking more and more likely that we can't get an Irish opponent to face me. Coleman Barrett doesn't want to fight, neither does big 'Rogie' and I don't think Kevin McBride wants to fight either.

"I like to keep busy; I'll go back to the gym, watch the video and work on my defence. I could have made it easier tonight. I can stand off and box, use the jab and run around but I wanted to go in but I'm a fighting man and I came here to fight and entertain."

Could an enticing matchup with Liverpool's David Price be on the agenda? There would be very little to choose, physically or ability-wise between the pair.

"It's all up to Mick Hennessy and if he gets David Price over then so be it but whatever the fight I want to be over in Belfast," stated Fury. "November 12 is being talked about and if I'm any good I'll win the fight whoever the opponent and if I'm no good then I'll lose, it's as simple as that. It's hard to find a good heavyweight who wants to go out and fight. When I get my jab going, there are not too many fighters who can touch me. I'm learning all the time and if I step up the opponent level then you'll see more."

Ruing mistakes made on the night but overall happy with his efforts, Nicolai Firtha proved to be an engaging and likeable character outside of the ring. Licking his wounds backstage, the 32-year-old from Ohio knew that the third round was his chance to cause the big upset and inflict a first defeat on Fury. He added that while Tyson hits as hard as you can expect for a man of 6'9" and over 18 stone, Firtha has been in with some pretty big hitters during his seven-year career.

"He hit me with some good shots that buzzed me a bit and he woke me up in the first round when he controlled me with his jab. When he got his distance going he got comfortable and we wanted to pressure him but I was unable to effectively enforce my game plan. I've been in with Oliver McCall, Tomasz Adamek and others who hit me harder. Oliver McCall, the "Atomic Bull" - wow he hit hard. A guy called Milton Littles hit me really hard too. Alexander Povetkin is the sharpest guy that I've been in with in my career, he was razor sharp. I saw some openings with Tyson Fury though; he threw a long jab and left room for the body shot underneath. It's a maturation process and he's coming along nicely but I thought we had got him at the right time and my experience would overcome him and force him into situations that he hasn't gone through yet.

“Kelly Pavlik’s trainer Jack Loew says that there are usually two or three windows in a fight – opportunities to knock a guy out. Unfortunately he [Fury] was holding in there and I wasn’t able to get my hands going. I hit him with some hard shots, some hard hooks to the head and I thought that the ref was going to jump in there, but he didn’t. That’s boxing for you, so good luck to him.”



Tyson Fury alongside promoter Mick Hennessy

© Chris Royle

Kodjo KO'd: Casey brings the 'Big Bang' to Belfast - 23rd September

Willie Casey returned with a 'Big Bang' on Saturday, September 17, recording an impressive eighth round stoppage win over Daniel Kodjo Sassou. The Togo-born veteran, now residing in France, has a reputation for hanging in and going the distance with good names. Styles, of course, make fights and after managing what the likes of Scott Quigg, Joe Murray and Patrick Hyland had previously failed to achieve, does the Limerick man feel that he has made a statement?

"Patrick Hyland and I are two different fighters and the way that we both beat Kodjo has nothing to do with what would potentially happen if we fought each other," Willie stated, shortly after exiting the man stage.

"He [Kodjo Sassou] had an excellent opportunity and got himself into great shape for this fight. The message is 'look out, because the 'Big Bang' is learning how to box' and I was aiming to be more elusive and show more movement tonight. I felt a little bit rusty in the early rounds and maybe a few nerves in there too. He was well prepared but I trained hard for eight rounds."

Casey did not have it all his own way during the contest and shipped a few meaty ripostes from the stubborn African. But overall, he landed the big shots and dropped Sassou in the seventh round, before upping the ante in the final session and forcing referee Mark Green to intervene.

"I picked it up to another gear and even when I caught him I still didn't apply a lot of pressure. He landed some hooks to the head and some nice body shots. I want a bit more experience and some rounds under my belt - no first round knockouts. Hopefully I can get another eight-rounder in before Christmas, or possibly even two. I don't want to rush my next move."



Delighted Casey is back on the hunt for big names

© Kevin Finn

After splitting with Phil Sutcliffe and the DolPhil camp, Casey has linked up with Cork manager Gary Hyde. It seems a natural fit.

“Stopping Kodjo was a lovely surprise after a great performance,” gushed Hyde. “I just knew that Willie would be hugely impressive tonight. He never fails to surprise me and even though he had the fight in the bag he came on and finished him off in true ‘Big Bang’ style, showing that massive desire to win. We’ll sit down and chat about his next move and no doubt Willie will be pestering me about the next fight soon enough.”

Casey is revelling in his new training situation, which sees the former EBU super-bantamweight champion working under the watchful eye of Paul McCullagh and his team, in west Belfast’s Gleann gym. The 29-year-old is glad to be back, feeling happy with his circumstances and looking forward to the future.

“Being in Belfast is great, there’s a good atmosphere in the gym and we’re all getting on well,” Willie enthused.

“Shows are getting scarce. I want a similar test or maybe an elusive opponent who can box with me and doesn’t fall over.”

Dee Walsh impresses with winning start in Belfast - 28th September

Belfast rookie Dee Walsh got off to a winning start on the recent Tyson Fury-Nicolai Firtha undercard and showed just why manager Gary Hyde and several members of the boxing fraternity view him as just a little bit special.

Walsh made his debut against fellow Belfast pugilist Gerard Healy, who gave his all but found the skills of Walsh too hot to handle during their four-rounder. Dee now looks forward to his next outing and revelled in the spotlight.

"It was brilliant and Gerard was a lot tougher than I thought he would be," admitted Walsh. "I weathered the storm in the first round and I used my natural skills to outbox him. I wasn't nervous before the fight but I got caught with a couple of shots because I wasn't being cautious. I thought I won the fight handily enough and maybe took every round but I'll not argue with the judges [sic] because I got the win which is the main thing. I thought that the referee was ready to jump in at one stage and I stopped throwing but he didn't and it halted my momentum."

Cork businessman Gary Hyde has a growing stable, with multi-talented Georgian Levan Ghvamichava and Manchester starlet Mark Heffron recently being joined by Willie Casey. Hyde also owns the signature of one of boxing's hottest prospects at the moment, Casey's former conqueror Guillermo Rigondeaux. After parting company with his talented, but frustrating, previous trio of Cubans - Luis Garcia, Alexei Collado and Mike Perez - Hyde has busied himself in putting together a refreshingly eclectic stable of fighters. Dee Walsh certainly impressed his paymaster on September 17.

"I was delighted with Dee, he showed fantastic movement and boxing ability," grinned Hyde. "Gerard Healy's very tough but Walsh's variation of punches and angles were superb. All of my boxers are going to the top and I wouldn't have anything to do with them if I didn't think that. From the third round we all saw the Dee Walsh that I see in the gym. It was his first time fighting without a vest, on a big show too, it was a tough ask. He fought an undefeated opponent, OK it was after only one fight, but Healy was game and came to win, so Dee just boxed him out of it.

"He's pure class and was always fighting as a pro in the amateur game and now he has turned over and is already showing his excellent footwork, fierce lateral movement and great shot delivery."

Shamrock Shorts: Andy Lee has finally signed to fight Bryan Vera in a rematch. Lou DiBella will promote 'Redemption' live on HBO Boxing.....Maria Ni Shiuilleabhain's Dundalk show, scheduled for October 22, may have to be postponed.

Rogan arranges rematch clash with old foe Skelton - 17th October

Martin Rogan will face Matt Skelton in the King's Hall on Saturday, November 12 in a main event accurately entitled 'The Brawl in the Hall'. After a proposed WBU heavyweight scrap with Luis Pineda was given the thumbs down by the BBofC, the self-styled 'Iron Man' was forced to reshuffle his pack and duly turned to former foe Skelton to provide the test he craves.

The first meeting was a rough-and-tumble affair between two men who only know one way to fight. Much water has passed under the bridge since February 2009 and each participant has been stifled by lengthy spells of inactivity. But come November 12, both Rogan and Skelton insist that they will be in lean shape and ready to put on a show for the Belfast faithful.

"We've both been out of the ring for a long time," admitted Rogan. "Unfortunately it's been tough getting fights and promoters are only interested in certain fighters so thankfully we have a chance to meet again. Is there any better way to get back into the ring but in a fight like this? Some people would like an easier challenge after being out for so long but that's boxing and this is the toughest sport out there."

After suffering a second defeat to Sam Sexton in November 2009 Martin had surgery on a long-standing shoulder problem and resumed his career a year later with two low key fights, defeating Yavor Marinchev and Werner Kreiskott. Despite being linked with several high profile returns to the title scene, including a long running EU tilt that never materialised, finally Rogan is back to business.

"Basically, boxers go through weeks of training and preparation for just 36 minutes of boxing or earlier. I had two fights last November and I'm coming back against the

toughest fighter I've fought in my career. It was a great night of brawling last time and everyone watching that saw a really great fight. My fans want to see a fight and Matt will give them that," he said.

Opponent Skelton briefly held the WBU heavyweight title in 2005 and Rogan's initial comeback plans, originally scheduled for October 27 in the Odyssey Arena, were set to include a shot at that very belt, against Luis Andres Pineda. Skelton has been fairly inactive himself and has not laced on the gloves since a losing *Prizefighter* effort in October 2010 to Michael Sprott, a man he had already beaten twice before.

"I took the *Prizefighter* at short notice to get back in there," said 'The Bedford Bear'. "I lost to Sprott but it was over three rounds. I came into this game late but I'm experienced, have been spending time in the gym and keeping my weight down."

Skelton was going through some testing personal issues when he faced off with Rogan in Birmingham's National Indoor Arena over two years ago. Rogan's remarkable rise from undercard performer to *Prizefighter* winner and, at the time, the latest man to better a timid Audley Harrison led him into the path of rugged Skelton and an all action brawl.

"My trainer and people around me told me not to go through with the first Rogan fight and I took time out of the gym, due to personal reasons and my mindset wasn't right. But my pride or ego made me think I could go and do it anyway. In hindsight I should've listened but I didn't and I paid the price. I lost the first encounter with 'Rogie' and I took the fight at a wrong time in my life, I had issues."

This time round, Matt was already in training for a clash with Albert Sosnowski but when the Polish heavyweight withdrew for personal reasons he was left without a dance partner... until Rogan and his JRL Promotions outfit picked up the phone.

“The promoters rang me asking if I wanted a rematch and I jumped at it,” said an excited Skelton. “I relish the thought and I believe it will be a hard fight, just like the first one was. We both come to fight and now I’m prepared; I’ve done things differently and my mind is right.”

The November 12 show will feature some tasty Belfast talent on the support card. Former British featherweight champion Martin Lindsay will be joined by Kevin O’Hara, Stephen Haughian, Marc McCullough, and Stevie Quinn Jnr, with more names to be announced in due course. But JRL Promotions believe that the fans will be out in force to watch the colourful heavyweight entertainer in action. Rogan sees the fight unfolding in only one way.

“Matt’s credentials are excellent – British, Commonwealth and European champion plus a WBA title challenge. He comes to fight and so do I, so let’s get it on.”

Skelton fancies a crack at Tyson Fury - 18th October

Martin Rogan and Tyson Fury will both take part in headlining attractions on Saturday, November 12 and it is a shame that the two heavyweight personalities will not be bashing lumps out of each other. As Fury meets Canadian champion Neven Pajkic in Manchester's Trafford Park Arena, Rogan will be busy renewing old acquaintances with former adversary Matt Skelton.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the 'Brawl in the Hall', Skelton said that he would not rule out a future clash with Fury but was not ready to start calling out Mick Hennessy's golden goose.

"I've watched Tyson Fury, he's a young lad who works well behind the jab but I'm not in the habit of calling out fighters and jumping on a bandwagon," said Matt.

"It's his time and after Danny Williams fought Mike Tyson they wanted me to call him out but I don't go in for that type of stuff."

Skelton looked in trim condition alongside trainer Mark Freeman, who revealed that Skelton's dietary habits concerned him. "His nutrition wasn't good enough and I'm sorting that out," said Freeman. "Martin Rogan's in great shape, you can tell by just looking at him. Matt got stale, he wasn't enjoying training as much and we're now clicking as a team. He'll be prepared on fight night."

Skelton reckons that his 'Rogie' rematch will prove that age is no barrier to two hungry heavyweights and remained amicable when pressed on the Fury matter.

"If the opportunity comes to fight Fury, or anyone at all, if it is right for me at the time then I'll take it. I've no plans to retire, I've been in hard fights but I still feel fresh. Fury might not even be 'the man' in a few fights' time anyway but he's good and I'd fight him."

**Rogan fires WBU broadside: Clonard battler unhappy at
Brit Board snub - 18th October**

Belfast heavyweight Martin Rogan has not quickly forgotten his WBU title snub and was clearly still irked at the British Board of Boxing Control's decision to block a proposed championship bout with Luis Andres Pineda. Rogan's opponent on November 12 Matt Skelton is a former WBU heavyweight title holder himself and the pair discussed the merits of the so called 'lesser' titles at a recent press conference in west Belfast's Balmoral Hotel.

"Skelton held the WBU title, so will the BBBofC now erase his history by no longer acknowledging a title win?" questioned 'The Iron Man'. "The WBU is still being fought for in America and this decision casts a shadow over proceedings. I was reading on the Internet -which is never far wrong- that apparently Sky Sports said that they would not show any more WBU titles after Matt won it and Frank Warren had to pull the plug. It makes you wonder what is really going on."

Rogan also had some choice words for the Internet tribes who criticized his venture and offered a new perspective on fighting for the sanctioning bodies' titles that are not perceived to be as prestigious as the 'big four'.

"For the people who don't train hard, get into the ring and take the shots to face and body, the critics who makes judgments, it is easy to talk," said 'Rogie'. "The fact is that a fighter wins a belt, no matter how credible, they take it home to their kids and it's all about what they think of it. We don't make the belts we just fight for them. I think it is wrong what has been done, it was an opportunity to lift boxing.

"The WBU and IBU was a great opportunity for fighters here. It's the same as *Prizefighter*, which is not credible worldwide but it sets you on a different journey. The WBU

would've opened doors for guys coming up in Belfast. This has damaged boxing; it was a stepping stone for climbing the ladder. But we don't need a belt for a fight like this [the Skelton bout]."

Matt 'The Bedford Bear' Skelton may be 44 years old and out of action for a year but he has held an impressive string of titles during his nine-year career. In 2008 Skelton offered a creditable challenge to then-WBA heavyweight champion Ruslan Chagaev. His career may have hit the skids since but he did hold the WBU title in 2005 after a six round knockout of Fabio Moli.

"Belts stand the test of time and I believe that the more credible fighters make the belts what they are," reasoned Skelton. "The WBC has seen great fighters contest their titles. If two great fighters fight each other and drop their belts then it would still be a great fight. If Pacquiao and Mayweather fought for the WBU then it wouldn't be rubbish. Maybe there are too many sanctioning belts and the general public can't identify who is a true world champion at each weight. Whether that's a fault or not, I don't know."

Midway through the press conference Rogan stood up and took off his trouser belt (a product of Next apparently) and passed it across the table to Skelton.

"That's the only belt we need for this contest," he chuckled.

There's no doubt that this should be a decent scrap between two enthusiastic heavyweights who fight in a manner pleasing to the fans, no matter what the combined age. The winner will likely move on to bigger and better things. Which could -dare I say- even be a title fight.

King Size: Rogan's promoters are aiming big - 21st October

Belfast's latest promotional outfit has big plans for the Northern capital's fight scene and Martin Rogan is entrusted with the job of spearheading a fistic revival. JRL Promotions want to build a scene where local talent are afforded the chance to showcase their potential to domestic crowds rather than being pitched in too deep on cards across the water.

"If we see boxers with talent then we aim to develop them, rather than having them thrown in without enough experience," said spokesman Shane King, a former GAA star with Fermanagh and Down. "Rather than having our Belfast talent go across the water and fight for peanuts on hotel shows we want to see them fight here. Our ultimate goal is to produce a world champion."

JRL first came to prominence last month when Rogan signed for a WBU scrap in the Odyssey Arena. That show fell through and a fight with Matt Skelton was swiftly arranged for November 12 in the famous old King's Hall venue. A Saturday night in the King's Hall makes more logistical sense for my money and King generally agrees.

"The Odyssey Arena was booked up and it was a holiday weekend [Halloween] so we thought it would work out well," he said. "Saturday night in the King's Hall is steeped in tradition. We are capable of taking on the Odyssey and will look at that in the future. Each opponent takes his own stage of training on and this date and venue suits us. Ticket prices start from £30 on Ticketmaster.ie with 3,500 seats available and every pound's golden at the minute to people and we understand that but it will be a great exhibition and the local fighters will be on board.

"We want to showcase talent and everybody needs to get paid but long term we would like to get a deal with the

networks and sign a good quality fighter. There are a number of options available. The WBU falling apart was a massive disappointment but we are in negotiations with TV companies and local media and we want to work with various intermediaries. If local media do the production then perhaps we could sell it on. Whoever wins this will hopefully get a shot at a title or a TV fight."

The undercard is shaping up nicely with Lurgan's Stephen Haughian aiming to put aside the disappointment of not facing Junior Witter last month and face a live opponent. A fight with the likes of Jeff Thomas or Chris O'Brien would do nicely for Stephen, who is eager to push back into title contention.

Back to the main event and even though a fight between Martin Rogan and Tyson Fury now appears further away than ever, JRL wish Tyson well and Shane King reckons that the ever-popular Rogan will have the fans out in their droves should the pair ever meet in the ring.

"Martin is probably the best supported fighter across Ireland and we wish Tyson Fury the best of luck - he will follow his own path. The people of Belfast would love to see Fury fight Rogan in Belfast. Whether that opportunity comes up again then we shall just wait and see what happens."

Irish Boxing News Round-Up

Martin Rogan's proposed November 12 clash with Matt Skelton is off. The Belfast heavyweight has suffered an injury and has postponed his comeback date. 'The Iron Man' has assured fans that he will be seen again early in the New Year.

There was little joy for two Irish boxers competing on Frank Warren's October 15 Liverpool show. **Gerard Healy** was stopped in the opening round by talented Liam Smith. West Belfast battler **Tommy Tolan** fared slightly better, extending Rocky Fielding the full six rounds but conceding the decision. Fielding won the *Prizefighter* tournament earlier this year and was snapped up by promoter Frank Warren as a result. Nobody gets an easy night against 'Tiger' Tommy as Rocky discovered following a bruising encounter.

John Waldron was stopped in two rounds by unbeaten prospect Robert Woge as part of the Marco Huck-Omar Rossi undercard in Germany on October 22. The Ballyhaunis man drops to 5-6.

When Frankie Gavin withdrew from an October 28 clash with Frank Haroche Horta, Dubliner **Dean Byrne** stepped in at late notice. Despite a gallant effort, the man formerly trained by Freddie Roach was deemed to be taking too many shots by current trainer Anthony Farnell and the ex-pro withdrew his man after eight rounds. Wily French southpaw Horta still craves a crack at Frankie Gavin, whose career now hangs in the balance after his short notice no-show. Byrne, meanwhile, returns to the drawing board.

Shamrock Shorts: Andy Lee finally tastes revenge, in the form of a 10-round points rematch win over Bryan Vera on October 1.....Daniel Kodjo Sassou has hailed Willie Casey's strength and believed 'Big Bang' has what it takes to move

on to bigger and better things. Casey's next mission will be a fight with unbeaten Kid Galahad on November 12....Breidis Prescott has labelled his loss to Paul McCloskey as a 'robbery'....Jamie Conlan may have turned down a *Prizefighter* opportunity but he has his eyes firmly fixed on a Commonwealth title shot....Following some in-camp sparring Dublin middleweight Anthony Fitzgerald tips Tony Bellew to edge out Nathan Cleverly when the pair meet....Tyson Fury will face Canadian-based Neven Pajkic in a Commonwealth title defence on November 12 in Manchester....Rendall Munroe doesn't fancy a rubber match with Kiko Martinez, so all available Irish super-bantamweights will no doubt be hoping for a crack at the strap....Alexei Collado defeated Franklin Varela over 10 rounds in Cleethorpes on October 14....Stephen Ormond was left reeling after a proposed Kevin Mitchell showdown failed to materialise. Promoter Frank Warren still insists that big things are on the cards for the Clondalkin talent....Money issues look to have put paid to a potential domestic dust up between Gary O'Sullivan and Anthony Fitzgerald....Andy Lee and Matthew Macklin both want the chance to meet cash cow Sergio Martinez next....Carl Frampton insists that a rumoured clash between himself and Kiko Martinez on December 17 is far from being confirmed.

Magee aiming for Danish showdown but no Christmas date for Lindsay - 4th November

Brian Magee will be fighting at the end of January, regardless of who the opponent is. That's according to manager Pat Magee, who has been working tirelessly to secure his charge another meaningful fight at world level.

"We received a proposal from Sauerland Promotion which we found acceptable," said Pat, who is vastly experienced around the negotiating table. "We agreed terms and now we are just working on a date suitable to television. Kessler's fighting around that date, but hopefully in March. But if, for whatever reason, that fight fails to make it, we will then look to get Brian in against [Károly] Balzsay.

"After the Barboza clash, Brian was exhausted. The fight and the conditions took loads out of him, so he has had three months off and he needed that."

Brian is setting his sights on Denmark's Rudy Markussen and the Lisburn man has been recharging his batteries in Alicante, Spain. Running along the beaches and getting into reasonable shape, Magee will resume training under the watchful eye of expert coach Bernardo Checa when he returns home.

One venture that will not be coming to fruition for manager Pat is a proposed Ulster Hall show on December 3. That rumoured event was set to feature the long overdue return of Martin Lindsay but unfortunately some complications have arisen and it will not be going ahead as planned.

"It was a good chance for Martin to get back in the ring and get his career moving again, but sadly this will not be the case," bemoaned Pat Magee. "I was also embarrassed that I had to phone the other fighters involved to tell them that the show was not going to happen."

Irish Boxing News Round-Up

Matchroom supremo Eddie Hearn is planning to put his leading Irish talent on in New York for a St Patrick's Day show. **Matthew Macklin** has his eye on a crack at Sergio Martinez and Hearn wants American powerhouse promoter Lou DiBella to add **Paul McCloskey** and **Carl Frampton** to the mix. Frampton could even be featuring earlier still, with a slot on the Jermain Taylor-Jesse Nicklow December 30 card being talked about. If that comes off, 'The Jackal' could punch his way into the HBO chief support slot.

"I had a chat with my good friend Lou DiBella and he wants one of our fighters on the under card of Jermain Taylor's show which is on HBO," Hearn told Irish boxing journalist Jonny Stapleton. "We are looking at getting Carl Frampton an opponent for that show and he could end up being chief support. It could be a great chance for him to get some massive exposure Stateside."

Despite enjoying a lofty number 13 world ranking by the WBA, Dublin middleweight **Anthony Fitzgerald** is enduring a period of frustration. After his paymasters at DolPhil Promotions dissolved as an organisation (shortly after golden goose Willie Casey was cruelly plucked by Guillermo Rigondeaux last May) Fitzgerald has been notable by his ring absence. 'The Pride' has decided to take matters into his own hands and is planning a show of his own in early 2012.

"It has been a frustrating few weeks. Fights falling through, people not wanting to fight us, not having the money to tempt names over and so forth," groaned the 26-year-old EBA belt holder, who believes he is approaching his prime.

"No one else could sort out a fight for me. There is no point in moping about so I will do it myself. I have a team

of backers with me and a big fan base and I am confident I can secure a name that will excite fans for the first show and build from there. I am really excited about this."

Fitz is aware of the perils surrounding literal self-promotion and will be working with an experienced team, leaving the reigning Irish super-middleweight champion free to concentrate on his rigorous training schedule. Anthony stopped tough European-level operator Affif Belghecham in his last outing and was eager to lure Andy Lee into a scrap, but Lee was busy frying bigger fish on American network HBO. Fitzgerald, whose three epic domestic battles with Robbie Long have since entered Irish boxing folklore, has also been linked with former Commonwealth Games gold medallist and current fledgling pro **Eamon O'Kane**.

"I got a call asking if I would fight O'Kane in Dublin and I told them I would take the fight," said Fitzgerald. "Obviously contracts and so forth would have to be sorted, but on principal I would love to fight O'Kane. It would be a great fight. I haven't heard anything since though so I have looked at fighting in January on a 'Pride Promotions' show."

O'Kane was a decorated amateur who mixed with the likes of James De Gale and George Groves (beating the latter) and has hit the ground running as a professional, winning an eight-rounder in just his third bout. However, a serious car accident has stunted his momentum and Fitzgerald is focusing on the current O'Kane and not what has gone in the past.

"I wouldn't pay heed to what he [O'Kane] did in the amateurs," reckoned Anthony. "The two codes are so different and I am confident I would beat him, but as I said it doesn't look likely now."

Former WBO super-middleweight champion and the ultimate 'Celtic Warrior' Steve Collins is renewing links with Irish boxing and plans to bring world title fights to

Dublin. Collins' brother Paschal currently presides over an increasingly productive gym down in his native Cork, enjoying promotional ties with Frank Warren. Paschal's fighters **Stephen Ormond**, **Ian Tims**, **Karl Brabazon** and **Gary O'Sullivan** are all enjoying exposure on Warren's Box Nation TV channel and Steve Collins believes that with a little more time and experience we could see those boxers coming home for some major title attractions.

"At the moment there are no Irish fighters out there who could fill an arena in Dublin and I believe if we can build these guys up in the UK they can come back here inside the next twelve months and pack anywhere out," opined Steve. "With Omega [financial backers] behind us and Frank Warren determined to build the guys up for big fights in Ireland we can really get the pro game back on the road."

Collins mixed with the likes of Mike McCallum, Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank during a massively successful 11-year career and has identified a new breed of talent waiting to fill domestic arenas. Cruiserweight Tims was a multi-title winning amateur and 'Spike' O'Sullivan's ferocious knockout ratio means that he rarely fails to excite.

