

THE IRISH BOXING REVIEW

2013 EDITION

STEVE WELLINGS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

‘Descending From Ireland’ by James Howard

‘It’s Been a Generally Positive Year for Our Fighters’ by David Mohan

‘Highs, Lows and Predictions – Boxing from 2012 to Present and Future’ by James Slater

‘The End for Hatton, But A New Beginning for Lennox Lewis’ by Marc Stockings

‘It’s Been An Enjoyable Year of Boxing’ by Paddy Appleton

‘Promoter Wars, Social Media Madness, Over-Hyped Prospects – Modern Day British Boxing in a Nut Shell’ by James Bairstow

‘McDonnell World Title Victory Was a Moment to Treasure’ by Jon Briggs

‘I Never Get Tired Writing About Boxing’ by Peter Wells

‘A Concise Review of Another Successful Year for Irish Amateur Boxing’ by Louis O’Meara

‘Let’s Look at the Current Standing of Some of the Most Significant Fighters on the Irish Boxing Scene Today’ by Jeremy O’Connell

‘Mike Stafford Will Be a Major Force Behind US Boxing Success’ by Jose Santana Jnr

Irish Boxing News Round-Up – 15th January 2012

Rigondeaux Returns for Ramos Test – 16th January 2012

Fighter of the Year Magee Planning for Danish Success – 17th January 2012

Conlan Eager to Drop Prospect Status – 18th January 2012

Magee Claims Irish Boxer of the Year Award After Away Win – 19th January 2012

Shamrock Shorts – 10th February 2012

Irish National Elite Championship Finals – 24th February 2012

Casey the Jewel in Emerald’s Crown – 24th February 2012

Casey Aims to Lead the New Belfast Breed – 26th February 2012

Casey Back With a Bang and Ready for the Big Names – 28th February 2012

Shamrock Shorts – 28th February 2012

‘Sugar’ Ray Ginley Looking Ahead After Debut Win – 1st March 2012

Anthony Cacace Aiming High After Debut Victory – 3rd March 2012

Fresh Start for Joe Hillerby Who Has Rung in the Changes – 3rd March 2012

Fury and Rogan Provide Jokes, Boasts and Songs at Belfast Presser – 6th March 2012

Fury Still Dreams of Irish Title Opportunity – 8th March 2012

Tyson ready to unleash the Fury on ‘cuddly’ Rogie – 9th March 2012

McCloskey Back in Belfast and Ready for a Date with Diaz – 9th March 2012

Songs, Satire and Stand-Up: Fury and Rogan Produce An Unforgettable Press Conference – 10th March 2012

Prizefighter Joins McCloskey in Northern Ireland Boxing Extravaganza – 10th March 2012

The Price Is All Wrong for Hennessy – 13th March 2012

Half-full Leisure Centres and Shit Fights – Hearn Discusses Boxing’s Health – 17th March 2012

Sweeney Prepared for Back Yard Brawl in Belfast – 25th March 2012

Red Hawk Planning ‘Rock ‘N Rumble’ Roscommon Event – 29th March 2012

McCloskey vs. Maidana Hit Too Many Roadblocks – 6th April 2012

Heavyweight Pair Ready for Titanic Battle in Belfast – 10th April 2012

Hillerby All Set for Northern Ireland Clash with Thompson – 10th April 2012

Governing Body Dispute Threatens to Take Irish Title Off the Fury-Rogan Agenda – 11th April 2012

Confident Fury Plans to Start a ‘Bum of the Month’ Club – 11th April 2012

Rogan Explains Injury Woes That Caused Sexton Defeat – 12th April 2012

John Breen Backs Youth Over Experience In Heavyweight Battle – 12th April 2012

Klitschkos Will Come But For Now It’s Rogan That Concerns Fury – 13th April 2012

Fury Ends Business With Rogan and Bags Controversial Irish Title in the Process – 15th April 2012

An Irish Title Fight Sanctioned by The British Board? – 17th April 2012

Dunne Reckons Frampton Can Rule the Roost at Super-Bantamweight – 25th April 2012

Wilton's An International Master and Wants to Rule Britain Next – 2nd May 2012

Wilton Calls On Chris Edwards to Put Brit Title On the Line and Face Him – 2nd May 2012

Joe Hillerby Wants Jeff Thomas for the Irish title – 4th May 2012

O'Kane's Prizefighter Joy Cut Short by McCloskey Mauling – 6th May 2012

Eamonn Takes the Prize and Aims for Even Bigger Nights – 7th May 2012

McDonagh Pushes O'Kane All the Way in Prizefighter Final – 7th May 2012

Hearn Admits That Marquez Fight Will Not Be Happening – 12th May 2012

Road Warrior Corley Needed a Knockout to Secure Away Win – 12th May 2012

Paul McCloskey: 'It's Too Early to Say What Went Wrong' – 15th May 2012

Corley Planned to Attack McCloskey Like a Locomotive Train – 17th May 2012

Martinez On the List But Frampton Could Now Face Molitor in September – 28th June 2012

Brandon Aiming for Peake Performance – 11th July 2012

Frampton and Martinez All Set for September 22 Clash in Belfast's Odyssey – 19th July 2012

Kiko Martinez: 'Don't Judge Me On Munroe Defeats' – 21st July 2012

McGuigan and Hearn Aim for Frampton Title Glory – 27th July 2012

Lindsay Eager for Selby Title Clash – 28th July 2012

Hearn Has High Hopes for Eamonn O'Kane – 29th July 2012

O'Kane Views Prizefighter Victory As a Fast Track to Titles – 30th July 2012

'Judgement Day' Looms for Paul McCloskey – 30th July 2012

Hearn Wants to See How Good Conlan Really Is – 31st July 2012

Matchroom Keen on Lindsay-Selby Purse Bids – 2nd August 2012

‘Western Warrior’ Coyle Leads the Charge in Castlebar – 18th August 2012

Wilton Heads the Pack of Belfast’s New Breed – 9th September 2012

Tennyson Impresses On Holiday Inn Debut – 10th September 2012

Wilton Craves Big Title Tests for His Frequent Belfast Headliners – 12th September 2012

Fitzpatrick Punching Back Into the Mix – 14th September 2012

Matthew Wilton Enjoying the Boxing Buzz – 14th September 2012

Peake Primed for Second Pro Fight – 23rd September 2012

Moving On Up: Marco McCullough Is On the Rise – 23rd September 2012

Frampton Steams Through Molitor On the Way to World Glory – 23rd September 2012

The World Awaits: McCloskey Gets His Career Back On Track – 25th September 2012

McGuigan and Hearn Plotting World Title Route – 26th September 2012

Hearn’s Dilemma – When Will Frampton Fight Next? – 26th September 2012

Frampton Still Open to Domestic Dust-Ups – 2nd October 2012

Murtagh Triumphs Over Thompson in Irish Title Clash – 14th October 2012

Sauerland Wants to Take One Back for Denmark – 26th October 2012

Pat Magee: ‘One Punch Can End Kessler Fight’ – 26th October 2012

Magee Fight Is a Question of Honour for Kessler – 29th October 2012

Magee and Kessler Ready to Battle in a ‘Question of Honour’ – 30th October 2012

Sauerland Sees Plenty of Options for Kessler-Magee Winner – 30th October 2012

World Champion: WBA Elevate Brian Magee – 1st November 2012

Brian Magee: ‘Kessler Fight Is Bigger Than Bute’ – 9th November 2012

‘Age Is Just a Number For Magee,’ Says Sauerland – 10th November 2012

Kessler Feared That He Would Have to Quit Boxing – 22nd November 2012

No World Title for Fury Says Jeff Mayweather – 29th November 2012

Fury Takes Aim at 'Fat Pudding' Johnson – 29th November 2012

Kevin Johnson: Giant Fury Won't Dominate Me – 30th November 2012

Tyson Fury: I'm the Greatest Heavyweight Since Lennox Lewis – 30th November 2012

Johnson Reckons He's One of the Most Feared Heavyweights Out There – 30th November 2012

Fury Overcomes Johnson in Tame Odyssey Affair – 1st December 2012

Peter Fury Slams John Breen's Corner Tactics – 3rd December 2012

Price Is Not a Worthy Opponent Reckons Team Fury – 4th December 2012

Fury Rubbishes 'Old Man' Vitali's Recent Run of Opposition – 5th December 2012

Kessler Has Big Respect for New Champion Magee – 6th December 2012

O'Kane Suffers First Pro Loss As Ryder Cruises Battle of the Unbeaten – 8th December 2012

Brave Byrne Pushes Jones Close and Gets Career Back on Track – 8th December 2012

Brave Showing from Magee But Classy Kessler Hacks the Body Down – 8th December 2012

Tyson Fury Reveals His 'Name and Shame' List – 9th December 2012

Michael Waldron Primed for New Year Explosion – 22nd December 2012

Sauerland Monitoring Irish Talent – 23rd December 2012

Casey Looking to Cause a 'Big Bang' in 2013 – 10th January 2013

Anthony Cacace Named as Irish Boxing Prospect of the Year – 6th February 2013

Irish Hero Tips Frampton to Get the Job Dunne – 7th February 2013

Boxer of the Year Frampton Prepares for Kiko War of Attrition – 8th February 2013

World Title Shot a Possibility for Frampton, But He Still Wants Quigg – 8th February 2013

Frampton Smashes Martinez to Become Euro Champ But Lindsay Fails to Tame Beastly Selby – 9th February 2013

Fitzgerald Pushes Lee Hard While O’Kane Gets Back to Winning Ways – 9th February 2013

Jamie Conlan Leads the New Breed on Belfast Undercard – 9th February 2013

Eddie Hearn Plots Frampton Route to World Title – 10th February 2013

Say That Again? Frampton Can’t Recall Final Blow That Ended Kiko’s Euro Reign – 12th February 2013

No Pain – No Gain for Refreshed O’Kane – 15th February 2013

Frampton Admits to Kiko Power and Targets Further Improvement – 17th February 2013

Lindsay’s Courage and Selby’s Quality Provide Perfect Mix – 19th February 2013

Time for The Board to Step-Up and Grant Conlan Title Shot – 20th February 2013

McGuigan Lauds Frampton Performance and Credits Bernard Dunne – 21st February 2013

Shane McGuigan: ‘Carl Outboxed and Outfought Kiko’ – 23rd February 2013

Irish Elite Championships 2013 Full Report – 23rd February 2013

Frampton: ‘I Beat the Best Version of Martinez’ – 25th February 2013

Book Review: Ringside with the Celtic Warriors by Thomas Myler – 27th February 2013

Irish Boxing Prospects Star in Ten-Fight Dundalk Show – 10th March 2013

Waldron Eager to Fight Mitchell On April 27 Show – 27th March 2013

Tennnyson Set for Irish Title Shot On Belfast Show – 25th April 2013

Tennyson Affirms Status with Coveney Destruction – 29th April 2013

Belfast’s City Hall Hosts the ‘Fearless’ Event On Tuesday Evening – 13th May 2013

O’Hara Ends Title Hoodoo with Victory On Belfast ‘Fearless’ Card – 15th May 2013

Frampton and McGuigan Confirm New Start and Future Plans – 31st May 2013

Barry McGuigan Has World Title Holders On Frampton Radar – 1st June 2013

Frampton Still Hopeful of Coaxing Quigg Into the Ring – 1st June 2013

Frampton a Key Player In New Promotional Agreement – 6th June 2013

Irish Talent Will Benefit from Frampton’s Belfast Return – 8th June 2013

Michael Sweeney Wants Conall Carmichael for the Irish Title – 13th June 2013

Frampton Looking to Make a Statement in Orozco Showdown – 28th June 2013

Frampton Looking to Dispatch Orozco On Route to World Title – 29th June 2013

Double Wilton Success and Joy for Burnett On Holiday Inn Card – 28th June 2013

Burnett Looking Forward After First Belfast Success – 2nd July 2013

Matt Wilton Passes Toughest Test of His Professional Career – 3rd July 2013

De’Ath Win Not Enough for Disappointed ‘Winky’ – 3rd July 2013

Mixed Results for Macklin, Gavin and Nesbitt In Weekend Bouts – 1st July 2013

O’Kane Beats Fitzgerald for Irish Title But There’s No Joy for Returning Murphy – 13th July 2013

Taggart Targets Fagan Fight to Fulfill Irish Title Dream – 18th July 2013

Irish Champion O’Kane Moving On from Ryder Defeat – 19th July 2013

Onwards and Upwards for Steve Collins Junior After Impressive Debut – 19th July 2013

‘Spike’ Sparring Pushed O’Kane On to Irish Title Success – 20th July 2013

No Disputing McDonagh Draw for Newry’s Paddy Murphy – 23rd July 2013

Aussie Coach Williams Insists Murphy Can Still Reach the Top – 24th July 2013

Frampton Fights Parodi In October 19 Belfast Return – 14th August 2013

McGuigan Primes Frampton for World Title Shot Once IBF Roadblock Clears – 16th August 2013

Frampton Expects Mathebula to Emerge Victorious from IBF Triangle – 17th August 2013

O’Kane Still Holds Out Hope for Celtic Title Clash – 19th August 2013

Jamie Conlan Eager to Start Punching People In the Face Again – 20th August 2013

Frampton’s Odyssey Shows Will Come Alive for Undercard Hopefuls – 28th

August 2013

Phil Sutcliffe Plans to Impress the Fans with TV-Friendly Performance – 31st
August 2013

O’Kane Eager to Impress Alongside Former Team Mates Frampton and Conlan
– 5th September 2013

Domestic Results 2012

Domestic Results 2013

World Results 2012

World Results 2013

Best World Bouts of 2012-13

INTRODUCTION

Hello and a very warm welcome to the latest edition of the Irish Boxing Review. Once again we look back at what has been an exciting 12-18 months of action with plenty of comings and goings, memorable moments and big talking points.

The articles included in this year's review were submitted to various websites and publications, often with four or five going out to separate places after a single press conference or post-fight interview, hence the slight repetition of subject matter on some of them. I try to make the most of all the quotes I can gather, which often means a tedious session sitting dissecting audio from a dictaphone and crafting it into something that boxing fans and readers can enjoy. The book is arranged in date order and the titles and headers are listed at the front so you can dip in and out accordingly.

So, just what can you expect inside this latest edition? First of all it as a pleasure to include a fantastic feature article penned by James Howard, who has interviewed three boxers of Irish descent, Frankie Gavin, Kieran Farrell and Liam Conroy, taking a close look at their respective careers thus far. We have also invited back a selection of writers and journalists from previous years to contribute their thoughts and feelings on developments in not just Irish boxing but in the UK and further afield. The timeline of articles as usual makes up the bulk of the material in the middle of the book, followed by a list of domestic shows, world results and a brief selection of some of the standout bouts that have taken place across the world inside our given time period.

There have been many talking points to discuss during this time, including the defection of Carl Frampton and Barry McGuigan from Sky Sports and Matchroom to Frank Warren's BoxNation stable as well as Brian Magee's battle with Danish superstar Mikkel Kessler. Other notable events have seen the likes of Matthew Macklin challenging for world titles live on HBO across America, while on the domestic front a whole host of aspiring champions have signed professional terms and are boxing on a healthy number of small hall shows, particularly in Belfast. While the Northern Irish boxing scene is motoring along in fairly trim shape it has to be noted that the decline in shows south of the border is a concern. Especially the lack of professional action in Dublin, not to mention the likes of Castlebar, Cork, Letterkenny, Limerick and so on which have all hosted successful boxing events in recent years. Hopefully this trend will not continue for much longer and things will pick up. We also live in hope that the likes of RTE will once again show

an interest in televising live boxing, or perhaps, at the very least, channels like Setanta Sports, TV3 and TG4 that have flirted with the sport in the past will be inclined to give it another chance.

Thanks again, Steve Wellings

‘Descending From Ireland’ by James Howard

Introduction

It’s not unusual to discover Irish heritage in the UK. I was raised in the London Borough of Brent a stone’s throw away from what is affectionately known as County Kilburn - the area in the country with a concentration of families from an Irish background. Irish immigrants have led the migration to Britain for over 200 years and as many as six million people in the UK are estimated to have at least one Irish grandparent. Neither is it unusual for those with Irish roots to rise to the top of their field, with even the great Muhammad Ali made an Honorary Freeman of Ennis in recognition of his Irish great-grandfather, Abe Grady, who immigrated to the US in the 1860s.

It is no surprise then, as in many other fields and industries, that the offsprings of the Irish have forged successful lives and careers for themselves. In this new annual feature, we’ll uncover boxers descending from Ireland and plying their trade in the UK. This year, we start with current British and Commonwealth champion Frankie Gavin, rising prospect Liam Conroy, and a regular feature in UK and Irish newspapers following his collapse and subsequent retirement from boxing due to brain injury, Kieran Farrell.

Frankie Gavin

While Brent may be the most Irish-represented borough, the wider region boasting the highest concentration of the Irish is the West Midlands. Irish men and women have ploughed into Brum since the days of the Industrial Revolution and the city lays claim to the largest St Patrick’s Day parade in the UK, the third biggest in the world. Such is the Irish presence in Birmingham; it is home to Britain’s only ‘Irish Quarter’, where you can stagger back and forth between the Kerryman and Dubliner public houses for as long as your equilibrium will permit.

One of Birmingham’s current shining lights is British and Commonwealth welterweight champion Frankie Gavin. Arguably Britain’s most successful amateur ever, Frankie is rich in Irish heritage with his mother and father from Tipperary and Derry respectively. He has been across Ireland on numerous occasions, both with his family and through his boxing journey. He is also the proud winner of an Irish title, which he won by defeating Michael Kelly in his home city of Birmingham.

It's been a busy few days for Frankie, as is usually the case. He was in the gym until 2pm, and a family matter kept him feverishly engaged until the evening. Frankie has always been an incredibly facilitating individual; he will speak with anyone and immediately slips into the mischievous humour that had originally led to his now defunct 'fun-time' moniker. The humour is still there, but there is definitely a more serious side to Frankie these days. It is most apparent that he is now at ease with himself and his routine. "Life is good, I'm happy. Everything is working out very well for me and I honestly couldn't be happier," he said.

Clearly tired but still cheerful, we began talking about Ireland, the land from which both his parents hailed.

"I've been back loads of times", recounted Frankie in a tone that indicated citing a specific number was an impossibility. "I've been all over really. I spent quite a bit of time in Donegal and Belfast, and then a lot more through the south. I've boxed there quite a few times and have done well. I beat Phil Sutcliffe who is coming through now (Crumlin prospect currently 3-0), I fought in Edenderry and a few times in Dublin. I fought the French lad in Belfast when I turned pro, Frarema, and I had great support from Ireland. I was delighted with it, as I was with the 400 I had brought over. I had a great time in Belfast, a really good laugh. If you pushed me for my favourite place though, I'm going to say Tipperary."

Frankie started boxing at 12, he remembers going into the gym and having a spar with his mate Derry on the first day they entered. "It was a real war", says Frankie with a chuckle, "I've not stopped since."

Fighting out of the Hall Green Boxing Club, Frankie demonstrated a precocious talent, winning a seemingly endless host of domestic and international accolades. He found local fights difficult to get, such was the name he was building for himself. His superb amateur record which saw him win around 90 per cent of his fights is even more impressive when it is considered that for five years those bouts were at an international level.

"Looking back on it now, my best memory was the Commonwealth Games," said Frankie, to my surprise. I had wrongly assumed the memory that stood out would be the win at the World Championships, but Frankie had no doubt that 2006 was the time for him. "It was my breakthrough tournament in a lot of ways," he explained. "Winning gold opened my eyes up to what I could achieve. It was a great experience being in a mixed tournament with athletes from other sports. Other athletes, such as Dean Macey, showed us the respect that the others had for what we do. I just really enjoyed it. It was all a new experience for me, everything about it. The whole set up was amazing, we were well

looked after, and like I said, having all the other sports there really made it stand out.”

After collecting the gold at the Commonwealth Games, Gavin consolidated his position as the country’s top amateur by winning the 2007 AIBA World Amateur Championships, beating tournament favourite Aleksei Tishchenko in the penultimate fight of a gruelling schedule. Frankie overcame five fights in a week and a half to win the title and write himself into the history books. Another consequence was that he qualified, was placed as favourite, and became Britain’s best hope for a medal in the Beijing Olympics a year and a half later.

Olympic fever arrived and Gavin flew out with Team GB but devastation ensued as it became clear he wasn’t going to make the weight. Qualifying 18 months earlier while already tight at 60kg had proved too long a gap and Frankie had outgrown the weight division in the interim. In a pre-Olympic outing at the higher weight, Frankie won gold in a European event in Poland and was named boxer of the tournament. However, with Bradley Saunders having already qualified, Frankie had no option but to try and squeeze back into his old frame. It was never going to happen, it didn’t, and that came as a horrific blow to the fighter who had worked his way from Hall Green to the top of the world. Modest about his achievements, it takes a push for Frankie to sit down and reflect on them. He seems far more comfortable talking about his next opponent or his world title dream, but when I persist, he does convey appreciation for his achievements, albeit briefly.

“I am really proud of what I achieved as an amateur. I would have loved to have won the Olympics but that just wasn’t meant to be. I achieved a lot and it left me in a good position when I wanted to turn professional.”

Upon his return from the World Championships, I can recall promoters eagerly inviting Frankie to sit in their company at ringside for shows home and abroad. He’d get called in to the ring and announced to the cheering crowd, the great and good of boxing coming up to him offering him the best. I remember one England vs. USA show at the York Hall when Frankie wasn’t fighting but trying to have a conversation with him was impossible as boxers, promoters, coaches all passed their congratulations and made their pitch. Frankie makes time for everyone, which can make him difficult to tie down for an interview at times, but it’s just his way.

He can be blasé about something that means so much too someone else, like giving his World Amateur final boxing robe to a delighted beaten opponent, Graham Fearn. Before a fight too, it’s quite normal to see Frankie saying hello to those who have come to watch him fight. Is it

the best preparation for most fighters? Probably not, but sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, Frankie plays by different rules to most fighters.

As you would expect, the offers to turn professional flooded in, with the likes of Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy outfit in the mix with the top European promoters. Frankie opted for Frank Warren's tried and tested know-how to guide his career in the paid ranks. Anthony 'Arnie' Farnell was to take over coaching duties which would see Frankie become gym mates with the likes of old friend Tony Bellew and middleweight Matty Hall.

Winning his first five fights by stoppage, Frankie then faced Peter McDonagh in what became the Birmingham man's first fight to last the distance (over six rounds). A fight with Gavin Tait (Tait stopped in the first) followed before Frankie won the Irish Title against Michael Kelly (stopped in the fifth). A brilliant performance against Michael Lomax seemed to announce Gavin's arrival among the top of the division but a lacklustre performance against Young Mutley led to criticism and suggestions that all was not well inside camp. Frankie countered that he'd had a cold and shouldn't have fought, but had not wanted to let those who had bought tickets down. Next up stood former footballer Curtis Woodhouse and although Frankie won, it wasn't in the convincing fashion one had expected prior to the fight.

Something wasn't right. The flashes of incredible movement were still there, but Frankie's mind wasn't. Rumbblings in the circuit were audible as fears were raised about the dedication of Frankie Gavin and discussion turned to whether he would go on to become another talent unable to flourish in the pugilistic art. Barry McGuigan said Frankie Gavin "could be the biggest waste of talent in UK boxing history." Others chipped in to have their say while Frankie kept his counsel. There was more to come, and come it did.

Personal circumstances led Frankie to want to move away from Manchester and as a result of that, move away from his trainer Anthony Farnell. Teaming up with his former England team mate Billy Joe Saunders, Frankie chanced his arm with Jimmy and Mark Tibbs in the TKO Gym in Canning Town, London. It seemed to be going well, when a proposed fight with Frank Haroche Horta was cancelled on the eve of the fight and it was clear that the move south hadn't worked out as planned. There was some disagreement about the exact circumstances of Frankie pulling out of the fight, as it turned out there were an array of difficult episodes running simultaneously, including his mother fighting cancer. One thing was certain however, the conjecture of the naysayers

that had been projecting Frankie's downfall was apparently at risk of becoming a reality.

And then, voila, Frankie realised that he had the answer which had been right in front of him all the time. Return home to Birmingham, and reunify with his amateur trainer and mentor, Tom Chaney. It was like hitting the jackpot. "I had to make a change," explained Gavin, "and I had to do something to sort things out. I moved back to my old trainer Tom Chaney and it was fantastic from the first day. It's bringing me back to all the things I was good at as an amateur. I get to see my kids all the time, they're my world. Things couldn't be better."

So with things looking so positive for Frankie, his career trajectory took an almost immediate spike. Frankie returned in February 2012 to fight Kevin McIntyre and displayed a newfound aggression as the former British champion couldn't cope with the whipped body shots Gavin fired in, and was stopped in the third. A routine win against the unremarkable Laszlo Komjathi followed, and then a fight was made with Junior Witter for the British Title. Frankie took a couple of rounds to get into the fight and then out boxed and perhaps surprisingly outmuscled Witter, the former WBC light-welterweight world champion. A local derby win against Jason Welborn set Frankie up for the biggest fight of his professional career, a unification fight with undefeated commonwealth champion Denton Vassell. The consensus was the fight could go two ways, Vassell wins by stoppage, or Gavin wins on points. As it turned out, both schools of thought were incorrect and Vassell failed to leave the stool after seven rounds due to a broken jaw. The delight in Frankie's face was tangible, and a revealing televised post fight interview added intrigue to his character as he openly discussed a lack of confidence which had hampered him to date.

I congratulated Frankie on the win. "Thanks", he replied, "I felt good and stuck to my plan. Vassell is a hard puncher but I am stronger than people might think. I'm not the biggest at 147 but I'm as strong as anyone. You've seen me push back and use my strength when I need to. I hardly ever fail when I try and push them backwards."

I confirm I'd noticed a huge increase of this tactic in the fights against Witter and Vassell, like he was trying to prove he could match them for strength. "Yes maybe, in a way, but it's just whatever tactics are needed on the night. I just know if I need to use my strength I can, if I need to box, I can. I'll do whatever I need to do to win."

He will have the chance again at the Copperbox, London, on the 21st of September. Being a third defence, a win would see Gavin permanently securing his Lonsdale belt, and a step up to the next level would seem to

align with Frankie's progression in the sport. He holds no fears about who he might face when the time comes.

"I'll fight anyone. I'm not just talking, I'm good enough and I'll fight anyone. I'm holding tide now, going to win the Lonsdale belt after this. After that, as long as the deal is right and it's taking me towards my world title dream, I'll fight anybody. In the long term I want a world title. Then I can take it back to Birmingham and showcase it in a mega fight at St Andrews."

A life-long Birmingham City fan, Frankie is no stranger to the venue, "I get to Birmingham games now and then. I played at St Andrews in May for charity fundraising in memory of schoolboy Harry Moseley (the team captain was Joe Calzaghe). I enjoy football, it's one of the things I do to relax." I ask Frankie where he plays and he replies "upfront or on the wing". It's a coincidence as all of the good fighters that went to my school always seemed to play in those positions too.

Frankie, a fan of Calzaghe, Mayweather, and perhaps most unsurprisingly, Pernell Whittaker, had three weeks out of the gym after the Vassell fight and now he's chomping at the bit to go again. There is calmness in Frankie that perhaps hasn't always been as demonstrable, a comfort in his position in life, a satisfaction in being a father to his young children.

"I love chilling out with the children", he says becoming all glazy-eyed, and "I love spending time with them. Thomas is four, and Daniel is 17 months. They are getting to the age now where they understand everything so I really enjoy the time with them."

With the conversation coming to a close, I begin to ask Frankie what he considers to be the best thing about being a boxer. The 27-year-old cuts me off prematurely with an unusual abruptness, "winning", he says firmly and without hesitation. I can think of different answers Frankie may have offered in the past, responses tinged with humour, but he's serious now and his recent career progression reflects it. There have been challenging times and the hope is that they have been overcome now, and that the path to repeating his amateur feat of becoming the best in the world is very much on track.

It's no more fun-time Frankie, it's just Frankie's time.

Kieran Farrell

I'm waiting to call Kieran Farrell but we'd agreed 8:30am and being a Sunday, I didn't want to disturb his lie in. Not much chance of that. Kieran has already been spreading the good word through Twitter, putting a shout out for the few slots he has left for personal training

sessions today. As I call, he is filling the fridge at the gym. Last December, Kieran was left unconscious following his bout with Anthony Crolla and soon advised his career of choice had been brought to a premature end. Eight months on and other than Sunday's, the Heywood man's day usually begins at 4am with his first private session at 5:30am. He tells me that he had a lie-in today. He doesn't have far to go to reach his Wham Street gym, the current home of Farrell's astronomical passion for boxing. It's 30 seconds from his house, on the same road. The house and gym are separated by nine or ten terraced houses and a couple of factories.

Farrell has links to Ireland from both a family and career perspective. While his mother's family are living across Ireland, his father's side of the family hail from Dún Laoghaire. As a pro, he visited Belfast to spar Paul McCloskey but despite the arranged move around not going ahead, Farrell had made some useful contacts. Following an amicable split with his trainer Bobby Rimmer, a conversation with John Breen raised the prospect of basing himself out of Belfast. Financial considerations would likely have put an end to the proposal, until Eamon Magee stepped up and volunteered the use of his father's former home for Kieran to stay in. Farrell became part of the gym, with Breen training him in the gym every day. Kieran recalls the time there fondly and he clearly has some deep rooted affection for the people he met, particularly John Breen.

"I had a great time there. I mean, I loved it, and I miss it. John Breen was so good, so scientific and detailed and wrote everything down. He'd come and tell me that I'd won 72 of the 84 rounds I sparred with McCloskey. I knew I'd done well, but he could tell you exactly because he was so scientific. I miss living there, miss having the lifestyle. I miss the gym with John and his family. He'd take me back for dinner and we'd play with his grandkids. Now I have my own baby (nine-month-old Kiera), so it's a bit harder to get over. I'm hoping to make it for the big show in October. Jamie Conlan is on that night. I'll be trying to get over for that."