"We intend to fill arenas in Dublin with top class Irish fighters going for major titles," concluded Collins. "We know they can revive the fight game here."

**BoxNation to televise Irish extravaganza.....in Liverpool -
22nd November**

There will be plenty of Irish interest on the December 16 boxing show in Liverpool with every member of Paschal Collins' ever-growing stable of talent preparing for action. Stephen Ormond, Gary O'Sullivan, Ian Tims and Karl Brabazon will all feature on the night.

Talented lightweight **Stephen Ormond** has been craving a title chance for a while and the Clondalkin man has seen proposed clashes with the likes of Liam Walsh and Kevin Mitchell get so near, yet remain so far from his grasp. The 28-year-old will be looking to pound some of the frustration out of his system and inflict some hurt on former quality operator Carl Johanneson, the Leeds man who firmly believes that he still has more left to offer the fight game. Ormond looked impressive when stopping southpaw survivor, and current Irish super-featherweight title holder, Mickey Coveney in the seventh round of their bout back on March 12. That featured on the undercard of fellow super-featherweight Ricky Burns' WBO title defence in Scotland against Joseph Laryea.



Paschal Collins is relishing the Liverpool show

© Kevin Finn

Gary O'Sullivan, meanwhile, has long been linked with a fight against domestic rival Anthony Fitzgerald, the Dubliner who won the Irish super-middleweight title and served as one of Ireland's most active champions probably since the belts came into existence. One weight down, at middle, O'Sullivan somewhat laboured to a points win over Ciaran Healy way back in 2009 to claim national title glory. 'Fitz' has had three blood-and-thunder encounters with fellow Dubliner Robbie Long (winning two and losing one, all were close fights) and in an interesting form guide fight, 'Spike' O'Sullivan matched up with Long earlier this year. Fans who settled in to their seats expecting a distance affair were left disappointed as Gary starched Long inside a single round. Likening his frustration at a lack of ring action to "a lion locked in a budgie cage" O'Sullivan again displayed his chilling punch power.

That was actually Gary's second fight of the year after he had already recorded a one round blitz of (the usually durable) journeyman Ryan Clark, via some quality body shots. O'Sullivan also revealed that he could potentially muscle his way into the British title scene.

"I'm eligible for the Commonwealth title because my mother was born in England," he explained. "She left when she was three years old but she can get hold of a British passport so that could present an opportunity to me. I'll take any fights at this stage, mainly at light-middleweight."

For now his attentions turn to Belfast bruiser **Tommy Tolan**. A rough-and-ready veteran of the Irish fight scene, Tommy never allows anybody an easy night. Comfortably slimmed down into the middleweight division his style is straight-forward, in your face, with plenty of headbutts, grappling and holding, always working his opponent for as long as the fight lasts. Tolan can be stopped –Tony Jeffries reeled off a classy combination to halt him back in December 2010- but he can also spring a shock too. Just ask JJ McDonagh who let his concentration waver for a split

second and found himself on the end of a chilling hook. It was a brutal knockout and popped McDonagh's unbeaten record. Gary O'Sullivan will need to be well prepared for the onslaught.

Further into the card and tough Dublin cruiser **Ian Tims** puts his domestic crown on the line against Shane McPhilbin. Tims upset the odds in March of this year when he bettered an admittedly out of shape Michael Sweeney for the Irish cruiserweight belt. Prior to that chance Tims was left frustrated at a lack of ring time and was even considering a move up to heavyweight to tackle Martin Rogan. Ian got into the condition of his life however to claim a deserved 97-95 win over co-challenger Sweeney in the City West that night, and walked away with the Irish crown strapped proudly around his waist. Unbeaten American prospect Ryan 'The Irish Outlaw' Coyne claims Emerald Isle ancestry and fancies a crack at Tims but that match has yet to move beyond the speculation stage. Ian will more than match plucky McPhilbin, who proved too much for Galway native Declan Timlin when the two met in the exciting *Prizefighter* tournament. Shane will have his hands full with the revitalised 'Tank' Tims who I expect to win handily.

'Disgusted' Brabazon quits the amateurs to chase pro dream - 22nd November

Karl Brabazon will make his debut on the aforementioned Liverpool card, competing at welterweight. Brabazon returned to amateur game earlier this year following a lengthy absence and this proud ex-champion stormed to the 69kg final at the Irish Senior Elite Championships, upsetting former Olympic rep John Joe Joyce en route to the final. The St. Saviours boxer operates out of a tight defensive shell but was pipped to the post by surprise package Adam Nolan, of Bray, conceding a 13-4 decision in the final.

30-year-old Karl decided to ditch the headguard and vest after being overlooked for the Open Elite Box-Offs staged earlier this year where the winners were sent to the AIBA World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan. After venting his anger in a phone call to the IABA's Director of Boxing Development Dominic O'Rourke, Karl cited favouritism as the reason he was not selected and now finds himself punching for pay instead.

"I had been sparring with Stephen Ormond and 'Spike' Sullivan while I was still an amateur and after the decision was made to overlook me I spoke to Pascal Collins about joining up with him, he said he was happy to have me and that was that," Brabazon told Irish-boxing.com.

Like many fighters changing codes, he believes that his style is more suited to the pros and is targeting the Irish title as a first major stepping stone.

"My focus is now on the pro game, I want to make an impression so I need to put in a good performance in Liverpool. To make an impression you need to improve and beat these lads and you have to look to that Irish title, after that it's the European and World rankings to focus on. I'm a young 30 and I'm excited about the fight, but it's just

about getting used to the longer rounds, although I have a lot of amateur experience.”

Much of that amateur experience was fought at a highly competitive level. Back in 2005 he outpointed Jorge Herrera by 17-14 at welterweight when Cuba arrived to take on a UK and Ireland select team. Ian Tims also featured that night, going down 21-11 at the hands of talented Luis Pons.

'Nordic Nightmare' views Chisora as his toughest challenge to date - 29th November

When Dereck Chisora squares off with Robert Helenius on Saturday, December 3, the Finchley heavyweight has a huge task on his hands, in every sense of the word. Not only is Chisora travelling over to Finland to face the 'Nordic Nightmare' on his home turf, but the unbeaten Helenius stands tall at an imposing 6'6" and has dismissed an impressive roster of opponents during a brief 16-fight career.

Robert is 27 years old and apparently heading for major title honours in the near future. This vacant European title fight -Helenius previously held the EU strap- is a step along that road, but the man who has knocked out 11 foes is not underestimating the challenge posed by 'Del Boy'.

"Chisora is a tough guy, he is a fighter and he can punch hard. I am aware of his power. But we have put together a plan how to beat him," Helenius told BoxRec News.

The heavyweight prospect may be laconic with his words but his punches land with a sense of authority, as most recent opponent Sergei Liakhovich (a former WBO 'world' title holder) found out in the ninth round of their clash. Helenius has also beaten former names like Lamon Brewster and Samuel Peter, with both men failing to make it into the later rounds.

"Obviously, beating three former world champions was big for me, but I think Chisora is the toughest opponent. I know I need to be at my best to beat him."

Robert is relishing a return to Helsinki, where he has already fought four times as a pro despite being based in Germany.

"There is nothing like it [fighting in Finland]. The crowd was superb during my last fight on the Abraham-Froch

Super Six undercard. Things have been going really well. We prepared in Germany and yesterday we flew over to Finland. It's good to be home. I look forward to the fight."

Helenius enjoyed a solid amateur career, claiming a silver medal in the 2006 European Championships and turned pro under the guidance of German promotional powerhouse Wilfried Sauerland in 2008. His early victories include a stoppage over former British champion Scott Gammer. Like most heavyweight 'world' title aspirants Helenius has his sights set on the Klitschko brothers, who sit at the top of the pile, dominating their opponents fight after fight. One day Robert sees himself fighting at that level, but for now it's Dereck Chisora who occupies his attention.

"Yes, of course I want to fight them, but all my focus right now is on Chisora," he mused. "On Saturday there will be a sell-out crowd of 12,000 wild Finnish fans. It is going to be loud and I will put on a great show for my fans."

Shamrock Shorts: Nine Irish boxers are ranked in the Top-20 according to the AIBA World rankings..... Oisín Fagan wants to end his career on a high by facing Kevin 'Sweet Pea' O'Hara for the Irish title.

Irish Boxing News Round-Up - December 2011

Carl Frampton will look to set the New Year off with a bang when he tackles Scotland's unbeaten Kris Hughes on January 28. Even though neither man hails from the English capital, the match will headline in London's York Hall, located in the Bethnal Green area. Frampton will defend the Commonwealth title that he won when pounding Aussie Mark Quon at short notice in September. Manager and mentor Barry McGuigan sees Hughes as a live threat to Carl's unblemished ledger.

"He's a tall rangy guy who gave Jamie Arthur a real work out, he's got experience and he is a southpaw so it's a different type of fight and challenge for Carl and I'm looking forward to it," said McGuigan.

"It's a big year for us - we're not looking past Kris but I believe Carl can go a long way, and by the end of 2012 I would like to think he'll be European Champion. (British Champion) Scott Quigg is a target fight down the line too and he's enthusiastic for the fight so there's exciting things ahead, but Kris comes first and Carl will be ready."

Matchroom Promotions' head honcho Eddie Hearn is also excited by the prospect of Frampton headlining: "I'm delighted to be kicking off the New Year with one of boxing's most exciting prospects in Carl Frampton," said Hearn. "There are some big fights out there for Carl in 2012 and I know he will be looking to make a statement on January 28."

BoxNation's December 16 show, set to feature a plethora of Irish talent, was cancelled, with Frank Warren's son Francis (Managing Director of Queensberry Promotions) blaming a third party for failing to adhere to their side of the bargain. Paschal Collins' impressive stable of fighters were set to feature on the dinner show at St. George's Hall.

“We’re looking to do a show in Dublin in 2012 and involve as many of the boxers who were scheduled to fight as possible,” stated Warren. “I’m also hugely disappointed for Steve Collins who has worked tirelessly to bring the two parties together and to provide many of the boxers.”

Veteran southpaw **Lee Murtagh** is aiming to become the inaugural winner of the recently created WBF Gaelic/Celtic title. Lee hopes to meet Ciaran Duffy for the fledgling strap, in Murtagh’s adopted home of Leeds, on March 15.

“The Celtic title controlled by the BBBofC excludes Irish boxers,” bemoaned Lee. “That leaves a huge jump from Irish champion to European title level. This title will also keep Irish boxers busy during the drought in Ireland.”

Jamie Kavanagh suffered the first blot on his copy book when unheralded journeyman Ramesis Gil held the Irishman to a majority draw on the Amir Khan-Lamont Peterson December 10 undercard. “This will only push and drive me more. I knew he was tough and hit hard. He did hit very hard, but I was the better boxer and I think I showed that and won,” Kavanagh told Irish-boxing.com.

“I wasn’t happy with my performance but there is a lot I can take from it. It was tough fight and I knew the guy was coming for the win. That is just boxing and despite those things happening [Jamie suffered a cut and a hand injury] we went for the win.”

Tommy Tolan stepped in to face Frank Warren’s unbeaten protégé Billy Joe Saunders but was dismantled in the opening stanza. The ex-Olympic representative (for the UK, in 2008) hurt Tolan almost immediately with an accurate left that shook Tommy and referee Jeff Hinds was busy jumping in shortly after, before the ‘Celtic Tiger’ had chance to recover. It was all over at 1-07 of the first round and the fight was televised live on BoxNation.

World Results 2011

Key: PTS = Points, TKO = Technical Knockout, KO = Knockout, NC = No Contest, D = Draw, TD = Technical Decision, RTD = Retired.

January 6: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WTKO4 Heri Purnomo (*flyweight*).

January 8: Beibut Shumenov WKO6 William Joppy (*WBA light-heavyweight title*) - Christian Esquivel WTKO2 Eduardo Garcia (*WBC bantamweight title eliminator*).

January 14: Erislandy Lara WKO1 Delray Raines (*light-middleweight*) - Peter Manfredo WPTS10 Daniel Edouard (*super-middleweight*) - Edwin Rodriguez WPTS10 Aaron Pryor Jr (*super-middleweight*).

January 15: Adrien Broner WKO1 John Revish (*lightweight*).

January 21: Lucas Matthyse WTKO8 DeMarcus Corley (*light-welterweight*).

January 22: Evander Holyfield NC3 Sherman Williams (*heavyweight*) - Monte Barrett D8 Charles Davis (*heavyweight*) - Hugo Ruiz WTD9 Alvaro Perez (*interim WBA bantamweight title*).

January 28: Chris Arreola WTKO1 Joey Abell (*heavyweight*) - Josesito Lopez WTKO7 Mike Dallas Jr (*light-welterweight*) - Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WKO7 Ego Yohan (*flyweight*).

January 29: Timothy Bradley WPTS12 Devon Alexander (*WBC and WBO light-welterweight titles*) - Vernon Paris WPTS8 Emanuel Augustus (*welterweight*) - Julio Cesar

Chavez Jr WPTS10 Billy Lyell (*WBC middleweight title eliminator*) - Nehomar Cermeno WPTS12 Victor Terrazas (*WBA super-bantamweight title eliminator*) - Jean Piero Perez WPTS12 Jesus Jimenez (*interim WBA flyweight title*) - Nkosinathi Joyi NC3 Katsunari Takayama (*IBF minimumweight title*) - Argenis Mendez WPTS12 Cassius Baloyi (*IBF super-featherweight title eliminator*).

February 4: Bryan Vera WPTS10 Sergio Mora (*middleweight*).

February 5: Austin Trout WPTS12 Rigoberto Alvarez (*WBA light-middleweight title*) - Jesus Silvestre WKO4 Yader Escobar (*WBA minimumweight title eliminator*) - Jesus Geles WPTS12 Ramon Garcia Hiraes (*interim WBO light-flyweight title*) - Tomas Rojas WPTS12 Nobuo Nashiro (*WBC super-flyweight title*).

February 11: Ionut Dan Ion WTD6 Steve Forbes (*welterweight*) - Kazuto Ioka WTKO5 Olydong Sithsamerchai (*WBC minimumweight title*) - Guillaume Frenois WPTS12 Eusebio Osejo (*super-featherweight*) - Peter Quillin WTKO4 Dennis Sharpe (*middleweight*) - Eddie Chambers WPTS12 Derric Rossy (*heavyweight*) - Rico Ramos WPTS10 Alejandro Valdez (*super-bantamweight*) - Hector Camacho Jr WPTS8 Juan Astorga (*super-middleweight*) - David Rodriguez WTKO2 Matt Hicks (*heavyweight*).

February 12: Steve Cunningham WPTS12 Enad Licina (*IBF cruiserweight title*) - Omar Narvaez WPTS12 Victor Zaleta (*WBO super-flyweight title*) - Yoan Pablo Hernandez WTKO7 Steve Herelius (*interim WBA cruiserweight title*) - Sammy Gutierrez WTKO6 Renan Trongco (*interim WBA minimumweight title*) - Arthur Abraham WTKO2 Stjepan

Bozic (*light-heavyweight*) – Marco Antonio Barrera WTKO2
Jose Arias (*light-welterweight*).

February 18: Carlos Quintana WTKO9 Yoryi Estrella (*light-middleweight*) – Jan Zaveck WKO5 Paul Delgado (*IBF welterweight title*) – Fernando Guerrero WPTS10 Derrick Findlay (*middleweight*) – Shawn Porter WPTS10 Anges Adjaho (*welterweight*).

February 19: Nonito Donaire WTKO2 Fernando Montiel (*WBC and WBO bantamweight titles*) – Felix Sturm WTKO7 Ronald Hearn (*WBA 'super' world middleweight title*) – Mike Jones WPTS12 Jesus Soto-Karass (*NABA welterweight title*) – Victor Lupo Puiu WPTS10 Junior Witter (*welterweight*) – Craig Watson WPTS12 John O'Donnell (*British welterweight title*) – Ashley Theophane WPTS12 Lenny Daws (*British light-welterweight title*) – Frankie Gavin WTKO7 Michael Lomax (*welterweight*) – John McDermott WTKO1 Larry Olubamiwo (*heavyweight*) – Tyson Fury WKO5 Marcel Luiz Nascimento (*heavyweight*).

February 24: James Toney WPTS10 Damon Reed (*heavyweight*).

February 25: Juan Carlos Burgos WTKO2 Frankie Archuleta (*super-featherweight*) – Danny Garcia WTKO2 John Figueroa (*light-welterweight*).

February 26: Brandon Rios WTKO10 Miguel Acosta (*WBA lightweight title*) – Gilberto Keb Baas WRD9 Jose Aguirre (*WBC light-flyweight title*) – Julio Cesar Miranda WTKO4 Arden Diale (*WBO flyweight title*) – Juan Carlos Salgado WPTS10 Guadalupe Rosales (*lightweight*).

March 4: Yusaf Mack WPTS12 Otis Griffin (*IBF light-heavyweight title eliminator*).

March 5: Saul Alvarez WPTS12 Matthew Hatton (*vacant WBC light-middleweight title*) - Zab Judah WTKO7 Kaizer Mabuza (*vacant IBF light-welterweight title*) - Humberto Soto WPTS10 Fidel Munoz (*light-welterweight*) - Juan Alberto Rosas WPTS10 Jesus Vazquez (*super-flyweight*) - Adrien Broner WPTS10 Daniel Ponce De Leon (*super-featherweight*) - Danny Jacobs WTKO1 Robert Klawer (*super-middleweight*) - Seth Mitchell WTKO2 Charles Davis (*heavyweight*) - Gary Sykes WPTS12 Carl Johanneson (*British super-featherweight title*) - George Groves WTKO4 Daniel Allotey (*super-middleweight*) - Vinny O'Brien WRTD3 David Navarro (*welterweight*) - James Kirkland WKO1 Ahsandi Gibbs (*super-middleweight*).

March 11: Michael Grant WKO3 Tye Fields (*heavyweight*) - Joel Casamayor WPTS10 Manuel Leyva (*welterweight*).

March 12: Miguel Cotto WTKO12 Ricardo Mayorga (*WBA 'super' light-middleweight title*) - Miguel Vazquez WPTS12 Leonardo Zappavigna (*IBF lightweight title*) - Pawel Wolak WRTD6 Yuri Foreman (*light-middleweight*) - Sergio Martinez WTKO8 Sergiy Dinziruk (*WBC 'Diamond' light-middleweight title*) - Andy Lee WTKO10 Craig McEwan (*middleweight*) - Jonathon Barros WPTS12 Miguel Roman (*WBA featherweight title*) - Ricky Burns WRTD7 Joseph Laryea (*WBO super-featherweight title*) - William Joppy WPTS10 Cory Cummings (*super-middleweight*).

March 18: Brad Solomon WPTS10 Demetrius Hopkins (*welterweight*) - Cedric Boswell WPTS10 Oliver McCall (*heavyweight*).

March 19: Vitali Klitschko WTKO1 Odlanier Solis (*WBC heavyweight title*) - Ola Afolabi WTKO5 Lubos Suda (*cruiserweight*) - Michael Sprott WPTS4 Serdar Uysal

(*heavyweight*) - Lucian Bute WTKO10 Brian Magee (*IBF super-middleweight title*) - Vanes Martirosyan WKO2 Bladimir Hernandez (*light-middleweight*) - Guillermo Rigondeaux WKO1 Willie Casey (*interim WBA super-bantamweight title*) - Roman Gonzalez WPTS12 Manuel Vargas (*WBA light-flyweight title*) - David Tua WPTS10 Demetrice King (*heavyweight*) - Liam Walsh WKO10 Jon Kays (*Commonwealth super-featherweight title*).

March 23: *Prizefighter* - The super-middleweights II - (*Quarter Finals*) Rocky Fielding WTKO2 Patrick J Maxwell, Joe Ainscough WPTS3 Wayne Reed, Tobias Webb WPTS3 Robin Reid, Jahmaine Smyle WPTS3 Carl Dilks - (*Semi Finals*) Rocky Fielding WTKO1 Joe Ainscough, Tobias Webb WPTS3 Jahmaine Smyle - (*Final*) Rocky Fielding WTKO1 Tobias Webb.

March 25: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WTKO5 Muhammad Nurfawaid (*flyweight*).

March 26: Dmitry Pirog WPTS12 Javier Maciel (*WBO middleweight title*) - Yuriorkis Gamboa WTKO4 Jorge Solis (*WBA 'super' featherweight title*) - Takalani Ndlovu WPTS12 Steve Molitor (*IBF super-bantamweight title*) - Moruti Mthlane WTKO5 Johnriel Casimero (*IBF flyweight title*) - Tshifhiwa Munyai WPTS12 Danilo Pena (*vacant IBO super-bantamweight title*) - Thomas Oosthuizen WKO9 Evert Bravo (*vacant IBO super-middleweight title*) - Denton Vassell WPTS12 Bethuel Ushona (*Commonwealth welterweight title*).

April 2: Hassan N'Dam N'Jikam WPTS12 Giovanni Lorenzo (*interim WBA middleweight title*) - Marco Huck WPTS12 Ran Nakash (*WBO cruiserweight title*) - Robert Helenius WTKO9 Sam Peter (*heavyweight*) - Daiki Kameda WKO4 Jesus Martinez (*super-bantamweight*) - Giovanni Segura WKO3 Ivan Calderon (*WBO light-flyweight title*) -

Edgar Sosa WTKO8 Kenichi Korikawa (*flyweight*) - Hernan Marquez WTKO11 Luis Concepcion (*WBA flyweight title*) - Krzysztof Wlodarczyk WPTS12 Francisco Palacios (*WBC cruiserweight title*) - John Murray WPTS12 Karim El Ouazghari (*European lightweight title*) - Derry Mathews WTKO1 Amir Unsworth (*English lightweight title*).

April 8: Jhonny Gonzalez WTKO4 Hozumi Hasegawa (*WBC featherweight title*) - Toshiaki Nishioka WKO9 Mauricio Javier Munoz (*WBC super-bantamweight title*) - Takahiro Aoh WKO4 Humberto Guitierrez (*WBC super-featherweight title*) - Marco Antonio Rubio WTKO7 David Lemieux (*WBC middleweight title eliminator*) - Jesse Vargas WRTD1 Vivian Harris (*welterweight*) - Danny Williams WKO1 Laszlo Toth (*heavyweight*).

April 9: Marcos Maidana WPTS12 Erik Morales (*interim WBA light-welterweight title*) - Robert Guerrero WPTS12 Michael Katsidis (*interim WBO and WBA lightweight titles*) - Paulie Malignaggi WPTS10 Jose Cotto (*welterweight*) - Nobuhiro Ishida WTKO1 James Kirkland (*light-middleweight*) - Robert Stieglitz WDQ10 Khoren Gevor (*WBO super-middleweight title*) - Donnie Nietes WKO1 Armando Vasquez (*light-flyweight*) - Tomasz Adamek WPTS12 Kevin McBride (*heavyweight*) - Stuart Hall WTKO5 John Donnelly (*British bantamweight title*).

April 13: Anthony Mundine WPTS10 Garth Wood (*middleweight*).

April 15: Omar Narvaez WPTS12 Cesar Seda (*WBO super-flyweight title*) - Kiko Martinez WKO10 Jason Booth (*European super-bantamweight title*).

April 16: Orlando Salido WTKO8 Juan Manuel Lopez (*WBO featherweight title*) - Victor Ortiz WPTS12 Andre Berto

(WBC welterweight title) - Amir Khan WTD6 Paul McCloskey (WBA light-welterweight title) - Rendell Munroe WPTS12 Andrei Iseau (*super-bantamweight*).

April 17: Chris John WPTS12 Daud Yordan (WBA '*super*' featherweight title).

April 19: Muhammad Rachman WKO9 Kwanthai Sithmorseng (WBA *minimumweight* title).

April 22: Breidis Prescott WPTS10 Bayan Jargal (*light-welterweight*).

April 23: Vic Darchinyan WTD5 Yohnny Perez (IBO *bantamweight* title).

April 27: Stephen Smith WPTS12 John Simpson (*British featherweight* title) - David Price WTKO1 Raphael Butler (*heavyweight*).

April 29: Peter Quillin WTKO3 Jesse Brinkley (USBO *super-middleweight* title).

April 30: Ulises Solis WPTS12 Luis Alberto Lazarte (IBF *flyweight* title) - Raul Garcia WTKO3 Rommel Asenjo (WBO *minimumweight* title) - Ramon Hiraes WKO4 Jesus Geles (*vacant WBO light-flyweight* title) - Adrian Hernandez WRTD10 Gilberto Keb Baas (WBC *light-flyweight* title) - Darren Barker WPTS12 Domenico Spada - (*vacant EBU middleweight* title).

May 7: Manny Pacquiao WPTS12 Shane Mosley (WBO *welterweight* title) - Jorge Arce WTKO12 Wilfredo Vasquez Jr (WBO *super-bantamweight* title) - Daniel Geale WPTS12 Sebastian Sylvester (IBF *middleweight* title) - Koki Kameda WRTD11 Daniel Diaz (WBA *bantamweight* title) - Kelly

Pavlik WPTS10 Alfonso Lopez (*super-middleweight*) – Mike Alvarado WRD3 Ray Narh (*light-welterweight*) – Evander Holyfield WTKO10 Brian Nielson (*heavyweight*) – Eduard Gutknecht WTKO8 Danny McIntosh (*EBU light-heavyweight title*) – *Prizefighter* – Heavyweights – (*Quarter Finals*) Mike Perez WPTS3 Kerston Manswell, Gregory Tony WPTS3 Evgeny Orlov, Tye Fields WPTS3 Michael Sprott – Konstantin Airich WPTS3 Lucian Bot – (*Semi Finals*) Mike Perez WTKO1 Gregory Tony, Tye Fields WKO1 Konstantin Airich – (*Final*) Mike Perez WTKO1 Tye Fields.

May 13: Kendall Holt WTKO3 Julio Diaz (*welterweight*) – Sharif Bogere WPTS10 Raymundo Beltran (*lightweight*) – Seth Mitchell WKO1 Evans Quinn (*heavyweight*) – Prince Arron WTKO12 Sam Webb (*British light-middleweight title*).

May 14: Andre Ward WPTS12 Arthur Abraham (*WBA 'super' super-middleweight title*) – Cristian Mijares WPTS12 Carlos Rueda (*IBF super-flyweight title*) – Hugo Ruiz WPTS12 Francisco Arce (*interim WBA bantamweight title*) – Chris Arreola WTKO3 Nagy Aguilera (*heavyweight*) – Shawn Estrada WKO1 Joe Garner (*super-middleweight*) – Dominic Britsch WTKO5 Delray Raines (*super-middleweight*).

May 18: Andy Lee WPTS10 Alex Bunema (*NABA & NABF middleweight titles*).

May 20: Sadam Ali WPTS8 John Revish (*welterweight*).

May 21: Bernard Hopkins WPTS12 Jean Pascal (*WBC and IBO light-heavyweight titles*) – Chad Dawson WPTS12 Adrian Diaconu (*light-heavyweight*) – Tomas Rojas WRD11 Juan Jose Montes (*WBC super-flyweight title*) – Nathan Cleverly WTKO4 Aleksy Kuziemski (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) – George Groves WPTS12 James DeGale (*British super-*

middleweight title) - Frankie Gavin WPTS12 Young Mutley (*welterweight*) - Paul Smith WTKO1 Jozsef Matolcsi (*middleweight*) - Nicky Cook WTKO6 Youssef Al Hamidi (*lightweight*) - Billy Joe Saunders WTKO2 Kevin Hammond (*middleweight*) - Denis Lebedev WKO10 Roy Jones Jr (*cruiserweight*) - Alexander Bakhtin WPTS10 Jose Angel Beranza (*super-bantamweight*) - Nate Campbell WPTS8 Sherzod Nazarov (*welterweight*) - Juan Palacios WPTS12 Sammy Gutierrez (*interim WBA minimumweight title*) - Alfonso Gomez WTKO2 Calvin Green (*welterweight*).

May 27: Chris Arreola WTKO2 Kendrick Releford (*heavyweight*) - Tony Thompson WTKO3 Maurice Harris (*heavyweight*) - Lukas Konecny WPTS12 Hussein Bayram (*EBU light-middleweight title*).

May 28: Jamie McDonnell WPTS12 Nick Otieno (*Commonwealth bantamweight title*).

June 4: Carl Froch WPTS12 Glen Johnson (*WBC super-middleweight title/Super Six semi-final*) - Zsolt Erdei WTKO6 Byron Mitchell (*light-heavyweight*) - Edison Miranda WPTS8 Rayco Saunders (*light-heavyweight*) - Julio Cesar Chavez Jr WPTS12 Sebastian Zbik (*WBC middleweight title*) - Vanes Martirosyan WTKO7 Saul Roman (*vacant WBC silver light-middleweight title*) - Miguel Angel Garcia WKO4 Rafael Guzman (*NABF featherweight title*) - Dakota Stone WTKO6 Christy Martin (*female light-middleweight*) - Marco Antonio Rubio WTKO3 Ricardo Marcelo Ramallo (*middleweight*) - Mikkel Kessler WTKO6 Mehdi Bouadla (*super-middleweight*) - Thomas Oosthuizen WPTS12 William Gare (*IBO super-middleweight title*) - Francois Botha WTKO6 Flo Simba (*heavyweight*) - Cedric Boswell WPTS10 Kertson Manswell (*heavyweight*) - Richard Hall WTKO2 O'Neil Bell (*cruiserweight*) - Johnny Tapia WPTS8 Mauricio Pastrana (*lightweight*).

June 10: Juan Carlos Reveco WKO2 Jean Piero Perez (*interim WBA flyweight title*) - Lateef Kayode WPTS10 Matt Godfrey (*cruiserweight*) - Thomas Dulorme WPTS10 DeMarcus Corley (*welterweight*).

June 11: Omar Narvaez WPTS12 Williams Urina (*WBO super-flyweight title*) - Austin Trout WPTS12 David Lopez (*WBA light-middleweight title*) - David Price WTKO2 Tom Dallas (*heavyweight*) - Chris Edwards WPTS12 Paul Edwards (*British flyweight title*) - Derry Mathews WKO1 George Watson (*lightweight*).

June 17: Anselmo Moreno WTKO8 Lorenzo Parra (*WBA 'super' bantamweight title*) - Gennady Golovkin WTKO10 Kassim Ouma (*WBA middleweight title*) - Grady Brewer WTKO4 Fernando Guerrero (*vacant NABF light-middleweight title*) - Karim Mayfield WTKO10 Steve Forbes (*welterweight*) - Carlos Baldomir WPTS10 Eduardo Flores (*middleweight*).

June 18: Saul Alvarez WTKO12 Ryan Rhodes (*WBC light-middleweight title*) - Adrien Broner WTKO1 Jason Litzau (*super-featherweight*) - Giovani Segura WTKO1 Eddy Zuniga (*super-flyweight*) - Gary Buckland WPTS6 Jose Roberto Gonzalez (*super-featherweight*) - Martin Murray WRD5 Nick Blackwell (*British & Commonwealth middleweight titles*) - Anthony Crolla WTKO1 Herve De Luca (*lightweight*) - Choi Tsevenpurev WPTS10 Jackson Asiku (*featherweight*).

June 24: James Kirkland WKO1 Dennis Sharpe (*middleweight*) - Brian Vera WKO8 Eloy Suarez (*middleweight*).

June 25: Devon Alexander WPTS10 Lucas Matthyse (*light-welterweight*) - Cornelius Bundrage WPTS12 Sechew Powell (*IBF light-middleweight title*) - Tavoris Cloud WTKO8 Yusaf

Mack (*IBF light-heavyweight title*) - Bermene Stiverne WTKO10 Ray Austin (*WBC heavyweight title eliminator*) - Cory Spinks WPTS10 Shakir Ashanti (*light-middleweight*) - Felix Sturm WPTS12 Matthew Macklin (*WBA 'super' middleweight title*) - Manuel Charr WTKO7 Danny Williams (*heavyweight*) - Humberto Soto WTD11 Motoki Sasaki (*WBC lightweight title*) - Roberto Ortiz WTKO4 Antonio Lozada Jr. (*WBC silver light-welterweight title*) - Mike Jones WTKO2 Raul Munoz (*welterweight*) - Daniele Petrucci DTD8 Leonard Bundu (*European welterweight title*) - Fernando Montiel WRTD3 Nehomar Cermeno (*super-bantamweight*) - Kell Brook WPTS12 Lovemore N'dou (*welterweight*) - Robin Reid WTKO4 Wayne Reed (*super-middleweight*).

July 1: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WPTS12 Takuya Kogawa (*WBC flyweight title*).

July 2: Wladimir Klitschko WPTS12 David Haye (*WBO, IBF, IBO and WBA heavyweight titles*) - Hernan Marquez WKO3 Edrin Dapudong (*WBA flyweight title*) - Jonathan Barros WPTS12 Celestine Caballero (*WBA featherweight title*) - Anthony Dirrell WTKO5 Dante Craig (*super-middleweight*).

July 8: Jessie Vargas WKO2 Walter Estrada (*light-welterweight*) - Daiki Kameda WKO2 Chatchai Monthon Gym (*bantamweight*).

July 9: Brandon Rios WTKO3 Urbano Antillon (*WBA lightweight title*) - Carlos Molina WPTS10 Kermit Cintron (*light-middleweight*) - Paul Williams WPTS12 Erislandy Lara (*light-middleweight*) - Rico Ramos WKO7 Akifumi Shimoda (*WBA super-bantamweight title*) - Jhonny Gonzalez WTKO4 Tomas Villa (*WBC featherweight title*) - Chris Arreola WPTS10 Friday Ahunanya (*heavyweight*) - Lucian Bute WTKO4 Jean-Paul Mendy (*IBF super-middleweight title*) -

Hugo Cazares WKO3 Arturo Badillo (*WBA super-flyweight title*).

July 14: Ismael El Massoudi WTKO12 Souleymane M'baye (*interim WBA welterweight title*) - Lee Haskins WPTS12 Mohamed Bouleghcha (*WBA Intercontinental bantamweight title*).

July 15: Lanardo Tyner WPTS10 Vivian Harris (*welterweight*) - Diego Magdaleno WPTS10 Alejandro Perez (*super-featherweight*) - Pawel Wolak DPTS10 Delvin Rodriguez (*light-middleweight*).

July 16: Marco Huck WKO10 Hugo Garay (*WBO cruiserweight title*) - Brian Vitoria WPTS12 Julio Cesar Miranda (*WBO flyweight title*) - Juan Manuel Marquez WKO1 Likar Ramos (*light-welterweight*) - Rafael Marquez WRTD6 Eusebio Osejo (*featherweight*) - Roman Gonzalez WTKO7 Omar Salado (*WBA light-flyweight title*) - Gilberto Ramirez Sanchez WTKO2 Oney Valdez (*middleweight*) - Ricky Burns WTKO1 Nicky Cook (*WBO super-featherweight title*) - Kevin Mitchell WTKO8 John Murray (*lightweight*) - Tony Bellew WPTS12 Ovill McKenzie (*British and Commonwealth light-heavyweight titles*) - Frankie Gavin WPTS12 Curtis Woodhouse (*welterweight*) - Rocky Fielding WPTS6 Jamie Ambler (*super-middleweight*) - Callum Johnson WPTS4 Lee Duncan (*light-heavyweight*) - Joe Selkirk WTKO1 Terry Carruthers (*light-middleweight*) - Lee Purdy WTKO5 Craig Watson (*British welterweight title*) - Denton Vassell WPTS6 Ronnie McField (*welterweight*).

July 20: Antonio Tarver WRTD9 Danny Green (*IBO light-heavyweight title*).

July 22: Anthony Dirrell WKO2 Kevin Engel (*super-middleweight*) - Aaron Martinez WTD8 Joseph Elegele (*welterweight*).

July 23: Amir Khan WKO5 Zab Judah (*WBA& IBF light-welterweight titles*) - Peter Quillin WRD5 Jason LeHoullier (*super-middleweight*) - Orlando Salido WTKO11 Kenichi Yamaguchi (*WBO featherweight title*) - Eduardo Escobedo WKO2 Joksan Hernandez (*IBF featherweight title eliminator*) - Tyson Fury WPTS12 Dereck Chisora (*British and Commonwealth heavyweight titles*) - Ashley Theophane WKO10 Jason Cook (*British light-welterweight title*) - James Kirkland WTKO2 Alexis Hloros (*middleweight*) - Gary Russell Jr. WPTS8 Eric Estrada (*featherweight*) - BJ Flores WRD5 Nicholas Iannuzzi (*cruiserweight*) - Scott Quigg WTKO7 Franklin Varela (*WBA super-bantamweight title eliminator*) - Gary Sykes WKO3 Valentin Stoychev (*super-featherweight*).

July 29: Billy Dib WPTS12 Jorge Lacierva (*vacant IBF featherweight title*) - Oleydong Sithsamerchai WPTS12 Mark Geraldo (*super-flyweight*) - Mariusz Wach WKO4 Kevin McBride (*heavyweight*) - Lamont Peterson WKO12 Victor Manuel Cayo (*IBF light-welterweight title eliminator*) - Yordanis Despaigne WDQ5 Edison Miranda (*light-heavyweight*) - Beibut Shumenov WTKO9 Danny Santiago (*WBA light-heavyweight title*).

July 30: Brian Magee WPTS12 Jaime Barboza (*interim WBA super-middleweight title*) - Zaurbek Baysangurov WKO1 Mike Miranda (*interim WBO light-middleweight title*) - Pornsawan Porpramook WPTS12 Muhammad Rachman (*WBA minimumweight title*) - Derry Mathews WTKO6 Stephen Jennings (*lightweight*) - Mike Alvarado WPTS10 Gabriel Martinez (*light-welterweight*).

August 4: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WKO1 Pakasit Twins Gym (*flyweight*).

August 5: Ameth Diaz WTKO5 Leonardo Zappavigna (*IBF lightweight title eliminator*) - Vernon Paris WTKO7 Tim Coleman (*light-welterweight*).

August 6: Luis Ramon Campas WTKO3 Marcelo Rodriguez (*middleweight*) - Ryol Li Lee WTKO5 Rikiya Fukuhara (*featherweight*).

August 9: Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym WKO4 Mohammed Metualy (*super-bantamweight*) Kwanthai Sithmorseng WPTS6 Jack Amisa (*light-flyweight*).

August 10: Kazuto Ioka WPTS12 Juan Hernandez (*WBC minimumweight title*).

August 11: Luis Concepcion WKO1 Manuel Vargas (*flyweight*).

August 12: Kermit Cintron WPTS10 Antwone Smith (*light-middleweight*) - Patrick Hyland WTKO4 Fabrizio Trotta (*featherweight*).

August 13: Abner Mares WPTS12 Joseph Agbeko (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Eric Morel WTKO4 Daniel Queveda (*bantamweight*) - Michael Katsidis WKO3 Michael Lozada (*light-welterweight*) - Monte Barrett WPTS12 David Tua (*heavyweight*) - Alejandro Lopez WPTS12 Teon Kennedy (*super-bantamweight*).

August 19: Suriyan Sor Rungvisai WPTS12 Tomas Rojas (*WBC super-flyweight title*) - Matthew Hatton WPTS12 Andrei Abramenka (*welterweight*) - Henry Lundy WTKO6 David Diaz (*lightweight*) - Demetrius Andrade WPTS10

Grady Brewer (*light-middleweight*) - Cesar Seda WPTS10 Jose Silveira (*bantamweight*).

August 20: Fernando Montiel WKO3 Alvaro Perez (*super-bantamweight*) - Alfredo Angulo WKO1 Joseph Gomez (*light-middleweight*) - Oliver McCall WPTS10 Damian Wills (*heavyweight*).

August 26: Vyachelsav Senchenko WTKO6 Marco Avendano (*WBA welterweight title*) - Karoly Balzsay WPTS12 Stanyslav Kashtano (*vacant WBA super-middleweight title*).

August 27: Alexander Povetkin WPTS12 Ruslan Chagaev (*WBA heavyweight title*) - Robert Helenius WTKO9 Sergei Liakhovich (*heavyweight*) - Dominik Britsch WPTS8 Steve Bendall (*middleweight*) - Ulises Solis WPTS12 Jether Oliva (*IBF light-flyweight title*) - Moises Fuentes WPTS12 Raul Garcia (*WBO minimumweight title*) - Alex Arthur WTKO4 Aleksander Vakh tangashvili (*lightweight*) - Kenny Anderson WKO4 Lee Duncan (*super-middleweight*).

August 31: Daniel Geale WPTS12 Eromosele Albert (*IBF middleweight title*) - Koki Kameda WPTS12 David De la Mora (*WBA bantamweight title*) - Tomonobu Shimizu WPTS12 Hugo Cazares (*WBA super-flyweight title*).

September 2: Luis Lazarte WPTS12 Nerys Espinoza (*IBF light-flyweight title eliminator*).

September 3: Andre Berto WRTD5 Jan Zaveck (*IBF welterweight title*) - Thomas Oosthuizen WPTS12 Aaron Pryor Jr. (*IBO super-middleweight title*) - Gary Russell Jr. WPTS8 Leonilo Miranda (*featherweight*) - Vic Darchinyan WPTS12 Evans Mbamba (*IBO bantamweight title*) - Marco Antonio Rubio WTKO5 Mohammed Akrong (*middleweight*).

- Humberto Soto TKO2 Jose Alfaro (*light-welterweight*) - Jamie McDonnell WPTS12 Stuart Hall (*British, Commonwealth and European bantamweight titles*).

September 9: Lateef Kayode WPTS10 Felix Cora Jr. (*cruiserweight*).

September 10: Vitali Klitschko WTKO10 Tomasz Adamek (*WBC heavyweight title*) - Juan Carlos Salgado WPTS12 Argenis Mendez (*IBF super-featherweight title*) - Cristian Mijares WKO3 Jonathan Perez (*super-bantamweight*) - Paul McCloskey WPTS12 Breidis Prescott (*WBA light-welterweight title eliminator*) - Yuriorkis Gamboa WTD8 Daniel Ponce de Leon (*featherweight*) - Ola Afolabi WPTS8 Lukasz Rusiewicz (*cruiserweight*) - Carl Frampton WTKO4 Mark Quon (*Commonwealth super-bantamweight title*).

September 15: Jhonny Gonzalez WTKO2 Rogers Mtagwa (*WBC featherweight title*) - Julio Cesar Miranda WTKO3 Luis Carlos Leon (*flyweight*) - *Prizefighter* - The Light-Middleweights II - (*Quarter Finals*) Robert Lloyd-Taylor WPTS3 Takaloo, Peter Vaughan WPTS3 Wayne Goddard, Kris Agyei-Dua WPTS3 Jeff Thomas, Nick Quigley WPTS3 Steve Harkin - (*Semi Finals*) Robert Lloyd-Taylor WTKO3 Peter Vaughan, Nick Quigley WPTS3 Kris Agyei-Dua - (*Final*) Robert Lloyd-Taylor WPTS3 Nick Quigley.

September 16: Seth Mitchell WTKO3 Hector Ferreyro (*heavyweight*).

September 17: Floyd Mayweather WKO4 Victor Ortiz (*WBC welterweight title*) - Saul Alvarez WTKO6 Alfonso Gomez (*WBC light-middleweight title*) - Erik Morales WRTD10 Pablo Cesar Cano (*vacant WBC light-welterweight title*) - Jessie Vargas WPTS10 Josesito Lopez (*light-welterweight*) - Carson Jones WRTD7 Said Ouali

(welterweight) - Anthony Crolla WPTS8 Juan Montiel
(lightweight) - Elio Rojas WTKO8 Arturo Gomez *(super-featherweight)* - Tyson Fury WTKO5 Nicolai Firtha
(heavyweight) - Junior Witter WPTS6 Arvydaz Trizno
(welterweight) - Willie Casey WTKO8 Daniel Sassou *(super-bantamweight)* - Lee Selby WTKO8 Stephen Smith *(British and Commonwealth featherweight titles)* - Paul Smith WTKO1 Paul Samuels *(super-middleweight)*.

September 23: Marcos Maidana WTKO4 Petr Petrov *(WBA light-welterweight title)* - Denis Shafikov WRTD9 Giuseppe Lauri *(European light-welterweight title)*

September 24: Jorge Arce WKO4 Simphiwe Nongqayi *(WBO super-bantamweight title)* - Victor Terrazas WTKO4 Eduardo Becerril *(featherweight)* - Adrian Hernandez WKO2 Gideon Buthelezi *(WBC light-flyweight title and IBO light-flyweight titles)* - Alexander Dimitrenko WPTS12 Michael Sprott *(European heavyweight title)* - Denis Boytsov WTKO6 Matthew Greer *(heavyweight)* - Darnell Wilson WPTS10 Juan Carlos Gomez *(heavyweight)* - Vitali Tajbert WPTS6 Andrey Kostin *(lightweight)* - Sylvester Lopez WTKO8 Oscar Ibarra *(WBC super-flyweight title eliminator)* - Daiki Kameda WKO1 Raul Hidalgo *(super-flyweight)* - Paulus Moses WPTS10 Sidney Siqueira *(lightweight)* - Chris van Heerden WPTS12 Kaizer Mabuza *(IBO welterweight title)* - Hekkie Budler WPTS12 Michael Landero *(IBO minimumweight title)* - Gary Buckland WPTS12 Gary Sykes *(British super-featherweight title)* - Rendall Munroe WPTS10 Ryuta Miyagi *(super-bantamweight)*.

September 25: Dmitry Pirog WRTD10 Gennady Martirosyan *(WBO middleweight title)* - Khabib Allakhverdiev WTD6 Nate Campbell *(light-welterweight)*.

September 30: Ajose Olusegun WPTS12 Ali Chebah (*WBC light-welterweight title eliminator*) - Darley Perez WRD6 Oscar Meza (*lightweight*) - Liam Walsh WRD10 Paul Appleby (*Commonwealth super-featherweight title*).

October 1: Sergio Martinez WTKO11 Darren Barker (*middleweight*) - Andy Lee WPTS10 Bryan Vera (*middleweight*) - Isaac Chilemba WKO2 Jameson Bostic (*light-heavyweight*) - Magomed Abdulusalamov WTKO1 Kevin Burnett (*heavyweight*) - Roman Gonzalez WKO2 Omar Soto (*WBA light-flyweight title*) - Toshiaki Nishioka WPTS12 Rafael Marquez (*WBC super-bantamweight title*) - Yoshihiro Kamegai WTKO6 Hector Munoz (*welterweight*) - Yoan Pablo Hernandez WTD6 Steve Cunningham (*IBF cruiserweight title*) - Grzegorz Proksa WRD3 Sebastian Sylvester (*European middleweight title*) - Juan Manuel Lopez WTKO2 Mike Oliver (*featherweight*) - Roman Martinez WTKO6 Daniel Attah (*super-featherweight*) - Jonathan Oquendo WKO2 Jose Luis Araiza (*WBO super-bantamweight title eliminator*) - Gavin Rees DPTS4 Derry Mathews (*European lightweight title*) - Karim Mayfield WPTS10 Patrick Lopez (*light-welterweight*).

October 7: Sharif Bogere WKO3 Francisco Contreras (*lightweight*) - Osumanu Adama WTKO9 Robert Karmazin (*IBF middleweight title eliminator*).

October 8: Rodrigo Guerrero WTD6 Raul Martinez (*vacant IBF super-flyweight title*) - Donnie Nietes WPTS12 Ramon Hiraes (*WBO light-flyweight title*) - Kell Brook WTKO6 Rafal Jackiewicz (*WBA welterweight title eliminator*).

October 12: *Prizefighter* - The super-flyweights - (*Quarter Finals*) Lee Haskins WPTS3 Terry Broadbent, Ryan Farrag WPTS3 Craig Lyon, Don Broadhurst WPTS3 Usman Ahmed, Mike Robinson WPTS3 Nathan Reeve - (*Semi*

Finals) Lee Haskins WPTS3 Ryan Farrag, Don Broadhurst WPTS3 Mike Robinson – (*Final*) Lee Haskins WPTS3 Don Broadhurst.

October 14: Celestino Caballero WPTS12 Jonathan Barros (*WBA featherweight title*) – Cesar Crenz WKO5 Hugo Garay (*cruiserweight*) – Prawet Singwancha WPTS12 Kosuke Iwashita (*light-welterweight*).

October 15: Chad Dawson NC2 Bernard Hopkins (*WBC light-heavyweight title*) – Antonio DeMarco WTKO11 Jorge Linares (*WBC lightweight title*) – Paulie Malignaggi WPTS10 Orlando Lora (*welterweight*) – Danny Garcia WPTS12 Kendall Holt (*WBC and IBF light-welterweight semi-final eliminator*) – Freddy Hernandez WPTS10 Luis Collazo (*light-middleweight*) – Nathan Cleverly WPTS12 Tony Bellew (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) – James DeGale WPTS12 Piotr Wilczewski (*European super-middleweight title*) – Hugo Ruiz WTKO4 Francisco Arce (*interim WBA bantamweight title*) – Daniel Rosas DPTS12 Jose Cabrera (*interim WBO super-flyweight title*) – Kimbo Slice WKO1 Tay Bledsoe (*heavyweight*).

October 19: Anthony Mundine WPTS12 Rigoberto Alvarez (*interim WBA light-middleweight title*).

October 21: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam WPTS12 Edgar Sosa (*WBC flyweight title*).

October 22: Nonito Donaire WPTS12 Omar Narvaez (*WBC and WBO bantamweight titles*) – Mikey Garcia WTKO4 JC Martinez (*featherweight*) – Marco Huck WTKO6 Rogelio Rossi (*WBO cruiserweight title*) – Alberto Mosquera DPTS12 Brunet Zamora (*interim WBA light-welterweight title*) – Richard Abril WPTS12 Miguel Acosta (*interim WBA lightweight title*) – Nehomar Cermeno DPTS8 Chris Avalos

(*super-bantamweight*) - Scott Quigg WRTD7 Jason Booth (*British super-bantamweight title*) - Karl Place WPTS6 Ivan Godor (*light-welterweight*).

October 24: Akira Yaegashi WTKO10 Pornsawan Porpramook (*WBA minimumweight title*).

October 27: Rodel Mayol WTKO4 Ernie Marquez (*flyweight*) - Moruti Mthalane WTKO7 Andrea Sarritzu (*IBF flyweight title*).

October 29: Hernan Marquez WTKO1 Luis Concepcion (*WBA flyweight title*) - Takalani Ndlovu WPTS12 Giovanni Caro (*IBF super-bantamweight title*) - Ivan Calderon WPTS10 Felipe Rivas (*minimumweight*) - Wilfredo Vasquez Jr WTKO3 Roberto Leyva (*super-bantamweight*) - Vanes Martirosyan WPTS10 Richard Gutierrez (*light-middleweight*) - Edmund DeClou WPTS12 Howard Eastman (*vacant Guyanese middleweight title*) - *Prizefighter* - featherweights - (*Quarter Finals*) Choi Tseveenpurev WTKO2 Lee Glover, Rhys Roberts WPTS3 Ian Bailey, Troy James WPTS3 Barrington Brown, George Jupp WTKO2 Lee Jennings - (*Semi Finals*) Choi Tseveenpurev WPTS3 George Jupp, Rhys Roberts WPTS3 Troy James - (*Final*) Choi Tseveenpurev WPTS3 Rhys Roberts.

November 4: Suriyan Sor Rungvisai WPTS12 Nobuo Nashiro (*WBC super-flyweight title*) - Denis Lebedev WPTS12 James Toney (*interim WBA light-heavyweight title*) Alexander Bakhtin WPTS10 Luis Melendez (*super-bantamweight*) - Sergio Mora WTKO7 Jose Flores (*middleweight*).