Kieran tells me his Dad always played Irish music, and we laugh when I recount his rendition of 'Tell Me Ma' in an interview with Len Gunning from Boxing-Ireland.com in December 2012, in the build-up to the fight with Crolla. A self-confessed musical oddity, Farrell will go running to Barry Maguire's Evil Destruction.

Beginning boxing aged seven, Farrell describes being among friends getting into fights but remembers it was he who gave out the black eyes. In an attempt to channel that aggression more productively, his Dad took him down to his local gym. Kieran reflects on the changing of the guard in the gym, "I used to go to the gym and see the older lads, I'd be

watching them, looking up to them. Now I'm taking those men on the pads and they are coming to me for advice."

The journey began with a pair of boxing gloves on his seventh birthday, "shit ones from Argos." An impressive amateur career followed, which saw Farrell reach three ABA finals. He didn't attend one, recounts being robbed in another, and won the last.

He went on to add a gold medal for England in a tournament in Poland, "I beat a lad in the weight above me. Knocked him down in the third and won on points." You can almost feel Kieran shifting his weight and throwing two as he describes the fight. He says beating Peter Brady by way of a third round knockout was a turning point for him, "I thought then that I could really focus, really do something."

Kieran was all set to fight for GB against Ireland, and it was his non selection for that event which prompted a move into the paid ranks. His time in the non-paid ranks of the sport saw him rack up a string of impressive wins, including beating Olympic bronze medallist, Mick Conlan, at the Balmoral Hotel.

The pair have sparred since, and Kieran is full of praise for Mick and his brother Jamie. "What two great lads. There is so much respect between us. I'm mates with both of them and of all the people who could do well for themselves; you couldn't wish it to be two better lads."

Racing through his first 14 professional contests without defeat, Farrell stepped up to fight Manchester's experienced Anthony Crolla for the English title. I had to ask about 'that night'. It's hard to ask someone to go back to their darkest day and talk you through it piece by piece. It had naturally come up through the conversation but I'd not yet begun to unthread the story, I hadn't yet bitten on any reference to it. I didn't know how Kieran would react, he is an amazing man but this subject had brought him to his knees, left him in tears, unable to dress himself, and questioning where he would go from here. I need not have worried.

"There is no point in hiding it. I have brain damage, that's it. Destiny, I suppose." With renewed vigour, Farrell recounted the night, with most focus on the decision the judges came to on the night. "I always think I won that fight. I'm not saying it wasn't close, but nine-one from one judge was like having my pants pulled down. Then the brain injury," he says without emotion.

"There isn't much I can say about the brain injury on the night, it was my family who suffered. My brother has flashbacks all the time. He used to see how good I was and he can't believe this has happened to me. But it did, they said 'you are not going to box again Kieran'. All I can say is destiny."

Kieran even managed to raise a mutual laugh when describing his collapse. He knew he'd made the final bell, but found himself collapsed on the canvas after attempts to elevate him in the air. For just a second, he was confused as he couldn't understand how he'd been knocked out despite being certain he'd heard the final bell go. Laughter dispersed rapidly as he talked about his legs shaking as he fitted in the ambulance en route to hospital. It was six or seven weeks later the sad news emerged, Kieran was told he couldn't box again. His thoughts had already embarked on a circular thought escapade as he endeavoured to preempt every scenario. It didn't stop the devastating impact when the news was relayed.

"The next day, I'd been on the phone, making calls about moving up in weight. Then the thought of Spencer Oliver, Michael Watson were there. I tried to prepare myself but it still hit me like a boot to the face. But I'm still here, I can put my socks on, I can go to the shops. I thank my lucky stars."

Having been the subject of respect from his days as a pro, Farrell takes his new role as a figure of inspiration in his stride. "Social Networking is a powerful tool. I can put my feelings and thoughts out there. People tell me they look up to me, that I inspire them. It's like they've seen me come off my deathbed and it makes them think, if he can do that, I can do anything if I fight for it."

One of the most poignant recollections was a few weeks after leaving hospital. He put on a sweat suit to be greeted by a more explicit version of "where are you off to?" from his brother. He replied he was going to shadow box and after some unsuccessful protestations, his brother told him he was coming with him to make sure he didn't just drop dead. The tears streamed furiously down Kieran's face.

"I'd known I couldn't do it, I just couldn't let go. I could see all these other fighters out there not able to let go, making comebacks, and I could see I was thinking the same as them. It was because it happened to me so young, but now I realise there is just nowt I can do about it. I just have to move on.

"I remember crying on the phone to John Breen saying I thought about boxing every day. But then I had so much to deal with, personal matters with the mother of my child. She caused issues which totally took up my thoughts and took my mind off the problems I was having – a blessing in disguise. I didn't think so at the time, mind." The strength he drew on was from his daughter, "she pulled me through, her and my family."

"In the sport, I couldn't see beyond becoming world champion. It was like chopping a joiner's arm off. I just have to go with the flow. I'm not

bitter about it, but I see big fights made - for example Derry Mathews and Tommy Coyle, and he pulled out of a fight against me. I think, well, that could have been me.”

There were others who helped. Dave Coldwell was “amazing”, while Gary Doherty has been as good to Kieran in terms of fundraising and acting in the capacity of Kieran’s agent. Fellow feature Frankie Gavin got involved, donating some punch bags for Kieran’s new gym and arranging more kit from his sponsors. Kieran couldn’t say enough for Stella at the Crown pub who has generously maintained his sponsorship despite his not fighting. Ged Mason of the Morson Group donated the ring.

Kieran is touched by the support, but it’s no walk in the park. “From 4am - I get up, shower, tea, then gym. I do a private session from 5.30am Monday to Saturday, sessions through the day, classes at night. I train the kids, I do the circuits. I finish up around 9.30pm, get home and get my head down ready to start again the next day.”

Kieran readily admits that he didn’t always think he’d extract as much joy from his new career, “I remember my Mum talking to me about helping the kids and to be honest, I didn’t think I’d enjoy it. I’d say I would, but I didn’t really think I would. I was 22, selfishly I thought I was too young to stop and I was still thinking about what I should be doing as a fighter. I’d always dreamed of being a world champion.

“There is no point in thinking about it too much. It’s destiny, I’m here to do what I’m supposed to do, which is help the kids. I have to look back at my career and think yes, I was successful in the short space of time I had fighting.”

While the natural assumption might be that Kieran’s proudest boxing moment would be his Central Area title win, he disagrees and offers up his England vest as his overall best memory. “My parents thought it would be the Central Area Title when I asked them, but it wasn’t. Ever since I was small, I wanted to wear an England vest, and I did it. As a pro, it would be my Central Area title. I fought Joe Elfidh, he was avoided and no one wanted to fight him at that time. He was undefeated but I caught him with good shots. I had a vision how the fight would go and I stuck to my plan.”

While boxing, Kieran was a Tarmac-Layer and a Hod-Carrier, both professions he will be unable to pursue given his injuries. In any case, Farrell has far more passion for his new career. “I have found my true calling now, helping the kids. I really believe that.”

Kieran, who would love to have fought Jake La Motta, doesn’t relax much. He says he doesn’t have much time for it, but I suspect it’s his explosive energy that ensures he is indefinitely occupied. He does think

about having some quiet time, “I want an allotment to hide in for a while,” he says, laughing. I tell him that I don’t think he would really be happy in such a tame atmosphere. “You are probably right,” he replies still laughing.

“I just have to keep being the best me. Everyone who knows me buzzes off me, I’m not big headed but I do right. I don’t drink, smoke or take drugs. I just want to keep training the kids. I don’t want people to get stuck on saying ‘boxing is dangerous’. I don’t think it is the most dangerous thing you can do, you can get hit by a bus at any time. Taking drugs is worse. If your kids are getting in trouble, take them to a gym.”

Kieran states with an assured certainty that given the chance, he’d do it all again. “Definitely, yes. I’d do some things differently, I’d be more dedicated but I didn’t know any better then. Now that I do know, it’s something else I can teach the kids. If they listen, we’ll see some champions coming out of here in future. Champions in boxing or in life.”

It seemed a natural end to the interview, which was fortunate as I’d almost overlapped into his next session. I wished him the best and thanked him, he’d left me feeling very upbeat and the conversation had given a timely alignment of perspective. As I sat reflecting in the two minutes after the interview, I notice a tweet from Kieran updating my screen as he waited for his client to get ready. It read, “I’m more motivated than ever today. I’ve found my true calling in life is to be the best me and that’s just be myself. I’ve got the best job in the world for me personally, training kids how to box.”

You just can’t keep a good man down.

Liam Conroy

In Furness, Cumbria, the unmistakable tones of Steve Bunce can be heard coming from the television screen of 21-year-old rising middleweight, Liam Conroy. He simultaneously navigates the social networking worlds of Twitter and Facebook, frequently flicking his head back at the television on each new story.

The Conroy story began in Galway, “My grandfather Mick Conroy was from Galway. He then moved to Liverpool, met my grandmother and they then moved to Barrow. I have many family members living in Ireland. It’s always been one of my dreams to box in front of an Irish crowd someday. Hopefully I’ll get the opportunity to do that.”

Taking up the sport to keep in shape, it soon became an addiction for the youngster with weight and confidence issues, “I started boxing at nine, I was a quiet and chubby kid. My mam took me to build some self-

confidence and probably to lose some of that puppy fat. I become obsessed straight away and never looked back.”

Despite showing some early interest in football, Liverpool in particular, it never stood a chance against boxing in Conroy’s affections when compared to the sweet science. He still watches Liverpool when he can, and he enjoys watching St Helen’s too in Rugby League. It just doesn’t match up to his chosen career.

“My first boxing memory would be sparring when I was around ten years old. I sparred an older kid who had already fought and was preparing for another fight. I was playing eat the jab for three rounds and I loved it!

“I had around 55 amateur fights for Barrow ABC, a good mixture of seniors and juniors. I never achieved as much as I’d have liked to. I always seemed to lose close decisions in area finals and things like that. I was never stopped and it never put me off. I boxed all the top boys and all told I won somewhere just short of the 40 mark. I had a good few stoppages, and I won the area title belt at 75kg and 81kg. I also boxed in Denmark and Guernsey winning both times. I picked up some good experience and travelling around the North West to the shows gave me some of the best times of my life.”

The orthodox fighter is a baby in boxing terms, having had four wins from five, and the loss by just one point back in December at the hands of Gilson De Jesus. Conroy is trained by Johnny Roye in Preston and shows impressive determination to maintain that relationship.

“He is from Preston so I do a 140 mile round trip from Barrow to Preston and back five days a week. I’ve only been there for about six months but I’ve loved every session there and learnt so much. I get on with him well and listen to everything he tells me. He is a great teacher and always adding something to your style, once you’ve perfected it, there is something else. There is a lot of success in the gym at the moment. I train at JR gym in Preston five days a week; I also run daily before work and do strength circuits of a weekend. I learn a lot from sparring my gym mate Matty Clarkson who is light-heavyweight Central Area champion, he’s really technically good and always gives me little tips afterwards, as well as everything Johnny is teaching me.”

All that travelling back and forth is a tough ask, especially when fitting around Liam’s full time job as a mechanical fitter in BAE systems shipyard. These are however balanced with the good times. Recalling his debut, a smile stretches across the Coldwell Promotions fighter’s face, “my entrance song is Ready or Not by The Fugees and around 150 travelling supporters from Barrow going nuts. What a buzz that was!”

Growing up, Conroy was inspired by Ricky Hatton's "personality and modesty outside the ring but above all, his exciting style." Of the current crop of British fighters, Martin Murray is Liam's pick, "I like his style, my trainer Johnny actually travelled to Argentina with him when he challenged Sergio Martinez." He rates Mayweather as best in the pound-for-pound stakes, followed by Alvarez, so he's excited about that particular match-up.

Citing his own strengths as his dedication and willingness to learn, Conroy added, "I'm always fit and feel strong for my weight. I believe these qualities will start to show over the next few fights."

The middleweight enjoys "the moment his hand is raised" most in the sport, alongside the hometown support which he feels fortunate to receive, "the support I get in my hometown is second to none, they are a really noisy bunch!". He adds that his "favourite part of training is sparring, as it's the closest thing to a fight."

Conversely, Conroy least enjoys the running that his trainer Johnny Roye put them through in the close season, "the weather was red hot and it was really hard graft. You feel like you are in hell, but you know it's only you who is going to benefit."

Having lost unexpectedly in his third fight, the enthusiastic young fighter has all his concentration centred on his next bout, scheduled for the 20th September at the Bowler's Arena, Manchester. Refreshingly honest, the man with roots in Galway just pines to achieve what he deserves in the sport, whatever that may be.

"My short term goal is to win my fight on the 20th of September; I want to show the improvements in my style. All I want from the sport is to leave it with no regrets or excuses, I'll put 100 per cent into the game and go as far as I possibly can and improve with each fight. I believe that a title is a realistic dream for me, which title? I don't know."

"I think the middleweight division is one of the strongest divisions out there, domestically it's full of talent. I watch a lot of fighters from the middleweight division closely, as well as the light middleweights, as its one of these two divisions that I believe I can challenge for titles in. I really rate (Martin) Murray in the middles, he's shown with Martinez that he's at that top level."

Outside the constraints of a full time job, a fledgling career in the pugilistic art, and the endless travelling that the combination of both entail, Conroy likes to spend time with his girlfriend by watching a film or going for a meal. He adds, "I also try and see my mates when I can. With me training in Preston I don't get that much time to see everyone, but they still show their support which I'm dead grateful for. I would just like to thank everyone who has followed my career so far by buying

tickets or just following me on twitter, anything at all. I hope you all stick with it, as there is definitely more to come.”

There is a realism about the unassuming 21-year-old, an expectation that the ride will be rocky, but a passion to make sure that he contributes what he can to making something for himself in the sport. Steve Bunce can be heard reaching another excited crescendo in the background, and one wonders whether in five years’ time whether he will be waxing lyrical about the boy from Barrow who has left his childhood weight and confidence issues a long way behind him.

James Howard’s work can be viewed on his personal website www.boxingvoice.co.uk and he can be found on Twitter @UKBoxingVoice.

‘It’s Been a Generally Positive Year for Our Fighters’ by David Mohan

As we enter the summer months and boxers begin to down tools and the action slows down, one must reflect on what has been a generally positive year for our fighters. Last summer was a time when the sport in its amateur form grabbed the hearts and minds of the nation with the exploits of John Joe Nevin, Paddy Barnes, Michael Conlan, Darren O’Neill, Adam Nolan and not to mention the ‘Golden Girl’, Katie Taylor, were followed at every turn at the London Olympics. The six became national treasures and at the recent European Championships, Nevin, Barnes and Conlan once again medalled while Donegal’s Jason Quigley exploded onto the scene with a golden finish in Minsk.

In the professional ranks, the rise and rise of Carl Frampton saw ‘The Jackal’ retain his IBF inter-continental title with a magnificent sixth round stoppage over former world champion Steve Molitor. The Belfast man followed this up by claiming the European title from Kiko Martinez on a night to remember at a packed Odyssey Arena and the signs indicate that world honours may not be too far off for the Tigers Bay native.

One Irishman who did get his hands on a world title was Brian Magee. Ireland’s road warrior saw his interim WBA super-middleweight title upgraded to the full version ahead of his December showdown in Herning against Mikkel Kessler. The ‘Viking Warrior’ proved to be a bridge too far for the ever-gutsy Magee who succumbed to a number of crippling body shots inside three rounds.

Elsewhere, the next generation continue to grow in stature with ‘Prospect of the Year’ Anthony Cacace and James Tennyson both holding the Irish super-featherweight title at times during the year, while former Youth Olympics gold medal winner Ryan Burnett put a year of frustration behind him to win his first two pro bouts in quick-fire fashion. There are a number of young prospects beginning to emerge such as Phil Sutcliffe Jr and Daniel McShane, but others such as Ray Ginley and Dee Walsh have watched their careers hit something of a wall with cancelled shows the main culprit – something that hopefully improves as new season develops.

One show that did go ahead and perhaps stood out for the year was the historic first pro boxing bill held at Belfast City Hall dubbed ‘Fearless’. With the proceeds going to the Oscar Knox Appeal, the night showed everything that is good in the Irish boxing fraternity and also allowed the returning Kevin ‘Sweet Pea’ O’Hara to land his first pro title

when he outpointed Micky Kelly for the ‘Celtic Warrior’ light-welterweight crown.

It was also the night the Irish public got their first glimpse of heavyweight prospect Hughie Fury, while cousin and heavyweight contender Tyson cheered from ringside. That night also provided what was surely the fight of the year on these shores when Toome debutant Jamie Kennedy and Omagh’s Willie Mitchell slugged it out for four pulsating rounds which Kennedy edged.

In all it has been a good year although as we go to print, it ended on a rather disappointing note as Matthew Macklin came up short in another quest for world honours when stopped by the fearsome Gennady ‘GGG’ Golovkin.

Hopefully ‘Mack the Knife’ finally realizes his world title dreams soon and that all of our boxers see regular action in the new season. Maybe by this time next year, we may be toasting many more titles on these shores, perhaps even a world title or two.

David Mohan is a sports journalist who writes for the Andersonstown News and the Irish News. He can be found on Twitter @davidmohan99.

‘Highs, Lows and Predictions – Boxing from 2012 to Present and Future’ by James Slater

Boxing, like all sports, has to move with the times so as to stay big, relevant and exciting. This past 18 months has certainly seen our sport go through some exciting and encouraging changes. The quite recent super-middleweight “Super-Six” tournament was one such innovative move, as was the more recent alignment of once rival promoters Frank Warren and Frank Maloney, who will be joining forces with the still relatively new promotional abilities of Ricky Hatton and Barry McGuigan. Fans everywhere will surely be anticipating some even bigger fights on BoxNation - the all-boxing TV channel itself being a major highlight of the last year or so - as a result of this powerful alliance.

Boxing, in the UK in particular, was also given a massive boost due to the magnificent spectacle that was London 2012; with a number of our boxers capturing medals at the Olympics and subsequently moving on to promising pro careers. Another highlight of the last 18 months has been the growing number of great match-ups being made - some of this fine match-making resulting in terrific action.

Okay, we missed out on Floyd Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao, but we have had: Carl Froch-Lucian Bute (the May 2012 fight in Froch’s hometown of Nottingham being a truly special night/British victory), Mayweather-Miguel Cotto, Sergio Martinez-Julio Cesar Chavez Junior, Saul Alvarez-Austin Trout, Tim Bradley-Ruslan Provodnikov, Brandon Rios-Mike Alvarado I and II, and Froch-Mikkel Kessler II, and we will (hopefully) soon have: David Haye-Tyson Fury, Mayweather-Alvarez, Wladimir Klitschko-Alexander Povetkin, Carl Frampton-Scott Quigg, Froch-Andre Ward II and Marcos Maidana-Adrien Broner.

Speaking of Froch, “The Cobra” has been one huge highlight all by himself: his willingness to fight the best each time out, and the spellbinding action he provides whilst doing so, really being something special. Amir Khan has also continued to thrill and will do so until he retires, while the aforementioned Fury, along with Martin Murray, Darren Barker and both Quigg and Frampton are sure to achieve plenty in the coming months (although David Haye will have ambitions of his own when it comes to derailing Fury and landing bigger fights as a result!).

Boxing is in good shape right now in my opinion, and with upcoming talent to keep an eye on - such as Anthony Ogogo, Anthony Joshua, Julian Ramirez, Oscar Valdez and Luke Campbell to name just a few hot

prospects - things can only get even brighter. Of course, in recent times the sport has suffered its share of lows, such as the sad passing of Emanuel Steward, the continued “alphabet” craziness, with the sanctioning bodies’ “Super,” “Regular,” and “Silver” champions, and some fights not being made (did I mention Mayweather-Pacquiao!?) - but things could be a lot worse.

As far as some things I think we may see in the advancing months go: look for Haye to topple Fury in a thriller, Kell Brook to finally fight for and win a world title, Frampton AND Quigg to do the same (making their inevitable showdown all the bigger), and for “Money” Mayweather to win all six of his contracted fights for Showtime - cementing his legacy as the finest boxer of his generation as a result.

With dedicated U.K journalists such as Steve Bunce, Steve Lillis, Jeff Powell, Colin Hart, Gareth A. Davies, Ron Lewis and others - not forgetting the entire team at the essential weekly trade paper that is Boxing News of course - continuing to give the sport great coverage, boxing is in good hands print-wise. While on the box, the entire Sky Sports team, BoxNation, Channel 5 and various live Internet presentations make sure fans get plenty of action in their living rooms.

So far in 2012/2013 we have seen a number of sizzling fights that have given everyone value for money, while the supreme talents of men such as Mayweather, Andre Ward, Gennady Golovkin, Juan Manuel Marquez, Guillermo Rigondeaux, Danny Garcia and the murderous punching Lucas Matthyse can only ensure that fans will remain as entranced, as fascinated and as loyal to boxing as they have ever been.

As far as personal highlights of the last 18 months go:

Favourite Fights Attended: Carl Froch-Lucian Bute, Floyd Mayweather-Miguel Cotto, Amir Khan-Julio Diaz, Jamie McDonnell-Julio Ceja.

Most Interesting Interviews Conducted: Mark Breland, Nacho Beristain, Bobby Czyz, Dave “Boy” Green, Angel Manfredy.

Best Boxing Books Read: “Twice Bitten”: The Story Of Holyfield-Tyson II, Boxing News 100 Greatest Fights of All-Time (bookazine), Sugar Ray Leonard’s “The Big Fight”, Floyd Patterson Biography, Four Kings.

James Slater’s work can be found in various places including Fightnews.com, Eastsideboxing.com, Britishboxers.com and Keppunching.com, as well as in the esteemed Boxing News magazine and on their website Boxingnewsonline.net. James can be reached on Twitter @jimslater1971.

‘The End for Hatton, But A New Beginning for Lennox Lewis’ by Marc Stockings

Low Point – Ricky Hatton

There was a tragic inevitability about Ricky Hatton’s return to the ring against Vyacheslav Senchenko last November. Fans in the UK were surprisingly polarised about Hatton’s decision to lace up his gloves three years after his demolishing at the hands of Manny Pacquiao. And the doubters were justified as Hatton was stopped in the ninth round by a body shot that, ironically, the Hatton in his prime was known for.

High Point - Timothy Bradley vs. Ruslan Provodnikov

This fight had everything and I’ll be surprised if it is not voted Fight of the Year. On the back of his controversial win over Pacquiao, light-welterweight Timothy Bradley had a point to prove against the Russian. Bradley, a boxer rather than a fighter, decided to go toe-to-toe with Provodnikov and it nearly cost him, being caught with some heavy shots in the first two rounds. But Bradley utilised his boxing skills and demonstrated a resilience that we had not seen of him prior to this bout. That’s not to say Provodnikov was totally outclassed, he himself showed a grit that suggests he’ll be back soon enough. The fact is, neither boxer really lost this fight and it was fantastic spectacle.

The Future? – Lennox Lewis Academy

I’ll be interested to see how the so-called “University of Pugilist Specialists”, set up by former world champion Lennox Lewis, develops. His first enrolled “student” is heavyweight prospect David Price ahead of his rematch with Tony Thompson (Unfortunately Price was stopped for a second time by Thompson, throwing these best laid plans into jeopardy - Ed). If successful, Lewis will be filling a big void in the sport, taking talented amateur boxers and nurturing them in their transition to the professional ranks. Although Lewis himself has admitted that he is still in the formation stage of bringing this dream together, it is definitely a worthwhile venture, with academies planned for Britain, the US and Canada. I wish Lennox Lewis every success with this.

Marc Stockings writes for BoxRec News and you can read his articles at

news.boxrec.com/users/marc-stockings or by following @Boxrec News on Twitter. E-mail Marc on ms1880@hotmail.com for correspondence.

‘It’s Been An Enjoyable Year of Boxing’ by Paddy Appleton

The year just past has been a hugely enjoyable and memorable one for me, although disappointingly I’ve had to watch some of our fighters lose out on huge nights.

Highs – There have been some memorable highs in the past year but Carl Frampton’s win over Kiko Martinez was sensational. To see Carl grow into the fighter he’d been threatening to become was a delight to watch and it is surely only a matter of time before we see him in a world title fight. For that world title fight to be in Belfast would be fantastic for Irish boxing, and it’s something I would love to see this or next year.

Lows – Unfortunately I think there were a lot more lows than I’ve ever seen in one year for Irish boxing, but that in itself has a silver lining as it has shown the quality our guys have been facing. Losses for Matthew Macklin, Brian Magee, Andy Lee and Paul McCloskey were all disappointing but when you consider the foes they faced – Felix Sturm, Sergio Martinez, Mikkel Kessler, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr and a wily DeMarcus Corley – a realist view is that these contests were personal highs for a number of our fighters.

Another low which does still hurt is Paddy Barnes missing out on silver. He gave China’s Zou Shiming everything over the three rounds in London’s Excel but lost on a countback. It was a real sore moment, so I think how Paddy conducted himself, hugging Zou and having a laugh, showed the Belfast man has matured into one of Ireland’s finest sportsmen around at the moment.

What’s stuck out – Katie Taylor and her fans raising the roof in London. It was a sight and sound to behold on television so I can only but imagine the decibels experienced by those watching in the arena. Again, Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlan emerging into “cheeky chappy” superstars has really pleased me. You won’t find two more likeable guys in Irish boxing and to see them really enjoying a sport they love, despite the pressures, gives hope for everyone.

On a personal note, being ringside when Brian Magee faced Mikkel Kessler and 10,000 roaring was an experience I’ll never forget. It wasn’t the result we or Brian wanted but the whole night will live long in the memory for Brian and us who witnessed it live.

Looking forward to – As I mentioned, a Carl Frampton world title fight in late 2013 or 2014 really excites me. He has beat all in front of him, including two luminaries in Kiko Martinez and a slightly

disappointing Steve Molitor, so the next obvious step has to be a world title fight two or three bouts from now. A fight with Quigg would be exciting but it's gone so Mayweather-Pacquiao that I'm a bit fed up with it. I just want to watch Carl progress. If Quigg wants it fair enough, if he doesn't then Carl doesn't have to go chasing.

I'm also looking forward to following some careers with interest. Phil Sutcliffe Jr, Luke Wilton and Jamie Kavanagh should have big futures ahead of them if their progression continues. Wilton, as we saw in February's barnstormer with British and Commonwealth champion Kevin Satchell, has all the attributes and bags of heart to go beyond British level in the next 12 months. Sutcliffe Jr is steadily making a name for himself as a power puncher and he could be the type of excitement to get new followers into Irish fight nights. As for Kavanagh, his recent move from the Wild Card gym is a real ballsy change but as we've seen so many times before it isn't always for the better in boxing. It will be interesting to watch, but again Jamie has the skill and firepower to get him to the top, so watch this space.

Paddy Appleton has contributed to Irish-boxing.com, Boxing Ireland and the Derry News. He can be found on Twitter @Pat_Appleton_II.

‘Promoter Wars, Social Media Madness, Over-Hyped Prospects – Modern Day British Boxing in a Nut Shell’ by James Bairstow

It's fair to say that there never seems to be a dull moment in boxing these days; and sometimes events outside of the ring are more entertaining than those inside it.

Promoter and Broadcaster Wars

There has been a big shift in power at the top of the unofficial “British Promoter’s Premier League” table as of late, after Sky Sports put all their eggs in Eddie Hearn’s basket back in September 2012, when the broadcaster made Eddie and Matchroom Sports their sole promoter. This bold move made most people in the game believe that it was the beginning of the end of promotional stalwart Frank Warren. But despite all the bad press and setbacks that Frank has encountered over his thirty-odd years in the game, the man behind boxing subscription channel BoxNation isn’t finished just yet. His channels’ recent deal with the other promoters such as Frank Maloney, Ricky Hatton, Amir Khan and Barry McGuigan suggests that Frank and his channel will be around for a few more years at least.

One thing helping Frank and his BoxNation platform is the fact that Sky Sports seem reluctant to broadcast live shows from Ireland because of the costs that hosting shows in Ireland incur, and they also seem to be less interested in international action, allowing BoxNation to mop up these shows to good effect, increasing its channels subscribers at the same time.

The promoter and broadcaster battles have created healthy competition within the domestic game because everybody involved is striving to put on the best fights and the biggest shows. The only problem we might face is that certain fights might not happen if fighters are on separate sides of the domestic “boxing divide”, such as Scott Quigg (Matchroom Sports) versus Carl Frampton (BoxNation). Let’s hope that promoters and broadcasters alike can try and strike deals to allow the mega domestic dust ups and the “50/50 battles” to happen.

Most boxing fans tune in to watch these sorts of match-ups because of the adrenalin rush that a big fight gives us (either ringside or on the television). We all enjoy making big fight predictions and we enjoy being proved right - even though most of us get it wrong nine times out

of ten. You can't beat the buzz that a big fight / bit arena fight atmosphere creates. Boxing is like a drug to most of us. We all tune in because none of us are really sure what will happen, and that's what keeps us interested.

Social Media Power

One of boxing's many foibles is the fact that there are no official rankings because of the countless number of different organisations and politics, and the nature of the sport. It's all about public perception, opinion and the today's media has a massive role in today's match-making at domestic level. Twitter, Facebook and iFilm London have revolutionised the fight game because fans and boxers are now closer than we ever thought possible and information is passed from fighter to fan in the blink of an eye, which is great for the fans. It is now easier to ask a promoter or a fighter about a certain fight and it is harder for both to turn a fight down these days. There doesn't seem to be as much "ducking" these days and that is because fighters are contacted easier nowadays they don't want the grief, either on Twitter or Facebook, which is great for us fans.

The 2012 Olympics Effect

The domestic game, amateur and professional, in Britain is still riding on the crest of a wave after the successful London Olympics last year, and the sport is in an extremely good shape at amateur level as we look to repeat our London 2012 successes in Rio in 2016. The squad continues to evolve as some have joined the paid ranks but the new squad seems to be as strong as ever. It will be interesting to see how many medals we get in Rio, as Head Coach Rob McCracken continues to work his magic at the Sheffield Institute of Sport. Keep an eye out for Leeds lad Jack Bateston, who recently medalled at the European Amateur Championships. The 19-year-old light-flyweight is destined for big things and one I will be tipping to medal in Rio in 2016. Some of the class of 2012 have turned professional and have had exciting starts to their "punching for pay" careers and it will be interesting to see how far the likes of Thomas Stalker, Luke Campbell, Anthony Ogogo and Anthony Joshua progress over the coming years.

Match-Making and Bridging the Gap

Our promoters, matchmakers and trainers need to find ways to bridge the

gap between domestic and European level, and fringe world class level. Not only do we need to bridge it, we need to work out how to get across the bridge successfully so that our best can dominate on the world scene.

Domestically, the game is very competitive but our best often come up short – embarrassingly short in some cases – when they confront world class opposition. Matchroom fighters Gavin Rees and Lee Purdy were sent over to America and got completely bamboozled by Adrien Broner and Devon Alexander respectively. One could argue that fighters have to take their chances but surely it is a promoter's responsibility to be realistic and responsible for them, as heavy beatings can shorten a fighter's career. It's a tough balancing act between cashing in and having a few years shaved off a fighter's career. Match-making is always easier to do with hindsight though; especially if a fighter is ripping his promoter's arm off for a fight he's been offered, and every fighter wants to test himself at the highest level he can.

In order to get ourselves more established at world level, we need to look at our training methods because the rest of the world seem to be a little bit in front of us at the moment, especially in the fitness, movement and general ring craft departments. Manchester-based trainer Joe Gallagher and a few of his fighters went to Freddie Roach's Wild Card gym in America recently and the trip across the pond has clearly paid dividends. Lightweight Anthony Crolla has just recovered from a loss and a draw with Derry Mathews with an impressive career best display to outpoint former world champion Gavin Rees, and the ever-improving super-bantamweight Scott Quigg is on the cusp of a world title shot and he looked decent in his recent win over William Prado after seven months of inactivity.

And finally

Sheffield welterweight Kell Brook is a fighter I pinned hopes of world glory on when I first saw him against Kevin McIntyre in 2008 - but for one reason or another, he is still to have a world title fight five years later. People say it's his attitude, some say it's his fitness, other says it's down to luck, and only Kell himself knows the real reason. Let's hope he finally fights for a world title next year.

James Bairstow writes for Boxrec.com.

‘McDonnell World Title Victory Was a Moment to Treasure’ by Jon Briggs

May 2013 witnessed a moment in boxing that makes you realise why fighters put themselves through hell to achieve their maximum potential. Doncaster bantamweight Jamie McDonnell announced himself on the world scene with a scintillating world title win over unbeaten Mexican banger Julio Ceja.

Rewind back to March 2008, Jamie had just lost back to back domestic bouts with Chris Edwards and Lee Haskins. Interviewed by BoxRec News in February 2012 Jamie admitted he almost packed up boxing.

Luckily he didn't! With hard fought wins over Ian Napa, Jermone Arnould, Stuart Hall and Darwin Zamora manoeuvred Jamie into a title fight with Ceja for the vacant IBF bantamweight strap.

Promoter Dennis Hobson did the hard work and secured the fight on Jamie's home turf. This was a dream opportunity for Jamie to fight in front of his loyal fans at Doncaster Rovers' Keepmoat stadium. Jamie's performance come fight night was one to remember. He out pointed his Mexican foe in style, finishing the fight strongly and putting it all on the line in an amazing 12th round. This has to be my boxing moment of 2013 so far.

Jon Briggs writes for BoxRec.com and can be reached on Twitter @jonnyboxrec or via e-mail: northender7@yahoo.com.

‘I Never Get Tired Writing About Boxing’ by Peter Wells

The most important part of journalism is enjoying what you write, and with boxing journalism that is exactly what I do, I enjoy every minute of it; from writing the actual article to discussing it after with other boxing fans and the boxers themselves. Not once have I sat down and thought “I can’t be bothered to do this”, and that’s exactly why I started. Since I wrote my first article for boxingnews24.com (whom I still send all my articles to) I have now set up my own blog (boxingbrains.blogspot.co.uk) and I also write for several other websites. My knowledge of boxing has grown, and so has my appreciation of the sport and the fighters.

Since becoming a boxing fan about five years ago, I have now seen three boxing shows live - and if you’re reading this after September 7th then make that four. All these shows have been in my hometown of Walsall. The second live show I saw in January 2013 featured a fighter I’m expecting great things of, Frankie Gavin. But the main attraction was local fighter Martin Gethin, who on that night beat Ben Murphy to win the British lightweight title. For any boxing fan who has not yet seen a boxing show live, then it is something I sincerely recommend. Even if it’s at your local town hall, and you don’t recognise the names, it doesn’t matter. The experience is something everything boxing fan must experience.

The fight I would most like to see happen in the near future is Adrien Broner vs. Yuriokis Gamboa. The accuracy of both fighters is off the charts, and there’s no doubt that with Broner’s mouth and Gamboa’s promoter, 50 Cent, this fight would bring in huge Pay-Per-View numbers. Broner has great defence but has yet to prove at the highest level how great his offence is. While Gamboa has an amazing offence but very poor defence, which ensures he’s never in a boring fight. Who would win? Well, right now I’d go for Yuriokis Gamboa.

The state of boxing right now is looking very good indeed. With superstars like Floyd Mayweather, Canelo Alvarez, Adrien Broner and so on, boxing in the next few years is only going to get bigger. The one thing I’m looking forward to most in boxing is the possible fights in the welterweight division. Something tells me this is going to be a great era. So this might well be a great time to be a boxing journalist or just a boxing fan, because in 40-50 years time, boxing historians will be looking back at this era of boxing, and we’ll be the people to tell the stories.

Peter Wells has been writing boxing articles for five years on: Boxingnews24.com, Boxingmadmagazine.com and Worldinsport.com. He now runs his own blog at: boxingbrains.blogspot.co.uk and can be found on Twitter @boxingbrains.

‘A Concise Review of Another Successful Year for Irish Amateur Boxing’ by Louis O’Meara

The 2012/2013 season proved to be another successful year for Team Ireland in the boxing ring. For the seniors the highlight was of course the London Olympics. Yet again, the boxers dominated the medal haul. Our queen of world boxing was given the honour of carrying the flag at the opening ceremony. In the ring the introduction of women’s boxing for the first time proved a major success. The Excel Arena seemed also to turn in to little Ireland. Our own Katie Taylor became only the second female to win Olympic boxing gold, beating her old rival Sofya Ochigava of Russia in the final 10-8.

John Joe Nevin beat the world number one Alvarez Estrada (Cuba) in the semi-final, on a score of 19-14, in what most have said was Nevin’s most complete performance so far. In the final, Nevin came up yet again against his old nemesis in England’s Luke Campbell. On the day Campbell came out on top 14-11. Paddy Barnes, who had claimed bronze in Beijing, doubled his haul losing out yet again to world number one Zou Shiming of China on countback after it finished 15-15. Most neutrals who watched this fight felt Barnes was unlucky not to get his revenge over Shiming. Michael Conlan in his first games gained a bronze losing in his semi to Ramirez Carrazana of Cuba on a score of 20-10.

This year’s Europeans saw our boxers once again increase their haul of medals. John Joe Nevin became the first Irish boxer to win medals at all major International Boxing events when he claimed gold by beating Ukraine’s Mykola Butsenko on a unanimous decision. Finn Valley’s Jason Quigley continued his love of European golds, having already obtained golds at the Under 18 and Under 23 levels. Quigley who surprised some by beating Darren O’Neill in the Elite Senior Championships claimed gold by beating number two seed Bogdan Juratoni on a split decision. Conlan lost out on a split decision to Welsh boxer Andrew Selby in the final. Later on his fellow Belfast team mate and junior level Dealgans Team Captain Paddy Barnes a former European Gold medallist had to settle for silver having failed his medical with a broken nose.

At the recent EU Female Championships in Hungary our women won an amazing haul of five golds, three silver and seven bronze. The gold medallists were Katie Taylor, Kristina O’ Hara, Amy Broadhurst, Jacqui Lynch and Grainne Gavin. In fact, earlier in the season Dealgins Amy Broadhurst became the first Irish female to win a European gold other than Katie Taylor when she took gold at the European Junior

Championships. Not to be out done, in the 2012 European Schoolboys Championships Team Ireland won a record total of ten medals, with three of them being gold. The gold medallists were Oliver McCarthy, James McGivern and Michael Nevin. This year's Championships take place at the end of July in The City West Hotel in Dublin where the team hopes to continue the success. October sees the World Senior Championship taking place.

Louis O'Meara is a freelance boxing pundit, dedicated to the Irish amateur boxing scene. He can be found on Twitter @louisomeara.

‘Let’s Look at the Current Standing of Some of the Most Significant Fighters on the Irish Boxing Scene Today’ by Jeremy O’Connell

At super-bantamweight, Carl Frampton recently made the shock decision to leave Eddie Hearn and Sky, to make his bed with Frank Warren and Boxnation. Supposedly this was over a disagreement between Hearn and Frampton’s manager Barry McGuigan, as McGuigan, bizarrely and arguably egotistically, wanted co-promotional rights to his contests, something Hearn was never going to agree to. The Frampton camp claimed bias from Sky towards British fighters and felt they weren’t getting the promotion that they deserved from the network. Sky were also reportedly reluctant to return to Belfast to put on a Frampton card, as the costs are much higher than doing shows on the mainland UK, as well as the viewing figures being allegedly below par for Frampton’s fights.

Domestic rival Scott Quigg moved in the opposite direction, from obscurity with Hatton promotions to a strong platform on Sky with Matchroom. He is now set to contest the vacant WBA “Regular” belt (regarded as a legitimate world title by some) against Cuban Yoandris Salinas in the next few months.

Frampton’s first fight with Boxnation was then cancelled due to an ear injury. And, as if that wasn’t enough bad news, the man Frampton knocked out in his last fight, Kiko Martinez has secured an August fight with IBF world titlist Jonathan Romero, despite being shamed recently by the exposure of his links to PED kingpin Eufemiano Fuentes.

How the worm has turned. Frampton will hope to regain his momentum when he fights next in October, likely in Belfast. Another Irish super-bantamweight, Willie Casey, is having an even tougher time. The former European champion has been inactive for over a year now since his win over Jason Booth, with no end on the horizon. This is a very disappointing situation, as Casey is a solid fighter who has a lot to offer at European level.

At Middleweight, Andy Lee continues to adjust to his new trainer, Adam Booth, now two wins (over lowly competition) into their partnership. One hopes for a significant fight for Lee soon. Cork’s Gary “Spike” O’ Sullivan (ranked number six going in by the WBO) suffered his first defeat recently, losing a near shutout decision to top prospect Billy Joe Saunders. What disappointed me was Spike’s lack of fire for much of the fight. His trainer, Pascal Collins, was trying to gee him up,

but it was only in the last two rounds that he let his hands go. That said, there is no shame in being completely schooled and outclassed by a good young fighter like Saunders, but his world title pretensions, and dreams of an American showdown with world titlist Peter Quillin, are gone forever. There is an outside chance he can rebuild towards a European title shot in the future, and he is set to return on a Frank Warren bill in the coming months. Fights with the likes of Eamonn O' Kane or Anthony Fitzgerald would be good to see. Matthew Macklin lost his third world title challenge to Gennady Golovkin in crushing fashion, and it looks like he may have to settle for being a nearly man at world level.

At super-middleweight, it has recently been revealed that another nearly man, Brian Magee, has failed a post-fight drug test for a banned PED*, the stimulant Oxilofrine. This is the same substance which some Jamaican track and field athletes, notably Asafa Powell, tested positive for recently. He claims to have had it inadvertently enter his system through a contaminated, over the counter product, and UK Anti-Doping have accepted his excuse, doling out a lenient six month ban. Nevertheless, for some, this test failure will place an asterisk next to his career achievements.

At heavyweight, David Haye vs. ex-Irish champion Tyson Fury has officially been signed and I'll make my prediction right now. Fury has earned a legitimate top ten ranking by picking up some solid wins over limited competition, but he is chippy, sloppy defensively, uncoordinated, and usually doesn't use his height or jab well, preferring instead to fight toe to toe. Haye is the fastest heavyweight in the world, is explosive, and is one of the pound for pound hardest punchers in the sport, as well as having tons of experience fighting at the highest level for many years, his only defeat at heavyweight coming by decision to the best man in the division. This all adds up to a short night for Fury, who has been put down by right hands in the past from relatively light punchers in Steve Cunningham and Neven Pajkic. Also, I am amused by the storyline/narrative Sky Sports are trying to push that if the fight goes beyond six, Fury is likely to win, even though Haye has fought into the late rounds numerous times at the top level, and his stamina problems of the Carl Thompson loss are many years behind him. In my view, Haye wins by KO2, and I would be SHOCKED if it went past six.

*At the time of publishing Magee is protesting his innocence - Ed.

You can follow Jeremy on Twitter @JeremyFoley, and read articles published through his blog: /pound4poundireland.wordpress.com.

‘Mike Stafford Will Be a Major Force Behind US Boxing Success’ by Jose Santana Jnr

The past year of boxing for me has been particularly good as in the U.S. state of Ohio, where I am based, we’ve seen the rise of Adrien Broner who has continued on the reputation of Cincinnati boxing. At the core of what is taking place here with Broner, is a man named Mike Stafford, Broner’s trainer. Despite the craziness that is Broner outside of the ring, Stafford is respected not just by the three-division champion but amongst all of his fighters. In fact, he is so well respected, that two prominent amateur fighters in the U.S. -- Jamel Herring and Robert Easter -- decided to relocate their lives to Cincinnati to train under Stafford as pros. While there is much more to look forward to in the future for these boxers, I am looking forward to seeing how Stafford can continue to mold more champions and growing into a coaching great.

Jose Santana Jnr contributes to SecondsOut.com and you can follow him on Twitter @JoseSantanaJr.

Irish Boxing News Round-Up – 15th January 2012

Unbeaten Irish lightweight prospect Stephen Ormond rejected a chance to fight Kevin Mitchell on February 10 but the Clondalkin talent insists that he will be ready for all challengers by March. Ormond took a break over the Christmas period and felt that more time was needed to prepare for a Mitchell fight.

“My team knew I was taking a break over Christmas and I told them I would not be ready for any fight in February,” explained Ormond. “I never agreed to the February fight. What happened between them and Frank [Warren] I am not too sure. I am back in training on Monday and I will be ready in two months’ time to fight anyone.”

Promoter Frank Warren was unhappy with Stephen’s decision to pass up the big opportunity on a BoxNation card.

“I am very disappointed in Ormond,” seethed Warren. “Here is a guy that was training for a fight in Liverpool on December 10, which was called off, so obviously he was fit. I gave him a big chance with this fight and he is just gone on the missing list.”

Ormond’s manager and trainer Pascal Collins (brother of ex-WBO super-middleweight king Steve) is attempting to mediate a resolve between the two parties.

“It was a great opportunity for Stephen, but he just couldn’t get up for it. I told him it may take time to get a chance like this again, but it is not a case of not wanting to fight Kevin Mitchell. Stephen proved he would take that fight by accepting it twice last year. We even accepted at 24 hours’ notice on one of those two occasions. The difference now is Stephen has not been in training over Christmas.

“I thought it made more sense to have the fight on March 10. If it was on the undercard of Ricky Burns’ next world title defence it would build up to a world title fight between the two winners. If Frank came back to us with that date we would take it,” concluded Collins.

Matthew Macklin will face Sergio Martinez on March 17 and the Birmingham-based Irishman has turned to former trainer Buddy McGirt in an effort to topple the best middleweight in the world. Macklin has employed the services of multiple trainers during his career and was whipped into shape by Manchester’s Joe Gallagher prior to his unsuccessful WBA middleweight crack at German Felix Sturm.

Cork boxing manager Gary Hyde has been hitting the Irish boxing headlines over the last month, with plenty of changes within his eclectic stable of talent. Former European super-bantamweight champion Willie Casey has left Hyde, despite the pair only having worked together for one bout. Casey won that contest by stoppage –in Belfast last October– but decided that it was time to move on. Meanwhile, Hyde’s red-hot Georgian fighter Levan ‘The Wolf’ Ghvamichava has relocated to Lowell, Massachusetts and will be trained by a familiar face, in the form of ‘Irish’ Micky Ward.

“I am delighted we have Micky Ward on board,” waxed Hyde. “He has a lot of valuable experience to share with Levan, whose style of fighting is very similar to Micky’s. ‘The Wolf’ is a throwback fighter who loves nothing more than going into the trenches, just like his new coach, and fighting toe-to-toe. Micky has been approached by a lot of fighters who wanted the benefit of his coaching and experience, so I am very happy that Micky has chosen to work with us.”

Hyde, president of Nowhere to Hyde Promotions, also manages a stable of other undefeated fighters such as WBA interim super-bantamweight champion Guillermo ‘The Jackal’ Rigondeaux (8-0, 6 KOs), undefeated British welterweight prospect Mark Heffron (5-0, 4 KOs) and light-middleweight Dee Walsh (1-0). Hyde plans to sign more fighters in 2012 and make Lowell his U.S. base.

Rigondeaux Returns for Ramos Test – 16th January 2012

Cuban hot-shot Guillermo Rigondeaux returns to the ring on Saturday, January 20, following a spell of inactivity that has now nearly spanned a full year. ‘El Chacal’ was last seen in Dublin’s City West venue, pounding Limerick’s Willie Casey into a quick fire defeat and thus successfully defending his WBA interim super-bantamweight crown. Rigondeaux will now step up and fight for the WBA title proper (if anything is ever ‘proper’ when the WBA are involved) in the Palms Casino Resort, Las Vegas.

Even though illustrious names like Nonito Donaire and Yuriorkis Gamboa were being mentioned after the Casey win, it is little-known American Rico Ramos who has been handed the unenviable task of derailing the Cuban freight train. Ramos owns the actual WBA belt after impressively coming from behind (he was way down on all three scorecards) to halt decent Japanese boxer Akifumi Shimoda in the seventh round of their title encounter back in July 2011. Ramos, now 20-0 (11 KOs), has not fought since then, so he will also have some rust to shed in the opening rounds of this championship bout.

Rigondeaux’s amateur pedigree hardly needs repeating, but the 31-year-old claimed a gold medal at two Olympic Games and forged a genuinely formidable reputation in the unpaid code. Now being handled by Cork businessman Gary Hyde and matched by promotional powerhouses Top Rank, this fight will find plenty of airtime, through Showtime in the US, Premier Sports in the UK and Setanta Sports across Ireland.

Rigondeaux showed the first glimpses of possible vulnerabilities in the fight before Casey when he negotiated 12 rounds against Panamanian Ricardo Cordoba, the man whose fight with Bernard Dunne in 2009 has since reached the realms of Irish boxing folklore. In his own personal battle with Cordoba, Rigondeaux decked his man in the fourth round but was himself placed on the canvas in round six and facing the first thing even resembling a crisis in his fledgling professional venture.

On the other hand, as his own undefeated ledger would suggest, Ramos clearly has something about him and will provide Guillermo with the test he no doubt craves. Tall, rangy and calculated in his approach, Ramos will be wary of meeting Rigondeaux head on and offering him the targets and clear openings needed for Guillermo’s razor sharp combinations to land.

Even though Ramos looks more of a test -on paper at least- ultimately Rico will most likely find himself wearing down as the fight moves towards the latter stages. My tip is for Rigondeaux to record a mid-to-late round stoppage win and therefore claim his first piece of professional silverware.

Fighter of the Year Magee Planning for Danish Success – 17th January 2012

Brian Magee takes another step along the road to world title glory when he ventures to Denmark for a crack at former IBF title challenger Rudy Markussen, on Saturday, February 18 in Brøndby. Magee has enjoyed good form in Denmark, having travelled to Aarhus in January 2010 to halt Mads Larsen in seven rounds for the European super-middleweight title.

“Everything’s on course and I’ve been training hard, so I’m confident that the preparation will be in place,” buzzed Brian, when chatting about this latest opportunity. “Fair play to my management team who do all the hard work behind the scenes; I just do the fighting. [Mikkel] Kessler is even a future possibility and it makes sense to fight him. I have to beat the top guys in the division.”

Magee was not only present in the St. Agnes’ gym to continue training and announce his next fight, but the Lisburn man also received the coveted Irish Boxer of the Year award for his achievements in 2011. The BUI-affiliated award was handed over by event organiser Cormac Campbell and Irish Prospect of the Year winner Jamie Conlan was also in attendance. Trainer of the Year Paschal Collins and his charge Gary O’Sullivan, the Irish Champion of the Year, were busy elsewhere.

Even though Brian Magee is mentioning names like Kessler and Carl Froch already, he knows that it would be a mistake to discount the threat posed by a reinvigorated Rudy ‘Hardhitter’ Markussen.

“Markussen’s strong, hits hard and will be very dangerous for the first half of the fight,” agreed the 36-year-old WBA interim super-middleweight king. “But he won’t hit any harder than the likes of Bute or Froch. There are no easy fights in this division and if you want big prizes then you have to beat the top guys.

“Travelling doesn’t faze me at all and fighting in Denmark is great because it feels like I’m only going up the road! There is no time difference, a nice short flight over and nothing to worry about. Pat will maybe get me into a six star hotel! I’ve three more weeks of hard training and sparring left to do and we will then fly over on the Tuesday of fight week.”

Now trained by Panamanian Bernardo Checa and enjoying a new lease of life as he ploughs through the twilight of a highly successful amateur and professional career, Magee looks back fondly to the heady IBO title days he once enjoyed and wonders if he’ll ever be back

headlining a Belfast bill. Brian has certainly morphed into somewhat of a road warrior in recent times.

“Looking back, topping bills in the King’s Hall goes over your head until it’s all finished and now I realise that it was a great time in my career. I can sit back and enjoy my time and just stay relaxed.”

Despite failing to better IBF ruler Lucian Bute when the pair met in Canada last year, Magee feels that he gave enough to suggest that he can compete at world level. He is truly relishing a return to Denmark and believes that he can topple local hope Markussen and then possibly return for a third Danish assignment. But failing that, he is willing to challenge any of the division’s big boys.

“I won’t look past this fight but there are big fights out there for me if I win. Kessler, Ward, Froch, I’ll just face anybody with a belt.”

Conlan Eager to Drop Prospect Status – 18th January 2012

Belfast flyweight hope Jamie Conlan will still get some much-needed ring time on Saturday, January 21 but, as expected, none of Britain's top champions or contenders will step up and accommodate him.

"Yesterday [Tuesday] alone I had three different opponents, so hopefully this one sticks," lamented Jamie, who now looks set to meet Slovakian journeyman Elemir Rafael over four rounds. "It's been a bit of a nightmare trying to pin down an opponent; I've been down to fight, then not down to fight but training non-stop in case something did come off. John Breen has kept me well focused."

26-year-old Rafael has won 19 fights out of 74 so will at least come to have a go at Conlan, who needed more of a test rather than going over old ground against the likes of Anwar Alfadi or Delroy Spencer. Elemir recently went six rounds with good quality Frenchman Jerome Thomas and was seen in England last month extending Liam Richards over four rounds. Even though any sort of opponent is better than further spells of inactivity, it is disappointing to think that Paul Edwards was originally expected to box Jamie on this show. Edwards withdrew and a whole list of names also went thumbs down when offered the opportunity to step in.

"I don't know why they won't fight me – am I really that bad looking?" Conlan joked. "I don't think I've scared them [British and Commonwealth fighters] off but they just don't seem to want a fight with me. Frank Maloney said that nobody wants it, they're all saying no. Martin Power said no straight away. I would have fought Paul Edwards in his home town as well, so what more could you ask for?"

Absent since June 2011 and a win in Craigavon over the aforementioned Del Spencer, Conlan at least enjoyed the accolade of being named Irish Prospect of the Year at the recent BUI-affiliated awards ceremony. He has also been promised a big chance if he extends his winning run.

"I've been told by Maloney that I could fight Chris Edwards in the summer so if he does that then I'll be more than happy. Even someone like Mike Robinson would be a lovely eight-rounder for me. He comes forward all day which would be brilliant. I want the British title this year. I stalled in 2011 with fights falling through and my last bout was in Craigavon last June. This next one will be either a four or six-rounder. I've already done an eight-rounder so I'm eligible for titles."

Hopefully the time will arrive when Conlan (along with fellow Belfast battler Luke Wilton) gets a chance to break into the title mix that has so far managed to shut them out. Jamie doesn't have too many requests, apart from nailing down that overdue shot at a belt.

"I don't want to be a prospect anymore," he concluded. "I want to be a champion."

Magee Claims Irish Boxer of the Year Award After Away Win – 19th January 2012

The annual Irish Boxing Awards took place on Wednesday, January 18 with Lisburn super-middleweight Brian Magee claiming the coveted Irish Boxer of the Year accolade. This is the fourth consecutive year that the awards have taken place and after celebrating the success of Phil Sutcliffe's Crumlin gym in Dublin, in recognition of their 2010 exploits, the event returned to Belfast and Magee's St. Agnes' Club, where a host of media representatives gathered to hear of Brian's next move.

2011 was a mixed year for Magee, who travelled to Canada in March to face off with IBF belt holder Lucian Bute. The Irishman gave a good account of himself but eventually fell in the 10th round after shipping some well-placed body shots from the stellar champion. Brian regrouped, however, and went to Costa Rica in July to meet local star Jaime Barboza in a WBA interim title affair. Magee's class told over 12 rounds as he took the decision and the belt. He is now looking to move in to contention for a shot at the regular WBA title or a crack at the division's big players, with esteemed names like Mikkel Kessler and Andre Ward being mentioned.

Other fighters in contention for the Boxer of the Year gong –which was voted for by a media select- included Paul McCloskey and Andy Lee. Awards organiser Cormac Campbell presented the trophy and later described Brian Magee as “the model professional.”

“Despite the current economic woes Brian and his team have continued to carve out opportunities at the highest level,” said Campbell. “His dedication in the gym and willingness to travel provides a template many young professionals should consider following.

“This is the fourth year we have run the awards - with the boxer of the year going to a different fighter each time. Out of the previous three years Brian actually came second in the voting on two occasions so this was a case of third time lucky.”

Flyweight prospect Jamie Conlan was also on hand to receive an award, with the west Belfast talent being pronounced Prospect of the Year. Conlan follows in the footsteps of Martin Lindsay, Carl Frampton and Jamie Kavanagh who had taken home the cut glass trophies in previous years. Conlan has had some trouble convincing Britain's top flyweights to meet him, despite Jamie appearing extremely willing to travel over to England to challenge for the big titles. The 25-year-old was set to face former British title holder Paul Edwards in late January in

Edwards' home town of Liverpool but the Scouser withdrew, citing a change of trainer as the reason, and Jamie was forced to tread water against a journeyman opponent. Fans eagerly await the confirmation of an all-Belfast clash with improving fellow-flyweight Luke Wilton.

"Jamie is a very exciting talent, who possibly should be further on in his career already, but with his brother Michael a medal hope at this summer's Olympics and opportunities finally starting to fall in to place, we can expect to hear much more from him over the next 12 months," added Cormac Campbell.

There were two other winners announced but understandably neither was on hand to receive their prizes. Paschal Collins was named as Coach of the Year and the Cork trainer has certainly built an impressive stable of fighters. One of those boxers, undefeated light-middleweight puncher Gary O'Sullivan, was named as Irish Champion of the Year. Despite suffering from a frustrating spell of inactivity, 'Spike' returned in style last year with a first round knockout of Dubliner Robbie Long when the two clashed to contest O'Sullivan's domestic middleweight crown in the National Stadium. A link-up with British promotional powerhouse Frank Warren should prove fruitful for Collins' entire squad in the forthcoming year.

Irish cruiserweight champion Ian Tims is also part of the group. 'Timsy' outpointed Michael Sweeney for that very title in March 2011 and recently contested the EU crown out in Finland, going down narrowly on points, but returning home convinced that had the fight been on neutral soil he would have prevailed. Meanwhile, lightweight prospect Stephen Ormond is aiming for a big year under Paschal's tutelage and the undefeated Clondalkin hope is forever linked with a shot at London starlet Kevin Mitchell. Collins also now trains ex-amateur star Karl Brabazon down in his Dublin base and was a deserved winner of the Coach of the Year honour.

Shamrock Shorts – 10th February 2012

It's great to see Carl Frampton keeping busy and fitting in a Commonwealth title defence on March 17. 'The Jackal' was impressive in his recent dismantling and brutal knockout win over Kris Hughes. Even though the Sky Sports commentary team were calling for a knockout all of a sudden mid-fight, I thought he was measured and controlled, using a good jab and some hearty body shots to weaken a cagey, awkward foe. Hughes wasn't a particularly stellar fighter but Carl showed that he can deal with tricky opponents and that lessons have been learned from the Robbie Turley fight.

Frampton's win was well received in the local press and he marches on towards a slot on the Sheffield undercard.

Eamonn O'Hara of the Irish News said: "A clinical finish to a superbly choreographed live TV display against Scotland's Kris Hughes, the undefeated 24-year-old 'Jackal' sent a warning to his key rivals, British and European champions Scott Quigg of England and Spain's Kiko Martinez."

Both fights mentioned would be wholly acceptable throughout the coming year, with Bury's Quigg gathering plenty of momentum alongside Frampton on Sky headliners and Martinez forever embedded in to the Irish boxing scene since that famous win over Bernard Dunne back in 2007. The Spaniard defends his European title on March 9 in Lyon, France against a man he has already beaten in Arsen Martirosyan. The first bout took place in Dublin's National Stadium back in 2010 and Kiko showed that he was a better boxer than given credit for when outthinking the solid but unexceptional Martirosyan. Often rightly portrayed as a one punch knockout artist, Martinez showed an added dimension to his game that night but surely Frampton would be favoured to prevail were the two to meet for Martinez's EBU crown. A fight between the pair would rest on Kiko beating his Armenian challenger next, which is away from home and no formality.