November 5: Lucian Bute WPTS12 Glen Johnson (*IBF super-middleweight title*) - Ricky Burns WPTS12 Michael Katsidis (*interim WBO lightweight title*) - George Groves WKO2 Paul

Smith (*British and Commonwealth super-middleweight titles*) - Steve Molitor WPTS10 Sebastien Gauthier (*super-bantamweight*) - Allan Green WPTS10 Sebastien Demers (*super-middleweight*) - Guillermo Jones WTKO6 Michael Marrone (*WBA cruiserweight title*) - James Kirkland WTKO6 Alfredo Angulo (*WBC light-middleweight title eliminator*) - Peter Quillin WTKO6 Craig McEwan (*super-middleweight*) - Tomas Rojas WTKO2 Feliciano Ledesma (*bantamweight*) - Chris Arreola WTKO3 Raphael Butler (*heavyweight*).

November 6: Takahiro Aoh WPTS12 Devis Boschiero (*WBC super-featherweight title*) - Shinsuke Yamanaka WTKO11 Christian Esquivel (*WBC bantamweight title*) - Toshiyuki Igarashi WPTS12 Wilbert Uicab (*WBC flyweight title eliminator*).

November 9: Colin Lynes WPTS12 Lee Purdy (*British welterweight title*) - Mike Perez WPTS8 Zack Page (*heavyweight*) - John Ryder WTKO2 Luke Osman (*middleweight*).

November 11: Austin Trout WTKO5 Frank LoPorto (*WBA light-middleweight title*) - Mercito Gesta WPTS10 Ricardo Dominguez (*lightweight*) - Diego Magdaleno WPTS10 Emmanuel Lucero (*super-featherweight*) - Dereck Chisora WPTS6 Remigijus Ziausys (*heavyweight*).

November 12: Manny Pacquiao WPTS12 Juan Manuel Marquez (*WBO welterweight title*) - Timothy Bradley WTKO8 Joel Casamayor (*WBO light-welterweight title*) - Mike Alvarado WTKO10 Breidis Prescott (*light-welterweight*) - Tyson Fury WTKO3 Neven Pajkic (*Commonwealth heavyweight title*) - Denton Vassell WPTS12 Samuel Colomban (*Commonwealth welterweight title*) - Chris Eubank Jnr WTKO4 Kirilas Psonko (*middleweight*) - Dimitri Sartison WPTS8 Affif Belghecham (*super-middleweight*).

November 18: Joan Guzman WKO1 Florencio Castellano (*welterweight*) – Sam Soliman WPTS12 Eromosele Albert (*IBF middleweight title eliminator*) – Enzo Maccarinelli WTKO1 Gyorgi Marosi (*light-heavyweight*).

November 19: Julio Cesar Chavez Jr WTKO5 Peter Manfredo Jr (*WBC middleweight title*) – Billy Dib WKO1 Alberto Servidei (*IBF featherweight title*) – Jose Rodriguez WPTS12 Nethra Sasiprapa (*interim WBA light-flyweight title*) – Victor Terrazas WPTS12 Fernando Montiel (*super-bantamweight*) – Joshua Clottey WTKO2 Calvin Green (*light-middleweight*) – Hugo Cazares WKO7 Jhunriel Ramonal (*bantamweight*) – Michael Grant WKO12 Francois Botha (*heavyweight*).

November 23: Thomas Oosthuizen WTKO11 Francisco Sierra (*IBO super-middleweight title*).

November 25: Anthony Crolla WPTS12 Willie Limond (*British lightweight title*).

November 26: Saul Alvarez WTKO5 Kermit Cintron (*WBC light-middleweight title*) – Nobuhiro Ishida WTKO1 Jose Luis Cruz (*middleweight*) – Gilberto Ramirez Sanchez WTKO4 Samuel Miller (*middleweight*) – Adrien Broner WKO3 Vicente Rodriguez (*vacant WBO super-featherweight title*) – Gary Russell Jr. WKO1 Heriberto Ruiz (*super-bantamweight*) – Jorge Arce WPTS12 Angky Angkotta (*vacant WBO bantamweight title*) – Humberto Soto WKO4 Adailton De Jesus (*light-welterweight*) – Selcuk Aydin WPTS12 Ionut (JoJo) Dan Ion (*welterweight*) – Ryan Rhodes WPTS8 Siarhei Khomitski (*light-middleweight*).

November 30: Krzysztof Wlodarczyk WTKO11 Danny Green (*WBC cruiserweight title*) - Chris John WPTS12 Stanyslav Merdov (*WBA 'super' featherweight title*).

December 2: Felix Sturm DPTS12 Martin Murray (*WBA middleweight title*) - Anthony Dirrell WTKO4 Renan St Juste (*WBC super-middleweight title eliminator*) - Leif Larson WKO2 Danny Williams (*heavyweight*).

December 3: Miguel Cotto WTKO10 Antonio Margarito (*WBA 'super' light-middleweight title*) - Brandon Rios WTKO11 John Murray (*vacant WBA lightweight title. Rios failed to make weight so only Murray eligible to win title.*) - Mike Jones WPTS12 Sebastian Lujan (*IBF welterweight title eliminator*) - Delvin Rodriguez WPTS10 Pawel Wolak (*light-middleweight*) - Abner Mares WPTS12 Joseph Agbeko (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Anselmo Moreno WPTS12 Vic Darchinyan (*WBA and IBO bantamweight titles*) - Jhonny Gonzalez WTKO2 Roinet Caballero (*WBC featherweight title*) - Alexander Povetkin WTKO8 Cedric Boswell (*WBA heavyweight title*) - Robert Helenius WPTS12 Dereck Chisora (*European heavyweight title*) - Akifumi Shimoda WPTS10 Jonel Alibio (*super-bantamweight*) - Brian Rose WPTS12 Prince Arron (*British light-middleweight title*).

December 5: Ruslan Provodnikov WPTS12 DeMarcus Corley (*light-welterweight*).

December 6: Oleydong Sithsamerchai WPTS12 Hyobu Nakagama (*super-flyweight*).

December 7: Tepparith Kokietygym WPTS12 Daiki Kameda (*vacant WBA super-flyweight title*) - Koki Kameda WKO4 Mario Macias (*WBA bantamweight title*).

December 9: Gennady Golovkin WKO1 Lajuan Simon (*WBA middleweight title*) - Lucas Matthyse WKO4 Sergio Priotti (*light-welterweight*).

December 10: Lamont Peterson WPTS12 Amir Khan (*WBA and IBF light-welterweight titles*) - Seth Mitchell WTKO2 Timur Ibragimov (*heavyweight*) - Anthony Peterson WPTS8 Daniel Attah (*lightweight*) - Juan Carlos Salgado NC2 Miguel Beltran Jr. (*IBF super-featherweight title*) - Liborio Solis WPTS12 Jose Salgado (*interim WBA super-flyweight title*) - Johan Perez WTKO4 Fernando Castaneda (*interim WBA light-welterweight title*) - Roy Jones Jr. WPTS10 Max Alexander (*cruiserweight*) - Brian Vilorio WTKO8 Giovanni Segura (*WBO flyweight title*) - Martin Honorio WPTS12 Fahsai Sakkreerin (*IBF super-featherweight title eliminator*) - Ashley Theophane WTKO11 Ben Murphy (*British light-welterweight title*) - Chris Edwards WPTS12 Shinnny Bayaar (*British flyweight title*).

December 14: Lee Selby WTKO5 John Simpson (*British and Commonwealth featherweight titles*).

December 16: Marco Antonio Rubio WTKO5 Matt Vanda (*middleweight*).

December 17: Andre Ward WPTS12 Carl Froch (*WBA and WBC super-middleweight titles and Showtime Super Six Final*) - Kell Brook WTKO5 Luis Galarza (*welterweight*) - Edison Miranda WTKO5 Kariz Kariuki (*light-heavyweight*) - Orlando Salido WTKO8 Weng Haya (*WBO featherweight title*) - Antonio Decarie WPTS12 Victor Lupo (*welterweight*).

December 22: Michael Medina WPTS10 Grady Brewer (*light-middleweight*) - Pongsaklek Wonjongkam NC1 Hirofumi Mukai (*WBC flyweight title*) - Kompayak

Porpramook WKO10 Adrian Hernandez (*WBC light-flyweight title*).

December 30: Jermain Taylor WTKO8 Jessie Nicklow (*middleweight*) - Andre Dirrell WTKO2 Darryl Cunningham (*super-middleweight*) - Mike Perez WPTS10 Friday Ahunanya (*heavyweight*).

December 31: Takashi Uchiyama WTKO11 Jorge Solis (*WBA super-featherweight title*) - Celestino Caballero WPTS12 Satoshi Hosono (*WBA featherweight title*) - Kazuto Ioka WTKO1 Yodgoen Chalermchai (*WBC minimumweight title*) - Nobuo Nashiro WKO2 Petch Twins Gym (*bantamweight*).

Domestic Results 2011

January 30 - CityWest Hotel, Dublin (Promoters: Dolphil Promotions).

Super-middleweight: Anthony Fitzgerald (Dublin) beat Lee Murtagh (Belfast & Leeds) RSF 7 - Irish title defence by Fitzgerald.

Super-featherweight: Finbarr Eade (Westport) beat Csaba Toth (Hungary) RSF 3.

Super-middleweight: JJ McDonagh (Mullingar) beat Phillip Townley (Belfast) PTS 8.

Light-welterweight: Oisín Fagan (Dublin) beat Karoly Lakatos (Hungary) PTS 6.

Cruiserweight: Ian Tims (Dublin) beat Viktor Szalai (Hungary) RSF 2.

Light-heavyweight: Paddy McDonagh (Mullingar) beat Titusz Szabo (Hungary) PTS 6.

Lightweight: Paul Griffin (Dublin) beat Janos Vass (Hungary) RSF 1.

Super-middleweight: Darren Cruise (Castlerea) beat Mickey Doherty (Carndonagh) PTS 4.

Light-welterweight: Levan Ghvamichava (Georgia & Cork) beat Konstantins Sakara (Latvia) RSF 2.

Super-middleweight: Robert Long (Dublin) beat James Tucker (Doncaster) PTS 4.

March 19 - CityWest Convention Centre, Dublin (Promoters: Dolphil Promotions & Nowhere 2 Hyde).

Super-bantamweight: Guillermo Rigondeaux (Cuba & Miami) beat Willie Casey (Limerick) RSF 1 - Interim WBA super-bantamweight title defence by Rigondeaux.

Middleweight: Anthony Fitzgerald (Dublin) beat Affif Belghecham (France) RSF 4 - for vacant EBA title.

Cruiserweight: Ian Tims (Dublin) beat Michael Sweeney (Ballinrobe) PTS 10 - for vacant Irish title.

Welterweight: Mark Heffron (Manchester) beat David Pulido (Spain) RSF 3.

Light-heavyweight: Paddy McDonagh (Mullingar) beat Jevgenijs Andrejevs (Latvia) PTS 6.

Light-welterweight: Levan Ghvamichava (Georgia & Cork) beat Mihaita Mutu (Romania & France) PTS 4.

Heavyweight: Paddy Ward (Galway) beat Igoris Borucha (Lithuania) PTS 4.

Women's Super-bantamweight: Christina McMahon (Carrickmacross) beat Julija Cvetkova (Latvia).

Women's lightweight (amateur): Katie Taylor (Bray) beat Maria del Carmen Moreno (Spain) PTS 4.

May 28 - Holiday Inn, Belfast (Promoters: Belfast Promotions).

Flyweight: Luke Wilton (Belfast) beat Salim Salimov (Bulgaria) RSF 3.

Bantamweight: Stevie Quinn Jnr (Belfast) beat Delroy Spencer (Wolverhampton) PTS 6

Light-welterweight: Levan Ghvamichava (Georgia & Cork) beat Karoly Lakatos (Hungary) RSF 1.

Light-middleweight: Gerard Healy (Belfast) beat Aaron Fox (Westbury) PTS 4.

Lightweight: Radoslav Mitev (Bulgaria) beat Michael Harvey (Belfast) PTS 4.

Light-welterweight: Tony Nellins (Belfast) beat Dan Carr (Trowbridge) PTS 4.

25 June - National Stadium, Dublin (Promoter: Paddy Hyland).

Featherweight: Patrick Hyland (Dublin) beat Philippe Frenois (France) PTS 12 - for vacant WBF title.

Middleweight: Gary O'Sullivan (Cork) beat Robert Long (Dublin) RSF 1 - Irish title defence by O'Sullivan.

Super-middleweight: Ciaran Healy (Belfast) beat Brendan Fitzpatrick (Dublin) KO 1.

Featherweight: Paul Hyland (Dublin) beat Hyusein Hyuseinov (Bulgaria) RTD 5.

Light-welterweight: Stephen Ormond (Dublin) beat Valentin Stoychev (Bulgaria) RSF 5.

Lightweight: Finbarr Eade (Westport) beat Radoslav Mitev (Bulgaria) PTS 6.

Middleweight: Eddie Hyland (Dublin) beat Asen Vasilev (Bulgaria) RSF 3.

June 25 - Leisure Centre, Craigavon (Promoter: Dave Murphy).

Welterweight: Stephen Haughian (Lisburn) beat Arek Malek (Poland) PTS 6.

Super-flyweight: Jamie Conlan (Belfast) beat Delroy Spencer (Wolverhampton) PTS 6.

Middleweight: Eamon O'Kane (Dungiven) beat Tommy Tolan (Belfast) RTD 5.

Light-welterweight: Bobby George (Bulgaria & Luton) beat Billy Smith (Worcester) PTS 6.

Lightweight: Mark Ginley (Belfast) beat Robin Deakin (Crawley) PTS 6.

Lightweight: Damian Taggart (Omagh) beat Giuseppe Daprato (Stranraer) PTS 4.

Featherweight: Marc McCullough (Belfast) beat Eddie Nesbitt (Belfast) RSF 2.

August 12 - Royal Theatre, Castlebar (Promoter: Brian Peters).

Light-middleweight: Henry Coyle (Geesala) beat Elio Cotena (Italy) RTD 5 - for vacant WBF title.

Super-featherweight: Mickey Coveney (London) beat Finbarr Eade (Westport) PTS - for vacant Irish title.

Featherweight: Patrick Hyland (Dublin) beat Fabrizio Trotta (Italy) RSF 4.

Light-heavyweight: Michael Sweeney (Ballinrobe) beat John Waldron (Ballyhaunis) RTD 3.

Super-bantamweight: Paul Hyland (Dublin) beat Dai Davies (Merthyr Tydfil) PTS 6.

Super-middleweight: Lee Murtagh (Belfast & Leeds) beat Darren Cruise (Castlereagh) PTS 4.

September 10 - Odyssey Arena, Belfast (Promoter: Eddie Hearn, Matchroom).

Light-welterweight: Paul McCloskey (Dungiven) beat Breidis Prescott (Colombia) PTS 12 - WBA title eliminator.

Super-bantamweight: Carl Frampton (Belfast) beat Mark Quon (Australia) RSF 4 - vacant Commonwealth title.

Middleweight: Eamon O'Kane (Dungiven) beat Joe Rea (Ballymena) PTS 8.

Flyweight: Luke Wilton (Belfast) beat Arpad Vass PTS 6.

Lightweight: Sid Razak (Birmingham) beat Damian Taggart (Omagh) RSF 2.

Middleweight: Liam Hutchinson (Australia & Belfast) beat Aaron Fox (Wiltshire) PTS 4

Super-featherweight: Dai Davies (Merthyr Tydfil) beat Marc McCullough (Belfast) PTS 4.

September 17 - King's Hall, Belfast (Promoter: Mick Hennessy, Hennessy Sports).

Heavyweight: Tyson Fury (Manchester) beat Nicolai Firtha (Akron, Ohio) RSF 5.

Super-bantamweight: Willie Casey (Limerick) beat Daniel Kodjo Sassou (Togo & France) RSF 8.

Welterweight: Junior Witter (Bradford) beat Arvydas Trizno (Lithuania) PTS 6.

Featherweight: Kid Galahad (Sheffield) beat Paul Griffin (Dublin) RSF 1.

Light-middleweight: Phill Fury (Manchester) beat Richard Troupe (Hull) PTS 6.

Super-featherweight: Michael McLaughlin (Carndonagh) beat Mark Betts (Lanark) RSF 4.

Super-middleweight: Joe Hillerby (Belfast) beat Tommy Tolan (Belfast) PTS 4.

Middleweight: Dee Walsh (Belfast) beat Gerard Healy (Belfast) PTS 4.

Middleweight: Levan Ghvamichava (Georgia & Cork) beat Joe Rea (Ballymena) RTD 1.

Irish Boxers' Records as of December 2011: Compiled and supplied by Gerry Callan

All Irish or Irish based boxers who fought in either 2011 or 2010 are listed here, those who last fought in the latter year are included as fighters may be out of action for some time for a variety of reasons; Martin Lindsay, for instance, didn't fight during 2011 but clearly has no intention of retiring and Brian Magee, to take another example, didn't fight throughout 2009 yet won the European super-middleweight title in January of the following year. John Duddy announced his retirement in January 2011 but is included for reference purposes (Thanks, GC).

Coleman BARRETT

Heavyweight Born: Galway, 10 November, 1982. Based in London.

2003

Dec 11 Marcus Lee, London PTS4

2004

Mar 12 Dave Clarke, Nottingham PTS4

June 2 Terry Morrill, Nottingham PTS6

2005

Mar 3 Valery Semishkur, Durres, Albania PTS6

June 12 Czaba Andras, London RSF1

July 24 Tony Booth, London PTS4

2006

Inactive

2007

Inactive

2008

Inactive

2009

Apr 18 Vlado Szabo, Galway RSF3

June 23 David Ingleby, London PTS6

Oct 2 Scott Gammer, London PTS3

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Oct 2 Carl Baker, London PTS3

(Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Oct 2 Audley Harrison, London L-RSF2

*(Final of Prizefighter tournament)*2010

Feb 13 Colin Kenna, Dublin PTS10

(For vacant Irish heavyweight title)

Sep 11 Remigijus Ziausys, Dublin PTS6

Oct 2 Norbert Sallai, Letterkenny PTS6

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 14 WON: 13 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Tony BATES*Light-welterweight Born: Dublin, 28 February, 1988. Based in Australia.*2011

July 29 Jason MacGura, Homebush PTS4

Aug 28 Matt Bune, Hurstville RSF3

Oct 15 Troy Glover, Campsie RSF2

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Scott BELSHAW

Heavyweight Born: Lisburn, 8 July, 1985. Irish amateur super-heavyweight runner-up 2005 (Cathal McMonagle). Now based in Australia.

2006

Oct 7 Lee Webb, Belfast KO1

Nov 11 Anatoliy Kusenko, Dublin RSF1

Nov 25 Alexander Subin, Belfast RSF2

2007

Jan 26 Makhmund Otazhanov, Dagenham RSF2

Mar 9 Paul King, Dagenham PTS4

June 30 Chris Woollas, Belfast KO1

2008

Jan 26 Aleksandrs Borhovs, Cork RSF3

Mar 7 Daniel Peret, Nottingham L-PTS6

May 31 Edgars Kalnars, Belfast RSF4

July 18 Daniel Perets, Dagenham PTS6

Sep 13 Pavol Polakovic, London PTS8

2009

May 23 Tyson Fury, Watford L-RSF2

Oct 2 Audley Harrison, London L-RSF2

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

2010

Jan 22 Larry Olubamiwo, Brentwood L-RSF1

2011

May 13 Lucas Browne, Flemington, Victoria L-KO2

Oct 19 George Poulivaati, Newcastle, AUS L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 16 WON: 10 DREW: 0 LOST: 6

Ian BOYD*Middleweight Born: Belfast, 4 August, 1990.*2010

Oct 16 Rick Boulter, Northampton L-PTS6

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 0 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Dean BYRNE*Light-welterweight Born: Dublin, 11 September, 1984. Based in Sydney until late 2007, then Los Angeles.*2006

Feb 18 Ronie Oyan, South Windsor RSF2

May 12 Robert Oyan, Sydney PTS6

Aug 4 Robert Oyan, Sydney PTS6

Oct 21 Arnel Porras, Sydney T-PTS5

*(For vacant New South Wales light-welterweight title)*2007

Mar 9 Chris McCullen, Brisbane PTS10

(Australian light-welterweight title challenge)

May 27 Brad Crooke, Sydney PTS10

*(Australian light-welterweight title defence)*2008

May 23 Michaelangelo Lynks, Montebello, California RSF1

Aug 2 Daniel Gonzalez, Tacoma, Washington PTS6

Sep 19 Geoffrey Spruiell, Woodland Hills, California KO2

Dec 20 Francisco Rios Gil, Los Angeles RSF4

2009

May 1 Jose Reynoso, Las Vegas PTS8

2010

May 14 Justo Sanchez, Santa Ynez RSF5

Aug 7 Konstantins Sakara, Dublin RSF4

Dec 10 Sergejs Volodins, Dublin PTS6

2011

Oct 21 Michael Frontin, London PTS8

Oct 28 Frank Haroche Horta, Manchester L-RTD8

FIGHTS: 16 WON: 15 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Willie CASEY

Super-bantamweight Born: Limerick, 20 December, 1981.

2008

Oct 26 Carlos De Jesus, Killarney RSF2

2009

Oct 24 Stoyan Serbezov, Dublin PTS6

Nov 14 Michael O'Gara, Limerick RSF6

2010

Feb 13 Fernando Guevara, Dublin RSF1

Apr 8 Tyson Cave, Toronto RSF8

May 29 Mark Moran, London RSF3

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

May 29 Josh Wale, London PTS3

(Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament)

May 29 Paul McElhinney, London PTS3

(Final of Prizefighter tournament)

June 26 Faycal Messaoudene, Cork RSF5

Aug 7 Emiliano Salvani, Dublin PTS8

Nov 6 Paul Hyland, Limerick RSF4

(For vacant European super-bantamweight title)

2011

Mar 19 Guillermo Rigondeaux, Dublin L-RSF1
 (Interim WBA super-bantamweight title challenge)
 Sep 17 Daniel Kodjo Sassou, Belfast RSF8

FIGHTS: 13 WON: 12 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Alexei 'Acosta' COLLADO

Super-bantamweight Born: Havana, 13 February, 1988. World Junior Championships light-flyweight gold medallist, Agadir, 2006.

2008

Sep 13 Krastan Krastanov, Cork KO2
 Oct 26 Cristian Nicolae, Killarney RSF3

2009

Jan 17 Laurent Ucristinel Balmu, Cork RTD3
 Feb 28 Fikret Remziev, Newcastle KO1
 Apr 25 Sergio Victor Caruso, Cork KO1
 Sep 18 Hyusein Hyuseinov, Doncaster KO2
 Oct 3 Yordan Vasilev, Birmingham KO1
 Oct 24 Ricardo Tanase, Dublin KO1
 Nov 20 Sean Hughes, Belfast RSF2

2010

Feb 13 Felix Machado, Dublin RSF5
 June 26 Daniel Enache, Cork RSF1
 Sep 11 Oscar Chacin, Dublin RSF6
 Oct 2 Cristian Faccio, Letterkenny RSF4

2011

Apr 8 Jose Saez, Barnsley RSF3
 Oct 14 Franklin Varela, Cleethorpes PTS10

FIGHTS: 15 WON: 15 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Jamie CONLAN

Super-flyweight Born: Belfast, 11 October, 1986.

2009

Nov 6 Anwar Alfadi, Belfast PTS4

2010

Feb 13 Itsko Vaselev, Dublin RSF5

June 11 Delroy Spencer, Belfast PTS4

Sep 18 Hyusein Hyuseinov, Belfast RSF3

Dec 3 Francis Croes, Belfast RTD3

2011

May 13 Kyle King, Gillingham KO3

June 25 Delroy Spencer, Craigavon PTS6

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 7 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Darren CORBETT

Light-heavyweight Born: Belfast, July 9, 1972. Irish super-heavyweight champion, 1993.

1994

Dec 10 David Jules, Manchester RSF1

Dec 13 Carl Gaffney, Potters Bar RSF1

1995

Feb 21 Steve Garber, Sunderland PTS6

Mar 18 Gary Williams, Millstreet DREW6

Apr 14 Dennis Bailey, Belfast RSF2

May 27 Roger McKenzie, Belfast L-PTS6

Aug 26 Nigel Rafferty, Belfast PTS6

Oct 7 Nigel Rafferty, Belfast PTS6

Dec 2 Bobby Joe Edwards, Belfast PTS6

1996

May 7 Cliff Elden, London RSF1
 May 28 Darren Fearn, Belfast RSF1
 Sep 3 Chris Woollas, Belfast RSF7
 Nov 5 Ray Kane, Belfast RSF5
 (*For vacant All-Ireland cruiserweight title*)
 Dec 17 Chris Woollas, Doncaster RSF1

1997

Jan 28 Nigel Rafferty, Belfast PTS10
 Apr 29 Noel Magee, Belfast KO2
 (*All-Ireland cruiserweight title defence*)
 June 2 Chris Okoh, Belfast RSF3
 (*Commonwealth cruiserweight title challenge*)
 Oct 17 Hector Sanjuro, Ledyard PTS6
 Dec 20 Robert Norton, Belfast PTS12
 (*Commonwealth cruiserweight title defence*)

1998

Feb 21 Dirk Wallijn, Belfast PTS10
 Apr 28 Konstantin Okhrev, Belfast RSF4
 (*For vacant IBO inter-continental cruiserweight title*)
 May 26 Roberto Dominguez, London RSF1
 (*IBO inter-continental cruiserweight title defence*)
 Nov 28 Bruce Scott, Belfast L-RSF10
 (*Commonwealth cruiserweight title defence and also for vacant British title*)

1999

Apr 10 Stephane Allouane, Manchester L-RSF9
 (*IBO inter-continental cruiserweight title defence*)
 July 31 Darren Ashton, Carlisle RSF2
 Dec 14 Neil Simpson, Coventry PTS12
 (*For vacant IBO inter-continental light-heavyweight title*)

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2000

Mar 25 Lennox John Lewis, Liverpool RSF2
(*IBO inter-continental light-heavyweight title defence*)

2001

June 16 Tyler Hughes, New York RSF1
Nov 16 Radcliffe Green, Dublin PTS8

2002

Inactive

2003

Apr 5 Clint Johnson, Belfast RSF4

2004

Apr 17 Karim Bennama, Belfast L-RSF6

2005

Inactive

2006

Inactive

2007

Inactive

2008

July 12 Remigijus Ziausys, Dublin PTS6

2009

May 19 Mickey Steeds, London PTS3
(*Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament*)
May 19 Ovill McKenzie, London L-RSF2
(*Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

2010

Apr 30 John Anthony, London PTS3
(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)
 Apr 30 Nick Okoth, London L-PTS3
(Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament)

FIGHTS: 36 WON: 29 DREW: 1 LOST: 6

Henry COYLE

Light-middleweight Born: Geesala, 8 July, 1981. Irish welterweight champion, 2004. Based in Chicago.