I was down in Dublin last week with the News Letter's boxing correspondent Nicky Fullerton to cast an eye over the Irish Senior Finals. The future of professional domestic boxing is in good health if this crop of talented amateur fighters is anything to by. Not that it is a given that any quality unpaid pugilist is always being groomed for the pro game but I often like to speculate on who would likely succeed if they were to

ditch the headguard and vest.

The eagerly anticipated return of last year's final between Joe Ward and Kenny Egan did not disappoint. Filled with intrigue and pre-fight suspense on whether we would see repeat or revenge, Ward ultimately cast aside any doubts as to who was the boss at 81kg with a masterful display. It was sad to see Egan dominated for large chunks of the contest but perhaps Kenny's period of success is coming to a close as his superb ability to time opponents' moves slowly diminishes.

Another return bout saw David Oliver Joyce again being outmanoeuvred by the unspectacular yet effective Michael McDonagh and one of my personal favourites Ross Hickey motored past Stephen Coughlan. I rate Hickey highly, yet Coughlan showed enough in his offensive capabilities –like a raking left jab for example- to suggest that he can come again at this level.

Meanwhile, down at 52kg Belfast's Michael Conlan showed exactly why he has qualified for the 2012 Olympic Games, with a brilliantly elusive display against Ryston's Chris Phelan. Conlan slips and moves in and out of range with relative ease and picks his punches so well. I would view him as a dark horse for the flyweight medals in London this summer.

And finally...a quick word for Tommy McCarthy who produced the knockout of the night, at 91kg. The only one as it turned out, but well worth the wait as he disposed of Christy Joyce in the third round. Planting a sharp right hand on to the chin quickly removed Joyce from his senses and as the St. Michael's Athy man scrambled across the floor to try and continue it looked like the referee's count was purely academic. Even though Tommy does not appear to completely suit the heavier weight class he has clearly retained his punch power.

"Tommy trained so hard for this, was in great shape, feeling very good and it was all about putting a performance together. He did that," countered veteran coach Patsy McAllister.

McCarthy will now head to Turkey in April, alongside Paddy Barnes, Michael McDonagh, Ross Hickey, Adam Nolan, Joe Ward and Con Sheehan as the seven-strong group vie for a place in the Olympic Games.

Irish National Elite Championship Finals – 24th February 2012

Joe Ward (Moate) claimed the coveted 81kg title in the Irish National Elite Finals with a dominating 29-10 win over arch-rival **Kenny Egan** (Neilstown). Ward had beaten Egan in last year's final and the rematch was highly anticipated but a listless Egan was unable to get in to any sort of rhythm and was generally outmuscled and manhandled by the younger man. Kenny failed to cut off the ring or sustain any momentum and despite dropping Ward in the second round he was second best throughout the contest. Kenny later received a standing count as he endeavored to hear the final bell. Ward motored forward landing punishing hooks and was named as Boxer of the Championships.

"I respect Kenny but I don't fear him," said Ward post-fight. "My plan was to make him miss and counter punch and it worked."

Egan conceded that his opponent was the superior man and the torch has now been formally passed from the ten-time senior title winner to the new breed.

"Joe's as strong as an ox and he landed the cleaner shots – I was falling short," sighed the 2008 Olympic silver medallist. "If he qualifies for the Olympics then I'll put a couple of grand on him to win a medal. I'm not retiring; I'll go back to camp and start again."

In the fight of the night Bray's **Adam Nolan** bettered **John Joe Joyce** (St. Michael's Athy) 17-15 at 69kg. Ex-Olympian Joyce was troubled by Nolan's rangy southpaw style but pushed forward and put it all on the line, which in turn brought the best out of the defending champion.

Light-flyweight king **Paddy Barnes** (Holy Family) retained his 49kg title with a 21-17 win over **Hugh Myers** (Ryston). The challenger was on Paddy's tail for the duration and Barnes admitted that he was ring rusty and will now focus on Olympic qualification.

Grangecon southpaw **Ross Hickey** is a talent to keep an eye on. He cleverly drew leads from Bray's **Stephen Coughlan** all night and duly picked his opponent off with classy counters for a 21-5 victory at 64kg.

In the battle of the **Neavins John Joe** (Cavan) had too much quality for his less experienced cousin **Michael** (Portlaoise), recording a 23-3 win at 56kg. Plucky southpaw Michael Nevin was dropped twice and did well to last the course.

In a repeat of last year's 52kg final, **Michael Conlan** (St. John Bosco) outfoxed Ryston's **Chris Phelan** 19-11. Conlan's slick moves illustrated why he has booked a place at London 2012. Another man who

will be there, Paulstown's **Darren O'Neill**, claimed the 75kg title via walkover when Derry's **Conor Coyle** withdrew with an injury.

The 60kg bout was also a repeat of the 2011 final with **Michael McDonagh** (St. Mary's) again defeating **David Oliver Joyce** (St. Michael's Athy). Last time it was via disqualification but on this occasion McDonagh fiddled his way to a 17-14 win, managing to tame the rushing attacks of buzzsaw Joyce with fleet-footed movement.

Belfast's **Tommy McCarthy** (Oliver Plunkett) produced the (only) knockout of the night when he landed a crunching right hand to dispose of **Christy Joyce** (St. Michael's Athy) in round three of the 91kg final. Joyce had offered little ambition up to that point and McCarthy's classy cameos wracked up the points, until his clinical finisher made it all academic.

In the battle of the big men at 91kg+ Clonmel's **Con Sheehan** mastered **Sean 'Big Sexy' Turner** (Drimnagh) 25-10. Chunky Turner – who resembles a young Darren Corbett- had his moments but Sheehan moves well for his size and was always one step ahead.

In two female contests **Lynn McEnery** (St. Paul's) defeated **Oliwia Samsanov** (Cavan) 16-13 at 48kg and **Michaela Walsh** (Holy Family) outpointed **Dervla Duffy** (Ryston) 15-13 at 57kg.

Unusually, all of the night's winners came from the red corner.

48Kg: (Light-flyweight): Lynne McEnery (St Pauls) beat Oliwia Samsanov (Cavan) 16-13

49Kg: (Light-flyweight) Paddy Barnes (Holy Family) beat Hugh Myres (Ryston) 21-17

56Kg: (Bantamweight) John Joe Nevin (Cavan) beat Michael Nevin (Portlaoise) 23-3

57Kg: (Featherweight) Michaela Walsh (Holy Family) beat Dervla Duffy (Ryston) 15-13

52Kg: (Flyweight) Michael Conlan (St John Bosco) beat Chris Phelan (Ryston) 19-11

81Kg: (Light-heavyweight) Joe Ward (Moate) beat Ken Egan (Neilstown) 29-10

60Kg: (Lightweight) Michael McDonagh (St Marys) beat David Oliver Joyce (St Michaels Athy) 17-14

75Kg: (Middleweight) Darren O'Neill (Paulstown) beat Conor Coyle (St Josephs) W/O

69Kg: (Welterweight) Adam Nolan (Bray) beat John Joe Joyce (St Michaels Athy) 17-15

64Kg: (Light-welterweight) Ross Hickey (Grangecon) beat Stephen Coughlan (Bray) 21-5

91Kg: (Heavyweight) Tommy McCarthy (Oliver Plunkett) beat Christy Joyce (St Michael's Athy) KO3

91+Kg: (Super-heavyweight) Con Sheehan (Clonmel) beat Sean Turner (Drimnagh) 25-10

Boxer of the Championships: Joe Ward (Moate BC)

Casey the Jewel in Emerald's Crown – 24th February 2012

Former European super-bantamweight champion **Willie Casey** will be hoping to return to the ring with a 'Big Bang' when he meets Hungarian **David Kanalas** at the Emerald Road House in west Belfast on Saturday, February 25. Casey has not tasted action since the Tyson Fury-Nicolai Firtha back in September 17, 2011 and recently split with manager Gary Hyde, before Emerald Promotions offered him this fresh start.

Finding a suitable opponent has not been an easy task as original choice James Ancliff caught a cold, Istvan Nagy was in and then out and a proposed WBF Celtic-Gaelic title clash with Paul Economides never really got off the ground. Promoter Chris Graham told me that the reasoning behind this new venture was that he didn't want to see a talented crop of professional hopefuls go to waste and has dutifully stepped in with the intention of running three-five shows this year to keep his starlets busy.

According to their website Emerald Promotions is a new venture dedicated to promoting local talented boxers and is managed locally by Graham. Chris is a former Ireland international amateur boxer who signed for Brendan Ingle before a serious knee injury cut short his professional career.

In the nominal main event Casey's adversary Kanalas boasts a statistically impressive 6-1 (3 KOs) record and has won his last two bouts via first round stoppage wins but, tellingly, on the one occasion he stepped up in class he was halted himself in the opener by Paul Butler. The 19-year-old was dropped four times before the referee called off his challenge in Liverpool on that night and Willie Casey will probably be favoured to do the business within a similar timeframe.

Down to the rest of the bill and former Commonwealth lightweight champion Graham Earl signed up a multitude of Irish youngsters but only **Joe Hillerby** has seen a significant amount of ring time so far. The 24-year-old meets **Aleksandrs Radjuks** in a sixth professional outing (all wins so far) and should have too much for the Latvian over eight rounds.

Another of Earl's fledglings, light-welterweight **Mark Ginley**, gets slippery southpaw journeyman **Johnny Greaves**. Mark's brother 'Sugar' **Ray Ginley** must have got most of the Weetabix at the Ginley family table seeing as he turns pro all the way up at light-heavyweight. Ray faces **Stuart 'Mad Dog' Maddox** who has yet to record a win in three attempts (one draw).

Former Holy Trinity talent **Anthony Cacace** was an amateur achiever who has decided to switch over to the paid circuit. Opponent **Ben Wager** won his last bout via first round knockout and the Yorkshireman should come over to Belfast and have a go at the promising Cacace.

Local middleweight **Gerard Healy** completes the card and will have shifted a few tickets as he prepares to improve his slate beyond 1-2. Healy narrowly won his home debut before finding himself as the 'opponent' in his last two outings and may have his hands full with **Oleksiy Chukov** who has three victories on his CV.

Casey Aims to Lead the New Belfast Breed – 26th February 2012

Former European super-bantamweight king **Willie Casey** reinforced his title intentions with a first-round knockout win over **David Kanalas** in Belfast in the first show organized by Emerald Promotions. There was no feeling out process in the nominal main event after Casey (9st 11lb 10oz) had discovered the lean torso of Kanalas (8st 13lb 10oz) and the end quickly rolled into view. A double right hook to the body had Kanalas on one knee and his attempts to circle the ring and jab proved futile as ‘Big Bang’ repeatedly honed in on the same area. It was no surprise when another well-placed right hook dropped the Hungarian and he was halted at 2-40 of round one by referee Paul McCullagh.

“I didn’t pressure this guy tonight I just walked him down,” said Casey, who is open to facing the likes of Carl Frampton and Kid Galahad. “I want the big fights and I tell anyone out there to come to me if they want them too. The future is bright with Emerald Promotions.”

Emerald’s main man Chris Graham is a former Irish international amateur who later spent time at the Ingle stable in Sheffield before a knee injury put paid to any fistic ambitions. He already has plans to run again in Belfast, eight weeks from now.

The remaining five ‘house’ fighters on this show hailed from Belfast and four of their bouts were concluded via first-round knockout.

Joe Hillerby is eyeing a spot in the May 5 middleweight Prizefighter tournament and has adjusted his style to suit. Dropping the patient back foot boxing approach, 24-year-old Hillerby (11st 6lb 2oz) raced out of the blocks and immediately laid in to **Aleksandrs Radjuks** (11st 10lb). The Latvian covered up and tried to repel Joe’s assaults but not sufficiently enough for Paul McCullagh who terminated his evening at 2-05 of round one in a scheduled eight-threes.

Former amateur talent **Anthony Cacace** confirmed his status as one to watch with a first-round debut demolition of Barnsley’s **Ben Wager**. Any ambition Wager (9st 13lb 4oz) arrived with quickly diminished as a looping right hand sent him spinning to the canvas. Cacace (9st 8lb 8oz) followed up with ruthless intent to finish the job at 1-05 of the round and the prospect later revealed that he is eager to fight again next month. The third man, making his show debut as a referee, was former super-bantamweight pro John Lowey of Dundonald, who mixed with the likes of Erik Morales and Kennedy McKinney in his US-based heyday.

Another debutant **Raymond Ginley** removed Preston’s **Stuart Maddox** in the opening session. ‘Sugar’ Ray shipped a couple before

shedding his self-confessed first fight nerves with a cracking overhand right that placed Maddox (12st 6lb 4oz) on the canvas. The away man was still shipping leather when Paul McCullagh intervened at 2-50. Ginley (fleshy at 12st 9lb 4oz) is hoping to slim down for a campaign at super-middleweight.

Meanwhile, Ray's brother **Mark 'The Situation' Ginley** had his hands full with wily veteran **Johnny Greaves** in the fight of the night. The East Ham southpaw (10st 3lb 12oz) landed plenty of straight left hands and presented Ginley (10st 1lb 8oz) with an experience that will only benefit his career progression. Mark fiddled through 39-37 on the ringside scorecard (announced incorrectly as 39-36). Mr. Lowey refereed this contest and the evening's opening bout where local crowd-pleaser **Gerard Healy** improved his record to 2-2 with a shutout 40-36 win over unadventurous Ukrainian **Oleksiy Chukov**. Healy (11st 4lb 14oz) worked a good jab and uppercut but Chukov (10st 10lb 10oz) never threatened.

Casey Back With a Bang and Ready for the Big Names – 28th February 2012

Willie Casey returned to the ring with a bang on Saturday, February 25 and now aims to use his first-round knockout over David Kanalas as a springboard back to meaningful titles.

“I was waiting a while for a fight, it has been a long time coming and Emerald Promotions are on board and ready to bang out the shows,” said Casey, as trainer Paul McCullagh cut off his hand wraps post-fight. “There is a possibility of a title fight next, in Dublin. So we’ll be hitting down South and it will be a well-respected title, not some Mickey Mouse thing.”

No further clues were offered to the inquisitive press pack about that but Emerald Promotions’ supremo Chris Graham is working on options for Casey, who has suffered a frustrating spell of inactivity since splitting from manager Gary Hyde. On the night, Hungarian opponent Kanalas offered little more than was expected, but the fight was always about helping Willie shed some rust.

“I didn’t pressure this guy tonight I just walked him down,” Casey added. “He was letting his shots go but when I responded my punches were just a little bit too much for him. Emerald tried hard to bring in a good opponent but it didn’t happen. Whoever was in tonight was going down with those shots. I suppose a little bit of rust came off and Anthony [Cacace] and Mark [Ginley] have been offering great sparring for me. There’s a team atmosphere and we can all lead the way and do our best to get to bigger things. The quality sparring is there for us in the gym, all the lads tonight showed their class and we are lucky to have that.”

Now training in Belfast, Casey is the main name at the Gleann gym which is currently enjoying a spell in the limelight. All of the six home fighters on display at the Emerald Roadhouse are based in the club. Across Belfast, at Gerry Storey’s Holy Family club, red-hot super-bantamweight Carl Frampton plies his trade. The two faced off as amateurs and Casey says that he is keen to renew those rivalries at a professional level. Willie was scheduled to face Kid Galahad last year but the fight failed to materialise. That has been put back on the radar recently and talk of a slot on the upcoming Tyson Fury-Martin Rogan bill has gathered pace.

“There are some big fights out there and I’m open to any of them,” said Casey. “I said from the start of my career that you can bring me in all the journeymen and the same thing will happen, when the ‘Big Bang’ comes they will go down. I want the big fights and I tell anyone out there

to come to me if they want them too.

“I haven’t had any more contact to date with them [Team Hennessy, regarding the Galahad scrap] and all of my recent focus has been on this fight and getting it out of the way before thinking of anything else. Look, I’m a family man, always away from home and things can get frustrating. Emerald will be looking after me from now on and the title fight could come as soon as April. The big names have my phone number and if they want me then I’m sure they can find me. I’m a proud Limerick man and my second home is now in Belfast.”

Regardless of what happens next Casey is adamant that he will not be rushed into making decisions and wherever his proposed big fights end up taking place he has requested plenty of notice.

“I have options, I can’t say a lot at the moment but I’m open to offers and people have to be reasonable. There’s no point in coming in at the last week and asking me to fill in a slot, I need a proper training camp at this top level – six-eight weeks at least and I’m ready for anybody.”

Shamrock Shorts – 28th February 2012

Paul McCloskey will face Julio Diaz on May 5 and to be honest I have no problem at all with this fight. Even though at 32 years old Diaz's best days are slipping behind him, Julio was once a serious player on the world scene at light-welterweight and won versions of 'world' titles. Better to have a has-been than a never-was. Currently boasting a 37-7 with 27 knockouts 'The Kidd' has twice held IBF belts, winning the latter against Jesus Chavez when, if I remember correctly, Chavez damaged his knee and was unable to continue. Diaz has mixed with the likes of Javier Jauregui, Angel Manfredy, Jose Luis Castillo, Juan Diaz and Kendall Holt and enters the Belfast ring with a huge wealth of experience behind him. Even though he has lost many of the big assignments over a 13-year career he did upset the odds just three fights ago and pulled off a wide 10 round points win over Herman Ngoudjo in mid-2010.

So McCloskey will have to be on his guard against this wily old campaigner. Not that I would've complained if the likes of Curtis Woodhouse had been in the opposite corner, as was being mooted just a couple of weeks ago. McCloskey needs to earn a wage like everybody else and long spells out of the ring will be of no benefit to him, so if the elusive world title shot is still no closer to materialising it makes sense to at least keep him active. The first (and hopefully not last) Belfast Prizefighter will make up the undercard and not only that but it will be an all-Irish affair with hungry domestic fighters making up the eight slots. Usually a Prizefighter tournament is the main event in itself so to have McCloskey headlining on top of this is a great bonus.

Speaking of that Prizefighter middleweight tournament, several names have already been confirmed. It has the potential to be a fascinating format with the right mix of quality prospects, men with something to prove and a little bit of needle throw in for good measure. It's too early to pick a winner but I would initially lean towards Eamon O'Kane, although with some slots still remaining unfilled we shall wait and see who else is drafted in. O'Kane has a strong amateur pedigree, which included a Commonwealth Games gold medal and experience in the World Series of Boxing. The Dungiven man fights at a ferocious pace, with a strong engine and blasts in each hook (minus a jab) with serious intent.

Mark Heffron meanwhile has introduced himself to the Irish fans through brief glimpses of ability on a couple for undercards since signing with Gary Hyde. Anthony Fitzgerald is never shy to offer his opinions, especially on Ballymena's Joe Rea (who has previous Prizefighter experience) and fans will be hoping that the draw pulls out the pair so that they can settle their differences once and for all. Roscommon's Darren Cruise will bring strong support to the Northern capital and look to reassert his reputation after a slightly tainting loss to Lee Murtagh in Castlebar last August, which Cruise will no doubt put down to experience.

So who else will likely get the final spaces? It would be nice to see a Belfast boxer get the shout. Perhaps someone like Joe Hillerby fits the bill in that respect. Australian-based Dennis Hogan seems a popular choice on other articles here at Irish-boxing.com. I must confess that I have not seen Hogan fight but he seems to have plenty of vocal backing. Lee Murtagh has been mentioned but I'm not sure that the format suits his style. If Brendan Fitzpatrick can get down to middleweight (and I have no reason to suppose that he can't) then I would definitely put him in. New York-based Arklow man James Moore has apparently thrown his name in to the mix and would be a very strong inclusion if that were to come off. If not then perhaps Galway's unbeaten Alan Donnellan could force his way in, with one of the McDonagh brothers or even Belfast's Ciaran Healy all worthy of consideration.

Either way it's good to see all eight spaces filled with Irish fighters. Even though many will not mean anything to the Sky viewers or producers did we really want to see the likes of Danny Butler, Max Maxwell, Paul Samuels or a selection of better-known UK fighters thrown in just because their names are slightly more recognisable? I certainly didn't. I think this makes for a much more exciting evening's boxing and you can expect all eight combatants to raise their games to that extra notch given the fact that they will be facing fighters they already know, have probably sparred with and hail from different parts of the same island. All will be vying for local bragging rights and domestic pride. So let's get it on!

Chris Graham ran his first professional boxing event on Saturday, February 25 and it moved smoothly enough (from what I saw anyway) and I really don't envy anybody who takes on the running of a small hall show. Notable winners on the evening were Anthony Cacace, Joe Hillerby and Raymond Ginley who all scored first round knockouts, as

did Willie Casey but there wasn't too much to learn that we didn't already know before the Limerick man's brief performance. Stiffer tests will come for the 'Big Bang' who reckons that a Dublin title fight could be on the agenda in the coming months. Mark Ginley was involved in fight of the night after a back-and-forth tussle with Johnny Greaves, who rarely fails to entertain with his unique approach to showboating. Gerard Healy also pleased his fan base with a shutout win over Oleksiy Chukov.

‘Sugar’ Ray Ginley Looking Ahead After Debut Win – 1st March 2012

Joining his brother Mark on the paid boxing circuit for the first time, Belfast light-heavyweight Raymond Ginley is eager to get straight back in to the ring and chalk up win number two. It looked like being a longer night for the debutant after opponent Stuart Maddox came out with fire in his belly and landed a couple of jarring shots on the nervous youngster, but once ‘Sugar’ Ray loosened up and let his shots go it wasn’t long before the referee was rescuing the away man from further discomfort.

“He caught me with a shot and it woke me up a bit so I started boxing,” admitted Ginley, when we finally caught up with him after a post-fight parade of meeting and greeting the numerous fans. “I was very nervous at the start of the bout and I’ve been nervous all week because it’s my first pro fight and I haven’t boxed in nearly a year. I did a lot of talking leading up to my debut and when it came to this morning I realized that I was going to have to back up all my talking! Paul (McCullagh) said before the fight ‘You’ve done all the talking now go out and do the work.’”

Ginley’s excessive talking just heightened the expectation of his first bout and later in the evening his fighting sibling Mark made it a family double. The only thing that Raymond did not manage during an opening round knockout was to remove his man in the shortest time of all the home fighters. Club mate Anthony Cacace blasted his man (Ben Wager) just a few seconds earlier.

“I was just looking for a win so getting the knockout was a bonus,” said Ray. “I was expecting Cacace to knock his man out because he’s such an unbelievable talent. I want to move on and get the next one lined up. I’d love to get on the Irish Prizefighter bill or Rogie’s bill with Tyson Fury.”

The Fury bill would appear as a more realistic proposition for a one-fight novice, who fought on the night at 12st 9lb, than the Prizefighter middleweight tournament. The ex-Oliver Plunkett amateur competitor is still looking to bring his weight down as he continues along the learning curve.

“Since I started sparring my weight has come down and I’m going to be campaigning at super-middleweight and my next fight will probably be around 12st 6lb. I didn’t even get time tonight to see if I was rusty because once I started boxing I caught him with three jabs and then then let the right hand go.

“I was hoping it [my debut] would go a bit longer but I’ll just enjoy my victory and relax,” he concluded.

Anthony Cacace Aiming High After Debut Victory **– 3rd March 2012**

Even though he has only contested one pro bout thus far, Belfast banger Anthony Cacace is in no doubt as to where his career his heading. The novice is looking for quickfire bouts to push him up the rankings and plot a course to nothing less than a world title.

“I’m not joking; I’m heading for a world title and whatever comes in the short term,” said Cacace when I pressed him on potential short-term goals like Irish titles. ‘Anto’ came in to his Emerald Roadhouse debut with a fair amateur pedigree and plenty of vocal support amongst the healthy crowd.

“The atmosphere here was unbelievable,” he agreed. “I loved every minute of it and cannot wait to get back in again. I’m fighting in England in a month, not sure where but talks are ongoing. I don’t know of another fighter at this weight who’s more powerful than I am and that is maybe an overstatement but I’m punching very hard. I may drop down a weight next time because I can lose it [the weight].”

Opponent on the night Ben Wager was standard debut fare and never really expected to produce an upset win, but Cacace was still required to get the job done and he did so in style.

“I was nervous in there and a bit tight but I loosened up and caught him with a cracker, then just went out to do him in. I was rusty, it was my first fight in two and a half years but I feel great now, the punching power is there and very hard for my weight. I knew he would come at me so I timed him with one over the top; he came running at me after he caught me with one early. I was going to end up hurting him and it wouldn’t have gone past the first round. I think I proved myself there and remember that he was 1-1 with a stoppage win on his record.

“I’ll fight anywhere to get my name up there and getting a knockout in my first fight – happy days.”

Fresh Start for Joe Hillerby Who Has Rung in the Changes – 3rd March 2012

Belfast middleweight Joe Hillerby has made a few changes in his fledgling career and the undefeated Sandy Row pugilist reckons that we will soon start seeing the best of him. Breaking ties with Graham Earl has seen the 24-year-old sign on with Emerald Promotions and move his training camp to Paul McCullagh's buzzing Gleann stable. This resulted in a more aggressive version of 'The Faith' turning up on February 25 as Joe ditched the back-foot boxing and proceeded to rip in to opponent Aleksandrs Radjuks by scoring an impressive first round stoppage win.

"I just wanted to get the job done and put in a good performance," Joe modestly commented. "I saw him (Radjuks) moving back and there was an opening to the body so I got in and hurt him. I'm trying to change my style and my whole game from the old club to now and working with Paul and the boys from Gleann has brought me on so much more. I'm becoming a pro fighter and growing more and more in every fight, sitting back, picking my shots and not rushing in. My fitness is sky high so I can maintain a high pace.

"I've moved to Emerald Promotions now from Graham Earl and this promotional company is a new beginning, they are going to be massive. The talent on show tonight says a lot. We are all growing in the gym, winning fights and building a bond."

Hillerby had employed a strict jab-and-move policy in his previous outing – a four-round win over rugged veteran Tommy Tolan- and I for one was expecting more of the same at the Emerald Roadhouse last Saturday night. But the prospect had been implementing a new strategy just down the road in west Belfast and showed why he believes that a spot on the May 5 Prizefighter in Belfast should still be his.

"Against Tommy Tolan I stuck to my boxing and picked the shots off, using my skills and boxing him because he just came forward all the time. I took the fight with Tommy because I wanted to fight on a home show and it was too good to turn down but really I'm not a 12 stone fighter. I'm strong at middleweight; I can pressure and put it on to opponents. From my first fight in Luton against Gavin Putney until now I am just getting better and better all the time, just taking it fight by fight and hopefully an Irish title will be next.

"There has been talk of Prizefighter and it can shoot you up to world level and if it happens then that's great. Prizefighter would suit my new style and as an amateur I was a come-forward fighter. 2012 is going to be a massive year and a British title or Irish title would be great."

The Prizefighter slots have since been filled but Hillerby will continue his improvements and a British, or more realistically an Irish, title shot could soon come knocking. Plenty of quality of sparring will have him ready should either chance arrive.

“I’ve been sparring big Ray Ginley in the [Gleann] gym and whoever comes in. Paddy Gallagher was in and Conrad Cummings too before he went down to the Irish Seniors. The gym is buzzing, everybody is eager to get another fight already. I’ll sit down with Emerald and see what they have planned.”

Fury and Rogan Provide Jokes, Boasts and Songs at Belfast Presser – 6th March 2012

Tyson Fury and Martin Rogan met face to face in Belfast's Odyssey Arena for the first time to formally announce their upcoming scrap. There were no bottles or tripods flying at this heavyweight meeting, with the pair quite literally tuning up for the April 14 showdown by treating a strong press turnout to a burst of song. The fight itself has been a long time in the making but it appears that all parties have finally reached a conclusion that everybody is happy with.

"Fury had no choice but to fight me, he doesn't have any belts and neither do I so he's not above me in any way," opined Rogan. "There's no bad blood between us at all, we're both in there to fight."

At 40 years of age and inactive for 18 months come fight night, some observers may reason that the former Commonwealth champion is taking a retirement package but Rogan -who like Fury looks in excellent shape already- does not share that view.

"I'm older but wiser and I'll use my education in the ring on April 14 to put together some destruction. Fury's world number six and this is a great opportunity for me, it's a lifeline. He'll go into the ring and get beaten by a good, hard Irishman."

Promoter Mick Hennessy hopes that the Irish title will be on the line although long-running issues over Fury's eligibility still need to be ironed out with the Boxing Union of Ireland. Much has been made of the team's decision to drop Tyson's belts rather than face David Price, but the Wythenshawe native has put any conflicting thoughts on hold until he has dealt with Rogan.

"This, for me, may as well be for the unified heavyweight championship of the world," said Fury. "This is where it is; Martin Rogan in Belfast, nothing else - no other fighter in the world matters more to me right now, not even the Klitschkos. I've put myself to hell and back [in training camp] for this one and I never, ever want to go there again.

"To be honest, I've often in the past gone into fights not being in one hundred per cent condition and not one hundred per cent mentally right as well. I want to go out there in fantastic shape, put on a real performance, climb myself up to the world championships and stay there for as long as I want to."

Seeing as no belts are on the line, proud Belfastman Rogan requested to enter the ring last on fight night but Hennessy was in no mood for giving ground. The London promoter left no doubts as to who is in

charge of this event, which will be televised by Channel 5. With fight night predictions, winner-takes-all purse suggestions and plenty of hyperbole flying around the press conference it was generally all done in good spirits, prompting Fury to take hold of the microphone and practice some snippets of his recently devised Comic Relief stand-up routine before breaking into a ballad. The move clearly inspired Rogan.