2007

Mar 16 Jason Collazo, New York KO1
 May 18 Samuel Ortiz Gomez, New York RSF1
 June 20 Omar Bell, New York L-RSF1
 Sep 14 Robert Kimbrough, New York RSF1
 Nov 16 Guy Packer, Cicero RSF1

2008

Jan 31 Chris Cook, North Charleston RSF3
 Feb 26 Rashaan Abdul Blackburn, Indianapolis RSF5
 May 9 Ben Aragon, Cicero RSF3
 Aug 2 Alan Moore, Gary KO1
 Nov 15 Sergejs Savrinovics, Castlebar PTS8

2009

Mar 27 Dave Saunders, Chicago RSF2
 May 15 Neil Sinclair, Belfast L-RSF3
(For vacant Irish light-middleweight title)

2010

May 29 Marcus Luck, Hammond, Indiana RSF2
 Oct 2 Mustafah Johnson, Hammond, Indiana PTS6
 Nov 20 Sandor Ramocsa, Castlebar PTS8

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2011

Apr 9 William Prieto, Hammond, Indiana RSF6

May 18 Keith Collins, Rosemont RSF2

Aug 12 Elio Cotena, Castlebar RSF5

(For vacant World Boxing Foundation light-middleweight title)

FIGHTS: 18 WON: 16 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Darren CRUISE

Light-heavyweight Born: Castlerea, 26 January, 1990.

2010

Aug 7 James Tucker, Dublin PTS4

Nov 20 Zahir Mutafchiev, Castlebar PTS4

2011

Jan 30 Mickey Doherty, Dublin PTS4

Aug 12 Lee Murtagh, Castlebar L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 4 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Brian CUSACK

Light-heavyweight Born: Downpatrick, 26 April, 1978.

2010

May 14 James Tucker, Belfast PTS4

May 29 Emmanuell Oshinronde, Bedford PTS4

Dec 15 Ianto Jenkins, Belfast PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Mickey DOHERTY*Light-heavyweight Born: Carndonagh, 1969.*2007

Feb 10 Robert Cristea, Letterkenny L-KO2

2008-2010

Inactive

2011

Jan 30 Darren Cruise, Dublin L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 0 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Alan DONNELLAN*Light-middleweight Born: Athenry, 28 November, 1987.*2010

May 15 Ryan Clark, Limerick PTS4

Aug 7 Lester Walsh, Dublin PTS4

Nov 6 Zahari Mutafchiev, Limerick PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

John DUDDY*Middleweight Born: Derry, 19 June, 1979**Irish light-middleweight runner-up 2001 (Michael Roche). Irish light-middleweight champion 2002. Based in New York.*2003

Sep 19 Tarek Racheed, New York RSF1

Oct 22 Jesse Gomez, New York RSF1

Nov 28 Lenny Laudat, New York RSF1

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2004

Jan 9 Ken Hock, Uncasville RSF4
Oct 30 Victor Paz, New York RSF1
Nov 18 Willian Johnson, New York RSF1
Dec 11 Glen Dunnings, New York RSF5

2005

Feb 4 Chuck Orso, New York KO1
Mar 18 Lenord Pierre, Mashantucket RSF1
June 11 Patrick Thompson, New York PTS8
July 22 Pat Coleman, Chicago RSF8
Sep 17 Joseph Brady, Boston KO1
Nov 4 Bryon Mackie, New York RSF4
Dec 15 Wilmer Mejia, Hollywood, Florida RSF4

2006

Feb 4 Julio Jean, Boston PTS10
Mar 16 Shelby Pudwill, New York RSF1
(*For vacant WBC Continental Americas middleweight title*)
June 10 Alfredo Cuevas, New York RTD7
(*WBC Continental Americas middleweight title defence*)
Sep 29 Luis Ramon Campas, New York PTS12
(*For vacant IBA middleweight title*)

2007

Mar 16 Anthony Bonsante, New York T-PTS9
(*IBA and WBC Continental Americas middleweight titles defence*)
May 18 Dupre Strickland, New York PTS10
July 14 Alession Furlan, Dublin RSF10
Oct 20 Prince Arron, Dublin RSF2
Dec 8 Howard Eastman, Belfast PTS10

2008

Feb 23 Walid Smichet, New York PTS10
June 28 Charles Howe, Boston PTS10

2009

Feb 21 Matt Vanda, New York PTS 10

Apr 24 Billy Lyell, Newark L-PTS 10

Oct 10 Jorge 'Michi' Munoz, New York PTS 8

2010

Jan 23 Juan Astorga, New York RSF1

Mar 13 Michael Medina, Dallas PTS10

June 26 Julio Cesar Chavez Jnr, San Antonio L-PTS12

2011

Announced retirement in January.

FIGHTS: 31 WON: 29 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Ciaran DUFFY

Light-middleweight Born: Dungloe, 11 September, 1980. Based in Leeds.

2001

Nov 3 Wayne Shepherd, Glasgow PTS6

Dec 3 Pedro Thompson, Leeds PTS6

2002

Apr 22 Richard Inquieti, Glasgow PTS6

Nov 20 Gavin Pearson, Leeds DREW6

2003

Mar 17 Danny Moir, Glasgow PTS6

2004-2005

Inactive

2006

Dec 10 Paddy Pollock, Glasgow L-PTS6

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2007

Feb 10 Rocky Muscas, Letterkenny PTS4

Oct 26 Martin Sweeney, Glasgow L-PTS4

2008

Nov 1 Duncan Cottier, Glasgow PTS6

Nov 14 Ernie Smith, Glasgow PTS4

2009

Mar 6 Paddy Pollock, Glasgow PTS10

(For vacant Scottish middleweight title)

2010

Apr 16 Martyn King, Glasgow PTS6

Nov 27 Billy Smith, Glasgow PTS8

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 13 WON: 10 DREW: 1 LOST: 2

Finbarr EADE

Lightweight Born: Westport 23 May, 1975.

2009

May 23 Yordan Vasilev, Castlebar PTS4

2010

Aug 7 Nikolajs Jasenko, Dublin RSF1

Oct 2 Wladimir Borov, Letterkenny PTS4

Nov 20 Plamen Kostadinov, Castlebar PTS4

2011

Jan 30 Csaba Toth, Dublin RSC3

June 25 Radoslav Mitev, Dublin PTS6

Aug 12 Mickey Coveney, Castlebar L-PTS10

(For vacant Irish super-featherweight title)

FIGHT: 7 WON: 6 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Oisin FAGAN

Lightweight Born: Dublin, 24 December, 1973.

2003

Feb 18 Shelton Mosely, Oklahoma RSF4

May 13 Jason Varnell, Oklahoma RSF1

June 28 Joe Jiles, Oklahoma RSF2

July 25 Isaac Mendoza, Tulsa L-RSF4

Nov 14 Shelton Mosely, Oklahoma PTS4

2004

Feb 6 Levi Shearbern, Oklahoma City RSF2

Feb 28 Julio Cesar Chavez Jnr, Las Vegas L-PTS4

Mar 12 Ken Manuel, Oklahoma City RSF2

Oct 5 Derrick Moon, Oklahoma City L-PTS4

Dec 10 Lee Cargle, Oklahoma City PTS6

(For vacant Oklahoma lightweight title)

2005

Apr 15 Sheldon Mosley, Oklahoma City PTS4

Oct 14 Richie Scifo, Dublin RSF1

2006

Jan 14 John Huskey, Wichita KO2

Feb 4 Donald Cairns, Russelville PTS4

Feb 25 Donald Cairns, Oklahoma City, PTS4

Mar 4 Steve Mincks, Wichita PTS8

Apr 27 Steve Mincks, Tulsa PTS8

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May 6 Andrew Hartley, Oklahoma City RSF1

June 3 Jeff Thomas, Dublin RSF7

(For vacant Irish light-welterweight title)

2007

Jan 26 Brian Paul, Tulsa KO2

Mar 9 Paul Spadafora, Mount Pleasant L-PTS10

May 17 Josh Hammock, Wichita KO1

June 23 Chill John, Dublin PTS8

Sep 15 Jason Varnell, Fort Smith RSF4

Dec 30 Verquan Kimbrough, Chester, West Virginia L-PTS12

(For vacant United States Boxing Association lightweight title)

2008

Mar 15 Brian Carden, New York RSF2

July 12 Konstantins Sakara, Dublin PTS6

Dec 6 Amir Khan, London L-RSF2

2009

May 23 Asen Vasilev, Castlebar RSF5

July 25 Eddie Hyland, Dublin L-PTS12

(For vacant IBF International super-featherweight title)

Sep 26 Juris Ivanovs, Dublin RSF2

Oct 24 Johnny Greaves, Dublin PTS6

2010

Feb 13 Andy Murray, Dublin L-RSF5

(Irish lightweight title challenge)

2011

Jan 30 Karoly Lakatos, Dublin PTS6

FIGHTS: 34 WON: 26 DREW: 0 LOST: 8

Anthony FITZGERALD*Middleweight Born: Dublin, 8 June, 1985.*2008

Oct 26 Kirill Pshonko, Killarney PTS4

2009

Jan 30 Robert Long, Dublin L-PTS6

Mar 21 Janis Chernouskis, Dublin L-RSF3

May 23 Denis Sirjatovs, Castlebar KO2

July 25 Peter Cannon, Dublin RSF3

Sep 26 Tadas Jonkus, Dublin PTS4

Oct 24 Robert Long, Dublin PTS8

Dec 5 Matt Scriven, Dublin PTS8

2010

Feb 13 Ciaran Healy, Dublin PTS10

(For vacant Irish super-middleweight title)

Aug 7 Phillip Townley, Dublin PTS6

Sep 11 Robert Long, Dublin PTS10

(Irish super-middleweight title defence)

Nov 6 Lee Murtagh, Limerick NO-CON2

(Irish super-middleweight title defence)

Dec 10 Kevin Hammond, Dublin PTS12

*(For vacant WBF Inter-Continental middleweight title)*2011

Jan 30 Lee Murtagh, Dublin RSF7

(Irish super-middleweight title defence)

Mar 19 Affif Belghecham, Dublin RSF4

(For vacant EBA middleweight title)

FIGHTS: 15 WON: 12 DREW: 0 NO-CON: 1 LOST: 2

Brendan FITZPATRICK

Super-middleweight Born: Dublin, 7 March, 1984.

2010

Sep 11 Mariusz Radziszewski, Dublin RSF2

Oct 2 Zahari Mutafchiev, Letterkenny PTS6

Nov 6 Kirilas Psonko, Limerick PTS6

2011

June 25 Ciaran Healy, Dublin L-KO1

FIGHTS: 4 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Jon FOGG

Cruiserweight Born: Galway, 10 October, 1980.

2010

Nov 6 Ricky Dennis Pow, Limerick L-RSF3

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 0 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Carl FRAMPTON

Super-bantamweight Born: Belfast, 21 February, 1987. Irish flyweight champion 2005. Irish featherweight champion 2009.

2009

June 12 Sandor Szinavel, Liverpool RSF2

Sep 4 Yannis Lakrout, Middlesbrough PTS4

Nov 6 Ignac Kassai, Magherafelt RSF3

2010

Feb 12 Yoan Boyeaux, London PTS4
 Mar 5 Istvan Szabo, Huddersfield RSF1
 June 11 Ian Bailey, Belfast PTS6
 Sep 18 Yuriy Voronin, Belfast RSF3
 Dec 3 Gavin Reid, Belfast RSF2
 (*For vacant Celtic super-bantamweight title*)

2011

Mar 5 Oscar Chacin, Huddersfield RSF4
 June 4 Robbie Turley, Cardiff PTS10
 (*Celtic super-bantamweight title defence*)
 Sep 10 Mark Quon, Belfast RSF4
 (*For vacant Commonwealth super-bantamweight title*)

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 11 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Luis GARCIA

*Light-heavyweight Born: Matanzas, Cuba, 23 December, 1987.
 World Junior Championships middleweight gold medallist,
 Agadir, 2006. Based in Cork.*

2008

Sep 13 Martins Kukuls, Cork RSF3

2009

Jan 17 Mantas Tarvydas, Cork RSF1
 Jan 30 Daniel Regi, Dublin KO2
 Feb 28 Michael Gbenga, Newcastle PTS8
 Apr 25 Nestor Fabian Casanova, Cork RSF1

2010

May 15 Alexander Sipos, Limerick PTS6
 June 11 Nathan King, Belfast RSF5
 June 26 Demetrius Davis, Cork RSF3
 Sep 11 Christian Cruz, Dublin RSF3

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Oct 2 Jorge Rodriguez Olivera, Letterkenny RSF6

Nov 6 Byron Mitchell, Limerick RSF2

2011

Dec 30 Alexander Johnson, Carbazon PTS8

FIGHTS: 12 WON: 12 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Frankie GAVIN

Welterweight Born: Birmingham, 28 September, 1985. World Championships lightweight gold medallist, Chicago, 2007.

2009

Feb 28 George Kadaria, Birmingham RSF4

May 15 Mourad Frarema, Belfast RSF3

July 18 Graham Fearn, Manchester RSF2

Oct 30 Steve Saville, Liverpool RSF2

Dec 5 Samir Tergaoui, Newcastle RSF6

2010

Feb 13 Peter McDonagh, London PTS6

May 15 Gavin Tait, London RSF1

Sep 18 Michael Kelly, Birmingham RSF5

(For vacant Irish light-welterweight title)

2011

Feb 19 Michael Lomax, London RSF7

May 21 Young Mutley, London PTS12

(For vacant WBO Inter-Continental welterweight title)

July 16 Curtis Woodhouse, Liverpool PTS12

(WBO Inter-Continental welterweight title defence)

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 11 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Levan GHVAMICHAVA

Light-welterweight Born: Poti, Georgia, 30 July, 1985. Based in Cork/Belfast.

2011

Jan 30 Konstantins Sakara, Dublin RSF2

Feb 25 Laszlo Komjathi, Wilshaw RSF2

Mar 19 Mihaita Mutu, Dublin PTS4

May 28 Karoly Lakatos, Belfast RSF1

Sep 17 Joe Rea, Belfast RTD1

Oct 28 Giuseppe Lauri, Wishaw RSF2

FIGHTS: 6 WON: 6 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Mark GINLEY

Lightweight Born: Belfast, 6 September, 1988.

2011

May 7 Dan Carr, London PTS4

June 25 Robin Deakin, Craigavon PTS6

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 2 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Ryan GREENE

Light-middleweight Born: Lurgan, 28 December, 1983.

2010

May 8 Belfast Ryan Clark, Belfast PTS4

Sep 18 Matt Scriven, Belfast PTS6

Dec 3 Laszlo Haaz, Belfast RSF1

Dec 15 Simone Lucas, Belfast PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 4 WON: 4 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Paul GRIFFIN

Lightweight Born: Dublin, June 3, 1971. European Championships featherweight gold medallist, Gothenburg, 1991. Irish featherweight champion, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994. European Championships featherweight bronze medallist, Bursa, 1993.

1995

Mar 4 Chris Jickells, Livingston RSF5
June 10 Andrew Reed, Manchester RSF5
Sep 9 G.G. Goddard, Cork PTS4
Nov 25 Michael Hermon, Dublin PTS4

1996

Jan 13 Jason Thomas, Manchester RSF2
Mar 9 Pete Buckley, Millstreet PTS4
Apr 26 Carl Allen, Cardiff RSF3
June 25 Miguel Matthews, Mansfield PTS6
Aug 31 Ervine Blake, Dublin PTS4
Dec 14 Miguel Matthews, Sheffield PTS4

1997

Feb 25 Elvis Parsley, Sheffield PTS8
May 29 Mike Deveney, London PTS6

1998

Mar 27 Dean Pithie, Telford L-RSF9

1999

Inactive

2000

Mar 17 Daniel Hoskins, Sydney PTS6
July 3 John Green, Sydney PTS8
Oct 30 Marlon Castenada, Melbourne PTS6

2001

Feb 19 Daniel Hoskins, Gosford RSF4

Mar 2 James Swan, Sydney PTS6

July 13 Jackson Asiku, Sydney L-RSF5

2002

Inactive

2003

Oct 29 Daniel Hoskins, Sydney PTS6

2004

May 21 Shedy Souied, Homebush Bay, PTS6

July 9 Thongcharoen Mahasap Condo,

Homebush Bay PTS6

2005

June 4 Peter Feher, Dublin RSF2

Sep 18 Buster Dennis, London L-PTS4

Oct 14 John Bothwell, Dublin RSF1

2006

June 3 Wladimir Borov, Dublin PTS6

2007

May 27 Sornthong Sithkoson, Sydney RSF4

2008

Apr 19 Patrick Hyland, Dublin L-RSF3

(For vacant Irish featherweight title)

2009-2010

Inactive

2011

Jan 30 Janos Vass, Dublin KO1

Sep 17 Kid Galahad, Belfast L-RSF1

FIGHTS: 30 WON: 25 DREW: 0 LOST: 5

Thomas HARDWICK

Heavyweight Born: Dublin, 12 December, 1984. Based in New York.

2011

May 19 Derek Walker, New York RSF3

July 16 Rodelle Bolar, Atlantic City RSF3

Sep 23 Jamell Williams, New York PTS4

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Michael HARVEY

Lightweight Born: Belfast, 23 October, 1985.

2009

June 28 Michael Devine, Luton L-RSF3

Nov 20 Michael Devine, Belfast L-RSF2

2010

Nov 19 Santino Caruana, Wilshaw L-PTS4

Dec 15 Dan Carr, Belfast PTS4

2011

Apr 15 Stephen Russell, Renfrew L-PTS4

May 28 Radoslav Mitev, Belfast L-PTS4

Dec 9 Kris Hughes, Cleland L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 6

Stephen HAUGHIAN*Light-welterweight Born: Lurgan, 20 November, 1984.*2005

Mar 18 James Gorman, Belfast PTS4
 Oct 14 Imad Khamis, Dublin RSF4
 Nov 24 James Gorman, Lurgan PTS6

2006

Jan 28 Duncan Cotter, Dublin PTS4
 May 20 Peter Buckley, Belfast PTS4
 Oct 26 Denis Alekseev, Belfast RSF1
 Nov 11 Silence Saheed, Dublin PTS6

2007

Feb 17 Dwayne Hill, Cork RSF2
 Mar 25 Chill John, Dublin PTS6
 July 14 Gary O'Connor, Dublin RSF6
 Oct 20 Thomas Hengstberger, Dublin RSF1
 Nov 11 Tye Williams, Dunboyne PTS8
 Dec 8 Gianmario Grasselini, Belfast L-PTS12
 (*IBF International welterweight title challenge*)
 Dec 15 Artur Jashkul, Dublin PTS6

2008

June 20 Raul Saiz, Wolverhampton RSF2
 July 19 Giuseppe Langella, Limerick PTS8
 Nov 15 Gianmario Grassellini, Castlebar PTS8

2009

Feb 7 Billy Walsh, Craigavon RSF3
 (*For vacant Irish welterweight title*)
 Apr 11 Drew Campbell, London RSF1
 Sep 26 Albert Starikov, Dublin DREW6

2010

June 11 Kevin McIntyre, Belfast L-PTS10

(*For vacant Celtic welterweight title*)

Sep 18 Dee Mitchell, Belfast PTS6

Dec 3 Dave Ryan, Belfast PTS8

2011

June 25 Arek Malek, Craigavon PTS6

FIGHTS: 24 WON: 21 DREW: 1 LOST: 2

Eugene HEAGNEY

Featherweight Born: Dublin, 4 April, 1983. Based in Huddersfield.

2006

June 29 Neil Marston, Dudley PTS6

Nov 11 Delroy Spencer, Dublin PTS4

Dec 3 Neil Read, Wakefield PTS6

2007

Apr 14 Delroy Spencer, Wakefield PTS6

June 14 Shaun Walton, Leeds PTS6

July 14 Colin Moffett, Dublin PTS8

Dec 15 Colin Moffett, Dublin L-RSF8

(*For vacant Irish bantamweight title*)

2008

July 12 Kemal Plavci, Dublin PTS4

Dec 18 Paul Hyland, Dublin L-PTS6

2009

Feb 27 Jeremy Parodi, Toulon L-PTS8

Oct 31 Anthony Hanna, Huddersfield PTS4

Dec 5 Paul Hyland, Dublin L-RSF3

(*Irish super-bantamweight title challenge*)

2010

May 15 Ryan Walsh, London L-RSF1

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 13 WON: 8 DREW: 0 LOST: 5

Ciaran HEALY

Super-middleweight Born: Belfast, 25 December, 1974.

2003

Apr 5 Tomas Da Silva, Belfast PTS4

Sep 18 Patoma Cito, London PTS4

Oct 4 Joel Ani, Belfast PTS4

Nov 22 Neil Addis, Belfast RSF1

2004

June 26 Jason McKay, Belfast L-PTS6

2005

Apr 25 Vinnie Baldassara, Glasgow L-RSF4

June 17 Chris Black, Glasgow DREW4

2006

Feb 18 Karoly Domokos, Dublin PTS4

Apr 21 George Hillyard, Belfast L-KO6

Nov 18 Anthony Small, Newport L-RSF3

2007

June 23 Lukasz Wawrzyczek, Dublin L-PTS8

Aug 18 Martins Kukuls, Cork PTS6

Aug 25 Andy Lee, Dublin L-RTD4

Dec 8 Lee Murtagh, Belfast KO5

(For vacant Irish light-middleweight title)

2008

Feb 2 Pavels Lotahs, Limerick L-PTS6
Mar 29 Pavels Lotahs, Letterkenny PTS8
July 5 Jamie Moore, Dublin L-RSF3
(Irish light-middleweight title defence)
Oct 10 Matthew Hall, Liverpool L-RSF3
Oct 26 John Waldron, Killarney PTS4
Dec 12 Paul Smith, Widnes L-PTS6

2009

May 15 Matt Scriven, Belfast PTS 4
July 18 James DeGale, Manchester L-RSF1
Nov 6 Lee Noble, Belfast L-PTS4
Dec 4 Gary O'Sullivan, Cork L-PTS10
(For vacant Irish middleweight title)

2010

Feb 15 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin L-PTS10
(For vacant Irish super-middleweight title)
May 15 Paddy McDonagh, Limerick L-PTS4
June 11 Harry Matthews, Belfast PTS6
Nov 20 John Waldron, Castlebar RSF5
(Irish light-heavyweight title challenge)
Dec 18 Frank Haroche Horta, Lyon L-PTS6

2011

June 25 Brendan Fitzpatrick, Dublin KO1
Nov 5 Bilel Latreche, Damparis, France L-PTS8

FIGHTS: 31 WON: 13 DREW: 1 LOST: 17

Gerard HEALY*Light-middleweight Born: Belfast, 29 September, 1983.*2011

May 28 Aaron Fox, Belfast PTS 4

Sep 17 Dee Walsh, Belfast L-PTS 4

Oct 15 Liam Smith, Liverpool L-KO 1

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Joe HILLERBY*Middleweight Born: Belfast, 19 December, 1987.*2010

Oct 16 Gavin Putney, Northampton RSF1

2011

Jan 21 Ryan Clark, London PTS4

May 7 Bheki Moyo, London PTS4

July 31 Iain Jackson, Luton PTS4

Sep 17 Tommy Tolan, Belfast PTS4

FIGHTS: 5 WON: 5 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Dennis HOGAN*Light-heavyweight Born: Kildare, 1 March 1985. Based in Australia.*2011

Apr 1 Marlon Toby, Fortitude Valley RTD2

May 13 Ben Dyer, Fortitude Valley RSF3

June 17 Edmund Eramiha, Altona North DREW5

Aug 6 Moses Ioelu, Fortitude Valley PTS4

Sep 30 Tass Tsitsiras, Fortitude Valley PTS4

Oct 21 Glen Fitzpatrick, Red Hill RSF4

(For vacant Queensland super-middleweight title)

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Oct 29 Robert Clarke, Hervey Bay PTS4

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 6 DREW: 1 LOST: 0

Liam HUTCHINSON

*Middleweight Born: Queensland, Australia, 4 January, 1993.
Based in Belfast.*

2011

Sep 10 Aaron Fox, Belfast PTS4

Dec 15 Robert Heppell, Brisbane PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 2 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Eddie HYLAND

Super-featherweight Born: Dublin: 24 April, 1981.

2004

Nov 26 Buster Dennis, Altrincham PTS4

2005

June 4 Stefan Berza, Dublin RSF1

Sep 17 Peter Batora, Dublin RSF1

2006

Mar 11 Tibor Rafael, Dublin RSF2

June 16 Stephen Mullin, Liverpool L-RTD4

2007

Feb 10 Gheorghe Ghiompirica, Letterkenny PTS4

June 30 Daniel Thorpe, Belfast PTS4

Oct 13 Robin Deakin, Belfast PTS4

Dec 15 Wladimir Borov, Dublin PTS8

2008

Apr 19 Kevin O'Hara, Dublin PTS10
 (For vacant Irish super-featherweight title)
 Sep 6 Geoffrey Munika, Dublin PTS8
 Dec 4 Gustavo Dailey, New York PTS6

2009

May 23 Juris Ivanovs, Castlebar RSF1
 July 25 Oisín Fagan, Dublin PTS12
 (For vacant IBF International super-featherweight title)
 Oct 24 Kirkor Kirkorov, Dublin KO3
 Dec 4 Maurycy Gojko, Cork PTS6

2010

Inactive

2011

June 25 Asen Vasilev, Dublin RSF3

FIGHTS: 17 WON: 16 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Patrick HYLAND

Featherweight Born: Dublin, 16 September, 1983.

2004

Sep 24 Dean Ward, Dublin PTS4

2005

Feb 13 Steve Gethin, Brentwood PTS4
 June 4 Peter Buckley, Dublin PTS4
 Sep 17 Imrich Parlagi, Dublin PTS4
 Nov 18 Craig Morgan, Dagenham PTS4

2006

Mar 11 Tibor Besze, Dublin KO1
 June 23 Lajos Beller, Dublin RSF1
 July 14 Roman Rafael, Dublin RSF1

2008

Jan 26 Gheorghe Ghiompirica, Cork PTS8
Mar 15 Mike Dobbs, Boston RSF1
Apr 19 Paul Griffin, Dublin RSF3
(*For vacant Irish featherweight title*)
May 31 Robin Deakin, Belfast RSF5
July 5 Geoffrey Munika, Dublin PTS8
Sep 6 John Gicharu, Dublin RSF1
Oct 4 Elvis Luciano Martinez, Philadelphia RSF2

2009

Mar 14 Carlos Guevara, Dorchester, Massachusetts PTS10
(*For vacant IBA Inter-continental super-featherweight title*)
July 25 Abdu Tebazalwa, Dublin PTS12
(*For vacant IBF International featherweight title*)
Sep 26 Manuel Sequera, Dublin RSF6

2010

Feb 13 Mickey Coveney, Dublin RSF7
(*Irish featherweight title defence*)
Oct 2 Yordan Vasilev, Letterkenny PTS6
Nov 20 Suat Laze, Castlebar PTS8

2011

Apr 30 Daniel Kodjo Sassou, London PTS6
June 25 Phillippe Fernois, Dublin PTS12
(*For vacant WBF featherweight title*)
Aug 12 Fabrizio Trotta, Castlebar RSF4

FIGHTS: 24 WON: 24 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Paul HYLAND

Super-bantamweight Born: Dublin, 19 November, 1984. Irish light-flyweight runner-up 2002 (John Paul Kinsella). Irish flyweight champion 2003, 2004.

2004

Nov 5 Janos Garai, Hereford RSF2

2005

Feb 19 Vladimir Bukovy, Dublin RSF3

June 4 Ferenc Szabo, Dublin PTS6

Sep 17 Andrej Surina, Dublin RTD3

Oct 14 Peter Feher, Dublin PTS4

Nov 18 Rakhim Mingaleev, Dagenham PTS4

2006

Feb 24 Dariusz Snarski, Dagenham PTS6

Mar 11 Sandor Paska, Dublin RSF3

2007

July 27 Arthur Parker, Saratoga Springs PTS4

2008

Apr 19 Ayitney Mettle, Dublin PTS8

July 5 Marc Callaghan, Dublin PTS10

(For vacant Irish super-bantamweight title)

Sep 6 Cristian Nicolae, Dublin PTS6

Oct 4 Lucian Gonzalez, Philadelphia L-PTS4

Dec 18 Eugene Heagney, Dublin PTS6

2009

Feb 27 Nikita Lukin, Barnsley PTS6

July 25 Robert Nelson, Dublin PTS8

Dec 5 Eugene Heagney, Dublin RSF3

(Irish super-bantamweight title defence)

2010

Mar 12 David Chianella, Naples PTS12

(For vacant European Union super-bantamweight title)

Sep 11 Robert DaLuz, Dublin PTS8

Nov 6 Willie Casey, Limerick L-RSF4

(For vacant European super-bantamweight title)

2011

June 25 Hyusein Hyuseinov, Dublin RSF5

Aug 12 Dai Davies, Castlebar PTS6

FIGHTS: 22 WON: 20 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Jamie KAVANAGH

Light-welterweight Born: Dublin, 28 May, 1990. Light-welterweight silver medallist, World Junior Championships, Guadalajara, 2008. Irish light-welterweight runner-up 2008 (John Joe Joyce). Based in Los Angeles.

2010

May 15 William Ware, New York RSF2

June 24 Luis Sanchez, Los Angeles PTS4

Sep 30 Ricardo Malfavon, Los Angeles PTS4

Dec 11 Jacob Thornton, Las Vegas RSF1

2011

Feb 24 Ramon Flores, Los Angeles PTS6

Apr 16 Sid Razak, Manchester PTS6

June 23 John Willoughby, Los Angeles RSF3

July 22 Marcos Herrera, Las Vegas PTS6

Dec 10 Ramesis Gil, Washington DREW6

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 8 DREW: 1 LOST:

Paul KAYES*Light-flyweight Born: Downpatrick, 13 June, 1985.*2010

May 8 Norredine Dahou, Belfast PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Michael KELLY*Light-welterweight Born: Dundalk, 28 April, 1975. Irish light-welterweight champion, 2001. Irish light-welterweight runner-up, 2003 (Paul McCloskey).*2004

Feb 2 Carl Allen, Bridgend PTS4

Apr 17 Baz Carey, Belfast PTS4

June 26 Simon Wilson, Belfast PTS4

2005

July 2 Daniel Thorpe, Dundalk PTS4

Sep 17 Jozef Kubovsky, Dublin PTS4

2006

Apr 21 Stuart Green, Belfast PTS4

2007-2008

Inactive

2009

Feb 7 Juris Ivanovs, Craigavon RSF2

Mar 21 Valentins Morozovs, Dublin DREW4

Dec 12 Peter Feher, Dublin KO1

2010

Apr 8 Buzz Grant, Toronto L-PTS8

Sep 18 Frankie Gavin, Birmingham L-RSF5

(*For vacant Irish light-welterweight title*)

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 8 DREW: 1 LOST: 2

Colin KENNA

Heavyweight Born: Dublin, 28 July, 1976. Based in Southampton.

2001

Feb 25 Alvin Miller, London RSF3

Apr 22 Eamon Glennon, London PTS4

Oct 15 Tony Booth, Southampton PTS6

2002

Feb 11 Dave Clarke, Southampton RSF4

Apr 8 James Gilbert, Southampton RSF1

July 12 Gary Williams, Southampton RSF3

Nov 1 Paul Buttery, Preston DREW4

2003

Mar 17 Derek McCafferty, Southampton PTS6

May 12 Paul Bonson, Southampton PTS6

Aug 1 Michael Sprott, London L-RSF1

(*Southern Area heavyweight title challenge*)

Oct 26 Darren Ashton, London KO1

2004

Feb 20 Paul Bonson, Southampton PTS6

Mar 30 Chris Woollas, Southampton PTS6

May 12 Mark Krence, Reading L-RTD3

2005

Feb 6 O'Neil Murray, Southampton RSF3

Feb 19 Paul King, Dublin DREW6

June 26 Julius Francis, Southampton PTS4

Dec 4 Wayne Llewellyn, Portsmouth KO2
(*For vacant Southern Area heavyweight title*)

2006

Jan 28 Luke Simpson, Dublin PTS8

Mar 5 Mickey Steeds, Southampton L-PTS10
(*Southern Area heavyweight title defence*)

Apr 22 Oleg Platov, Mannheim, Germany L-RSF5

2007

Feb 25 Keith Long, Southampton PTS8

Oct 31 Roman Greenberg, London L-PTS8

2008

Jan 25 Albert Sosnowski, Dagenham L-PTS10

Apr 11 Paul Butlin, London L-RSF2

(*Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

Sept 27 Gurcharan Singh, Bracknell L-KO4

Nov 21 Sam Sexton, London L-RSF6
(*For vacant Southern Area heavyweight title*)

2009

Inactive

2010

Feb 13 Coleman Barrett, Dublin L-PTS10

(*For vacant Irish heavyweight title*)

May 14 Larry Olubamiwo, Dagenham L-RSF1

(*For vacant Southern Area heavyweight title*)

Oct 16 Damien Campbell, London DREW4

Nov 13 Edmund Gerber, Manchester L-RSF1

2011

Nov 21 Ian Lewison, London PTS4

FIGHTS: 32 WON: 17 DREW: 3 LOST: 12

Andy LEE

Middleweight Born: London, 11 June, 1984. Irish middleweight champion 2003, 2004, 2005. Silver medallist, World Junior Championships, Cuba, 2002.

2006

Mar 10 Anthony Cannon, Detroit PTS6

Apr 22 Wassim Khalil, Mannheim RSF5

June 16 Rodney Freeman, Memphis RSF1

Aug 10 Carl Cockerham, Las Vegas PTS6

Sep 14 Jess Salway, Las Vegas KO1

Nov 11 Dennis Sharpe, New York PTS6

2007

Jan 25 Arturo Ortega, Las Vegas RSF6

Mar 16 Carl Daniels, New York KO3

May 18 Clinton Bonds, Memphis RSF1

July 7 Thomas Hengstberger, Cologne KO2

Aug 25 Ciaran Healy, Dublin RTD4

Oct 2 James Morrow, Chicago RSF1

Nov 15 Marcus Thomas, Plymouth, Michigan KO1

Dec 15 Jason McKay, Dublin RTD6

2008

Feb 2 Alejandro Gustavo Falliga, Limerick KO5

Mar 21 Brian Vera, Uncasville, Connecticut L-RSF7

July 19 Willie Gibbs, Limerick RSF10

2009

Mar 21 Alexander Sipos, Dublin PTS10

June 20 Olegs Fedotovs, Gelsenkirchen, Germany PTS6

Aug 21 Anthony Schuler, Hammond, Indiana RSF8
 Nov 14 Affif Belghecham, Limerick PTS10

2010

May 15 Mamadou Thiam, Limerick RTD2
 July 30 James Cook, Miami, Oklahoma KO5
 Sep 17 Michael Walker, Chicago RSF8
 Oct 2 Troy Lowry, Hammond, Indiana RSF4

2011

Mar 12 Craig McEwan, Mashantucket RSF10
 May 18 Alex Bunema, Rosemont PTS10
 (*For vacant North American middleweight title*)
 Oct 1 Bryan Vera, Atlantic City PTS10

FIGHTS: 28 WON: 27 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Louie LEE

Super-middleweight Born: Galway, 8 September, 1985. Based in Newport, Wales.

2011

Feb 5 Ianto Jenkins, Newport PTS4

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Martin LINDSAY

Featherweight Born: Belfast, 10 May, 1982. Irish bantamweight champion 2002. Irish bantamweight runner-up 2003 (Brian Gillen). Irish featherweight champion 2004.

2004

Dec 2 Dai Davies, London RSF1

2005

Apr 24 Rakhim Mingaleev, London PTS4

July 2 Henry Janes, Dundalk RSF2

Sep 17 Peter Feher, Dublin PTS4

2006

Apr 21 Chris Hooper, Belfast KO1

Oct 13 Nikita Lukin, Port Talbot PTS6

2007

Mar 30 Buster Dennis, Crawley PTS6

July 14 Jose Silveira, Rama, Ontario PTS6

Oct 27 Uriel Barrera, Rama, Ontario PTS10

(For vacant IBF Youth featherweight title)

Dec 8 Edison Torres, Belfast PTS8

2008

Jan 19 Jason Hayward, Rama, Ontario RSF1

May 16 Marc Callaghan, Turin PTS8

Sep 20 Derry Mathews, Sheffield KO9

(British featherweight title eliminator)

2009

Apr 25 Paul Appleby, Belfast RSF6

(British featherweight title challenge)

Nov 6 Alfred Tetteh, Magherafelt PTS8

2010

Mar 19 Jamie Arthur, Leigh PTS12

(British featherweight title defence)

Sep 11 Yauheni Kruhlik, Houghton-le-Spring PTS6

Dec 15 John Simpson, Belfast L-PTS12

(British featherweight title defence)

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 18 WON: 17 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Robert LONG*Middleweight Born: Dublin, 26 February, 1983.*2008

Sep 6 Florin Bogdan, Dublin PTS4

Oct 26 Sandris Tomsons, Killarney RTD3

2009

Jan 30 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin PTS6

July 25 Deniss Sirjatovs, Dublin PTS4

Oct 24 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin L-PTS8

Sep 11 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin L-PTS10
(*Irish super-middleweight title challenge*)2010

Dec 10 Andrejs Suliko, Dublin PTS4

2011

Jan 30 James Tucker, Dublin PTS4

June 25 Gary O'Sullivan, Dublin L-RSF1
(*Irish middleweight title challenge*)

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 6 DREW: 0 LOST: 3

Matthew MACKLIN*Middleweight Born: Birmingham, 14 May, 1982. English welterweight champion 2001.*2001

Nov 17 Ram Singh, Glasgow RSF1

Dec 15 Cristian Hodorogea London KO1

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2002

Feb 9 Dmitri Protkunas, Manchester RTD3
Mar 11 David Kirk, Glasgow PTS4
Apr 20 Ilia Spassov, Cardiff KO3
June 1 Guy Alton, Manchester RSF3
Sep 28 Leonti Voronchuk, Manchester RSF5

2003

Feb 15 Ruslan Yakupov, London PTS6
May 24 Paul Denton, London PTS6
Nov 6 Andrew Facey, Dagenham L-PTS10

2004

Feb 21 Dean Walker, Cardiff KO1
Apr 24 Scott Dixon, Reading RTD6
June 12 Ojay Abrahams, Manchester PTS4

2005

May 14 Michael Monaghan, Dublin KO5
(For vacant Irish middleweight title)
Aug 4 Leo Laudat, Atlantic City RSF3
Oct 28 Anthony Little, Philadelphia RSF2
Nov 26 Alexey Chirkov, Sheffield KO1

2006

June 1 Marcin Piatkowski, Birmingham RSF4
Sep 29 Jamie Moore, Manchester L-KO10
(British light-middleweight title challenge)

2007

July 20 Anatoliy Udalov, Wolverhampton KO1
Aug 26 Darren Rhodes, Dublin RSF4
Oct 20 Alessandro Furlan, Dublin RSF8

2008

Mar 22 Luis Ramon 'Yory Boy' Campas, Dublin PTS10

Sep 6 Francis Cheka, Manchester PTS10
 Oct 31 Geard Ajetovic, Birmingham PTS10

2009

Mar 14 Wayne Elcock, Birmingham RSF3
 (*British middleweight title challenge*)
 Sep 25 Amin Asikainen, Manchester RSF1
 (*For vacant European middleweight title*)
 Dec 5 Rafael Sosa Pintos, Dublin PTS10

2010

Vacated European title on March 24
 Sep 18 Shalva Jomardashvili, Birmingham RTD6
 (*For vacant European middleweight title*)
 Dec 11 Ruben Varon, Liverpool PTS12
 (*European middleweight title defence*)

2011

June 25 Felix Sturm, Cologne L-PTS12
 (*WBA middleweight title challenge*)

FIGHTS: 31 WON: 28 DREW: 0 LOST: 3

Brian MAGEE

Super-middleweight Born: Lisburn, 9 June, 1975. Irish middleweight champion, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998. European Championships silver medallist, Minsk 1998. Commonwealth Games bronze medallist, Kuala Lumpur 1998.

1999

Mar 13 Dean Ashton, Manchester RSF2
 May 22 Richard Glaysher, Belfast RSF1
 June 22 Chris Howarth, Ipswich RSF1
 Sep 13 Dennis Doyley, London RSF3
 Oct 16 Michael Pinnock, Belfast RSF3

2000

Feb 12 Terry Morrill, Sheffield RTD5

Feb 21 Rob Stevenson, London RSF5

Mar 20 Darren Ashton, Mansfield RTD5

Apr 15 Pedro Carragher, London RSF2

June 12 Jason Barker, London PTS8

Nov 11 Teymouraz Kekelidze, Belfast RSF4

2001

Jan 29 Neil Linford, Peterborough PTS12

(For vacant IBO Inter-continental middleweight title)

July 31 Chris Nembhard, London RSF6

Dec 10 Ramon Britez, Liverpool KO1

(IBO super-middleweight title challenge)

2002

Mar 18 Vage Kocharyan, Crawley PTS8

June 15 Mpush Makembi, Leeds RSF7

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

Nov 9 Jose Spearman, Manchester PTS12

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

2003

Feb 22 Miguel Jimenez, Huddersfield PTS12

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

June 21 Andre Thyse, Manchester RSF10

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

Oct 4 Omar Eduardo Gonzalez, Belfast KO1

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

Nov 22 Hacine Cherifi, Belfast RTD9

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

2004

Apr 17 Jerry Elliott, Belfast PTS12

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)

June 26 Robin Reid, Belfast L-PTS12

(IBO super-middleweight title defence)
 Nov 26 Neil Linford, Altrincham RSF7

2005

July 16 Vitali Tsypko, Nuremburg L-PTS12
(For vacant European super-middleweight title)
 Oct 14 Varuzhan Davtyan, Dublin RSF2

2006

Jan 28 Daniil Prakapsou, Dublin RSF2
 May 26 Carl Froch, London L-KO11
(British and Commonwealth super-middleweight titles challenge)
 Nov 3 Paul David, Barnsley PTS6

2007

Jan 26 Andrew Lowe, Dagenham PTS12
(British light-heavyweight title eliminator)
 June 8 Danny Thornton, Motherwell RTD2
 Aug 25 Tony Oakey, Dublin DREW12
(British light-heavyweight title challenge)

2008

Feb 8 Mark Nilsen, Peterlee PTS4
 Mar 7 Tyrone Wright, Nottingham PTS6
 July 11 Simeon Cover, Wigan RSF4
 Dec 13 Stevie McGuire, Brentwood RSF8
(For vacant British super-middleweight title)

2009

Inactive

2010

Jan 30 Mads Larsen, Aarhus, Denmark RSF7
(For vacant European super-middleweight title)
 Sept 11 Roman Aramyan, Dublin RTD8
(European super-middleweight title defence)

2011

Mar 12 Lucian Bute, Montreal L-RSF10

(*IBF super-middleweight title challenge*)

July 30 Jaime Barboza, San Jose, Costa Rica PTS12

(*Interim WBA super-middleweight title*)

FIGHTS: 40 WON: 35 DREW: 1 LOST: 4

Kevin McBRIDE

Heavyweight Born: Clones, 10 January, 1973. Irish super-heavyweight champion, 1992.

1992

Dec 17 Gary Charlton, Barking DREW6

1993

Feb 13 Gary Williams, Manchester PTS4

Sept 15 Joey Palladino, London KO2

Oct 13 Chris Coughlan, London PTS4

Dec 1 John Harewood, London RSF3

1994

May 6 Edgar Turpin, Atlantic City RSF1

June 4 Roger Bryant, Reno RSF1

June 17 Stanley Wright, Atlantic City PTS6

Aug 26 James Truesdale, Upper Marlboro RSF3

Sept 24 Graham Arnold, London RSF2

Nov 12 Dean Storey, Dublin RSF3

Dec 10 John Lamphrey, Portland RSF1

1995

Feb 7 Carl Gaffney, Ipswich KO1

Mar 3 Carl McGrew, Boston RSF5

Apr 22 Jimmy Harrison, Boston RSF1

May 13 Atelea Kaihea, Sacramento KO1

July 2 Steve Garber, Dublin RSF7

1996

Nov 6 Shane Woollas, Hull RSF 2
 Dec 3 Roger McKenzie, Liverpool RTD 6

1997

Jan 14 Tui Toia, Kansas City RSF2
 Feb 7 Louis Monaco, Las Vegas L-RSF5
 Apr 28 Stoyan Stoyanov, Hull RSF1
 June 2 Paul Douglas, Belfast RSF5
 (*For vacant Irish heavyweight title*)
 Aug 30 Axel Schulz, Berlin L-RSF9
 Nov 22 Yuri Yelistratov, Manchester RSF1

1998

Apr 11 Michael Murray, Southwark L-RSF3

1999

June 26 Domingo Monroe, Boston KO1

2000

Inactive

2001

Aug 11 Willie Phillips, Little Rock PTS10
 Nov 3 Rodney McSwain, Little Rock PTS10

2002

Jan 18 Davarryl Williamson, Las Vegas L-RSF5
 May 24 Gary Winmon, Revere RSF2
 July 26 Reynaldo Minus, Boston KO3
 Oct 26 Craig Tomlinson, Taunton KO3

2003

Mar 17 Najee Shaheed, Boston RTD8
 Aug 9 Lenzie Morgan, Brockton RSF1
 Dec 4 Marcus Rhode, Boston RSF3

2004

Inactive

2005

Mar 18 Kevin Montiy, Atlantic City RSF5

June 11 Mike Tyson, Washington RTD6

2006

Apr 1 Byron Polley, Cleveland RSF4

Oct 7 Mike Mollo, Rosemont, Illinois L-RSF2

(For vacant WBA Fedelatin heavyweight title)

2007

Oct 6 Andrew Golota, New York L-RSF6

(For Vacant IBF North American heavyweight title)

2008-2009

Inactive

2010

July 10 Zack Page, New York L-PTS8

Oct 9 Franklin Egobi, London PTS3

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Oct 9 Matt Skelton, London L-PTS3

(Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament)

2011

Apr 9 Tomasz Adamek, Newark L-PTS12

(IBF International heavyweight title challenge)

July 29 Mariusz Wach, Uncasville L-KO4

(For vacant WBC International heavyweight title)

FIGHTS: 46 WON: 35 DREW: 1 LOST: 10

Paul McCLOSKEY

Light-welterweight Born: Dungiven, 3 August, 1979. Irish light-welterweight runner-up 1998 (Mark Wickham), 2000 (Seanie Barrett), 2001 (Michael Kelly). Irish light-welterweight champion 2002, 2003, 2004.

2005

Mar 18 David Kehoe, Belfast RSF3
 June 17 Oscar Milkitas, Glasgow PTS4
 Nov 5 Billy Smith, Glasgow PTS4
 Nov 24 Henry Janes, Lurgan RSF3

2006

Feb 18 Duncan Cotter, Edinburgh PTS6
 Mar 11 Surinder Sekhon, Newport KO1
 Nov 4 Daniel Thorpe, Glasgow RTD3
 Dec 9 Silence Saheed, London PTS4

2007

Feb 10 Eugen Stan, Letterkenny PTS6
 Feb 17 Chill John, Cork PTS6
 July 14 Ivan Orlando Bustos, Dublin KO4
 Aug 26 Alfredo Di Feto, Dublin PTS8
 Oct 20 Dariusz Sharski, Dublin RTD2
 Dec 8 Tontcho Tontchev, Belfast RSF4
 (*For vacant IBF Inter-Continental light-welterweight title*)

2008

Feb 2 Manuel Garnica, Limerick PTS10
 Mar 29 Cesar Bazan, Letterkenny PTS10
 July 19 Nigel Wright, Limerick PTS10
 Dec 5 Colin Lynes, Dagenham RTD9
 (*For vacant British light-welterweight title*)

2009

Mar 13 Dean Harrison, Widnes RSF4

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(British light-welterweight title defence)
Nov 6 Daniel Rasilla, Magherafelt RSF9
(For vacant European light-welterweight title)

2010

June 11 Giuseppe Lauri, Belfast KO11
(European light-welterweight title defence)
Oct 2 Barry Morrison, Letterkenny RSF7
(European light-welterweight title defence)

2011

Apr 16 Amir Khan, Manchester L-T-PTS6
(WBA light-welterweight title challenge)
Sep 10 Breidis Prescott, Belfast PTS12
(WBA light-welterweight title eliminator)

FIGHTS: 24 WON: 23 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Marc McCULLOUGH

Featherweight Born: Belfast, 22 November, 1989.

2011

June 25 Eddie Nesbitt, Craigavon RSF2.
Sep 10 Dai Davies, Belfast L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

JJ McDONAGH

Super-middleweight Born: Mullingar, 2 December, 1985.

2009

Nov 20 Jevgenijs Kiselevs, Belfast RSF1
Dec 5 Mario Lupp, Dublin RSF1

2010

Aug 7 Tommy Tolan, Dublin L-KO3
 Dec 10 Deniss Sirjatovs, Dublin RSF4

2011

Jan 30 Phillip Townley, Dublin PTS8
 Dec 4 Stuart Maddox, Barnsley PTS4

FIGHTS: 6 WON: 5 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Paddy McDONAGH

Super-middleweight Born: Mullingar, 29 August, 1991.

2009

Nov 20 Grigor Sarohanian, Belfast PTS4
 Dec 4 Mariusz Radziszewski, Cork PTS4

2010

May 15 Ciaran Healy, Limerick PTS4
 Dec 10 Martins Kukulis, Dublin PTS8

2011

Jan 30 Titusz Szabo, Dublin PTS6
 Mar 19 Jevgenijs Andrejevs PTS6
 Dec 4 James Tucker, Barnsley PTS4

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 7 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Peter McDONAGH

Lightweight Born: Galway, 21 December, 1977. Based in London.