“Everybody saw what happened between Dereck Chisora and David Haye and there will be nothing like that here, we’ll do our fighting in the ring,” affirmed Martin. “I’ve fought everyone that’s been put in front of me, never ducked anyone and I’m not starting now. Tyson’s a good guy and this is my city, so I’m ready to fight.”

Fury Still Dreams of Irish Title Opportunity – 8th March 2012

Tyson Fury believes that his dream of fighting for an Irish title may be moving one step closer, with the April 14 Odyssey Arena headliner against Martin Rogan a possible opportunity to dust off the heavyweight domestic strap last seen around the waist of Coleman Barrett in February 2010.

“Providing it gets passed as a title fight, it’s going to be a good thing for me,” buzzed Fury, who has made no secret of the fact that he wants the Irish strap before moving on to bigger things. “I never got to go to the Olympic Games and I never boxed for Ireland - well, I did, actually, twice as an amateur - but when it came to the big tournaments or championships they didn’t want to send me. It was more of a pride thing with me, to be honest, and now I want to put it straight – I’m really looking forward to this fight.”

While Tyson has yet to grace the impressive Odyssey venue, Rogan, on the other hand, has plenty of title experience there, with not too many happy memories unfortunately. But there is no doubt that the Clonard bruiser will be looking to put the two defeats by Sam Sexton into distant memory and arrive in stellar shape on fight night. Judging by initial impressions, both he and Fury look well-conditioned already.

“The fans are going to be out in their numbers,” predicted the ‘Iron Man’, who always attracts a healthy following. “Belfast’s a fight city and the kids [aspiring boxers] will like Fury and be inspired by a big guy like him, they’ll know him from Channel 5.”

“It’s fantastic to be back in Belfast, a long time coming and it has everyone talking about this fight,” added promoter Mick Hennessy. “Everyone wants it and we’ve duly delivered. I believe it will be the biggest heavyweight attraction in Ireland since Muhammad Ali in the 1970s at Croke Park [a 1972 knockout win over Alvin Lewis]. We have two proven warriors here. Tyson Fury beat Chisora and we all saw what he did out in Germany.”

I assume Mick means Chisora’s *actual* fight with Klitschko and not the post-fight melee that garnered boxing more column inches than anything with gloves on has managed in recent years. One matter that is not fully resolved for this upcoming event is the issue of Fury’s ‘Irishness’ and Rogan took every available opportunity to poke and prod at Tyson over the on-going matter.

“The Irish title eligibility has been proved,” confirmed Hennessy.

“The title is Mel’s business but last time we spoke, the Irish title was looking good. Tyson wants to win an Irish title and after the Klitschkos he is the most talked about heavyweight in world boxing.”

The title situation may seem fairly clear cut from Mick’s end but Boxing Union of Ireland president Mel Christle apparently sees it rather differently: “The situation at the moment is quite simple; we are still awaiting confirmation of Tyson Fury’s eligibility to fight for an Irish title,” he stated.

Meanwhile, Martin Rogan has his own eligibility concerns, over an Irish license dispute. It seems that Martin has a valid point of contention but the funky world of boxing politics is too sticky a subject to tackle at this moment.

“I’m an Irish citizen in Belfast and I don’t know why I can’t fight off my Irish license in my own city,” remarked Rogie. “It needs looked at, the politics of it, but I should be able to be fighting on my Irish license. People talk about belts but this fight doesn’t need a belt. A newspaper once said that I showed my Commonwealth title off too much when walking down the road but I was proud of winning a title. It was brilliant to win that, but this fight is a proper fight in a fight city - Belfast loves me and I love Belfast.”

Tyson Ready to Unleash the Fury On ‘Cuddly’ Rogie – 9th March 2012

It may have been a few months in the making but Tyson Fury and Martin Rogan will finally lock horns on April 14. Setting out the finer points in a jovial press conference last week, the pair are aiming to arrive at the Odyssey in peak physical condition and rumble away until one of them hits the deck.

“Martin has a lot to say about his destruction and devastation, but what can you say?” questioned the 23-year-old unbeaten prospect Fury. “All will be revealed on April 14 and I hope his fight is as good as his words, because I’ve been sitting here listening to him ramble on.”

A smiling Rogan later quipped that it was Tyson doing most of the rambling and if he didn’t manage to finish the job with his fists then maybe he could talk the Belfast veteran to the canvas!

“He’s not going to take anything away from me because I am in destruction mode,” responded Fury. “An army won’t stop me on the 14th of April, so Martin Rogan hasn’t got a chance. He’s getting on a bit too, to be honest.”

Referring to his adversary as “wee cuddly Rogie”, Tyson did offer some begrudging respect to the ex-Commonwealth champion, admitting that he would rush home early to witness Rogan’s rapid rise into one of the domestic heavyweight scene’s most unlikely heroes, just a couple of years ago.

“He’s the kind of fighter I like to watch when I’m watching boxing on TV. I always thought he’d do really well; I believe he should have got a world title shot at Ruslan Chagaev, but he was messed around and never got the opportunity. When I was a kid starting out, when I turned pro at 20, Martin Rogan was the man coming up; he’d won Prizefighter and then he beat Matt Skelton - which nobody expected him to do - and Audley Harrison. I’d only had one or two fights then, but I’d rush back to watch him because I knew it would always be a good fight.”

It seemed for a while that this fight would never materialise after previous attempts to bring the two together ended in a haze of accusations and counter-claims with no resolution in sight. Eventually Fury –who looked set for an enticing scrap with David Price before relinquishing his British and Commonwealth titles- and his promotional team managed to reach an agreement with Rogan and the end will be written in their Easter showdown.

“It’s not that I ever disagreed to this or any other fight,” he reasoned,

“it’s just that these things are down to the promoter to put the fights on and this one has been a long time in the making. It’s one of those things, but we finally got together and sat down and agreed everything. The fight is on at last. He [Rogan] has got his chance now to fight a top ten rated fighter but, to be honest, I think it’ll be one of those times where the young man is going to prevail. The young warrior always overtakes the old one, and the old one has to move over and make room.

“Rogie’s one of those fighters who always gives it his all,” concluded Tyson. “There’s no nancy business with him, it was always get stuck in and shit or bust, really.”

McCloskey Back in Belfast and Ready for a Date with Diaz – 9th March 2012

Paul McCloskey will once again command headliner status and this time it's on May 5 in a bumper Belfast bill that contains the first Prizefighter tournament to take place in Ireland. Paul and his team expected a world title opportunity to come knocking after a career-best win over Breidis Prescott last September, but that frustrating search will resume after the Dungiven southpaw has dealt with former world title holder Julio Diaz.

"I've been in the gym since Christmas and have been working hard," revealed McCloskey, who needs to keep busy while his promoter bangs on the doors of the sanctioning body bigwigs.

"It's going to be a great night and exciting for the fans with Prizefighter coming on board. I obviously want to fight for a world title but that's just not happening even though we've approached a lot of fighters. A short while ago we were talking about the likes of Curtis Woodhouse and no disrespect to him but before that we targeted boys like Zab Judah and Paulie Malignaggi. We had to get somebody tied up and we got Diaz, who I haven't studied yet but I'll get the videos and see what he does. I need to do the job on the night and move on from there and I'm fully focused on May 5."

Paul will start as a heavy favourite over Diaz who has previously fought at a high level and will no doubt travel to the King's Hall for a good go at the well-supported Irishman. Some stellar, and not so stellar, names had been approached for the May assignment and any name that holds familiarity with American audiences is an added advantage.

"People have been asked to come and fight but it hasn't happened and we just wanted to get the ball rolling," added the former undefeated European champion. "For me it's about winning my fights and if the American boys like me then that's a bonus. I'm just thinking about moving on as quickly as I can and fighting for a world title. If that chance comes in another country then so be it but I would obviously like it to be here because the support I have is amazing.

"The Odyssey Arena, filled up to the neck with all my support, in a world title fight would be a dream for me but we're just taking each fight as it comes. I'm in pretty good shape at the minute and I want to get into the ring in peak condition. It's frustrating but I have to stay calm, focused and keep working hard."

If it's been frustrating for McCloskey and his advisor Francie McNicholl then the endless obstructions have also taken their toll on Matchroom's Eddie Hearn who is exploring every avenue in an attempt

to nail that elusive crack at a world strap.

“It has been a frustrating period as a promotional team, after beating Prescott from the deepest depths of possible defeat,” sighed Hearn. “It’s difficult to get a title shot and we keep banging on the door, showing off the fans’ support [to TV networks etc] and displaying a willingness to fight big opponents. I was convinced that a world title fight would come next after we beat Prescott.”

The plan remains in tact, just revised for the time being. This could turn out to be a make-or-break year for Eddie and his growing collection of fighting Irishmen.

“We have a three-fight plan for 2012 with the May bill, then one show at the end of June/beginning of July featuring a big fight for Carl Frampton and then a big September bill for Paul McCloskey with a world title fight hopefully. The Prizefighter winner will feature on both bills and Martin Lindsay, who is a talented ticket seller, will also feature in the three-fight plan,” Hearn confirmed.

Songs, Satire and Stand-Up: Fury and Rogan Produce An Unforgettable Press Conference – 10th March 2012

The last time Tyson Fury and Hennessy Promotions rolled into Belfast, Martin Rogan turned up unannounced at Tyson's King's Hall press conference and a war of words quickly ensued between the two camps. Fury eventually fought Nicolai Firtha on that occasion but for a while it looked as if he and Martin would get the chance to sort out their differences. Now they will – at the Odyssey Arena on April 14. The pair got together for a press conference that was made memorable for a whole different set of reasons as both men entertained the eager onlookers with a variety of stunts and gags.

“All my focus is on April 14, I'm not underestimating him at all,” said Rogan, during the serious part of the conference. “I've been working so hard in training and it's only right that the Klitschkos have mentioned Tyson Fury's name because he's world rated. I should've got a crack at a world title after I beat Matt Skelton but I'll not cry over spilt milk, I'll move on to the next episode of my career.”

That episode comes as a make-or-break night for the man who has always lived up to his since disposed nickname of 'The Entertainer'. The self-decreed 'Iron Man' may be the wrong side of 40 but he is in fine nick and ready to derail the Fury freight train – live on Channel 5.

Martin later took a sideswipe at so called “outside influences” who he claims have added in their own bit of internet-based skullduggery to try and ratchet up the tension on boxing forums. Like the Belfast veteran, Fury has also been training hard and is looking forward to a tough night's work. Unlike previous training camps he insists that everything has been going well and the Wythenshawe man is desperate for a bash at the Irish title before moving on to bigger things.

“I just hope he's prepared, because I've never put myself through this much training ever in my life,” growled Fury. “I had a few problems going on at the time that I'm not going to go into, but now I am one hundred per cent focused on my aim, my goal - and that's to be the heavyweight champion of the world.

“I see Martin Rogan as being in my way, he's holding the key for me; he's stopping my family from eating, so any man who's going to get in with a 6'9” man who weighs 18 stone and has been training like a demon - away from the celebrity lifestyle and away from my family for 15 weeks by fight time - is in trouble.”

Always looking for a psychological advantage, Rogan later found time to try and lever a winner-takes-all agreement in to the contracts to up the ante on his younger opponent. Fury was enthusiastically receptive and as promoter Hennessy nervously chuckled away, the idea fluttered away as quickly as it had arrived.

“You said if Chisora beat you then you’d give him your purse,” recalled Rogan. “Well let’s say if I win then I get your purse. People, get to the bookies as soon as you can because he’s going down! I’m dealing with the issues surrounding this fight. I don’t want to ruin your dreams but after April 14, when I knock you out, you’ll go away and watch me again on TV knocking a few others out! On Sky Sports against the Klitschkos though, not Channel 5.”

To which Fury responded, “If he beats me then I’ll be going nowhere apart from back to his house to shine his shoes for him.”

It was generally all good natured banter and things took a turn for the surreal towards the end as Rogan produced a pair of comedy spectacles and accurately mimicked the recently deceased Northern Irish comic Frank Carson.

“Forget about stand-up, it’ll be lie down for Tyson Fury,” quipped Rogan.

As the late Carson would’ve said, “It’s a cracker!”

Prizefighter Joins McCloskey in Northern Ireland Boxing Extravaganza – 10th March 2012

Not only will Belfast fight fans be treated to both Paul McCloskey and Martin Lindsay on May 5 but the King's Hall attendees will have an all-Irish Prizefighter sandwiched in between. So when promoter Eddie Hearn says that he can't remember a card that offered as much value, I would be inclined to agree with him.

"Belfast fans were crying out for a Prizefighter and with Paul McCloskey and now Martin Lindsay on as well it's even going to be even bigger," said Hearn, who promised no singing, stand-up or hurling tripods at the beginning of last week's press briefing.

"Prizefighter is all about characters and having an all-Irish tournament makes sense because I was originally planning an Ireland vs. England format but I was inundated with requests –nearly 20 in all- from Irish fighters at light-middleweight, middleweight and super-middleweight looking for a spot. There are fighters with pedigree involved and if you look at the individuals, and I know I get accused of saying this before every Prizefighter, then I really think this is the best line-up yet."

An all-Irish flavour to the usual format makes sense as not only is there good strength in depth in and around that division in Ireland, but because domestic pride is stake and some serious ticket sellers are on board.

"It will be an historic night, records are on the line and winning can take out the domestic scene and push a fighter straight into a big fight. I don't like saying this to fighters but losing isn't the end of the world either, because they can raise their profile and get noticed on Prizefighter."

The show will kick off around 7.30pm on May 5 with Martin Lindsay, then the Prizefighter and finally McCloskey's headline act against Julio Diaz. It will run until 11.30pm with at least three hours being televised by Sky Sports as well as enjoying worldwide coverage. Eddie Hearn says that Prizefighter doubles the viewing numbers of any Saturday fight night and with 6,000 Irishman packed into the King's Hall it will be a special night. This sort of event will never happen again or at least not for many years anyway.

"Everyone is putting it on the line," continued Hearn. "Eamonn O'Kane is out on March 17 [in Sheffield versus Wayne Reed] and has been sparring with George Groves. I won't tell you what they were up to there but I don't think that Groves liked it too much. Eamon's a

tremendous talent and there's quality running through the line-up.

"The heavyweight Prizefighter, which was won by Audley Harrison, was massive but this will be huge, with serious ticket sales. I can't see how it won't be sold out. Prizefighter is a special event than needs a special venue and the King's Hall holds up to 6,000 and has the balcony which makes an iconic venue for an iconic night's boxing."

Matchroom's John Wischhusen came up with the hardcore Prizefighter concept after various ideas were thrown around, including a heavyweight idea called *Last Man Standing*. Eddie thinks that the Prizefighter ethos of "Three rounds with two blokes trying to bash each other up and double your money in each round" is what brings in the casual viewer as well as the hardcore boxing fans.

If I was to nail my colours to the mast and try to pick a winner of what will no doubt be a highly competitive tournament I would side with Eamonn O'Kane, the 2010 Commonwealth Games amateur gold medallist who has links with Matchroom and will probably be installed as the betting favourite. Follow him with Manchester's Mark Heffron, who has family history in Cork and is managed by Gary Hyde.

After that it's a real pick 'em and you could choose any one from former long-reigning Irish champ Anthony Fitzgerald to Simon O'Donnell, JJ McDonagh, Ryan Greene, Joe Rea or Darren Cruise. Galway's Alan Donnellan (who like O'Kane, Heffron and Greene is undefeated as a pro) is named as one of the reserves with the other yet to be revealed.

"I would expect viewing figures of around 400,000-500,000 on the night," hoped Hearn. "This is a once in a lifetime shot for the guys and they need to embrace that, show their personality and go for it. Some have never fought on TV and some will never fight on TV again. The English fans have a perception that the Irish fighters love a good punch-up. Every time we do a fight or even a press conference in Belfast we have a great response and we can't do six shows a year in Ireland but we love coming over. There will be shocks, upsets, knockouts, cuts, reserves, you name it – it's going to be a special night."

The Price Is All Wrong for Hennessy – 13th March 2012

Even though a fight between Tyson Fury and David Price remains a mouth-watering prospect for UK and Irish fight fans, it seems that both undefeated prospects are destined to head in different directions. Fury's promoter Mick Hennessy has said that he tried to bring the talented pair together but for one reason or another, the bout will not be happening anytime soon.

"The only publicity that David Price gets, in my opinion, is off the back of Tyson Fury and being associated with him," stated Hennessy. "It's simple, Tyson Fury is a star. He's been groomed to be a star and he's on terrestrial TV in front of millions of people. I offered him [Price] the fight, on Channel 5 and if he really believed that he could beat Tyson then that's where stars are built and made. I offered him a lot of money, a career best by a long way and he turned it down so we're moving on."

Tyson will instead focus on cementing his lofty ranking world ranking (as talk of either Klitschko brother continues to gather pace) while Price carries on with preparations for a May 19 showdown with Sam Sexton in Liverpool, for the now available British heavyweight crown that Fury vacated. Tyson's next opponent, meanwhile, is former Commonwealth champion Martin Rogan, a man who is wholly familiar with the threat that Sexton will pose to Price's unbeaten ledger. Even though a big-punching Price-Fury showdown is off the agenda for the time being it is hoped that the match could still be made in the near future.

"Who knows?" questioned Hennessy. "Tyson's number seven with the WBC at the moment and David Price is way, way behind Tyson Fury and he hasn't fought a 'live' opponent yet. Just look at what a 45-year-old Matt Skelton did to Tom Dallas -who was fully prepared- the other day. Dallas went in with Price at four days' notice or something."

Mick seems adamant that a Price fight has been consigned to history and the only thing concerning his young charge now is the prospect of a fired-up Martin 'Iron Man' Rogan on April 14 in front of an expectant Odyssey Arena crowd.

"So as far as Tyson Fury goes, Price isn't even worth talking about," reinforced Hennessy.

"Martin Rogan did a job on Matt Skelton in his prime, so we have a live fight here. Martin may have been out for a long time but throughout their careers fighters pick up a lot of niggles and injuries and fights like this give them a chance for everything to correct itself. Each time I see

Martin Rogan he is in better shape. This is a serious fight because Martin's coming to take what Tyson's got. I haven't underestimated him and neither has Tyson Fury."

The April 14 undercard sees another inactive 40-something, in the form of cruiserweight Darren Corbett, lurch out of retirement to tackle Ballinrobe prospect Michael Sweeney. Chris Eubank Jr and John O'Donnell both get opponents who are yet to be named. Conal Carmichael makes his debut at cruiserweight against African roughhouse Moses Matovu and talented prospect Dee Walsh meets Tommy Tolan.

Half-full Leisure Centres and Shit Fights – Hearn Discusses Boxing’s Health – 17th March 2012

During his time as a top boxing promoter, looking after some of the UK scene’s most well-known names, Barry Hearn presided over the constant twists and turns of the sport as it evolved towards what we currently enjoy - or despair of, considering your individual viewpoint. Barry’s son Eddie is now busy building up a respectable stable of talent across the Irish Sea, many of whom will see action on May 5 in the King’s Hall. Hearn openly discussed the nature of the beast when it comes to negotiating big fights in the existing climate and revealed the many factors that are shaping boxing’s present and future health.

“Boxing is not rating well in the UK and that’s the bottom line,” Eddie stated. “Any aspiring viewer or fight fan is turning on and seeing half-full leisure centres and shit fights, which appeals to nobody.

“Paul (McCloskey) will potentially have to travel for a world title shot and he’s willing to do that. We would happily go to Las Vegas for a big fight. We were willing to take a risk to bring a world title shot here, by selling out the Odyssey and getting a whack from Sky. Look at the fight market in Germany and the recent Klitschko vs. Mormeck fight for example where they packed the place out and the Germans all left with a smile on their face with great ratings. All of the hardcore boxing fans know that it was a load of bollocks but the casual would have turned the TV on, seen all that going on, and thought ‘wow!’

“Prizefighter is a gimmick but it’s also a great concept that gives these boys [assembled fighters] an unbelievable opportunity to catapult into a title fight. But it also means that the casual fan turns it on and thinks, ‘this is unbelievable, eight fighters, seven fights, double your money and winner stays on’. It’s three-three minute rounds of hammer-and-tongs at each other, all night and we know what we’re going to get from these guys [the all-Ireland cast], they will all go for it on the night.”

Several opponents were mooted and rumoured for Paul McCloskey before Julio Diaz was finally settled on for the Dungiven star. Even ex-footballer Curtis Woodhouse’s name was mentioned and while Curtis may not be a stellar fighter, lacking any pedigree due to his late arrival in to the fistic art, I believe that he would have at least entered the ring all guns blazing and had a good go at the Irishman regardless of the end result.

“We probably tried close to 60 opponents and with regards to Curtis Woodhouse we just wanted someone to come over and fight, not someone who would look to hide in a shell for 12 rounds and it would’ve

been Woodhouse's ultimate world title fight," agreed Hearn.

"The Bredis Prescott fight was a night worthy of being a world title fight but we will be doing everything we can to secure a world title shot and that is the ultimate goal. What options does Maidana have now? Katsidis opted to stay at lightweight, which would've been a great fight."

Paul will be getting valuable TV exposure for this latest assignment and an impressive performance could send a message to fans and networks around the world that the southpaw stylist can be a serious player at world level, even in the talent-laden light-welterweight division.

"This will be shown in America on a Fox channel and in Canada. The Khan fight wasn't even on Sky and wasn't seen by enough people," bemoaned Eddie, who has been a strong critic of Team Khan's organisational skills both in and around the big fights.

The English promoter also places little credence in an undefeated slate and reckons that if you can fight a bit then the chances to participate in big fights will eventually come knocking, as the cream rises to the top.

"An 0 means less and less in today's boxing," reckoned Eddie. "Too many people hide behind an unbeaten record when they actually aren't that good and the moment they are put in a meaningful fight then they will lose. So if you aren't any good then why waste your time? At least put yourself into a tough fight and find out how good you are."

Sweeney Prepared for Back Yard Brawl in Belfast – 25th March 2012

Ballinrobe talent Michael Sweeney is looking to use an April 14 clash with Belfast's own 'Raging Bull' Darren Corbett as a chance to catapult his way back into the title mix. Even though former Commonwealth cruiserweight king Corbett is 39 years old and has endured a lengthy career reaching all the way back to 1994, Sweeney is expecting a tough night's work on the Tyson Fury-Martin Rogan undercard.

"A win over Corbett puts me up right there and on course for a rematch with Ian Tims which is what I want, or an EU title fight, whatever comes first," buzzed the man who is now 11-2-1 (6 KOs) since turning pro in 2007.

"Training with Sean Mannion has been going great as usual and everything is fitting in well with just a few weeks left. I've been out for a while but this has happened before [a spell of inactivity] and I came back with a good win. I'm young so I'm moving all the time."

Sweeney has been out of the ring for seven months and has seen a few mooted opportunities fail to materialise. He has never found high-class sparring difficult to come by and has been in with the likes of Arthur Abraham, Chad Dawson and Wladimir Klitschko, no less, after forming a solid relationship with Emanuel Steward. This time the 29-year-old has been out in Finland sparring Juho Haapoja who recently beat Ian Tims for the same EU title that Michael craves a shot at. He will finish up preparations by working with headline attraction Martin Rogan and show debutant Conall Carmichael.

Sweeney briefly teamed up with the now defunct DolPhil Promotions early last year for an ill-fated crack at the Irish cruiserweight title against the aforementioned Tims. After coming in, by his own admission, in less than stellar condition having been beset by pre-fight troubles, Sweeney dropped a narrow 95-97 points decision to the rampant Dubliner Tims.

"I wasn't in good shape for the Tims fight but I had loads of tickets sold and I didn't want to let anyone down but on the night but I did let myself down," he admitted. "That won't happen twice though and I'll get him next time. I had just had an operation on my Achilles so that says it all. The main thing now is to keep getting fights and winning them and then the big ones will come along."

Corbett, meanwhile, has made his own intentions clear in the local press by stating that he sees Sweeney's scalp as his chance to snare a crack at Tims for the all-Ireland crown. In recent times Darren has only moved out of semi-retirement for opportunities in the last two

cruiserweight *Prizefighter* tournaments but he seems to have refocused all efforts back in his Sacred Heart gym base and is bizarrely looking to use any future fight earnings towards a deposit on a sweet shop.

“Corbett is looking at a hard way to get his deposit for sweets, because he won’t beat me,” laughed Sweeney. “I’m going to spoil his party...but I will bring him some Maltesers and popcorn to the after party! Darren made his name back in the day but time moves on and so does [a fighter’s] age, but I don’t look at that because he can be dangerous, so I’m not taking him lightly. But it’s definitely a win I want on my record. I’ve got fast feet, good hand speed and I can bang too so it’s going to be a good fight.”

As Rogan and Fury bash lumps out of each other in the main event, screening live on Channel 5, Sweeney and Corbett could yet find themselves enjoying some television exposure on the undercard but that is the least of the Mayo man’s concerns.

“Getting on TV would be great but just winning is on my mind, I will get on TV some day. I’m happy to be on the card and a big thanks to Mick Hennessy and Mickey Hughes who are good boxing men. It’s shaping up into a good bill and that’s obviously what the fans want. I’m fighting in Corbett’s back yard but I’ve been fighting in back yards all my life. It’s in my DNA and I just can’t wait for April 14.”

Red Hawk Planning ‘Rock ‘N Rumble’ Roscommon Event – 29th March 2012

Red Hawk Promotions will run their first professional boxing event, *Rock ‘N’ Rumble*, on Saturday, May 19 at The Hub venue in Castlerea, Roscommon. Promoter Maria Ni Shiuilleabhain has an action-packed bill lined up for all fans of the noble art.

Former Irish light-heavyweight champion John Waldron and exciting female boxing talent Christina McMahon will both compete in title fights, while ex-amateur achiever Stephen Reynolds makes his first step on the road to professional honours. The Ballinacarrow cruiserweight will be joined by fellow debutants Finton Glynn, Michael Waldron and Brandon Peake.

Unbeaten Galway prospect Alan Donnellan also features, alongside Roscommon’s own Darren Cruise who will be hoping to thrill his hometown fans off the back of a successful *Prizefighter* campaign on May 5. Middleweight Willie Mitchell’s inclusion caps what promises to be an exciting evening’s action for all fight fans.

“It’s going to be a very different show from the norm with top class boxing, performers and musicians,” said Maria Ni Shiuilleabhain. “Red Hawk is delighted to be coming to Roscommon for a pro show. The local fans love their boxing and we have a quality show lined up for them. We are expecting a strong and enthusiastic crowd to come along to Castlerea and support the cream of Irish boxing talent.

“I want people to start celebrating boxing in Ireland again and for fans to enjoy the experience of getting out and going to shows to see that it is fun to be at a real live boxing show, rather just watching on TV. By bringing their friends and family, and even those who would not normally attend boxing, they can also enjoy an entertaining experience.

“That’s where the challenge lies with Irish boxing at the moment. I am very proud to have such a great team in Red Hawk, we have hugely talented and experienced boxers and I hope to showcase their skills on this show.”

Maria intends to take the experience beyond boxing and is planning a show filled with surprises. Galway Samba Drummers, Red Hawk Golden Girl Cheerleaders, Fierce Studio Firebreathers and Pole Fitness Performers will join an Irish Speaking MC for what is shaping up to be an unforgettable evening’s entertainment.

McCloskey vs. Maidana Hit Too Many Roadblocks – 6th April 2012

According to promoter Eddie Hearn a fight between Paul McCloskey and Marcos Maidana did not happen due to negotiations hitting too many roadblocks. After McCloskey's heroic win over Breidis Prescott last September it looked for all intents and purposes that he would next face off with the Argentine banger and WBA 'regular' belt holder. Maidana, however, opted to take an alternative, slightly puzzling route, and Hearn thinks he knows why.

"The fact is that Maidana isn't that good and there's no way that he beats McCloskey in Belfast and that factors into Maidana's decisions," opined Eddie.

"We made Marcos Maidana a great offer and it was even more disappointing that he took less money to lose a ten-rounder to Devon Alexander up at welterweight. Maidana should really be stripped of his title by the WBA. It probably won't happen because he's got very close links with the WBA but are world titles that important? I know they are but I believe that in four or five years' time it won't be about the world titles but instead about the fights themselves, because some of the stuff that's going on in the organisations makes no sense at all."

World title belts are a whole different debate for another day, or more likely several days, such are the mind boggling decisions that the variety of organisations often come up with. The serious power players in the U.S. are the TV networks, HBO and Showtime, who call the shots on who they want to see, sometimes with head scratching outcomes.

"The U.S. networks are getting very particular," agreed Hearn. "For example Showtime with regards to [not showing] Froch-Bute and if Maidana goes to HBO and talks about a McCloskey fight then they have no interest because they don't know a great deal about Paul. They have little interest in Maidana either unless he's fighting a big name American.

"There have been many roadblocks to making a fight with Maidana; another is getting a fighter over here [to Belfast]. We offered Maidana \$300,000 plus worldwide TV, which is another \$300,000 at a minimum if his management team has any ability at all. I know that some people rate Maidana but he's effectively coming over to lose and they half know that. About 15 people work for him -when making deals- and they all want cuts of the purse."

Maidana's bloated entourage of advisors, middle men, deal breakers and the guy that washes his car (who Hearn jokes is also looking for a

purse cut) can often hinder deals. Even solid offers as noted above. On May 5 Paul McCloskey will still get his big fight but against Julio Diaz and Marcos Maidana may have to scuttle back into obscurity for a while before his next big payday comes along.

“We wanted a name and Diaz is not the most amazing opponent ever but a top quality fighter who has operated at a high level and has won two titles,” concluded the Matchroom head honcho. “This September we need a world title fight but we also need to earn money and fight while we’re waiting.”

Heavyweight Pair Ready for Titanic Battle in Belfast – 10th April 2012

It was no coincidence that Tyson Fury and Martin Rogan were brought together in the Harland and Wolff Drawing Office as the heavyweight pairing prepare for their Saturday, April 14 showdown. It truly promises to be a Titanic struggle in every sense of the word. The Irish title is on the line, both men are ripped into impressively chiselled condition and there can be no excuses after the leather has stopped flying in the Odyssey Arena.

“The entertainment and comedy is finished and we’ve got one hell of a fight for the Irish title,” summed up promoter Mick Hennessy. “I don’t think that there has ever been such a high profile fight for an Irish title that has more meaning on the world stage than this one and it’s a heavyweight fight to boot.”

The sideshow element of the build-up has been plentiful, but both men seem to have stripped away the masks of humour and it is all business from here on in. ‘Iron Man’ Rogan, a grizzled veteran at 40 years old, proceeded to send out an invitation of warfare to his 23-year-old adversary.

“I think that Tyson has overlooked me,” Rogan growled. “He thinks it will be an easy ride but he will find out the hard way. The Titanic reminds me of Tyson Fury and I’m like an iceberg because when I hit him he’s going down. He’s 6’9” but I’ve thrown bigger guys out of the way just getting to the ring.

“It doesn’t matter how hard he trains because the end result will still be the same and I know that I’ve trained hard. There will only be one true Irishman lifting that belt on Saturday night.”

The latter was a clear backbite at Manchester’s Fury and a tireless quest to prove his ‘Irishness’ before this bout. The younger man sighed and shook his head before spelling out some vicious intentions of his own and also revealing that he has been out and about canvassing for pre-fight opinion.

“I’ve been doing a few trips around Belfast and I’m struggling to find anyone that likes Rogan, “chuckled the former British and Commonwealth title holder. “Everyone is asking me to knock him out and I’ll happily do that. Rogan might be a great fighter but I’m supreme and there’s a difference between world class and domestic level. You’re talking and listening to a world class athlete and Martin Rogan is coming for a war but he’s a British-level fighter. I’ll hit Rogan with so many left jabs that he’ll be begging for the right hand to come over and knock him

out.”

Fury also spoke candidly about the belief that his punch resistance may not be up to scratch, having been dropped or rocked in his last two bouts.

“It’s obvious that I’ve been hurt in my last two fights and Rogan is a bigger puncher than Pajkic and Firtha so on paper it looks like he’s going to smash me to bits but I’ve never trained like this before. My chin won’t be a problem on the night. Martin, you’ve never been any good and I’m going to expose you on Saturday night.”

Tyson also took an opportunity to move to the floor and remove his shirt, to which Rogan quipped back, “The only six pack he has is sitting in the fridge at home.”

No singing or stand-up routines this time, but a rare one-liner served to lighten the mood in a meeting mixed with animosity and intent. As promoter Hennessy described, the time for comedy is over and the real business will begin on Saturday night.

Hillerby All Set for Northern Ireland Clash with Thompson – 10th April 2012

Belfast brawler Joe Hillerby is relishing his first professional title fight as the ever-improving fighter strips down to light-middleweight. Hillerby meets Ballyclare's Willie Thompson over ten rounds for the Northern Ireland Area title. It will be the first time the belt has been aired since October 2007 when James Gorman outlasted Gary Hamilton in east Belfast for the light-welterweight version.

"I can't wait, training's gone well and it's been a perfect preparation," buzzed the Sandy Row starlet. "The boys were off fighting last week in Nottingham and the gym's buzzing, all raring to go. Willie (Casey) has got a title fight next week and I'm excited to be getting in there myself."

Now stationed at the red-hot Gleann gym on the Glen Road in west Belfast, the 24-year-old started off his career with Londoner Graham Earl. Despite getting on English shows, Joe was competing in a higher weight class. Since returning home and linking up with new trainer Paul McCullagh and promoter Chris Graham, the undefeated prospect has shed the excess and is now training as a light-middleweight.

"I've no worries doing the ten rounds, I could do 12 and my fitness is sky high, never been as fit in my life," he said. "I've been sparring Ray Ginley and a few other boys have come in; guys like Gerard Healy. Hopefully four or five fights down the line I can get a British title crack and that's what we are aiming for. I want the Irish title next though and I'm stronger at this new weight. 12 stone was too heavy for me when I started as a pro. Down at 11 stone I'm putting people away instead of going the distance."

Going in with an experienced, solid competitor like Willie Thompson holds no fears for Joe, who says that the pair shared a fleeting spar session a couple of years back. He views Thompson as someone who is willing to mix with the best and Hillerby will have to be on song to prevail.

"Willie's very durable," he agreed, "only having been stopped once in his career and that was by Michael Jennings. We know that Jennings is a former British and WBU title holder who fought Miguel Cotto [soon to meet Floyd Mayweather], so there's no doubt at all that Thompson has been in a high class. He went the distance with British champion Ashley Theophane so he's faced the top boys. It's a good step-up for me.

"I've sparred Willie before, just a one round light spar, down in Breen's a while back, and I was working with Neil Sinclair that day so they stuck me in with Thompson for a round. I don't know if he

remembers me but I remember him!”

If Thompson doesn't recall then Hillerby plans to introduce himself fairly quickly on April 14. Joe always carries a strong following along to shows and expects a great atmosphere on the big Odyssey attraction.

“The Odyssey will be brilliant on the night. In the main event I think that Rogan could do it early but if it goes longer then Fury will win late on points.”

Governing Body Dispute Threatens to Take Irish Title Off the Fury-Rogan Agenda – 11th April 2012

A disagreement between two leading governing bodies, the Boxing Union of Ireland (BUI) and the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC), could see the Irish belt removed from Saturday's Belfast blockbuster between Tyson Fury and Martin Rogan. Because the fight takes place in Northern Ireland it therefore partly falls under the jurisdiction of the BBBofC and General Secretary Robert Smith is reportedly presiding over a series of demands regarding the running of the headline attraction.

The crux of the disagreement apparently rests on an e-mail that was sent from Smith to BUI president Mel Christle, the details of which are as follows: "We have received a request from promoter Mick Hennessy for a non-scoring referee and three judges, which will be accepted by the Stewards of the Board due to the importance of the contest being on National Television, etc.

"However, the request for Mr. David Irving to be referee will not be accepted by the Board. We have no problem with Mr. Irving judging the contest but it is felt an experienced official will be required. Someone who has undertaken a number of varied championship contests and is proven at operating at world class.

"Unfortunately, before Mr. Irving was licensed by the Boxing Union of Ireland he failed to be upgraded to Star 'A' Class Referee in Great Britain due to the fact it was not felt he was good enough but suited more to the grade of 'A' Class.

"In addition, Mr. Hennessy requires a 12x3 round contest for television and, as in the past, we are happy to appoint judges following such a request. The fact that Mr. Hennessy has attracted a major television company in Channel 5, it is felt that the best possible standards are put in place and that would mean three judges and a non-scoring referee."

The stance of the Board is surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly given that in 2007 Brian Magee and Tony Oakey met in Dublin for the British light-heavyweight title and all BBBofC requests (regarding distance, judges, referees etc) were adhered to by the BUI. Three years later Frankie Gavin fought Michael Kelly in Birmingham for the vacant Irish title with only Emile Tiedt as sole scoring judge and over ten rounds. The recent JJ McDonagh-Lee Murtagh fight in Hove and Paddy McDonagh-John Waldron in Liverpool were also both over ten rounds and with the referee as sole scorer. Smith dealt with both matters in the

e-mail.

“With regard to the two Boxing Union of Ireland championship contests which took place in the United Kingdom recently, you are correct in that they were solely judged by the referee; however, had the promoter requested judges, each application would have been considered on its own merit.

“This event is a major tournament in Belfast and also a good advert for the All Irish Championship and therefore the Stewards feel that any appointment of officials for contests under their jurisdiction need to be made with the full approval of the Board.

“I am sure you understand the British Boxing Board of Control’s concerns and knowing the good relationship between the Boxing Union of Ireland and the British Boxing Board of Control the Stewards are mindful that this will not be an issue.”

BUI president Mel Christle has responded by stating that, “Under the rules of the Boxing Union of Ireland, All Ireland title fights are scheduled for 10x3 minute round bouts and are judged by the referee in charge of the said bout. The Board has nominated David Irving to be the referee, who has refereed numerous All Ireland titles, including heavyweight title fights, in the past. He is viewed as a top class referee, not only by the Boxing Union of Ireland but also by the president of the European Boxing Union, who witnessed and complimented his performances as referee on more than one occasion in the recent past.

“The Ratings Commission would be delighted if John Williamson [a Belfast official nominated by the BBB of C] would agree to be a supervisor at the bout, along with [BUI nominee] Francie McCullagh. However, we wish to make it clear that the conditions attaching to the holding of an all-Ireland heavyweight title fight in Belfast - which were initially furnished to Mick Hennessy on 20th March - still apply.

“If the fight cannot take place in accordance with the BUI’s rules and be refereed by the BUI’s nominees, it will not be for the All Ireland heavyweight title.”

So it appears unlikely at the moment that the Irish title will be present at the Odyssey on April 14 unless these problems are first ironed out. Further discussions between the parties are due to take place and the BUI’s most basic rules and conditions are widely known to ringside scribes and, more importantly, to the promoters and show organisers. Even though the longstanding issue of Tyson Fury’s heritage and documentation was finally resolved and the Irish title initially put on the line, it appears that it may now be subject to added provisos being attached.

Confident Fury Plans to Start a ‘Bum of the Month’ Club – 11th April 2012

During his long and successful reign as world heavyweight champion, American Joe Louis went on a lengthy run of knocking out a different hapless challenger each month. The amusingly titled ‘bum of the month’ club kept Louis active in the ring if nothing else. Tyson Fury, a boxer with a keen sense of heavyweight history, now wants to reignite the idea and plans to start with his first victim on April 14 in the Odyssey Arena.

“Joe Louis once went on a ‘bum of the month’ campaign and Tyson Fury is starting his very own, beginning with Martin Rogan,” chuckled Fury. “Every four or five weeks I’ll be fighting a bum and keeping busy in the process. I’m not in a rush to fight for world titles because I’m the new blood in the game. People mention names like David Price and ask me if I would fight him. My answer is yes, no problem, but that fight hasn’t happened yet because the business side of things sometimes comes into play. I’ve got a contract with Channel 5 which means that I can’t box for any other station. He’s in the same position and it’s not that we don’t want to fight; we do, because we are both fighting men. But if someone else boxes for Sky Sports or BoxNation then we have a problem.”

Sitting across the press table, slowly simmering next to Panamanian trainer Bernardo Checa, Martin Rogan sees the ‘bum of the month’ jibes as another insulting example of how Fury is repeatedly overlooking, or even downright dismissing, his challenge.

“I have a feeling that he’s looking beyond and past me and if he’s talking about fighting every four weeks then he has already done that. My eyes are firmly on what he has to offer and I’m prepared to die in the ring, to lose a limb in that ring. I’m totally mentally and physically relaxed. I’m quite happy with the work that I’ve done in the gym. It’s in Belfast and I’m looking forward to it.”

Rogan feels that Fury’s support base across Ireland is minimal and has asked to be allowed to enter the ring second (an honour usually reserved for the champion or star name) in an attempt to save face for Team Hennessy.

“It will look bad on TV when Tyson comes in and there are no supporters there for him,” said ‘The Iron Man’. “He’ll be thinking that Martin’s scared, over the hill and all that, the usual pantomime crap. He’ll be running away from me on his tip toes on Saturday night just like he’s in a pantomime.”

As the battle for psychological supremacy raged, Fury revealed that

he has enlisted the help of veteran Belfast trainer John Breen to aid his training regime. Breen, and assistant coach Eamonn Magee, were the two men working closely with Rogan during his breakthrough Prizefighter victory and subsequent rise to prominence.

“I have a secret weapon in my corner,” teased Tyson. “It’s the man who trained Martin and took him to where he’s been in his career. If anyone knows how to beat Rogan then it’s John Breen.”

The Wythenshawe native has found good quality sparring hard to come by since turning pro in 2008 and even resorted to placing a cry for help in the *Boxing News* magazine last year in a bid to attract suitable partners. Tyson has now turned to his scrapping siblings for assistance.

“It’s been a bit hard replicating Yogi Bear but we managed to do it,” he smiled, when asked who had helped imitate Rogan’s style. “I’ve been sparring my two brothers, my cousin, Dillian Whyte [an unbeaten London novice] and Darren Corbett - so that’s quite a bit of sparring and all has been going well.

“This has been a long time coming and Saturday will be a great evening of boxing. For me this fight is for the heavyweight championship of the world. I’m feeling brilliant.”

Rogan Explains Injury Woes That Caused Sexton Defeat – 12th April 2012

Martin Rogan has lifted the lid on the injury torment that caused his sixth-round retirement defeat to Sam Sexton in November 2009 and sent him into an enforced period of rehabilitation. Rogan set about explaining the reason behind his lethargic display in the rematch loss after Saturday night's opponent Tyson Fury questioned the Belfast brawler's resolve in the heat of battle.

"Sam Sexton's busted you twice and Tyson Fury is a million times better than Sexton ever dreams of being," mocked Fury. "You talk a good fight but your bark is worse than your bite. You've already lost twice, as your record shows and I'm undefeated."

"He [Sam Sexton] got his hand raised and I accept that because I'm a sportsman," reasoned the Clonard native. Rogan suffered a broken bone in his neck which was dealt with just weeks after the fight. Back problems and various other ailments proceeded to bring the proud heavyweight to his knees.

"The entertainer is still there but the 'Iron Man' came through," continued 'Rogie'. "Sam Sexton did not stop me from fighting. In the first fight we had, the referee was on my case from round one, even from the dressing room he was on my case, warning me four times before the fight ended. I got the rematch and I didn't even spar for the second fight, hit a punchbag or move my back. A doctor told me that I shouldn't be fighting and that I could be paralysed for life and I put the letter under my bed and went out to fight."

Rogan had split from trainer John Breen shortly after the first loss to Sexton and he revisited the Odyssey Arena with respected trainer Paul McCullagh working his corner. McCullagh has since gone on record confirming that he did not want Martin to compete in the return bout, which had already been postponed due to Rogan's injury woes. Fury, meanwhile, who has had his own fitness issues, was in an unforgiving mood.

"Martin Rogan's going on about being a fighting man and a sportsman yet he just gave half an hour's worth of excuses," said Tyson. "I've been messing about in the past as well and if you knew what I was doing before fights then they would wonder how on earth I was ever winning fights at all. I'm proud of all my past performances, because even though I've got rocked and knocked down I've still go up to win and I know he's coming for a fight but it doesn't matter what he does, he does not have the physical attributes to beat me and he cannot beat me."

Unless I give him my chin and let him hit it then he's not going to win.”

Rogan believes that he has exorcised the demons of his two losses and on Saturday, April 14 he has a huge chance of redemption.

“Believe me when I say this, I have done everything differently from before. I'm nice and relaxed, without a worry and there's no pressure on me at all, I'm in a win-win situation. I have been in camp for five weeks and I haven't seen my kids for that long. When I trained with John Breen he taught me an awful lot and he's a very good coach but I was at home with all the problems of everyday life and this time I haven't had those worries. I want to make it clear that I will not be making any excuses after this fight. If Tyson Fury beats me on Saturday night then I will shake his hand, but he is not going to beat me and I'm telling you right now, you'd better believe it!”

John Breen Backs Youth Over Experience In Heavyweight Battle – 12th April 2012

Highly-regarded coach John Breen has passed his judgement on the April 14 Tyson Fury-Martin Rogan bout and the Belfast veteran believes that the younger man will prevail. Breen possesses a unique insight into the fight having trained Rogan during his unstoppable rise and now the veteran trainer has lent his hand to Fury's preparations.

"I think age will tell and Tyson Fury will win," opined Breen. "Tyson has been down in the gym with us a few times and I have been over in Manchester. I am not sure if I will be in his corner this weekend. I haven't made my mind up, but we have been working together and he will win. I know what 'Rogie' can do so obviously Tyson Fury knows what he can do now."

Fury alluded to the fact that Breen would offer him the inside track and the unbeaten heavyweight even described him as a 'secret weapon'. Rogan smiled away these suggestions at the big fight press conference and it is clear that even as an inactive 40-year-old Martin has left no stone unturned during a gruelling training camp under the watchful eye of Bernardo Checa. Breen could, however, turn out to be the thorn in his side.

"No one knows Rogan better than I do," suggested John. "If 'Rogie' tries to box then he is in trouble. I've seen bad fighters making him look bad, so all Tyson Fury has to do is be sensible and use his boxing ability. I think he has loads of ability and he punches harder than Rogan. When I am on the pads with Tyson Fury he throws that right hand and he hurts you with it. Martin throws punches but one of them will hurt you, not them all. There are no hard feelings between me and Rogan. I am just giving my opinion because boxing is about opinions. My opinion is that Fury is going to win."

Breen may yet become a permanent fixture in Fury's corner and the unbeaten hope could do with an experienced hand to offer him some much-needed stability. Tyson's dietary problems are well documented and John Breen would not stand for some of his current habits inside the ring either.

"Some of the fights you see him walking back to his corner waving to his uncles. He wouldn't do that with me, he would concentrate. Tyson asked me to train him at Christmas time. He said he was fighting in Madison Square Garden, but then he hurt his ankle and the bill was cancelled in America. But who knows, get this one over with and we might team up. He is only a child and heavyweights don't mature until

they are 30. He is only 23 years of age.”

Klitschkos Will Come But For Now It's Rogan That Concerns Fury – 13th April 2012

The Klitschko brothers, Wladimir and Vitali, are increasingly on the lookout for credible opposition and just like any undefeated heavyweight with all the physical attributes, Tyson Fury's name has been mentioned on more than one occasion. Promoter Mick Hennessy insists that his charge is being groomed for an eventual tilt at either, or maybe both, of the fearsome Ukrainian siblings, but Mick insists that any prospective opportunity will only occur when Tyson is ready and matured. If he gets past Martin Rogan then a fight for the European title would represent a logical next step.

"Tyson's very highly rated with the governing bodies and a fight with the Klitschkos is there for him," stated Mick. "He will fight them when he's ready to take them apart and we'll work on our own time scale that we have agreed between the team. He'll do a job on the Klitschkos when he is ready for them. Tyson wants to do things the traditional route; he wants Irish, European and world titles."

After much toing and froing with the BUI, the Irish title is expected to be on the line when Fury meets Rogan on April 14. Even though the usual Irish title format runs with a referee scoring the bout over 10 rounds, Hennessy believes that a 12 round affair with three scoring judges could ensue and there are ongoing discussions between the respective governing bodies over what the outcome will be. Fury fought for Ireland as an amateur but his ambition to fight for the domestic crown has been fraught with difficulty as the man who recently relinquished British and Commonwealth straps struggled to tie down the requisite paperwork. That has now been resolved and battle will commence.

"I've been through this a million times and we can sit here all day and talk about it," sighed the behemoth, "but my grandmother was born in Nutts Corner, my father's from Galway and I have loads of relations in Ireland. It's real and official and all the paperwork has been sorted. With a name like Fury I can't be Chinese."

Clonard warrior Rogan begs to differ and claims that the belt can only be lifted by one verifiable Irishman on April 14.

"If I'm born in Ireland then I'm not Polish," reasoned 'Rogie'. "I have family in America and they are Americans with an Irish background. The same with my family in New Zealand, they are of Irish descent. He's from Manchester, Galway, Nutts Corner or whatever but after I've finished with him he won't know where he's from."

Fury Ends Business With Rogan and Bags Controversial Irish Title in the Process – 15th April 2012

Tyson Fury brutally ended any ‘Unfinished Business’ he may have had with **Martin Rogan** by bludgeoning the Belfast veteran to defeat in the fifth-round of their Odyssey Arena headliner. Both men were in stellar condition and even though Rogan had pulled out all the stops in a lengthy training camp with coach Bernardo Checa he struggled with the height and reach advantages enjoyed by the man 17 years’ his junior. The fact that Fury, rather surprisingly, fought the entire bout as a southpaw just added to Rogan’s woes.

The lead-up to the show had been marred with controversy, mostly surrounding promoter Mick Hennessy’s quest to secure the contest as an Irish title affair. Adding to the drama was a dispute between two governing bodies and an altercation on the scales, when Martin was presented with a contract to sign just as he was due to weigh in. The best place to sort out these types of disagreements is in the ring and when the pair finally locked horns Tyson let his power do the talking. Even after passively conceding the first two rounds by allowing Rogan (16st 4lbs 4oz) to command centre ring and visibly grow in confidence, it was inevitable that the undefeated fighter would at some point bring out the heavy artillery.

Fury (a lean 17st 7lbs 12oz) entered the fray to a mixed reception from the vociferous, pro-Rogan crowd who cheered every attack their hero made, even though he was finding it difficult to get on to Fury’s chest and walk down the bigger man, or get the requisite body attack going. Fury’s unpredictable change in stance did not help matters and the 23-year-old Manchester man unleashed a lead right hand-straight left combination midway through the third that sent Rogan sprawling to the ropes and on the receiving end of a count. He smiled through it but was notably more tentative about committing for the remainder of the session and spent much of the fourth-round on the end of a mean portside jab. Fury also tucked a couple of meaty body shots in to Rogan’s tight torso, which was an indicator of things to come.

It was not all one-way traffic throughout, as Rogan managed at times to force Fury on to the defensive and opportunities did appear, but Martin lacked the speed of hand and glove to get inside and exploit those openings. Tyson grabbed the initiative in the middle of the fifth and never let it go. Backing up the ‘Iron Man’, whose face was starting to

swell, Fury planted his feet and started to let the shots fly in bunches of threes and fours. It was looking ominous for Rogan who glanced at his corner just moments before a swiping left to the body saw him slump to the canvas and rise gingerly as referee David Irving tolled out the count. The proud bruiser attempted to edge himself back into battle but Bernardo Checa, who once trained Roberto Duran, had already climbed in to the ring and called for a ceasefire.

The finishing time was recorded as 3-00 of round five. In a break from the normal Boxing Union of Ireland title procedure, the headline attraction was scheduled over 12 rounds instead of ten and third man Mr. Irving did not score the bout. The three unused judges were Dave Parris, Terry O'Connor and Howard Foster. The contentious issues and rules changes –mostly approved at extremely short notice- were raised by Martin Rogan during a lengthy monologue at the post-fight press conference. There is no love lost between Rogan and Hennessy and the pair once again engaged in a fiery exchange before the incensed Clonard native and his training team exited prematurely.

“All respect to Tyson, he deserves the plaudits,” stated Rogan before his departure. “I didn’t see the final punch coming; he set it up really well and who knew he was going to come out as a southpaw? Tyson can go far in this game, he’s a nice kid. It’s just too early to say whether I will retire or fight again.”

A nonplussed Fury, now 18-0 (13) is the proud Irish title holder and gave credit to his ailing adversary: “Rogan is a true Irish warrior who kept coming for five rounds and he gave it a right good go,” commended Tyson. “I hope everyone can now get behind me and we can bring big title fights to Ireland. I’m in the best shape I’ve ever been in, as an amateur or pro, and it’s all down to my trainer Peter Fury.”

Mick Hennessy wants to keep Fury busy and hinted that highly-ranked international opponents could be on the agenda. “Tyson’s the biggest star in heavyweight boxing behind the Klitschkos at the moment and the big fights will come when he’s ready for them,” said Mick. “Let’s be real here, Fury would wipe the floor with [Alexander] Povetkin and we will bring the big names to us when the timing is right.”

Chris Eubank Jnr moved to 3-0 with a fourth-round stoppage over **Paul Allison**. Eubank Jnr’s esteemed father struggled to stamp his mark in Ireland with three mixed outings during an illustrious career but Eubank Jnr got his own Irish debut off to a flyer. The talented middleweight suffered a hand injury midway through his last fight, with Jason Ball, which dampened any great ambitions there but both pistons were firing in his latest outing.

Opponent Allison had been over to Northern Ireland for sparring

sessions so was familiar with the terrain. To his credit the Stranraer boxer was extremely game and did find the occasional gap in Eubank Jnr's armoury but lacked the power to sufficiently exploit any weaknesses. Chris used his speed and accuracy to keep on top, raking in jabs and flurries, laced with a sickening accumulative effect rather than raw power.

When Allison (11st 8lbs) stumbled early in the fourth, Eubank Jnr (11st 9lbs) pounced like a seasoned opportunist. Rocking his rival's head back with a vicious two-fisted assault the 22-year-old piled it on until referee Terry O'Connor dived in at 0-43 of the fourth-round.

"I went out there to produce an impressive performance and that's exactly what I did," said the brooding prospect, who had aimed to prove a point. "I was restricted to the left hand in my last fight but this time I had both tools and was able to use them, so I'm very happy. I want at least two or three more fights this year."

The prime of **Darren Corbett's** long career has since passed but this bulky cruiserweight is making one last stab at glory. 'The Raging Bull' tried to kick start his comeback with an eight-rounder against Ballinrobe's talented **Michael Sweeney**. The title charge was placed on hold, however, when Darren found himself going down 58-56 on the scorecard of Terry O'Connor who scored from ringside while novice referee John Lowey handled matters inside the squared circle. It all started so well for Corbett (14st 10lbs 14oz), who landed a looping right hand high on the head in round one that sent a hesitant Sweeney spinning to the canvas for a count.

Sweeney (14st 4lbs 4oz) has made his name as a classy sparring hand, but without ever really transferring that experience on to the main stage. Corbett neglected the jab and repeatedly lunged into range with looping hooks, while Sweeney was guilty of inciting clinches and failing to maintain his good work. As the bout wore on, Michael produced enough classy cameos to eke out the decision and send Corbett home to reconsider his future plans.

The light-middleweight version of the Northern Ireland Area title was dusted off for two fighters moving in different directions of their respective careers. Unbeaten prospect **Joe Hillerby** (11st) turned pro at light-heavyweight but is now punching for pay in a much lighter weight class. Opponent **Willie Thompson** (10st 10lbs 12oz) of Ballyclare was touted as a one-to-watch himself at a point but has seen his career take a wayward turn since a 2009 loss to Michael Jennings. Without a win in his last five (one draw) Willie was looking for the big turnaround but despite being in good shape he fell short, conceding a 98-93 decision to the ever-improving Hillerby. Joe selected his punches well and never

allowed Thompson a foothold even though he suffered a bloody nose himself midway through the contest. Willie was rocking in the seventh-round as Hillerby piled it on, but the new champion stepped back and settled for the win on points. Terry O'Connor handled the contest.

Silky southpaw **John O'Donnell** had been absent from the ring for over a year and the former Commonwealth welterweight champion returned with a reasonable test in the form of Swanley's **Martin Welsh**. O'Donnell (11st 8oz) holds his gloves low, chooses the shots well and had Welsh (11st 11lbs 4oz) on one knee in the first-round but later found his opponent overly negative for long periods and had to do most of the running to make a fight of it. When Welsh discovered some ambition and let the hands go he enjoyed moderate success, but those moments were few and far between. Referee Paul McCullagh raised O'Donnell's arm at 78-74.

Dee Walsh re-affirmed his hot prospect status with a win over grizzled brawler **Tommy Tolan**. This fight brought along the interest of a local derby, with both men hailing from west Belfast. Walsh (11st 6lbs 8oz) from St. James' had too much value in his combinations for Ballymurphy's Tolan (11st 7lbs) and laid on the hurt long enough to force his badly cut and bruised opponent into a retirement at the end of the fourth-round. John Lowey officiated.

Cruiserweight debutant **Conall Carmichael** looks to have a touch of class about him. The Holy Trinity ex-amateur achiever looked confident and assured against **Moses Matovu** (13st 9lbs 6oz). The Ugandan wildman was quickly subdued by the quality of Carmichael (14st 5lbs 10oz), who stood off and used a variety of moves to keep Matovu firmly under control. Conall was supported at ringside by former gym mate Bernard Dunne and cruised home 40-36 on Mr. McCullagh's card.

Debutant **Paul Moffett** was thrown in at the deep end against former two-time Irish champion **Ciaran Healy**. Healy (12st 3lbs 10oz) often loses when he steps up in class and is usually a handful at this level, but he offered little during a strangely lethargic display, conceding a 40-37 verdict from Terry O'Connor. Well-supported Moffett (12st 3lbs 14oz) was livelier but unexceptional.

Local hope **Marco McCullough** got back to winning ways with a first-round knockout of Fauldhouse's **Sean Watson**. McCullough (9st 3lb 12oz) hurt Watson (9st 3lb 8oz) early and never let up until Paul McCullagh stepped in at 2-09 of the opener.

Notes: Attention was diverted from the main event stoppage when an ugly brawl broke out in the crowd on the far side of the arena. Capping a bizarre night of crowd activity, a semi-naked reveller attempted to access

the ring earlier in the evening only to be wrestled down by security.

Tyson Fury made a bit of boxing history by adding the Irish title to his previously attained English, British and Commonwealth belts. No other fighter has won the quartet in such a short time period.

Promoter Mick Hennessy also expressed his desire to promote an Irish title defence for Fury. But, as one sharp old boxing scribe quipped, he would have to trawl a few graveyards before finding an eligible opponent.

There were plenty of photo opportunities for the enthusiastic Belfast faithful. The likes of Chris Eubank Snr, Ambrose Mendy, Paul McCloskey, Eamonn O’Kane and Carl Frampton were all present. Larger than life character Spencer Fearon was another popular choice for the fight fans and former promoter Barney Eastwood ventured out to his first show in years.

An Irish Title Fight Sanctioned by The British Board? – 17th April 2012

It was described by savvy veteran boxing journalist Gerry Callan as, “an Irish title fight sanctioned by the British Boxing Board” and that was just part of the story of a truly bizarre lead-up to the April 14 clash between Tyson Fury and Martin Rogan. Pre-fight press conference jokes and sing-alongs were mixed with questionable changes of mind and rules before Belfast heavyweight Rogan eventually snapped, cried foul and stormed out of the post-fight presser.