2002

Apr 28 Aev Mittoo, London PTS6
 June 23 Dave Hinds, London PTS6
 Sep 14 Peter Buckley, London PTS4
 Oct 27 Ben Hudson, London L-PTS6

2003

Feb 18 Dafydd Carlin, London L-PTS4

Apr 8 Ben Hudson, London PTS4

Nov 8 Ceri Hall, Bridgend L-PTS4

Nov 22 James Gorman, Belfast L-PTS4

2004

Feb 21 Chill John, Hove RSF2

Mar 6 Barry Hughes, Glasgow L-PTS6

Apr 7 Jon Honney, London PTS10

(For vacant Southern Area lightweight title)

Nov 19 David Burke, London L-PTS8

2005

Jan 21 Ryan Barrett, London L-PTS8

Mar 4 Scott Lawton, Rotherham L-PTS6

Apr 30 Rob Jeffries, Dagenham L-PTS10

(Southern Area lightweight title defence)

May 14 Robert Murray, Dublin L-PTS10

(For vacant Irish light-welterweight title)

Aug 7 Brunet Zamora, Rimini L-PTS6

Nov 4 Anthony Christopher, London PTS4

2006

Jan 28 Michael Gomez, Dublin RSF5

(For vacant Irish lightweight title)

Sep 24 Jason Nesbitt, London PTS4

Dec 1 Karl Taylor, London PTS4

2007

Oct 5 Duncan Cottier, London PTS4

2008

Feb 29 Giuseppe Lauri, Milan L-RSF6

(European Union light-welterweight title challenge)

July 12 Andy Murray, Dublin, Ireland L-PTS10

(For vacant Irish lightweight title)

Sep 27 Constantin Florescu, Brampton, Canada PTS6

Dec 13 Lee Purdy, Brentwood PTS10

(For vacant Southern Area light-welterweight title)

2009

Apr 11 Lenny Daws, London L-PTS10

(For vacant English light-welterweight title)

June 12 Jimmy Briggs, London PTS4

Sep 5 Lee Purdy, Watford L-PTS10

(For vacant Southern Area welterweight title)

2010

Feb 13 Frankie Gavin, London L-PTS6

Apr 3 Christopher Sebire, Manchester PTS8

June 4 Yvan Mendy, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, France L-PTS12

(For vacant WBF Inter-Continental light-welterweight title)

July 24 Michele Di Rocco, Quartu Sant'Elena, Italy L-PTS6

Sep 4 Alex Arthur, Glasgow L-PTS8

Oct 23 Curtis Woodhouse, London PTS8

2011

Mar 18 Darren Hamilton, London L-RSF8

(For vacant Southern Area light-welterweight title)

June 7 Yassine El Maachi, London L-PTS3

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Sep 30 Johnny Greaves, London PTS4

Nov 25 Gary McMillan, Motherwell L-PTS6

FIGHTS: 39 WON: 17 DREW: 0 LOST: 22

Paddy McGARRITY

Featherweight Born: Belfast.

2010

May 8 Dan Carr, Belfast PTS4

Dec 4 Craig Evans, Glasgow L-PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Michael McLAUGHLIN

Light-welterweight Born: Carndonagh, 21 September, 1984.

2010

Oct 2 Valentin Stoychev DREW4

2011

Sep 17 Mark Betts, Belfast RSF4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 1 DREW: 1 LOST: 0

Christina McMAHON

Bantamweight Born: Carrickmacross, 18 June, 1974.

2010

Aug 7 Ineta Lieknina, Dublin RSF3

Dec 10 Polina Pencheva, Dublin PTS4

2011

Mar 19 Julija Cvetkova, Dublin RSF4

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Sean MONAGHAN

Light-heavyweight Born: Navan. Based in New York.

2010

May 21 Simeon Trigueno, New York RSF1
 July 17 Dennis Penelton, Atlantic City KO1
 Oct 6 Borngod Washington, New York PTS4
 Oct 22 Nick Whiting, New York RSF2

2011

Feb 9 Angel Gonzalez, New York RSF3
 Mar 12 Billy Cunningham, Mashantucket PTS4
 Mar 29 Michael Glenn, New York PTS4
 July 30 Brian Bernard, New York KO1
 Oct 1 Kentrell Claiborne, Atlantic City RSF4
 Oct 22 Anthony Pietrantonio, New York RSF5
 Dec 2 Santos Martinez, New York KO2

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 11 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

James MOORE

Light-middleweight Born: Arklow, 26 February, 1978. Based in New York. Irish welterweight champion 2001, 2002, 2003. Irish welterweight runner-up 2004 (Henry Coyle). World Championships bronze medallist, Belfast, 2001.

2005

Aug 4 Gabriel Garcia, New York RSF2
 Aug 26 Cory Jones, White Plains PTS4
 Sep 17 Hollister Elliott, Mansfield, Massachusetts KO3
 Nov 4 Manji Conteh, New York RSF3

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2006

Mar 16 Jose Felix, New York RSF3

Apr 20 Chuck Orso, New York RSF1

June 3 Salaheddine Sarhani, Dublin KO4

July 22 Jorge Alberto Gonzalez, Atlantic City PTS6

Sep 29 Willie Cruz, New York RSF2

2007

Feb 16 Edson Aguirre, New York RSF3

May 2 Angel David Gonzalez, New York PTS6

July 12 Chris Overbey, New York KO3

Oct 18 Chad Greenleaf, New York PTS6

Nov 21 Thomas Davis, New York RSF2

2008

Mar 15 Juan Carlos Candelo, New York PTS10

June 4 Gabriel Rosado, New York L-PTS8

Aug 6 Christian Lloyd Joseph, New York PTS8

Dec 13 Yuri Foreman, Atlantic City L-PTS10

(North American light-middleweight title challenge)

2009

May 8 Joseph De Los Santos PTS6

2010

June 6 Pawel Wolak, New York L-PTS10

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 20 WON: 17 DREW: 0 LOST: 3

Andy MURRAY

Lightweight Born: Cavan, 10 September, 1982. Irish lightweight champion 2002, 2003, 2004.

2005

Mar 18 Jonathan Jones, Belfast RSF4

Oct 9 Billy Smith, London PTS4

Nov 17 Silence Saheed, London PTS4

2006

Feb 2 Ian Reid, London RSF4

Mar 30 Frederic Gosset, London PTS6

May 21 Carl Allen, London PTS4

June 3 Tony Jourda, Dublin RSF3

2007

Oct 4 Billy Smith, London PTS8

Dec 8 James Gorman, Belfast T-PTS4

(For vacant Irish light-welterweight title)

2008

Mar 22 Leonard Lothian, Dublin RSF3

Mar 29 Juris Ivanovs, Letterkenny RSF3

Apr 12 Wellington De Jesus, Castlebar KO1

July 12 Peter McDonagh, Dublin PTS10

(For vacant Irish lightweight title)

2009

Feb 7 Ali Wyatt, Craigavon RSF3

Mar 21 Daniel Rasilla, Dublin PTS12

(For vacant European Union lightweight title)

July 18 Adam Kelly, London RTD3

Dec 5 Alex Bone, Dublin PTS6

2010

Feb 13 Oisin Fagan, Dublin RSF5

(Irish lightweight title defence)

May 15 Amir Unsworth, Limerick RTD2

June 11 Jon Baguley, Belfast RSF2

June 26 Laszlo Robert Balogh, Cork RSF3

Oct 2 John Nolasco, Letterkenny PTS10

Nov 20 Claudinei Lacerda, Castlebar PTS10

2011

Apr 16 Graham Higginson, Manchester PTS8

June 4 Gavin Rees, Cardiff L-PTS12

(For vacant European lightweight title)

FIGHTS: 25 WON: 24 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Danny MULHERN

Light-welterweight Born: Donegal, 1 October, 1989. Based in Sheffield.

2011

July 31 Sid Razak, Luton PTS4

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Paddy MURPHY

Welterweight Born: Newry, 28 September, 1987. Based in Australia.

2011

May 13 David Bainbridge, Fortitude Valley RSF1
 Sep 30 Mick Shaw, Fortitude Valley PTS4
 Oct 28 Kurt Finlayson, Mansfield PTS4
 Dec 15 Brett John Smith, Brisbane RSF4 (*For vacant Queensland welterweight title*)

FIGHTS: 4 WON: 4 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Lee MURTAGH

Middleweight Born: Belfast, 30 September, 1973. Based in Leeds.

1995

June 12 Dave Curtis, Bradford PTS6
 Sep 25 Roy Gbasai, Bradford PTS6
 Oct 30 Cameron Raeside, Bradford L-PTS6
 Dec 11 Donovan Davey, Bradford PTS6

1996

Jan 13 Peter Varnavas, Halifax PTS6
 Feb 5 Seamus Casey, Bradford PTS6
 May 20 Shaun O'Neill, Bradford PTS6
 June 24 Michael Alexander, Bradford PTS6
 October 28 Jimmy Vincent L-TKO2

1997

April 14 Lee Simpkin PTS6
 Oct 9 Brian Dunn, Leeds PTS6

1998

Mar 5 Wayne Shepherd, Leeds PTS6
 Aug 8 Alan Gilbert, Scarborough PTS4

1999

Mar 13 Keith Palmer, Manchester DREW6

Sep 27 Jawaid Khaliq, Leeds L-RSF5

(For vacant WBF inter-continental light-middleweight title)

2000

Feb 27 Gareth Lovell, Leeds PTS6

Sep 24 Jon Foster, Shaw PTS6

2001

May 17 Ojay Abrahams, Leeds L-RSF2

(For vacant British masters light-middleweight title)

2002

Mar 3 Howard Clarke, Shaw NO-CON3

Apr 19 Neil Bonner, Darlington PTS6

June 21 Wayne Shepherd, Leeds, PTS10

(For vacant British masters middleweight title)

Dec 2 Martyn Bailey, Leeds L-RSF6

(British masters middleweight title defence)

2003

May 10 Darren Rhodes, Huddersfield L-PTS6

Sep 15 Matt Scriven, Leeds DSQ9

(British masters light-middleweight title challenge)

Dec 1 Gary Beardlsey, Leeds L-RSF8

(British masters light-middleweight title defence)

2004

June 8 Robert Burton, Sheffield L-KO3

(For vacant Central Area light-middleweight title)

Dec 15 Dean Walker, Sheffield PTS10

(Central Area middleweight title challenge)

2005

May 20 Jason Rushton, Doncaster PTS10
(Central Area light-middleweight title defence)

2006

Jan 27 Gary Woolcombe, Dagenham L-RSF4

2007

June 3 John Musgrove, Barnsley PTS6
 June 30 Peter Dunn, Belfast PTS6
 Aug 11 Graham Delehedy, Liverpool PTS6
 Oct 13 Tye Williams, Belfast PTS6
 Dec 8 Ciaran Healy, Belfast L-KO5
(For vacant Irish light-middleweight title)

2008

Dec 5 Lee Edwards, Sheffield L-PTS10
(British Masters light-middleweight title challenge)

2009

Apr 18 Carl Drake, Galway PTS6
 Oct 17 Paul Royston, York PTS6
 Nov 14 Marcen Gierke, Limerick PTS6

2010

Sep 18 Dean Walker, Rotherham PTS6
 Nov 6 Anthony Fitzgerald, Limerick NO-CON2
(Irish super-middleweight title challenge)

2011

Jan 30 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin L-RSF7
(Irish super-middleweight title challenge)
 Apr 10 Bobby Wood, Rotherham, PTS6
 May 14 Ryan Clark, York PTS4
 Aug 12 Darren Cruise, Castlebar PTS4
 Sep 15 Steve Spence, Leeds PTS6

FIGHTS: 46 WON: 31 DREW: 1 NO-DEC: 2 LOST: 12

Tony NELLINS

Light-welterweight Born: Belfast, 12 June, 1991. Real name: Tony Mills.

2010

Dec 15 Jason Carr, Belfast PTS4

2011

May 28 Dan Carr, Belfast PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 2 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Eddie NESBITT

Featherweight Born: Belfast, 17 May, 1988.

2011

June 25 Marc McCullough, Craigavon L-RSF2

Oct 8 Billy Lavelle, London PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Noel O'BRIEN

Light-welterweight Born: Dublin, 24 December, 1978.

2010

Dec 10 Asen Vasilev, Dublin PTS4

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Simon O'DONNELL*Middleweight Born: Galway, 15 January, 1986.*2006

Sep 15 Andres Larrinaga, Philadelphia PTS4

Sep 29 Terrance Miller, New York RSF4

Nov 17 Joshua Snyder, Philadelphia RSF1

2007

Apr 6 Joe Christy, Philadelphia PTS4

Aug 10 Danny Rivera, Philadelphia L-RSF4

Sep 23 Anthony Young, London PTS6

2008

Mar 15 Chris Overbey, New York KO2

Oct 4 Antonio Baker, Philadelphia KO5

Oct 17 Adrian Redmond, Winston-Salem KO2

2009-2010

Inactive

2011

June 18 Sergejs Savrinovics, London PTS4

Oct 7 Ty Mitchell, London RSF6

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 10 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Kevin O'HARA*Super-featherweight Born: Belfast, September 21, 1981. Irish featherweight runner-up 2001 (John Paul Campbell).*2002

Nov 2 Mike Harrington, Belfast RSF1

2003

Feb 1 Jus Wallie, Belfast RSF2

Mar 29 Jason Nesbitt, Portsmouth RSF3

June 14 Piotr Niesporek, Magdeburg PTS4

Oct 2 Wladimir Borov, Liverpool PTS6

Oct 30 Henry Janes, Belfast PTS6

Nov 29 Gareth Payne, Glasgow PTS4

2004

Mar 6 Henry Janes, Glasgow PTS4

Apr 1 Buster Dennis, London PTS4

May 6 Choi Tseveenpurev, Barnsley L-PTS8

Oct 10 Jean Marie Codet, Belfast PTS8

2005

June 17 Willie Limond, Glasgow L-PTS10

(For vacant Celtic super-featherweight title)

Nov 24 Damian Owen, Lurgan PTS6

2006

May 20 Daniel Thorpe, Belfast PTS6

Oct 26 Eric Patrac, Belfast PTS6

2007

Nov 30 Henry Castle, London L-PTS8

2008

Apr 19 Eddie Hyland, Dublin L-PTS10

(For vacant Irish super-featherweight title)

Nov 8 Robin Deakin, London RSF1

2009

Feb 7 Silence Saheed, Craigavon RSF3

May 15 Jon Baguley, Belfast PTS6

June 19 Ricky Burns, Glasgow L-PTS12

(Commonwealth super-featherweight title challenge)

Nov 6 Mickey Coveney, Belfast PTS6

2010

May 28 Gary Sykes, Huddersfield L-PTS12

(British super-featherweight title challenge)

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 23 WON: 17 DREW: 0 LOST: 6

Eamon O'KANE

Middleweight Born: Dungiven, 18 March, 1982. European Championships middleweight bronze medallist, Liverpool, 2008. Commonwealth Games middleweight gold medallist, New Delhi, 2010.

2011

June 4 Dmitrijus Kalinovskis, Cardiff RSF1

June 25 Tommy Tolan, Craigavon RTD5

Sep 10 Joe Rea, Belfast PTS8

FIGHTS: 3 WON: 3 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Stephen ORMOND

Lightweight Born: Dublin, 18 April, 1983. Irish featherweight champion 2002, 2003. Irish lightweight champion 2005.

2008

Oct 26 Juris Ivanovs, Killarney PTS4

2009

Jan 30 Jevgenijs Kirillovs, Dublin PTS4

Mar 19 Jonathan Ocasio, Worcester, Massachusetts RTD1

June 5 Sergi Ganjelashvili, New York PTS6

July 18 Israel Suarez, New York PTS6

Nov 21 Andrew Costa, Crossville, Tennessee RSF1

2010

Sep 4 Johnny Greaves, Glasgow PTS4

Dec 4 Sebastien Cornu, Glasgow RSF6

2011

Mar 12 Mickey Coveney, Glasgow RSF7

June 25 Valentin Stoychev, Dublin RSF5

Sep 9 Ibrar Riyaz, London PTS8

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 11 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Gary O'SULLIVAN

Middleweight Born: Cork, 14 July, 1984.

2008

Jan 26 Peter Dunn, Cork RSF6

Mar 15 Robert Harris, Boston RSF

Apr 19 Tye Williams, Dublin RSF1

July 5 Eugen Stan, Dublin PTS6

Sep 13 Sergejs Volodins, Cork RTD1

Oct 26 Idiozan Matos, Killarney RSF3

2009

Mar 14 Jimmy LeBlanc, Dorchester, Massachusetts DSQ4

Apr 25 Marcin Piatkowski, Cork KO1

July 25 Arturs Jaskuls, Dublin PTS6

Dec 4 Ciaran Healy, Cork PTS10

(For vacant Irish middleweight title)

2010

June 26 Sylvain Touzet, Cork RSF3

2011

May 21 Ryan Clark, London KO1

June 25 Robbie Long, Dublin RSF1

(Irish middleweight title defence)

FIGHTS: 13 WON: 13 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Mike PEREZ

Heavyweight Born: Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, 20 October, 1985.

Based in Cork. World Junior Championships light-heavyweight gold medallist, Jeju, 2004.

2008

Jan 26 Jevgenijs Stamburskis, Cork RSF1

Feb 2 Sandor Balogh, Limerick RSF1

Mar 22 Tomasz Zeprzalka, Dublin PTS6

April 12 Howard Daley, Castlebar RSF1

Sep 13 Claudemir Dias, Cork KO1

Oct 26 Luis Oscar Ricail, Killarney RSF1

2009

Jan 27 Harry Duiven, Cork KO2

Feb 28 Zack Page, Newcastle PTS8

2010

May 15 Edgars Kalnars, Limerick RSF1

May 15 Tomas Mrazek, Limerick RSF1

June 26 Jason Barnett, Cork KO1

Nov 6 Pavels Dolgovs, Limerick RSF1

2011

Mar 4 Ismail Abdoul, Doncaster PTS8

May 7 Kertson Maxwell, London PTS3
(*Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

May 7 Gregory Tony, London RSF1
(*Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

May 7 Tye Fields, London RSF1
(*Final of Prizefighter tournament*)

Nov 9 Zack Page, London PTS8

Dec 30 Friday Ahunanya, Carbazon PTS10

FIGHTS: 18 WON: 18 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Jamie POWER

Light-heavyweight Born: Limerick, 29 January, 1981.

2008

Apr 12 Leonid Dmitrichenko, Castlebar KO2

July 19 Sandris Tomsons, Limerick PTS4

Sep 13 Stefan Stanko, Cork RSF3

2009

Jan 17 Martins Kukuls, Cork PTS6

Apr 25 Vladimir Idranyi, Cork PTS6

July 25 Kirilas Psonko, Dublin RSF4

Sep 26 Michael Sweeney, Dublin L-RSF3

Nov 14 Aleksandrs Dunecs, Limerick RSF5

2010

May 15 John Waldron, Limerick L-PTS10
 (For vacant Irish light-heavyweight title)

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 7 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Gavin PRUNTY

Welterweight Born: Dublin, 3 October, 1983.

2009

Apr 18 Ibrar Riyaz, Galway L-PTS4
 Oct 24 Asen Bonev, Dublin RSF1
 Dec 5 Kaloyan Kyuchukov, Dublin KO1

2010

Aug 7 Johnny Greaves, Dublin PTS4
 Sep 11 Arek Malek, Dublin PTS4
 Nov 6 Marius Kravcukas, Limerick L-PTS4
 Dec 10 Franck Aiello, Dublin RSF3

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 5 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Stevie QUINN JNR

Bantamweight Born: Belfast, 3 February, 1993.

2011

May 28 Delroy Spencer, Belfast PTS6

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Joe REA

Middleweight Born: Ballymena, 24 July, 1983.

2004

June 11 Devin Womack, Plymouth, Massachusetts RSF1
Aug 10 Henry Dukes, Hyannis, Massachusetts NO-CON2
Oct 1 Robert Muhammad, Boston PTS4

2005

Mar 25 Jerald Lowe, Boston RSF3
Apr 1 Cory Phelps, New Haven, Connecticut RSF2
Nov 19 Michael Rayner, Boston RSF1

2006

July 7 Valentino Jalomo, Hyannis, Massachusetts DREW4

2007

Inactive

2008

Apr 13 Jamie Ambler, Birmingham PTS4
Nov 22 Martin Murray, London L-PTS3
(*Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

2009

Nov 6 Phillip Townley, Belfast PTS4

2010

Inactive

2011

Feb 12 Dominik Britsch, Muelheim, Germany L-PTS8
Mar 5 Grzegorz Proksa, Huddersfield L-KO4
June 4 Patrick Nielsen, Copenhagen L-RSF3
July 10 Kenny Anderson, Colne L-RTD4
Sep 10 Eamon O'Kane, Belfast L-PTS8

Sep 17 Levan Ghvamichava, Belfast L-RTD1

FIGHTS: 16 WON: 7 DREW: 1 NO-CON: 1 LOST 7

Martin ROGAN

Heavyweight Born: Belfast, 1 May, 1974. Irish super-heavyweight runner-up 2003 (Thomas Crampton). Irish super-heavyweight champion, 2004.

2004

Oct 28 Lee Mountford, Belfast RSF1

2005

Mar 18 Billy Bessey, Belfast PTS4

June 4 Tony Booth, Manchester RSF2

2006

May 20 Darren Morgan, Belfast PTS4

Oct 7 Paul King, Belfast PTS6

Oct 26 Jevgenijs Stamburskis, Belfast RSF3

2007

Oct 13 Radcliffe Green, Belfast RSF2

2008

Apr 11 Alex Tibbs, London RSF2

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Apr 11 Dave Ferguson, London PTS3

(Semi-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Apr 11 David Dolan, London PTS3

(Final of Prizefighter tournament)

Dec 6 Audley Harrison, London PTS10

2009

Feb 28 Matt Skelton, Birmingham RSF11
(*Commonwealth heavyweight title challenge*)

May 15 Sam Sexton, Belfast L-RSF8
(*Commonwealth heavyweight title defence*)

Nov 6 Sam Sexton, Belfast L-RTD6
(*Commonwealth heavyweight title challenge*)

2010

Nov 6 Yavor Marinchev, Limerick RSF1

Nov 20 Werner Kreiskott, Castlebar PTS6

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 16 WON: 14 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Neil SINCLAIR

Welterweight Born: Belfast, 23 February, 1974. Commonwealth Games gold medallist, Victoria 1994. Irish welterweight runner-up 1994 (Neil Gough). Irish welterweight champion, 1995.

1995

Apr 14 Marty Duke, Belfast RSF2

May 27 Andrew Jervis, Belfast L-RTD3

July 17 Andy Peach, London RSF1

Aug 26 George Wilson, Belfast PTS4

Oct 7 Wayne Shepherd, Belfast PTS6

Dec 2 Brian Coleman, Belfast RSF2

1996

Apr 13 Hughie Davey, Liverpool PTS6

May 28 Kasi Kaihau, Belfast RSF2

Sep 3 Dennis Berry, Belfast L-PTS6

1997

Sep 27 Trevor Meikle, Belfast RSF5

Dec 20 Chris Pollock, Belfast RTD3

1998

Feb 21 Leigh Wicks, Belfast RSF1

Sep 19 Paul Denton, Dublin RSF1

Dec 7 Michael Smyth, Acton KO1

1999

Jan 22 Mark Ramsey, Dublin KO3

June 5 David Kirk, Cardiff PTS8

Oct 16 Paul Dyer, Belfast RSF8

2000

Mar 18 Dennis Berry, Glasgow RSF2

May 16 Paul Dyer, Warrington RSF6

June 24 Chris Henry, Glasgoe RSF1

Aug 12 Adrian Chase, London RSF2

Dec 16 Daniel Santos, Sheffield L-RSF2

(WBO welterweight title challenge)

2001

Apr 28 Zoltan Szili, Cardiff KO2

Sep 22 Viktor Fessetchko London PTS6

Nov 19 Harry Dhami, Glasgow KO5

(British welterweight title challenge)

2002

Apr 20 Leonti Voronchuk, Cardiff RSF4

June 15 Derek Roche, Leeds KO1

(British welterweight title defence)

Aug 17 Dmitry Kashkan, Cardiff RSF4

Nov 2 Paul Knights, Belfast RSF2

(British welterweight title defence)

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2003

Feb 1 Bradley Pryce, Belfast RSF8
(*British welterweight title defence*)

2004

July 30 Craig Lynch, London PTS6

2005

Mar 18 Taz Jones, Belfast L-RSF1

2006

July 5 Jerome Ellis, Colorado Springs L-KO6

2007

Feb 17 Arek Malek, Cork RSF4

June 23 Francis Jones, Dublin L-KO5

Aug 18 Sergejs Savrinovics, Cork PTS6

2008

Mar 29 Juan Martinez Bas, Letterkenny PTS8

June 7 Daniele Petrucci, Rome L-PTS12

(*European Union welterweight title challenge*)

2009

May 15 Henry Coyle, Belfast RSF3

(*For vacant Irish light-middleweight title*)

Nov 6 Janos Petrovics, Belfast RSF4

2010

Feb 26 Bradley Pryce, London L-PTS3

(*Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament*)

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 41 WON: 33 DREW: 0 LOST: 8

Michael SWEENEY*Light-heavyweight Born: Ballinrobe, 17 January, 1983.*2007

Oct 20 Leonid Dmitrichenko, Dublin RSF3

Dec 15 Klaidis Kristapsons, Dublin PTS4

2008

Feb 2 Remigijus Ziausys, Limerick PTS4

Mar 15 David Williams, Boston DREW4

Apr 12 Roland Horvath, Castlebar RSF4

July 5 Stan Catalin, Dublin RSF2

Sep 13 Aleksandrs Dunecs, Cork RSF2

2009

May 23 Mark Nilsen, Castlebar PTS6

Sep 26 Jamie Power, Dublin RSF3

Dec 19 Felipe Romero, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico L-RSF8

2010

May 15 Tommy Tolan, Limerick PTS4

2011

Mar 19 Ian Tims, Dublin L-PTS10

(For vacant Irish cruiserweight title)

Aug 12 John Waldron, Castlebar RTD3

Sep 10 Billy Boyle, Brighton PTS8

FIGHTS: 14 WON: 11 DREW: 1 LOST: 2

Damian TAGGART*Welterweight Born: Omagh, 24 November, 1982.*2007

Dec 8 Peter Dunn, Belfast PTS4

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2008

Mar 29 Janis Chernouskis, Letterkenny L-RSF1

Nov 15 Jevgenijs Fjodorovs, Castlebar RSF3

2009

Nov 6 Johnny Greaves, Magherafelt PTS4

Dec 5 Wladimir Borov, Dublin PTS6

2010

Inactive

2011

June 25 Giuseppe Deprato, Carigavon PTS4

Sep 10 Sid Razak, Belfast L-RSF2

FIGHTS: 7 WON: 5 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Willie THOMPSON

Welterweight Born: Ballyclare, 2 January, 1980.