“I have a lot of regrets and a lot of unacceptable things happened in the running of this show,” growled ‘Rogie’, who was pulled out in the fifth-round by trainer Bernardo Checa. “No disrespect to Tyson or any problem with what happened in the ring. Tyson’s a nice lad, with great ambition but some people were out of order before this fight. The same happened when Howard Eastman came to Belfast and even Sam Sexton, they parade them around the city.”

Rogan and Fury shared a love-hate relationship throughout the build-up with the home fighter offering praise to his younger rival while digging him about the dubious subject of his Irish heritage.

“I respect Tyson Fury but I don’t view him as the genuine Irish champion,” added the Clonard battler. “How can a bout be changed from a ten-rounder to a 12-rounder on the eve of the fight? The rules have been bent and I didn’t feel that I was fighting for an Irish title here tonight. If I had won then I would’ve handed the belt back. I’ve had every distraction possible and I was even told to give an answer to the new demands or they would fly somebody else in. Straight after the weigh-in I was confronted by someone holding a piece of paper, demanding a signature even though I’d signed the contract weeks ago.”

Promoter Mick Hennessy was unabashed when defending his role in the dispute.

“I’ll do the right thing by my fighter even if that means a 12-rounder,” countered Mick, who lobbied the BBBofC to alter procedure. “The Irish belt was very important to us, even through the twists and turns of the week. We want to go to the South (of Ireland) as well; we’d love to go to the O2 in Dublin.”

Despite Hennessy’s version of events, Martin Rogan was skeptical at many of the ‘antics’ that went on both before, during and after the main event.

“Don’t be coming back to Belfast. You’ve ruined this kid [Fury], he was a likeable guy,” said the ‘Iron Man’, who also had a stark message

for alleged troublemakers in the crowd. “For those people kicking things off in the crowd, outside of the ring, then I would tell them to go and join a boxing club or, even better, come and spar with me. I don’t regret taking the fight, not at all. Tyson stuck to his gameplan and did his job in the ring. There were rules broken and what’s to stop them being broken time and again to suit. Boxing’s tough enough without this bullshit.”

Dunne Reckons Frampton Can Rule the Roost at Super-Bantamweight – 25th April 2012

Carl Frampton has received a ringing endorsement from none other than former world champion Bernard Dunne who believes that the Tigers Bay prospect can go on to rule Europe and beyond. Dunne claimed the WBA super-bantamweight crown in March 2009 with an unforgettable knockout win over Ricardo Cordoba and now the Dubliner sees Frampton as the man to go on and dominate the division that he has since left behind.

“I think Frampton is the best and not because he is an Irishman,” said Bernard. “I think he is the best of them when you talk about future prospects. He is 25 years of age, so still very young, but he is very polished as a professional.”

Dunne also has the inside track on one of Frampton’s potential future opponents. Back in August 2007 Spaniard Kiko Martinez arrived in Dublin as an unknown quantity as mandatory challenger for Bernard’s European title. 86 seconds later he had dished out a conclusive beating and ripped away the crown, so ‘The Jackal’ has been warned.

“I think Kiko has improved as a fighter since I faced him in Dublin,” opined Bernard. “It would be a huge step up for Carl, because the level after that is a fight for a world title but he could get the job done. I just think Kiko would suit him and it would be a great fight for the fans. Kiko’s experienced and I know from personal experience that he’s strong - but he is the right style of fight for Frampton.”

Another man who Dunne nearly faced during his heyday was ex-world title challenger Rendall Munroe. Throughout 2008 and 2009 various press releases flew back and forth between Dunne’s promoter Brian Peters and Munroe’s manager and promoter at the time, Frank Maloney. Despite claims of offers and counter-offers by each party, nothing materialised. But now Bernard sees Munroe, and Bury’s Scott Quigg, both as viable opponents for Frampton.

“If you asked me the question is it too soon to be fighting Munroe or Quigg then I would say no,” stated Dunne, who retired in 2010 with a 28-2 (15 KOs) record.

“If Munroe wins the clash between him and Quigg for the interim WBA world title I would take the fight [if I was Carl], because I believe he would beat him, or Quigg. Carl is a great mover and his upper body movement is fantastic. He is also a fantastic body puncher, slick and really entertaining to watch, which is what the fans love.”

Dunne also rates Quigg and believes that the two unbeaten prospects

should let the fight simmer before finally settling the growing hostilities once and for all.

“I have seen Quigg in action and I believe Carl and him should wait until there is a bigger title on the line before they fight each other. They have to be clever about both their careers. But people do not come in to watch boring fights and Carl is never in one.”

Wilton's An International Master and Wants to Rule Britain Next – 2nd May 2012

Luke Wilton moved a step closer to major title opportunities with a one-round win over **Francis Miyeyusho** in the Holiday Inn. 'Winky' claimed the vacant International Masters super-flyweight title for his efforts and has improved significantly as a fighter since his first win in Letterkenny back in 2008. He is clearly benefitting from training time spent with Bernardo Checa and Immaculata veteran Gerry 'Nugget' Nugent, by displaying an accurate lead left jab and sustained body assault to weaken his opponent.

Miyeyusho (8st 3lb), a slippery Tanzanian southpaw, arrived with a reasonable enough record (including a Commonwealth title challenge) but with obvious vulnerabilities and as Wilton (8st 1lb 12oz) ruthlessly found the gaps in the away man's defence it wasn't long before Miyeyusho was hurting. Some well-timed flurries and a final swiping right hand helped deposit Francis to the canvas and referee Kenny Pringle counted him out at 1-53 of the opener.

Luke, who is now enjoying a seven-fight unbeaten streak, made it clear who he wishes to tackle next.

"I want to fight Chris Edwards for the British title and my message to Chris is to step up and fight me. I'll go to England no problem at all," stated the 23-year-old, who improves his record to 11-2-1.

On the undercard, **Conall Carmichael** claimed his second win since handing in the amateur vest, with a 39-37 decision over **Paul Morris**. Conall (14st 8lb 4oz) won a string of accolades in the unpaid code and the 33-year-old is now rededicating himself as a pro, training in the Holy Trinity gym under the watchful eye of Harry Hawkins who helped guide both Bernard Dunne and Brian Magee to respective title glories. Carmichael will do well to even approach those heady heights and he will need to work on a slightly leaky defence but it is still early days. The Belfastman used his skills to keep Morris (14st 7lb) at bay, even though the Preston man stood firm and remained competitive throughout. Paul McCullagh was the man in charge.

"I'm just getting rid of the ring rust and it's good to be boxing again. When he came at me in the last round I was able to counter and use my skills," said Carmichael, who could find himself in the British title mix fairly swiftly.

Welterweight debutant **Alfredo Meli** shares a gym with unbeaten prospect Eamonn O'Kane and the high-quality sparring has clearly paid off. Southpaw Meli (11st 6lb 2oz) got off to a flying start by posting a

first-round knockout win over Lithuanian **Sergej Drob** (11st 3lb 10oz). The visitor gave it a go by letting off some winging bombs but Alfredo's better footwork got him into range and back out again to land the punishing combinations. Drob's challenge was terminated at 1-40 by Paul McCullagh.

Luke's brother **Matthew Wilton** joined the family business with an early win after Mr. McCullagh accepted **James Smith's** retirement from a hand injury at the end of the first-round. Smith (11st 9lb 8oz) had held his own until that point and Wilton's (11st 5lb) apparent tension was initially attributed to debutant nerves. It remarkably transpired later on that Matthew and his partner had experienced a personal tragedy on the previous day, highlighting Wilton's brave decision to still compete.

Paul Moffett has landed a reserve spot in the upcoming middleweight *Prizefighter* and he celebrated by stopping **Jamie Boness** at 2-17 of the first-round. Despite a succession of swiping left hooks from Moffett (11st 13lb 10oz), referee John Lowey halted Boness (11st 10lb 12oz) prematurely.

Belfast-based Ugandan **Moses Matovu** (13st 10lb 8oz) was busy enough to outlast Nottingham's decent **Courtney Owen** (13st 6lb 12oz) 40-36 on John Lowey's scorecard.

Wilton Calls On Chris Edwards to Put Brit Title On the Line and Face Him – 2nd May 2012

Luke Wilton is itching for a crack at a major title and the ever-improving Belfast hope is calling on Chris Edwards to answer his plea and put the British flyweight belt on the line. Wilton was fresh from a one-round whitewash of hapless Tanzanian Francis Miyeyusho when he took time out to make his future plans clear. Usually such a reserved character, with little room in his make-up for bravado or brash statements, Luke scaled the corner post and yelled into an awaiting TV camera that he wanted the Stoke veteran next.

“My message to Chris is to step up and fight me and I’ll go to England no problem at all,” roared ‘Winky’. “There have been talks about a fight with Edwards and I think it is a realistic option. It must be my turn to fight for the British title next. Chris Edwards has fought Paul Edwards and Shinny Bayaar and Ashley Sexton’s also had a fight for it so I’m the only guy left who hasn’t had a chance yet. So why don’t we get it on?”

Wilton claimed the International Masters super-flyweight title for his efforts at the well-attended Holiday Inn show. Despite a bright start, including some raking body shots, Miyeyusho was unable to halt the Wilton express train and while Luke’s newly acquired crown may have been a bit of a head scratcher it will all be worth it if he can edge closer to further opportunities.

“That guy [Miyeyusho] had 31 wins and ten losses but he’d fought for all sorts of titles up at super-bantamweight and bantamweight,” said Luke. “I’m only a flyweight and I fought at one pound over the weight tonight. He was very strong and he caught me with a couple of cracking body shots but I just sucked it up and I got him with a bit of a right uppercut to finish things off. I thought that he was going to get up but he just didn’t rise. I don’t know a great deal about the Masters title but I’ll not worry too much about that. As long as it gets me a British title fight then that’s all that matters.”

Wilton has significantly improved since his debut four years ago and looks like a more compact unit after engaging in some good quality sparring sessions with the hefty amount of lower-weight amateur talent dotted around the city’s thriving gyms.

“I trained really hard for this fight and pre-fight preparation went along perfectly. I sparred with Joe Fitzpatrick, who’s an Ulster senior champion, and young Dean McComb. Plenty of sparring up in the

Immaculata is really bringing me on and Bernardo Checa is there to fine tune things and take off the rough edges. I'm getting a lot better now and starting to punch with more authority."

Talk will persist of an all-Belfast clash between Wilton and cross-city rival Jamie Conlan but for now Luke has his eyes set on only one opponent and coveted strap.

"There's no point in me fighting Jamie Conlan because he can't make flyweight and he has nothing to offer me now," concluded Wilton. "I don't do the negotiating, with Edwards or Conlan, and I never turned any fights down. I'll fight anybody and once I get told by my trainer who I'm fighting then I get ready."

Joe Hillerby Wants Jeff Thomas for the Irish title – 4th May 2012

Fast-improving Belfast middleweight Joe Hillerby is targeting a crack at the vacant Irish title and the Sandy Row prospect even has an opponent lined up ready to contest it with.

“I want the Irish title and I’ll fight Jeff Thomas for it,” affirmed Hillerby, “2012 is going to be my year and this is just the start of it.”

Joe was speaking straight after winning his first professional title. The Northern Ireland Area belt went home with the sprightly youngster as he tamed the feral assaults of Ballyclare’s Willie Thompson on the recent Tyson Fury-Martin Rogan undercard.

“I just boxed comfortably in there and I’m not even tired now,” he boasted. “Willie’s a tough fighter so I stuck to the boxing and worked when I needed to. This is my first time past four rounds and I showed my fitness. I caught him as he rushed in and thought that I might have put him away. I think that I hurt him a few times in the fight.

“I knew that Willie would be tough and durable and ready to take a lot [of punishment]. He can take a good shot. In the seventh-round I thought he was about to go and I raced in instead of picking my shots properly.”

It indeed looked like Thompson might shrivel under the attacks but he sucked up the punishment and took his licks well, managing to see out the round and ultimately the fight itself. Willie has fallen short in his career over recent years after a promising start but he showed his usual resolute spirit and had whipped himself up in to fine shape, switching between the gyms of John Breen and Alan Wilton. He was, however, unable to get inside and ruffle the feathers of his rampant opponent. On the other hand, Joe is revelling in the workouts provided by trainer Paul McCullagh Snr and a host of quality spar partners.

“We’ve got the best camp in Ireland and we might not have all the belts yet but they’re coming,” added Hillerby. “Willie Casey’s going to get one next week [the Limerick man was actually unable to outfox Andreas Evensen in Denmark]. The camp’s buzzing and the trainers are fantastic; they’ve put a lot of work into me and it’s all coming out now. Two fights under my new training team and I’m flying.”

O’Kane’s Prizefighter Joy Cut Short by McCloskey Mauling – 6th May 2012

Paul McCloskey’s world title dreams lie in tatters after the Dungiven boxer was dramatically stopped in the tenth-round by wily veteran **DeMarcus Corley** at the King’s Hall, Belfast. Pre-fight talk of a shot at the WBC light-welterweight title, or even a possible July date against ring legend Juan Manuel Marquez, will now slip away as Paul returns to the drawing board to consider his next move and try to work out exactly what went wrong.

It had all started off reasonably positively for the former European title holder, who held centre ring and pot-shotted effectively to edge the opening round, as Corley stalked with a menacing air. McCloskey’s troubles began in round two when his nose started bleeding profusely and as the jaws opened wider to try and suck in valuable air, Corley mouthed “I’ve broken your nose” to the hometown hero who bravely tried to shrug it off. The same injury had occurred in Paul’s gutsy win over Breidis Prescott last September but this time he was ultimately unable to drag himself over the line.

McCloskey (10st 0lb 1oz) was wobbled by the right hook in round five and too often left his head hanging in range for extended periods; a mistake that the ultra-slick southpaw rarely makes. He was, however, enjoying plenty of success to the body from the sixth round onwards and Corley (9st 12lb 2oz) later questioned why Paul had not targeted that area sooner. The nervous crowd rallied at every opportunity, trying to inject life into their man and it seemed that McCloskey had indeed boxed himself back into the contest when the fateful 10th round arrived. A sneaky low blow and a right hook shook Paul, who flexed his hips and stared straight back at Corley. McCloskey was just ‘playing possum’ as the visitor from Washington DC described post-fight. Moments later another right hook rocked Paul’s head back, the legs wobbled in conflicting directions and referee Ian John-Lewis jumped in between them. It appeared that Lewis had not firmly made up his mind about the stoppage but once the action was broken the third man was unable to turn back and duly called it off at a time of 2-28.

“I can’t say what went wrong because it’s a bit too soon to try and figure out what the problem was,” admitted a clearly disappointed McCloskey, who was ahead by scores of one, two and four points on the judges’ official cards.

“I was pretty flat even though I felt great before the fight, my training went well and I have to give plenty of credit to Corley because he’s a

quality fighter. It was a last chance saloon for him and he caught me with a good shot. I felt that I could've fought on but every fighter thinks he can fight on and I may not have been able to. I'm gutted because this is a massive setback for me."

Corley, meanwhile, was respectful in victory and suggested that the end may have been called prematurely.

"I don't think that the ref should have stopped it but when I saw that Paul wanted to fight some more then I wanted to go and get him," said 'Chop Chop', who had been written off as a globe-trotting journeyman after losing six of his last seven fights.

"My game plan was to come over here and win by knockout because I have been in so many fighters' back yards and not got the decision that it hurts and makes a fighter angry."

Promoter Eddie Hearn did not complain about the stoppage and plans to return to Belfast in September, with a big fight for Carl Frampton still on the agenda. Eddie suggested that Paul McCloskey would have to re-build back at European title level if the 32-year-old could motivate himself to do so.

Eamonn O'Kane is the new Prizefighter middleweight champion and the 30-year-old could now find himself moving towards a major title shot after scooping the coveted trophy along with a cheque for £32,000. O'Kane successfully negotiated his way through three rough-and-tumble contests in the all-Ireland eight-man competition. Eamonn outpointed wiry Mullingar southpaw **JJ McDonagh** by scores of 30-27, 30-26 and 29-27 in a scrappy final contest, which took place prior to the McCloskey-Corley headline attraction.

"To be champion of such a volatile competition is brilliant," said the newly crowned Prizefighter king. "Paul McCloskey is a hero of mine and I'm gutted for him so it definitely takes the shine off the night after my win. I was ecstatic after each fight, on a high and I was the favourite but how can you make anyone a favourite in a tournament like this? So many things can happen. I'm delighted though and I'll leave it to Eddie Hearn to work out my next move."

To his credit McDonagh (11st 6lb 12oz) enjoyed sporadic success in the final and looked decent when using the lead right jab and overhand left, but the bout was marred by holding and both men suffered low blows, with JJ having a point deducted in the final round. Terry O'Connor took charge.

O'Kane (11st 6lb 12oz) had set a frightening pace throughout the tournament and enjoyed a one round knockout victory in his semi-final over Lurgan's **Ryan Greene** in a battle of unbeaten. When a clash of heads buzzed Greene (11st 4lb) early on he was left visibly shaken and

sporting a nasty cut over the left eye. Clearly aggrieved and angrily patrolling his corner, Ryan bulldozed in seeking retribution. Eamonn took a step to the side and landed a peach of a right hand to remove Greene from his senses at 2-22. Ian John-Lewis refereed.

JJ McDonagh had plotted his own path to the final via a points win over much-improved Ballymena man **Joe Rea**. Rea (11st 7lb 10oz) brought a sizeable following to the King's Hall and switched and moved but was unable to pin down McDonagh, who used his smarter boxing to secure a unanimous verdict at 30-27 (twice) and 29-28, with Howard Foster taking control.

The first Prizefighter to take place anywhere in Ireland had started with a ferocious quarter-final battle between O'Kane and Dubliner **Anthony Fitzgerald**. It was bar room brawl stuff as both men laid it all on the line with plenty of missed punches flying off into the night sky. Referee Ian John-Lewis called a clash of heads in round two when Anthony suffered a cut to the scalp. O'Kane was overall slightly more accurate than Fitzgerald (11st 7lb 4oz) and got his campaign off the ground with a split decision win after three wild rounds.

JJ McDonagh started his evening with an efficient points win over Roscommon's **Darren Cruise**. The 26-year-old dropped brittle Cruise (11st 6lb 8oz) in the first round with a right hook to the head and was able to keep his increasingly desperate opponent at a comfortable range for the remainder of the bout. The scores were 30-26 (twice) and 29-27 with Terry O'Connor officiating.

Joe Rea successfully negotiated a way through his quarter-final with a points verdict over Galway's **Simon O'Donnell**. All three scores came in at 29-28 in Rea's favour as O'Donnell (11st 6lb 14oz), cited by some as a potential dark horse, failed to gather any momentum. Joe landed all of the telling blows and Mark Green refereed.

Ryan Greene had earlier booked his semi-final place by outmaneuvering a clearly unmotivated **Ciaran Healy** over the three-round distance. Ciaran (11st 7lb 6oz) had replaced Mark Heffron when the Oldham youngster withdrew through injury, but the veteran is now set for an end of year retirement. Ref Howard Foster had to deal with plenty of clinching and Greene won by scores of 29-28 (twice) and 30-27. The unused substitutes were Belfast novice **Paul Moffett** and Lurgan's former Irish welterweight champion **Stephen Haughian**.

Earlier on in the evening, former British featherweight champion **Martin Lindsay** returned to the same venue where he lost that very title, to pound **Mickey Coveney** to defeat in the fourth round of a scheduled six. Coveney (9st 4lb 6oz) is a tough yardstick and current Irish super-featherweight champion but Lindsay's (9st 5lb 2oz) extra quality

punches forced a stoppage at 1-13 of the round and the Immaculata man's comeback remains firmly on track. Howard Foster refereed.

Eamonn Takes the Prize and Aims for Even Bigger Nights – 7th May 2012

The Prizefighter tournament has the potential to push the winner into contention for a title shot and the latest boxer to lift the trophy, middleweight Eamonn O’Kane, is hoping that he can now mix it for major honours, just like two previous Irish winners managed to do.

“I’m definitely looking to get something out of this,” smiled the Dungiven man. “I’m 7-0 now. Am I good enough to fight for a Commonwealth or European title like the other Irish winners of Prizefighter, Martin Rogan and Willie Casey, did? I think I’m good enough quality-wise, but I need a bit more conditioning and a few more fights. It would be great if I could get a couple of 10 round fights to build myself up to that level.”

O’Kane points to the recent surprise win by Welshman Kerry Hope over Poland’s Grzegorz Proksa as proof that he is not a million miles away from the higher echelons of boxing.

“I thought Kerry Hope did a fantastic job beating Proksa for the European title two months ago, but is Kerry Hope leagues ahead of me? I don’t think so, but on the 12 rounds he might be at the moment. I’ll sit down with the team and we’ll see where we’re at.”

Eamonn negotiated his way through a tough opening bout against Dublin’s Anthony Fitzgerald, before starching Ryan Greene in the opening round of an ugly brawl and then managing to outpoint spidery Mullingar mover JJ McDonagh in the final. The Prizefighter crown and a cheque for £32,000 went home with the 30-year-old.

“That was a serious night's work and it was one hell of a way to start it off. My legs didn’t know what was happening in that first fight. Fair play to Anthony Fitzgerald, he prepared himself well and he was in very good nick. It took me everything I had to beat him. Also, credit goes to my team - and my conditioning coach Oliver Cummings in particular – in that I was able to get enough strength back into my body for the second fight. We ran Prizefighter competitions in the Immaculata gym to prepare myself for this and they were tough. There were nights when I wondered, ‘What the hell is going on here?’

“That stood to me, because I wouldn’t have been able to recover from the first fight only for that preparation. It was such a tough fight - I threw enough punches in that first fight to last a 12 round fight.”

Eamonn will use the bulk of his winnings to help fund a self-confessed hefty mortgage and his next stop is Florida, to make up for the

fact that he has not had a holiday in three years. Unless you're counting his participation in the World Series of Boxing which alongside a successful amateur grounding helped provide the tools to prevail in Prizefighter.

He is not yet the finished article and has things to work on but has been moved on swiftly by Matchroom and Eddie Hearn and could be contesting at least an Irish title in his next two or three fights. Whether or not he will fancy strategically plotting the 12 round course as much as the quickfire nature of tournament boxing, only time will tell.

"I was really nervous when I got the phone call asking me if I wanted to be in Prizefighter. I thought about it for a wee while and realized that that's my style of boxing," admitted O'Kane.

"I love this competition. I always watch it on television because anything can happen in it and you have to deal with all sorts of different styles one after the other at a fast and furious pace. That's hard to do and I'm delighted that I came through.

"Each one of those lads was awkward. They were strong, they were durable. It was going to take a big effort to get it done and I'm delighted that I've done it. It's always risky for a fighter with a 4-0 unbeaten record, not a lot of them enter, but I'm 30 years old and I wanted to fast-track to fighting for titles and I knew this was the way to do it - I knew that this style of boxing would suit me down to the ground."

McDonagh Pushes O’Kane All the Way in Prizefighter Final– 7th May 2012

After an impressive run to the final of the all-Irish middleweight Prizefighter, JJ McDonagh can rest easy in the knowledge that he gave a good overall account of himself and the 26-year-old will now look to push on to bigger things.

“I feel disappointed, but I feel good at the same time - I know I gave it a good go,” admitted McDonagh after the bout. “I have the height of respect for Eamonn O’Kane and all the boxers involved; there were no easy fights in there for anybody.”

It was a rough-and-tumble final and JJ tried –with varying degrees of success- to use his rangy southpaw lead jab and slick skills to keep O’Kane at bay. The rugged Dungiven competitor repeatedly dived head first in to range and hands and arms frequently became locked together, prompting several warnings from referee Terry O’Connor. Eventually after the pair had swapped low blows, McDonagh was penalised a point and the fight was mathematically pushed beyond his reach.

“Fair play to Eamonn, he won and he probably even deserved to win, but all I know is that I didn’t hit him with a low blow, but the referee kept warning me the whole time and he never warned Eamonn,” lamented the Mullingar man. “I didn’t throw a low blow but if the ref thought I did then it was a complete accident. I never grabbed a hold of his head and dragged him down either; his head was tucked in under me so what was I to do - lift him up or something? I’m not blaming Eamonn - he probably would have beaten me anyway - but I don’t think the referee gave me a chance.”

BUI president Mel Christle confirmed post-fight that McDonagh had actually damaged his hand in the opening round clash with Darren Cruise, so his ascension to the final was even more impressive.

“Both my hands were troubling me,” confirmed JJ, “even before the tournament started and maybe I shouldn’t have even been in the competition. But the money was there so I went through with it and I’m certainly not using that as an excuse. Eamonn O’Kane beat me fair and square and I wish him all the best for the future.

“There’s another fight out there for us. I’d love to get him again, maybe over eight rounds.”

Hearn Admits That Marquez Fight Will Not Be Happening – 12th May 2012

Talk of a potential clash with ring legend Juan Manuel Marquez has certainly flown out of the window according to promoter Eddie Hearn, who witnessed his fighter Paul McCloskey upset by DeMarcus Corley on Saturday, May 5. Marquez was seeking a southpaw opponent for his July 14 assignment in Texas as the Mexican warms up for another crack at nemesis Manny Pacquiao.

“No disrespect to DeMarcus but if you want to fight Juan Manuel Marquez then you have got to be beating people like DeMarcus Corley,” Hearn brutally admitted. “If you are not on your game then you will lose to people like Corley. Paul was poor tonight and he knows that he was poor. We want world title fights and if we want to be a world class, A or B level fighter, then we have got to perform. We were all happy to face Corley and he just upset our plans. Obviously, the loss affects Paul badly and he had a very tough fight with Prescott and now he’s been knocked back down to the level that he was fighting at before, which is British and European.”

Having scaled the heights of European glory and ascended to within touching distance of world class, it remains to be seen whether Paul will want to tread the domestic boards once again to climb back in to the reckoning for global honours.

“How do you motivate yourself to fight back at that level and climb the mountain again?” asked Eddie. “That will depend on Paul’s state of mind and what he wishes to do. If he wants to return in September then he will be fighting for a European title.”

Road Warrior Corley Needed a Knockout to Secure Away Win – 12th May 2012

Veteran southpaw DeMarcus Corley might not win too many these days as he travels the globe picking up paydays and seeking to put a spanner into the works of local fighters. Paul McCloskey fell foul of the Washington man's skilful fists on Saturday, May 5 and the visitor admitted that he was disappointed but not surprised to learn that he required a stoppage to prevail.

"My game plan was to come over here and win by knockout because I have been in so many fighters' back yards and not got the decision that it hurts and makes a fighter angry," growled the man who knocked out Felix Flores in a single round to claim the WBO light-welterweight title way back in 2001.

"Even though the fight was close, I just cannot believe that I was behind and it was impossible for me to be losing on the cards [in his opinion]. That gives boxing a bad name, when you go to box in someone else's back yard and lose. If it had gone 12 rounds tonight then I was already losing on the judges' scorecards so I wasn't going to win the fight."

Corley had mixed feelings about the stoppage decision made by quick-trigger referee Ian John-Lewis. McCloskey's propensity to feign distress and use subtle tactics to fool his opponents may well have led to his undoing.

"The referee saw Paul wobbling and thought it was a great stoppage but I don't think that Paul was completely out because he played possum all night," mused DeMarcus. "He wobbles and makes you think that he was hurt and you run in and get caught with something. I didn't want to take a chance and run in on Paul when he was like that. I don't think that the ref should have stopped it but when I saw that Paul wanted to fight some more then I wanted to go and get him. He was getting more desperate and eventually I knew that I would catch him. He was taking more chances but I found out that on all three scorecards I was actually losing the fight.

"I couldn't see McCloskey's eyes close up but the referee has looked into his eyes and seen that he was hurt. I took my time, put my shots together and he made me fight a different game plan from round one. But it's down to the referee's discretion and he felt that Paul was really hurt."

Paul McCloskey: ‘It’s Too Early to Say What Went Wrong’ – 15th May 2012

Paul McCloskey has a lot of thinking to do over the coming months, following his shock stoppage loss to American dangerman DeMarcus Corley. Despite the unforeseen career setback the Dungiven man has insisted that he will not rush into a post mortem of his second career loss.

“I can’t say what went wrong because it’s a bit too soon to try and figure out what the problem was,” said a dejected McCloskey. “I was pretty flat even though I felt great before the fight, my training went well and I have to give plenty of credit to Corley because he’s a quality fighter. It was a last chance saloon for him and he caught me with a good shot. I felt that I could’ve fought on but every fighter thinks he can fight on and I may not have been able to.”

After mixing in the echelons of world class against Amir Khan and bouncing back with a gruelling points win over Breidis Prescott, Paul was expected to comfortably defeat substitute opponent Corley who has morphed into a globetrotting journeyman in recent years.

“I’m gutted, this is a massive setback for me and I have a family to worry about so I’ll have to sit back, have a chat and see where we go from here,” added McCloskey. “I’m sorry for the fans that came here tonight and hopefully next time we will see something bigger and better.”

Corley Planned to Attack McCloskey Like a Locomotive Train – 17th May 2012

DeMarcus Corley has revealed that his victory plan against Paul McCloskey was simply to bomb forward and try to walk through the Dungiven slickster. Eventually Corley's plan worked and credit to the Washington DC man for boxing to an effective strategy.

“My game plan was to come in straightforward, all guns blazing, like a locomotive train and put Paul in a phone booth and make him fight,” revealed the ex-world champion. “I realized early on that he wanted to counter punch me and lead me into mistakes, then punish me. So I went to Plan B because I can also box, use my head and be slick. I knew that I had more power than him and even though he landed some good shots, it was too late. When he started going to the body it was too late, he should've done that earlier.”

There was plenty of in-fight communication between the pair and most was fairly complementary and good natured. McCloskey had suffered a debilitating broken nose in his fight with Breidis Prescott and when the nose popped early on here, Corley sensed blood in a very literal sense.