2007

June 30 Paul Royston, Belfast PTS4

Aug 25 Artur Jashkul, Dublin PTS4

Oct 13 Peter Dunn, Belfast PTS6

Dec 8 Duncan Cottier, Belfast PTS4

2008

Mar 22 Semjons Morosheks, Dublin PTS4

May 31 Janis Chernouskis, Belfast PTS6

Dec 18 Karl Chiverton, Dublin DREW4

2009

May 15 Michael Jennings, Belfast L-RSF4

2010

Oct 10 Ashley Theophane, London L-PTS6

Nov 19 Paul Burns, Wilshaw L-PTS6

2011

Mar 5 Kris Carslaw, Scotstoun L-PTS10

(British Masters light-middleweight title challenge)

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 6 DREW: 1 LOST: 4

Declan TIMLIN

Heavyweight Born: Rossport.

2004

Feb 28 Vinny Donatelli, Lewiston, Maine KO1

Mar 27 Joe Roedale, Lewiston, Maine RSF1

Sep 14 James Steele, New York PTS4

2005 - 2006

Inactive

2007

July 14 Peter Szabo, Dublin PTS4

Aug 18 Jevgenijs Stamburskis, Cork RSF7

Dec 15 Aleksandrs Selezens, Dublin PTS4

2008

Apr 19 Mircea Telecan, Dublin RSF4

2009

Inactive

2010

Oct 9 Shane McPhilbin, London L-RSF2

(Quarter-final of Prizefighter tournament)

Nov 17 Ian Lewison, London L-RSF1

2011

Inactive

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 7 DREW: 0 LOST: 2

Ian TIMS

Light-heavyweight Born: Dublin, 4 December, 1979. Irish middleweight runner-up 1999 (Conal Carmichael). Irish light-heavyweight champion, 2002. Irish heavyweight champion, 2005, 2007. Irish heavyweight runner-up 2006 (Alan Reynolds).

2008

Mar 22 Klaidis Kristapsons, Dublin PTS4
Apr 19 Mirica Edvardo, Dublin PTS4
July 12 Jevgenijs Andrejevs, Dublin PTS4
Sep 13 Alexander Ignatov, Cork RTD1
Oct 26 Remigijus Ziausys, Killarney PTS6

2009

Jan 30 Jevgenijs Stamburskis, Dublin PTS6
Dec 4 Radoslaw Musial, Cork RSF2

2010

Inactive

2011

Jan 30 Viktor Szalai, Dublin RSC3
Mar 19 Michael Sweeney, Dublin PTS10
(*For vacant Irish cruiserweight title*)

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 9 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Tommy TOLAN*Middleweight Born: Belfast, 4 November, 1973.*2001

Nov 16 Tomas Da Silva, Dublin L-RSF6

2002

Inactive

2003

Apr 5 Ray Atherton, Belfast RSF2

Oct 4 George Robshaw, Belfast L-PTS4

Nov 22 Wes Flemming, Belfast RSF1

2004

Inactive

2005

May 14 Michael Banbula, Dublin PTS4

2006 - 2009

Inactive

2010

May 15 Michael Sweeney, Limerick L-PTS4

Aug 7 JJ McDonagh, Dublin KO3

Dec 15 Tony Jeffries, Belfast L-RSF2

2011

June 25 Eamon O'Kane, Craigavon L-RTD5

Sep 17 Joe Hillerby, Belfast L-PTS4

Oct 15 Rocky Fielding, Liverpool L-PTS6

Dec 14 Billy Joe Saunders, London L-KO1

FIGHTS: 12 WON: 4 DREW: 0 LOST: 8

Phillip TOWNLEY

Middleweight Born: Belfast, 8 January, 1980.

2009

Nov 6 Joe Rea, Belfast L-PTS4

2010

May 8 Rick Boulter, Belfast PTS4

May 29 Jamie Boness, Bedford L-PTS4

June 25 Tony Hill, Brentwood L-PTS6

Aug 7 Anthony Fitzgerald, Dublin L-PTS6

Nov 19 John McCallum, Wilshaw L-PTS6

Dec 4 Callum Johnson, Glasgow L-RSF2

2011

Jan 30 JJ McDonagh, Dublin L-PTS8

Apr 15 Paul Allison, Renfew L-PTS4

FIGHTS: 9 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 8

Declan TRAINOR

Cruiserweight Born: Warrenpoint, 11 August, 1988. Based in Australia.

2010

July 22 Jamie Bogovic, Fairfield Heights RSF1

2011

Inactive

FIGHT: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

John WALDRON*Light-heavyweight Born: Ballyhaunis, 4 March, 1975.*2008

Oct 26 Ciaran Healy, Killarney L-PTS4

2009

Jan 30 James Tucker, Dublin PTS4

Apr 18 Danny Couzens, Galway L-DSQ4

May 23 Romans Sevcenko, Castlebar RTD2

Oct 24 Jamie Norkett, Dublin RSF 7

Nov 14 Martins Kukuls, Limerick PTS6

2010

May 15 Jamie Power, Limerick PTS10

(For vacant Irish light-heavyweight title)

Aug 7 Andrejs Barabanovs, Dublin L-RSF6

Nov 20 Ciaran Healy, Castlebar L-RSF5

2011

Aug 12 Michael Sweeney, Castlebar L-RTD3

Oct 22 Robert Woge, Tuebingen, Germany L-RSF2

FIGHTS: 11 WON: 5 DREW: 0 LOST: 6

Dee WALSH*Light-middleweight Born: Belfast.*2011

Sep 17 Gerard Healy, Belfast PTS4

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Paddy WARD

Heavyweight Born: Galway, 1973.

2010

Dec 10 Pavels Dolgovs, Dublin L-PTS4

2011

Mar 19 Igoris Borucha, Dublin PTS4

FIGHTS: 2 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 1

Tommy WARD

Heavyweight Born: Edinburgh, 9 Febuary, 1989. Raised in Galway, based in Leicester.

2011

Dec 4 Andy Mitchell, Whitwick KO4

FIGHTS: 1 WON: 1 DREW: 0 LOST: 0

Luke WILTON

Bantamweight Born: Barking, 12 May, 1988. Based in Belfast.

2008

Mar 29 Istvan Ajtai, Letterkenny RSF1

Apr 19 Delroy Spencer, Dublin PTS4

May 31 Kemal Plavci, Belfast PTS4

Dec 18 Usman Ahmed, Dublin L-PTS4

2009

Apr 25 Delroy Spencer, Belfast PTS4

May 15 Anwar Alfadi, Belfast DREW6

June 28 Delroy Spencer, Luton L-PTS4

Nov 6 Kevin Coglean, Belfast PTS4

Nov 20 Muharen Osmanov, Belfast RSF1

2010

May 8 Sali Mustafov, Belfast RSF1

Dec 15 Usman Ahmed, Belfast PTS6

2011

May 28 Salim Salimov, Belfast RSF3

Sep 10 Arpad Vass, Belfast PTS6

FIGHTS: 13 WON: 10 DREW: 1 LOST: 2

How they saw it...an end of year summary by those in the know

David Mohan – *Belfast journalist*

When looking back on how Irish boxers fared in 2011 it is hard not think of it being a case of 'so near yet so far'. The year began quietly but suddenly we were faced with three world championship fights which unfortunately, all ended in disappointment. Willie Casey was out of his depth against Guillermo Rigondeaux in their WBA interim super-bantamweight title clash on March 19. Later that night, Brian Magee put up a heroic effort against IBF super-middleweight king Lucian Bute but was stopped in the tenth, while a month later, Paul McCloskey lost out to Amir Khan in controversial circumstances at the MEN Arena.

However, things began to look up and when the Magee road show rolled into Costa Rica where the veteran southpaw outpointed Jaime Barboza for the WBA interim 168lb strap. McCloskey returned with a hard fought points victory over the 'Khanqueror' Breidis Prescott at an electric Odyssey Arena in September. For me, this was the performance of the year given the heart shown by 'Dudey' in overcoming a disastrous start against the Colombian banger. Let's hope the Dungiven stylist gets a second crack at world honours this year.

Prior to that fight, the stock of Belfast's Carl Frampton rose another few notches after he proved he had learned from the Robbie Turley experience and stopped game Aussie Mark Quon to collect the Commonwealth super-bantamweight title. The only disappointment was that Kiko Martinez pulled out of their proposed European title fight

scheduled for that evening but that is surely one contest 'The Jackal' can hope for in 2012.

Eamon O'Kane began his pro career in fine style and I expect the Derry man to continue his onward march, while Jamie Conlan may finally get the title shot he craves, in 2012. Matthew Macklin's disputed points defeat to Felix Sturm actually boosted his career as the former Tipperary minor hurler is likely to face Sergio Martinez in New York on St Patrick's Day, while Andy Lee is also in the middleweight mix and could land a title shot of his own. With Madison Square Garden set to become a little part of Ireland with many of our top boxers touted to appear on that bill, the exposure for Irish fighters is set to propel them onto great things and 2012 could well be the year when the world finally sits up and takes notice of the fighting Irish.

Bernard O'Neill – *Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA)*

Three European Senior gold medals and three places secured at the London 2012 Olympics were just some of the highlights of another action-packed 12 months for Ireland's most successful Olympic sport. The opening shots of what was to prove to be another eventful year for Irish pugilism were discharged at the 2011 Elite National Senior Championships at Dublin's National Stadium in February.

Michael Conlan, Paddy Barnes, Adam Nolan, Sinead Kavanagh, Katie Taylor, Joe Ward, Darren O'Neill, Con Sheehan, Michael McDonagh, John Joe Nevin, Adam Nolan and Cathal McMonagle were amongst those leaving the home of Irish boxing with Elite belts adorning their waists. Ward, who would go on to win a European gold medal aged just 17 this year, denied Ken Egan an 11th title in-a-row following an incident-packed 81Kg duel, while Michael Conlan, Darren O'Neill and John Joe Nevin progressed to qualify for the 2012 Olympic Games.

Ross Hickey, meantime, departed from the South Circular Road venue with an Elite title and the boxer of the tournament award added to his impressive CV. Ireland did the double over the mighty China in New Ross and Waterford in March, Katie Taylor playing her part in the victories over the Asian kingpins with a brace of wins over Cheng Dong, an opponent she had beaten in the 2008 and 2010 AIBA World lightweight finals in China and Barbados respectively. Scotland the brave travelled to the National Stadium on April 1st - and you have to be brave to take on Ireland at IABA HQ these days - and slipped to a 6-3 defeat, with 2008 World Youth bronze medalist David Joe Joyce posting one of Ireland's wins. Twenty four hours later, St Michael's Athy welterweight Christy Joyce was edged out 2-0 by Cuba's Osnay Torres in the 69Kg Multi-Nations Youth final in Anapa, Russia.

George Bates, David Roche, Kieran Forde, Stephen Broadhurst and Gary Sweeney settled for bronze following semi-final reversals by the banks of the Black Sea resort. Six days later, John Joe Nevin, Darren O'Neill and Joe Ward won triple gold at the Felix Stamm Multi Nations in Warsaw. Con Sheehan took home silver. Ireland hoovered up five gold medals at the Gee Bee Multi-Nations in Helsinki on April 10, with Michael Conlan, David Oliver Joyce, Jason Quigley, Ken Egan and Tommy McCarthy finishing first past the post. The Ulster duo of Quigley and Conlan also scooped the Best Boxer and Best Technical Boxer awards in the Finnish capital to put the icing on the cake for the Boys in Green.

Also in April, Katie Rowland, Michaela Walsh and Austeja Accueita took home three bronze medals from the first AIBA World Women's Youth and Junior Championships in Turkey. On May 7th, Ireland returned to Warsaw to meet Poland and lost out 5-4 in a nine-bout international. Chris Phelan, Declan Geraghty, John Joe Joyce and David Joe Joyce won for the visitors. On May

11th, the usual suspects, Michael Conlan, Willie McLaughlin, Darren O'Neill and Con Sheehan, chalked up victories in a 5-4 defeat to Germany in their opening match of a Round Robin in Cottbus. Two days later Conlan, Tyrone McCullagh, Michael McDonagh, McLaughlin, O'Neill and Ken Egan had their hands raised in triumph as Ireland beat Great Britain 6-2 in Schwedt Oder.

Also in May, David Kennedy and John Stokes won bronze at the President Heydar Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan. In June, Ireland's Elite squad created another piece of boxing history at the European Senior Championships in Ankara, Turkey. Joe Ward and Ray Moylette secured double gold in the light-heavyweight and light-welterweight categories following a 20-12 win over Russia's Nikita Ivanov and an 18-10 decision over England's Thomas Stalker. Those victories, a year after Paddy Barnes finished on top of the European light-flyweight podium in Moscow, helped Ireland finish in second spot in the rankings table behind powerhouses Russia. Head coach Billy Walsh, Zuar Antia and Jimmy Halpin worked Ireland's corner in Ankara. Dominic O'Rourke was Irish Director of Boxing and Des Donnelly was Irish Team manager. Conor McCarthy (physio), Gerry Hussey (Performance psychologist) and Alan Swanton (Performance analysis) were also part of the Irish squad at the Continental deciders.

"Joe and Ray were absolutely magnificent in their finals," said Des Donnelly. "They boxed very, very well and it's fantastic to be taking two gold medals from such a prestigious tournament."

Meantime, there was additional European glory in June when Michael O'Reilly claimed gold and the boxer of the tournament award at the Brandenburg Cup in Germany. Joe Fitzpatrick, Bernard O'Reilly and Edward Fitzpatrick won bronze. In July, John Nevin, Luke Thomas and Martin Conroy took three bronze medals from the European Junior Championships in Hungary. Later that month one of the

more remarkable stories of the year was unfolding at the European Schoolboy Championships in Grozny, Russia. Twelve months previously, John Joyce (Moate BC) was cruelly denied a place in the 41.5Kg final of the European Schoolboy Championships in Bulgaria following a highly controversial 1-0 "defeat" to Ivan Dubovik of Russia. Irish team manager Paddy Gallagher's report from Bulgaria didn't pull any punches in relation to that defeat, and such was the level of consternation at the miscarriage of sporting justice, amongst Irish fans and neutrals, that Joyce was presented with the boxer of the tournament award. However, despite the circumstances of his loss, Joyce, showing remarkable sportsmanship for such a young man, wished his opponent well in the final. He also vowed that he would win gold at the 2011 European Schoolboy Championships. He remained true to that vow as he returned 12 months later to finish in pole position in Grozny. James Cleary and Matthew Burke won silver the same day.

Meanwhile, it was at the IABA-hosted 2011 European Youth Championships at the City West Hotel in Dublin in August that I casually remarked to a Scottish fan that no English boxer had made it through to the semi-finals.

"Our heeeeerts ar broken", he replied sardonically in a granite-like Glaswegian accent. The European Youth Championships, the flagship tournament of the IABA's Centenary year, were a huge success. AIBA President, Dr Ching-Kuo Wu, attended and hailed Europe's young prospects as the future of the sport. Ireland secured five medals at the Cit West. Stephen Broadhurst, Jack Morrissey and Joe Fitzpatrick settled for bronze following semi-finals defeats, while Stephen O'Reilly and Gary Sweeney reached the 69Kg and 81Kg finals. But there was double disappointment on August 27 when O'Reilly was somehow adjudged to have dropped a 16-15 verdict to Russia's Igor Kharitonov and Sweeney narrowly lost to Kharitonov's

compatriot, Vladimir Korsunov. Personally, I thought that O'Reilly did enough to win his final and should have got the decision, while Sweeney had Korsunov on the run in the final round but ran out of time and lost 16-13.

Meanwhile, Ireland travelled to the AIBA World Senior Championships and Olympic qualifiers in Baku, Azerbaijan with quiet confidence and a spring in their steps following their European campaign. But there were mixed fortunes on October 4 when David Oliver Joyce, Roy Sheehan, Joe Ward and Con Sheehan lost out just one win away from qualifying for the 30th Olympiad. Joyce was cruelly denied by a harsh public warning in the final few seconds of his bout with Jai Bhagwan, a warning which handed the Indian lightweight a 32-30 win and a plane ticket to London. Ward was edged out on a countback to Ehsan Rouzbahani of Iran. However, Michael Conlan, Darren O'Neill and John Joe Nevin didn't need to be asked twice with Olympic places up for grabs. All three won their last-16 clashes to reach the quarter-finals and secure automatic berths for the London Games. Conlan and O'Neill were beaten in the last-eight. Nevin, who won bronze at the 2009 AIBA World Championships in Milan, reached the semi-finals to become the first Irish male boxer to win two medals at World Championships level. But the Mullingar bantamweight, who was the youngest member of the Irish 2008 Olympic team, lost out in his quest to become the first Irish male boxer to reach an AIBA World Championships final following a countback reversal to England's Luke Campbell.

Ireland sent a nine-strong squad to the eighth European Women's Championships in Rotterdam, Holland in October and Katie Taylor arrived back with her fifth gold medal in-a-row after recording a 10-5 win over Russia's Sofya Ochigava in the 60Kg final. Ochigava had "beaten" Taylor 8-1 at the Usti Nad Labem Grand Prix in the Czech Republic in 2010, an outrageous result which suggested

that some of the ringside judges were in urgent need of an appointment with the eastern European equivalent of Specsavers. However, there was to be no victory for the Russian the second time around, as Taylor, who had her dad and coach Peter and Zuar Antia working her corner, got her tactics spot on to secure her 12th major title.

“Sofya is one of the best opponents I have ever met and I’m absolutely thrilled with the win, I can’t believe it really. She said to me after the final that ‘we can be friends now’,” said the three-time World champion after her victory. “Obviously, we are rivals inside the ring, but we really get on very well outside the ring. She’s a lovely person and she’s a fantastic boxer. It’s always a great feeling to win. In fact, it gets better every time. There was a lot of pressure on me going into this tournament and that pressure was there again this week. I would like to thank my dad and coaches Zuar Antia and Damien Walsh. Without them I wouldn’t have done it because you need world class coaches in your corner when you’re boxing world class opponents.

“It is very demanding mentally to have five fights in six days. Each day you have to pick yourself up mentally for a new contest and a new challenge, but that’s where my preparation and experience comes in. I have competed in quite a lot of major international tournaments and I have the experience of dealing with that pressure now. I make sure that I’m prepared well and I focus on one fight at a time.”

It was another remarkable victory for Taylor, who won her fourth EU title on-the-trot in June courtesy of a 25-9 win over Poland’s Karolina Graczyk in Katowice, Poland. Her points tally in four bouts in five days in Poland was 80 for and 30 against. Also in October, Tommy Murphy was elected President of the IABA at Annual Congress at the Inishowen Gateway Hotel in Buncrana, Donegal. Murphy, a native of Co. Louth, polled 143 votes. Wexford’s Nicky White, the only challenger, polled 109 votes. In November,

the Ireland and Scotland schoolboy sides shared the spoils in an 8-8 draw in Motherwell, while the Irish Elite squad secured five medals at the Olympic Test Event at the Excel Centre in London. Ken Egan and Con Sheehan won gold, but Conrad Cummings had to settle for silver despite a fine performance against Russian middleweight Maxim Koptyakov in the 75Kg final. David Oliver Joyce and Tommy McCarthy took home bronze from the dress rehearsal for the 2012 Olympics. Tyrone's Michael Gallagher was also presented with the 2011 AIBA World Referee and Judge Award in London, another historic first for Irish boxing.

Accepting his reward, Gallagher said that it was a very proud moment, adding that he was keeping his fingers crossed that he'd make the R&J panel for the Olympic Games. If he is selected for the 30th Olympiad – and he is the world number one – it could be a lucky omen for Ireland as Newry's Jackie Poucher was the last Irish R&J to officiate at Olympic level at the 1992 Games in Barcelona where Michael Carruth and Wayne McCullough won gold and silver.

Six Irish boxers also signed up for the inaugural World Series of Boxing (WSB) season in 2010/11. John Joe Nevin, who helped Paris United win out the WSB Team Championships, Ken Egan, Tommy McCarthy, Eamon O'Kane, David Oliver Joyce and John Joe Joyce competed. Nevin, Egan, Joyce, Con Sheehan, Willie McLaughlin, Sean Turner, Jason Quigley and Patrick Gallagher have signed up for the 2011/12 WSB season which is underway.

The above are some of the international highlights of the Centenary year of Irish amateur boxing, another successful 12 months for the sport home and abroad. Domestically, Ireland's clubs, the lifeblood of the sport, played their part in the continuing rejuvenation of the amateur version of the Sweet Science in Ireland.

The next six months will be a crucial period for Ireland's boxers, starting with the Elite Senior Championships at the National Stadium in January and February. The focus will then begin to switch to the final Olympic qualifier for European male boxers in April and the only Olympic qualifier for female boxers at the 2012 AIBA World Women's Championships in China in May.

There are ten Olympic places available for Irish boxers at both qualifiers, seven for men and three for women. It's all still to play for. London's calling.

Louis O'Meara – *Amateur boxing pundit*

Centenary Year has been an eventful year for the IABA both inside and outside of the ring, for various reasons. February's Senior Elite Championships saw Junior and Youth World Champion Joe Ward bring to a halt Kenny Egan's run of senior titles. Michael McDonagh showed his potential by beating seasoned former champions Eric Donovan and David Oliver Joyce on his way to winning at 60kg. Repeating these wins later on in the World Championship box-offs.

On the European scene Ireland now possesses four European champions. Katie Taylor continued her impressive run by winning her fifth title in a row to add to her three world titles. For the men, Joe Ward and Ray Moylette were successful. Continuing in the family success, Johnny Joyce (Moate), a cousin of Joe Ward, won gold at the European Schoolboy Championships. This was his second year in a row in the finals, having won silver in 2010. Ireland also had the honour of hosting the European Youth Championships at City West. Both Gary Sweeney and Michael O'Reilly can consider themselves very unlucky to end up with silver medals. Ireland also won bronzes through Stephen Broadhurst, Joe Fitzpatrick and Jack Morrissey.

The World Senior Championships in Turkey only provided Ireland with one medal, through John Joe Nevin (bronze). Mixed success brought three Irish boxers in Nevin, Michael and Darren O'Neill their dream tickets to London 2012. The rest will have one more chance in the last European qualifier in April in Istanbul. London 2012 also sees the introduction of women's boxing to the games for the first time. Qualifications for London will only come through The World Women's Championships which take place in China in May. Even though nothing in boxing is ever a certainty, we can be optimistic that Katie Taylor for one will add to our tally of boxers at the games.

Ireland continues to support The World Series of Boxing. This season sees eight boxers throughout the franchises; ranging from Paris and Leipzig to as far afield as Los Angeles and Mumbai. Also in London, in November, in a dry run for next year's games, in a tournament at The Excel Centre, Con Sheehan and Kenny Egan both won gold, with the latter boxing back at 81kg. Conrad Cummings of Holy Trinity took silver. But what success will 2012 bring? We will have to just wait and see. But one thing is for certain. I am sure there will be plenty of talking points.

Padraig Hoare – *Cork Examiner*

It was a largely quiet scene domestically for the boxing fan in 2011, after being spoiled for choice in recent years. The emergence of Matthew Macklin as a genuine world-class operator, alongside Andy Lee who corrected his only reverse with a ruthless dismantling of Bryan Vera, were the highlights of a stop-start year in Irish professional boxing.

The real story of 2011 for Irish boxing was the emergence of journalism of the highest quality covering all aspects of the paid game.

Leonard Gunning of Boxing-Ireland.com and Jonny Stapleton of Irish-boxing.com brought out the best in each

other, ala Sherlock Holmes and Dr Moriarty, continually bringing Irish fans the best in domestic news. If it didn't make it in to Leonard or Jonny's inbox, it wasn't news, simple as that. Irish boxing now has online coverage that is among the very best in the world. A new sheriff was also given his badge, with Green Jab aka Stephen Sharpe, serving his apprenticeship with Leonard Gunning before becoming as passionate and dedicated a writer as Ireland has seen in recent years.

For investigative journalism of the highest quality, look no further than Steve Wellings' excellent exposé of the nonsensical world of sanctioning bodies, and their make-it-up-as-you-go-along rules, on Irish-boxing.com. If Steve had submitted a similar piece to Sports Illustrated on higher profile organisations, he'd rightly be in line for a Pulitzer Prize. It was one of the most magnificently constructed stories of recent years, akin to some of Thomas Hauser's best work, and should be given to every aspiring Irish sports writer as evidence of how it should be done.

The aforementioned Four Kings - Gunning, Stapleton, Sharpe and Wellings - have convinced me that even if it is a quiet time in the ring for Irish boxing, we won't ever be left short of news outside it. Well done all.

Ciaran Harrison - *Irish boxing pundit*

When I look back on the year on Irish boxing, I can't help thinking whereas the amateurs are going from strength to strength, the pro game, particularly in the 26 counties, is floundering badly. RTE and (Brian) Peters are seemingly gone, Dolphil gone, Team Hyland taking their chances in America [and rightly so if they're not getting the support here], Nowhere to Hyde promotions aren't putting shows on also. It's not looking good for next year, unless TG4 with (Henry) Coyle or Box Nation with the Collins brothers promoting start running and broadcasting regular shows.

It's not much better up here in Belfast with the much talked about McCloskey show at the Odyssey in Feb/March quickly disappearing, to Paul now boxing in MSG New York instead. Frampton for some reason is defending his Commonwealth title in London rather than Belfast, and the two Martins, Lindsay and Rogan have simply vanished. The globe trotter Brian Magee boxes in Denmark which is another disappointment. It's obviously much easier to supply a boxer than it is to promote a show which Pat Magee [with Brian Magee] and Eddie Hearn [with Paul McCloskey] are doing.

On a positive note there is other talent from the country doing their stuff away from home with Macklin, Lee and the Hylands now based in the States, and Jamie Conlan and Stephen Ormond taking part in massive fights shortly in Britain. Conlan takes on former British champ Paul Edwards in a 10-round contest in Liverpool on January 21 and Ormond is boxing Kevin Mitchell in London on February 10 [both fights were unfortunately later scrapped]. Good luck to them and all our boxers in 2012.

Contributions

I would like to extend my gratitude to the many people who contributed to this book.

Photography

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Boxing Fever

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<http://www.irishboxingreview.com>