“I told him during the fight that I'd broken his nose and he said that was OK! Paul is in the [world] ratings as a C class fighter, not an A or B class. I give him a C- performance tonight because he fights with his hands down, which is not good because no fighter should fight with their hands down. Even Floyd Mayweather shouldn't fight with his hands down; it just takes one punch to end a night.”

McCloskey was in the running for a potential crack at pound-for-pound heavy-hitter Juan Manuel Marquez before this setback and that opportunity is surely off the agenda for the Irishman at least. It seems unlikely but Corley thinks that he could now be getting the nod for a career swansong.

“I heard that Marquez would fight the winner of me and Paul so I'll take off for seven days and then get back running and in the gym,” he said.

Martinez On the List But Frampton Could Now Face Molitor in September – 28th June 2012

Super-bantamweight Carl Frampton is in training for a big fight later this year and he has been assured that it will take place at a Belfast venue. Late September-early October is the mooted time frame and Matchroom promoter Eddie Hearn recently proposed September 22 as a potential date. Many expect Spanish dangerman Kiko Martinez to finally don his gloves and face Carl, in an EBU title defence, but getting 'La Sensacion' in to the ring is proving trickier than first expected.

"I honestly don't know who the opponent is but we are looking at Kiko Martinez if things can be sorted out, because he's having some managerial problems but hopefully we can get him," enthused Carl.

"To be honest the more this goes on, the more I wonder if he really wants it because there are fewer obstacles in the road and I don't know what the problem is. If we can't get him then Steve Molitor has sort of called me out on Twitter and he's been conversing with Barry [McGuigan] about a possible fight. He's a bigger name than Kiko worldwide, but people here would know Kiko obviously because he knocked Bernard Dunne out, but if we don't get Martinez then there are still options."

Steve Molitor is indeed a big name, having mixed with the likes of Celestino Caballero and Takalani Ndlovu during a 12-year career that once saw the classy southpaw travel to Hartlepool and dismantle local man Michael Hunter for the IBF super-bantamweight crown back in 2006.

"Molitor's Canadian so it could be a Commonwealth title fight as well as an IBF Intercontinental defence," added Frampton. "Either way, it certainly makes sense. Plus, he's highly ranked, a former two-time world champion and it would be a big scalp for me to have on my record."

Carl expects that his next outing (against whichever opponent) will grace either the King's Hall or the Odyssey Arena, depending on the sort of undercard that can be put together. With Martin Lindsay now moving into line for a crack at British and Commonwealth featherweight king Lee Selby, perhaps another mammoth fight card could be on the cards.

"The Ulster Hall and the King's Hall were, in years gone by, the big venues for boxing in Northern Ireland but now we have the Odyssey and it could be the one that everyone wants to go to. I hope to be fighting for world titles and winning them in the Odyssey," said Carl.

The Tigers Bay prospect was last seen extending his winning streak to 14-0 (9 KOs) on the undercard of Carl Froch-Lucian Bute, by posting a wide decision win over rugged Mexican Raul Hiraes – adding the IBF Intercontinental belt to his trophy cabinet. The 25-year-old showed an added dimension to his game, using slick movement and a back foot boxing style to outfox his rangy opponent.

“I didn’t use the jab enough against Hiraes and I tried to pressure him but even though I boxed well on the back foot, I could have used the jab more,” he lamented. “Anyone who saw me box as an amateur knows that I like to fight going backwards. I’m a 12-round fighter and I did the distance quite easily; a win’s a win and it was a good performance from me. The fight was broadcast in America on the Epix channel and apparently they were impressed with the performance. We had a game plan and I stuck to it and basically did what I was told.”

Two potential future opponents, Rendall Munroe and Scott Quigg, recently clashed in Manchester and the winner would no doubt have been interested in a clash with the Belfast boxer. The bout ended prematurely, however, when a clash of heads resulted in a nasty laceration above Munroe’s right eye, bleeding profusely and impairing the Leicester man’s vision. Viewers were collectively left none the wiser as to whom was the better man.

“It only went a couple of rounds and I scored it one round apiece but the cut was bad and there’s not too much you can say,” admitted Frampton. “They will probably have a rematch and before the fight I was leaning towards Quigg winning. Munroe was fired up at the weigh-in though and he looked in great nick as always, better than he’s ever looked.”

A fight with either man will keep brewing for now, as Carl remains thoroughly focused on his next assignment and another opportunity to bring big time boxing back to the hungry Belfast fight fans.

“I’m just ticking over at the minute; it’s a long time to go before my next fight and plenty of time to train. I try not to get too much out of shape so there’s no rush getting the weight off. I’m just looking forward to a great night of boxing against a quality opponent.”

Brandon Aiming for Peake Performance

– 11th July 2012

Brandon Peake will make his first professional boxing appearance on Friday, August 17 in Castlebar against fellow debutant Michael Waldron. The Ballyhaunis welterweight is eager to impress his travelling army of supporters on the undercard of Henry Coyle's return to the Royal Theatre. Geesala native Coyle fights Argentine dangerman Marcelo Alejandro Rodriguez in the first defence of the WBF light-middleweight title that he acquired at the same venue last August.

"I feel privileged and honoured to be making my debut on such a big show with Henry Coyle topping the bill and I am very grateful to the promoter Brian Peters for making it possible," buzzed 19-year-old Peake.

"I come from a very large extended family and I'm a coach in Ballyhaunis boxing club, so we will have great support. The atmosphere on the night will be unreal and thanks to everyone who is coming out to shout for me."

Brandon has been bursting at the seams to get inside the ring and show the fans what he is capable of and fighting so close to home has only added to the excitement. Following a mixed amateur career that brought success at County and Provincial levels and a National under-21 semi-final appearance, this improving southpaw is primed and ready to introduce his come-forward brawler style to the professional ranks. The welterweight fight with fellow first-timer Michael Waldron is an all-Mayo affair with both young men ready to put everything on the line and do whatever it takes to achieve victory.

"I have great respect for my opponent Michael and his family and it is regrettable that the two of us are meeting each other in our pro debuts. Whatever happens though, there will be no bad blood between us – it's purely business."

Brandon is self-managed and trains under the watchful eye of his father Martin Peake. Competing as one of Ireland's youngest registered boxers, he regularly travels over to Leeds, England to spar with the likes of red-hot amateur prospect Qais Ashfaq and Tommy Broadbent, a rugged Yorkshireman who is well known on the Northern English boxing circuit. But Peake's dedication to the noble art does not end there as he also drives to Westport twice a week to spar Irish international Danny Coughlan in St. Anne's BC. Ashfaq and Coughlan are both still amateurs but outstanding boxers destined for big things.

"My own aim is to win as many fights as possible and as I mature

then possibly an Irish title could be achieved,” added Peake. “For now my focus lies on August 17 and an explosive night of action in Castlebar.”

Frampton and Martinez All Set for September 22 Clash in Belfast's Odyssey – 19th July 2012

Carl Frampton will face Kiko Martinez on Saturday, September 22 for the Spaniard's European super-bantamweight title, with Carl's IBF Intercontinental strap also on the line. Belfast's impressive Odyssey Arena will play host to a clash that will have been slowly simmering for just over a year come fight night. Now the experienced power-punching Martinez will look to inflict another heartbreaking defeat on an unbeaten Irish hope just as he sensationally achieved five years ago in Dublin over Bernard Dunne. Frampton insists that he will be ready for whatever the visitor brings to the table.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to fight on such a great occasion," said Carl. "Belfast wants big fights and this is a massive fight. It's one that I know I will win, despite Kiko being a dangerous puncher. I can take a shot and give one out as well and he has never been stopped before but I'll be looking to get the win and hopefully knock this guy out."

Martinez's manager Pat Magee has also been keen on matching the pair and the astute veteran is keeping Kiko busy with a six-rounder in Belfast's Emerald Roadhouse on Saturday, July 21. Magee was present the night Martinez beat Dunne and is already making plans for a fight with dangerous Russian Alexander Bakhtin, strongly assuming that his man will first dismiss 'The Jackal' in front of his home faithful.

"Since then [the Dunne fight] Kiko has gained vast experience defending his European title and fighting in an IBF title eliminator in Johannesburg," stated Magee. "He has improved as a fighter and is more experienced than Carl. Even though Frampton has said that he will knock Kiko out I can say that Kiko was never dropped in 40 undefeated amateur fights or in 29 professional fights so far so Carl will have to be an exceptional puncher to put Martinez on the floor. Kiko boxes on Saturday night at the Emerald Roadhouse against Dougie Curran so if you want to see a preview of what will happen to Carl Frampton then get those remaining tickets now!"

The smiling 25-year-old local countered with, "Carl Frampton is not Dougie Curran" but Pat's gesture was mostly light-hearted. On another big September bill, Martinez will certainly have his hands full with the untainted Tigers Bay bruiser who relishes the chance to once again come in to a fight that holds 50-50 status or where he is even a slight underdog.

"The last time I went into a fight as the underdog was against David

Oliver Joyce in the Irish Senior final and I put him on his bum and gave him a standing count in the last round, so I like being the underdog and I like proving people wrong. I don't know if I will be on the back foot or not, I can stand and have a fight with this guy if I want to. I can box him as well and we have not yet discussed our tactics but I can put my foot on the gas and fight for 12 hard rounds at a good pace," added Frampton.

Carl was originally scheduled to meet Kiko on the Paul McCloskey-Breidis Prescott undercard last September but Martinez pulled out citing an illness to his father. Frampton respects those reasons and will leave no stone unturned in his training camp with mentor and manager Barry McGuigan working alongside Belfast's wise old hand Gerry Storey. Since the first meeting was proposed Frampton has been itching to get it on with the Alicante dangerman and has gained four fights' worth of experience in the interim.

"There probably was a time when I was frustrated but Kiko pulled out of the fight for obvious reasons and I don't blame it at all despite being disappointed after training so hard," Carl admitted. "It's come around again and I'm really looking forward to it. I was ready to fight Martinez in September last year and beat him but I'm four fights better off and an improved fighter having gone the distance in my last bout with 12 good rounds under my belt. I can do it flat-out and this guy is not going to beat me, no way."

Pat Magee, who has guided his namesake Brian to several lucrative big title showdowns throughout a long career, obviously sees matters differently.

"The newspapers have suggested that Kiko was maybe avoiding this bout but that's not quite true as he's had some problems at home which have now been overcome. He has a new regime with Bernardo Checa as head coach and (Welshman) Robert Lyndon and (Wexford native) Louis Furlong working with him out in Spain. The wise old owl John Rooney is keeping an eye on it all.

"His mandatory contender has been asked to wait until this voluntary defence is over – and I emphasise that the Frampton fight is a voluntary defence and one that we have taken because we are so confident of winning. Kiko will win decisively and then we will fight the Russian Alexander Bakhtin for a version of the world title or an interim belt - if not the fully fledged version of a world belt.

"You will see a new Kiko Martinez on September 22. He's got a new training programme and he wants a world title fight this year. He's already had three fights in Ireland with three wins," concluded Magee.

Kiko Martinez: ‘Don’t Judge Me On Munroe Defeats’ – 21st July 2012

Reigning European super-bantamweight champion Kiko Martinez has rejected suggestions that his separate points losses to Rendall Munroe served to show up his boxing weaknesses. Speaking at the Europa Hotel press conference to announce a September 22 date with Carl Frampton, Martinez reasoned that there were issues surrounding his defeats to the Leicester binman.

“My career was not so good back then, I had a hernia operation and if you judge me on those fights then you have got it wrong because I am a better fighter than that,” reckoned ‘La Sensacion’.

Tricky southpaw Munroe, who was often linked with a possible bout against Bernard Dunne throughout 2008, eventually went on to unsuccessfully challenge for a version of the world title. But this was not before he had twice defused the bombs of Martinez: firstly in early 2008 and then again in early 2009, with Kiko’s third loss on a 26-3 (19 KOs) slate coming courtesy of Takalani Ndlovu in a September 2009 IBF super-bantamweight eliminator out in South Africa.

“I want to thank Pat Magee for bring me to Belfast to fight and for believing in me,” the 26-year-old said about his manager. “I hope to show everyone the best of me and I hope that you will enjoy the fight. I know that Frampton is a good fighter but I am the champion and I am ready to retain.”

Highly-confident Magee is already discussing moves beyond Frampton, and targeting a clash with undefeated Russian Alexander Bakhtin. If Martinez were to get past Frampton (which is a huge if) then he would have all the trouble he could handle against Bakhtin who is an impressively skilled operator. Martinez looked in good shape on Thursday and keeps busy at the Emerald Roadhouse this Saturday evening against oft-beaten Scotsman Dougie Curran. Barring any mishaps, that fight should shed the rust and propel the Spaniard into the Odyssey cauldron in two months’ time. New coach Bernardo Checa, a highly respected Panamanian based in Belfast, has devised a new training plan for his charge and also helped by translating Kiko’s Spanish.

“Carl is a very good up-and-coming fighter and we will get Kiko ready for a very tough fight but obviously we believe that Kiko will win,” said Checa.

Martinez has yet to taste defeat on Irish soil in three previous visits.

The by now infamous Dunne fight and a solid, if unspectacular, EBU title win over Arsen Martirosyan, with a nondescript eight round points win over Ghana's Lante Addy sandwiched in between. Typecast as a one-dimensional puncher who can hurt opponents but also be outboxed, Kiko is aiming to show a different side to his makeup on fight night.

“On the 22nd of September I will show people what I can do,” he promised.

McGuigan and Hearn Aim for Frampton Title Glory **– 27th July 2012**

The Barry McGuigan-Eddie Hearn partnership has worked smoothly since its fruition and the pair are now hoping to steer Carl Frampton to European title glory on September 22. McGuigan has made no secret of the fact that he envisages the multi-dimensional Frampton having too many tools for Martinez to deal with and the Irish ring legend paid tribute to the Spaniard for coming to Belfast to make this voluntary defence.

“We really appreciate how gutsy Kiko is to come and defend his title in Belfast. Our set-up will be the same and we will take Carl away to train but we want the big fights to be in Belfast,” said Barry, who won the European featherweight title in 1983.

“As you know we have wanted this fight for some time and Kiko is an exceptional fighter, a world-class puncher with a good chin and we have great respect for him. He has only been beaten by world-class fighters. We are absolutely convinced that Frampton can win but we are not underestimating this guy at all. He keeps his power consistently throughout a fight and is a very good overall fighter but Carl is better than him in every department and we intend to prove that on September 22.”

The return of big time boxing to Belfast is thanks in no small part to Matchroom supremo Eddie Hearn who is also busy singlehandedly revitalising the domestic boxing product on Sky TV. Hearn’s Irish project is currently moving along quite nicely.

“We come to Belfast a lot and we want to deliver value for fight fans and sporting fans,” said Hearn, whose darts league also makes a stop off at the Odyssey. “We have a real opportunity to create a superstar in Belfast all over again. We believe that we have something very special and on the night we will find out just how special Carl is. It will be an incredible 50-50 fight and we want to deliver those fights. It will be an iconic night of Irish boxing.”

After adding the Prizefighter to his previous Belfast event, Hearn has stacked this card full of local interest. Dungiven’s Paul McCloskey is on the running order although it is unclear as to whether he will indeed take part in his first contest since losing to DeMarcus Corley earlier this year. Prizefighter middleweight victor Eamonn O’Kane will be looking for a test as he eyes either the British or European title while featherweight Martin Lindsay is closing in on Lee Selby. Flyweight prospect Jamie Conlan (whose brother Michael is competing at the London Olympics)

has fought off a health scare to continue his frustrating task of coaxing a domestic belt holder into the ring. Eddie Hearn is excited about the show and especially the stellar main event.

“This fight [Frampton-Martinez] has been a long time coming and fair play to Barry McGuigan who asked me to make it 12 months ago. We tried to make it on the McCloskey-Prescott undercard. Carl has developed immensely over the past 12 months, with four fights in big arenas during that time. He’s gained the experience now and he’s ready for a huge test.”

“Carl is the most active Matchroom fighter this year and the Odyssey bill will be his fourth fight this year,” agreed Barry McGuigan.

“We still have the historical figure of amateur boxing and sage Gerry Storey laying down the foundation work in training but we take Carl away to train in isolation whenever there is a big fight coming up. He’ll be with me for six-eight weeks in preparation. What a great show this will be, tell your mates to get their tickets because boxing is flying here [in Ireland] again.”

Lindsay Eager for Selby Title Clash – 28th July 2012

Martin Lindsay may have been absent from the title picture since conceding his British featherweight title to John Simpson but the quality operator is now priming himself for a crack at Lee Selby, the man currently in possession of that coveted crown. Two non-title bouts have helped sharpen Lindsay's tools and the 30-year-old is preparing for a big fight on September 22.

"I'm hoping that Matchroom will win the purse bids for Lee Selby and the British featherweight title," he said. "The purse bids were meant to be on July 11 but they have been put back to August 8 because after the Haye-Chisora fight the Board put back all purse bids. I've started training and I can't do anything else but prepare for the date."

Lindsay won the British title back in April 2009 with a sixth-round stoppage win over Scotland's Paul Appleby in front of a passionate Ulster Hall crowd. Plagued throughout his career with spells of inactivity, Martin made one defence of the title when widely outpointing Welshman Jamie Arthur in the Leigh Indoor Sports Centre. It was clear from the venue that this popular Belfastman's abilities outside of the ring as a red-hot ticket seller in his home city were not being utilised correctly. In December 2010 then-promoter Frank Maloney brought rugged contender John Simpson to the Northern capital and after a gruelling 12 rounds of back-and-forth honest endeavour from both combatants the Scotsman left town with the Lonsdale Belt strapped around his waist. That prize has since found its way to Barry's Lee Selby and the always affable Lindsay holds respect for the reigning champion.

"I was impressed with Selby against Stephen Smith after he finished Smith with a good knockout, a smashing uppercut to finish it off, and he proved that it wasn't a flash in the pan by beating John Simpson who is a tough character," added Martin. "Obviously Selby carries a punch and is a good boxer too but I will not underestimate him or leave any stone unturned in preparing to go and do the business. I've had two fights already this year and I was hoping to get another eight-rounder in July or August but that didn't happen and this opportunity has come up so at 30 years of age I'll take on Selby now and do the 12 rounds."

Martin holds a 19-1 (7 KOs) record and believes that the Selby fight may provide the platform to perform some fistic redemption for his sole loss. A big win could help cement a relationship with promotional big hitters Matchroom and finally propel the Immaculata man into European title class or beyond. Perhaps then Lindsay could begin to realise the sort of lofty ambition that Frank Maloney talked about at a snow covered

Balmorel Hotel some 18 months ago at a pre-Simpson press conference.

“If I go out and beat Selby then the John Simpson fight is just a blip. Matchroom are the only ones on Sky so they can push you on and hopefully if Carl [Frampton] and [Paul] McCloskey both win then the shows will keep coming back here and if you have a belt then you can get on those big shows. Appleby might have now retired and Simpson has moved up to super-featherweight but I’m sure he could make feather if the right fight came along so those guys are out there for me but at the minute I’m fully focused on Lee Selby.”

Hearn Has High Hopes for Eamonn O’Kane – 29th July 2012

Eddie Hearn is not looking to hang around with the career of Eamonn O’Kane and the promoter wants to use his Dungiven asset’s Prizefighter success as a springboard into championship contests. Eddie will provide the 30-year-old middleweight with a test on September 22 and could even throw in Kerry Hope as an opponent. Hope upset the odds and briefly held the European title recently before surrendering it back to quality Pole Grzegorz Proksa in eight bad tempered rounds earlier this month. O’Kane could next use the rangy Welsh southpaw as a yardstick for his own progression.

“I’d like to see O’Kane in against somebody like Kerry Hope which would be a big step-up as Kerry showed that he could get to European level but was not quite at European level really,” Hearn explained at the recent ‘Judgement Day’ press conference in Belfast’s Europa Hotel.

“That’s a big risk fight for a 7-0 fighter like Eamonn but again if we’re looking at other Irish fights then Anthony Fitzgerald had a good scrap with Eamonn in the first round of Prizefighter. Even going beyond that to maybe a Craig McEwan and it all depends on what the team wants but it has to be a meaningful fight with a minimum of ten rounds and we’re looking at maybe the Irish title. I want to find out how good O’Kane is over distance rather than just six rounds or three rounds, because Eamonn gets stronger as his fights go on and he needs those rounds to progress. He always starts fast and gets into great scraps. Every fight I’ve seen him in has been an incredible fight, not just Prizefighter but also the Joe Rea and Wayne Reed fights.”

Even though a distance encounter with the likes of long-reigning former Irish champion Anthony Fitzgerald or previous victim Joe Rea have been talked about it would be preferable to see O’Kane get stuck in to a fresh face. With the British title circuit tied up at present perhaps someone like Hope or McEwan could bring the best out of the 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist who bridged the gap between amateur and professional with a stint in the innovative World Series of Boxing.

“I want to step Eamonn O’Kane up,” continued Hearn, “not madly, but obviously he won Prizefighter which doesn’t really show you a lot about him although he showed a lot of heart and brawn to win. It’s difficult to show all of your skills in Prizefighter because it’s a bit wham-bam but he won it and he has a platform there to progress. He will have a good popularity base but it’s time to step him up a bit in this next fight.”

O’Kane Views Prizefighter Victory As a Fast Track to Titles – 30th July 2012

Dungiven middleweight Eamonn O’Kane is ready to use his Prizefighter success as a springboard into championship contests. The 30-year-old’s promotional team at Matchroom are considering Kerry Hope as a possible next opponent and Eamonn is open to a step-up in levels.

“I’d like to push on for a title of some sort, whether that be Irish, Celtic, British or whatever,” enthused the former quality amateur. “I know that the British title is up for purse bids but I’m aiming to reach that level and then push on from that. Prizefighter was a stepping stone, a tough and rugged night where I got through it well, won every fight well and I want to show my boxing skills on this bumper night’s boxing.”

The bumper night in question is ‘Judgement Day’ on September 22 in the impressive Odyssey Arena. Carl Frampton will headline against Kiko Martinez and a host of talented pugilists from Belfast and beyond are also touted to appear. Last time at the King’s Hall O’Kane brawled his way past domestic rivals Anthony Fitzgerald, Ryan Greene and JJ McDonagh to scoop the £32,000 Prizefighter cheque. Since then the possibility of a longer distance encounter with Fitzgerald has been discussed on Irish boxing forums.

“I think that I have gone past that level,” Eamonn responded, “and no disrespect to Anthony who is a nice fella and we had a good fight over three rounds. In fact I think that those boxers should fight each other and they would have trouble with a guy like [fellow finalist] JJ McDonagh but hopefully I will move onwards and upwards. If they win titles and go around me in the meantime then I’ll definitely fight them but I don’t want to move backwards.”

Even though he has marked his arrival in to the pro game as a rough-and-ready slugger willing to use superior stamina and strength to bully opponents, O’Kane entered has a stellar amateur pedigree behind him. A spell in the World Series of Boxing also helped his transition.

“I mixed with some of the top boxers in the world as an amateur and in the WSB. As an amateur I fought Andre Dirrell, James DeGale and beat George Groves who is doing well and winning titles. So hopefully I can get in for European titles and there’s no reason why I can’t do the same as those boys. The WSB was the rubber stamp for me, I like to get in and have a go, like I showed in Prizefighter.”

Whoever the matchmaker finds for this amiable middleweight hopeful, he is not about to ruffle feathers and start calling out any

potential future adversaries.

“This part of the game is all new to me and I’m not into calling people out and looking for names,” he said. “I let Eddie Hearn and my manager Francie McNicholl deal with all of that and as long as I am moving onwards and progressing then I’ll fight whoever they get for me.”

‘Judgement Day’ Looms for Paul McCloskey – 30th July 2012

Eddie Hearn believes that he has called his bumper September 22 bill ‘Judgement Day’ for a reason and many, if not all, of the stars on show will be heading into bouts that could serve to determine their fistic futures. Following a shock stoppage loss to DeMarcus Corley on May 5 Paul McCloskey stands firmly at a boxing crossroads.

“I think that the next fight is the fight where we find out what’s happening and this is why we called the show Judgement Day because we are judging a lot of people,” explained Hearn, who said “not really” when asked if retirement was discussed with the original flag bearer for his Irish project.

“We have Carl Frampton and Eamonn O’Kane, then Jamie Conlan who we want to sling into a big fight and then, of course, Paul. We are going to find out the truth, which is, what have they got? That’s exciting for me and for the fans and more importantly for the fighters because if they are good enough they will be OK and if they are not then maybe it’s time to do something different.”

Hearn has affirmed that he wants a meaningful bout for former European champion McCloskey, to oversee where the 32-year-old stands with his career and decide whether the Dungiven man can come back refreshed and put his Corley loss down to an off night.

“Basically Paul McCloskey is back,” continued Eddie, “he’ll be on the show and we’ve got to find out what kind of fight he wants and for me it has to be a meaningful fight and Paul knows that it has to be a meaningful fight because we have to find out what he’s got left. There’s no point in having an eight-rounder, there’s no value in that, he’s not 27 so it’s got to be a fight that will test him again to see what he’s got left in his career. Hopefully Corley was just an off night, he didn’t look at the races at all and sometimes in those types of fights it can be difficult to get the momentum or motivation because it’s a treading water fight. You’re fighting a guy who’s behind you in the world rankings but it’s up to you to get motivated for that and I’m not sure whether he was. So the next opponent needs to be a name that motivates Paul.”

So what sort of names could be under consideration for McCloskey? The southpaw was linked with a WBA crack at Marcos Maidana last year after his stirring points win over classy Colombian banger Breidis Prescott. Curtis Woodhouse was mentioned for the May 5 headliner before Julio Diaz and ultimately DeMarcus Corley accepted the

assignment.

“For me that could be a domestic fight and I’ve mentioned Alex Arthur to him and even Derry Mathews,” said Hearn. “But then again from a mindset perspective it can be difficult to move back into that mould and feel that we are beyond that. But his loss to Corley could mean that maybe we are not and he has got to prove that he’s not, so the answer is we will have a meaningful opponent for McCloskey.”

Hearn Wants to See How Good Conlan Really Is

– 31st July 2012

Trainer John Breen has given word to Eddie Hearn that his flyweight charge will face anyone that can be found to accommodate him on September 22 and the English promoter is eager to find out just how good the 8-0 (4 KOs) prospect is. After a frustrating spell trying to coax Britain's top flyweights into the ring Conlan should see the ball start to roll after linking up with the Matchroom machine.

“I will invest in Jamie Conlan because I think he's a very good fighter and I will go to lengths to get the right fighter [as an opponent] but again it has to be a meaningful fight and a big fight,” explained Eddie.

Both he and Conlan are interested in a clash with Chris Edwards, the Stoke veteran who defends his British title on October 13 against unbeaten Kevin Satchell in Liverpool, and Jamie himself admits that Edwards is a genuine warrior who will face anyone. However, last time out Edwards laboured to a six-round draw with Anwar Alfadli, the Kuwaiti switch-hitter who holds only one win in 29 fights (two draws) and was beaten on points by Conlan in his November 2009 debut. For Chris Edwards, back-to-back title wins over Paul Edwards and Shinnny Bayaar at the end of a long career may have taken something out of the 36-year-old and both Conlan and Luke Wilton are poised to capitilise.

“Chris Edwards has a fight lined up but we need a meaningful fight for Conlan and we are speaking to Luke Wilton as well and I think that Conlan-Wilton is a good fight, especially for the Irish fans,” continued Hearn.

“From a business and financial perspective if fights don't add up then there's no point in making them. Everyone tells me how good Jamie is but I haven't really seen too much of him and I want to see more of him. If he's as good as people say he is then we'll fight anyone and John Breen has given me an indication that he will fight anyone so that's not a problem. That's great for me as a matchmaker and promoter because I know that whoever I put in front of him he's not going to turn down.”

Matchroom Keen on Lindsay-Selby Purse Bids **– 2nd August 2012**

Matchroom Sports have indicated that they will bid for the British featherweight title fight between champion Lee Selby and challenger Martin Lindsay but things will only progress if it benefits Lindsay's career advancement.

"We will bid for the purse bids and hopefully win them and make the fight happen here [on September 22]," asserted Eddie Hearn. "But I'm very concerned about purse bids at the moment where other promoters win bids and the fight in question doesn't actually happen. So if a bid comes in that I'm not particularly comfortable with then we may relinquish our position and look for other world options or interim world title options. Hopefully we can win the bids and make the fight happen but, financially speaking, here is the only place that the fight can happen with sense."

While Hearn respects Selby's boxing ability he does question the Welshman's ability to put bums on seats and insists that Belfast is the only viable place for the championship contest to take place.

"Selby's a great fighter but he boxed in Newport a couple of months ago and there were 300 people there so it only makes sense in Belfast and we have a show on September 22 so why not make it happen? I'm not prepared to let Martin be messed around or made to wait and so I'll say to him that if it's not an option that we are happy with then maybe we will give our position up and look at European, world or intercontinental title fights."

While the British title scrap would be a natural next step for Lindsay it is logical for Hearn to take such a tough stance. The Immaculata boxer will therefore feature on the show regardless of the opponent or belt on offer.

"Whatever happens, Martin will fight on this show because I cannot see the fight being made before October anyway, whoever has the dates to be able to make it. The scenarios I see is that we either promote that fight or perhaps it doesn't happen," concluded Hearn.

‘Western Warrior’ Coyle Leads the Charge in Castlebar – 18th August 2012

Popular Irish light-middleweight **Henry Coyle** got another win under his belt at the Royal Theatre, outpointing **Marcelo Alejandro Rodriguez** over 12 rounds. Even though Coyle successfully defended the lightly-regarded WBF title, he could have been mixing with Floyd Mayweather as far as the hugely passionate Castlebar crowd was concerned. The Geesala native had won his belt exactly a year previous in the same atmospheric venue and promoter Brian Peters returned to give the hungry fans a further glimpse of the ‘Western Warrior’.

Coyle (153.2lb) took the initiative early on and used an impressive collection of moves, including a snappy left jab, to ensure that the visitor was restricted to sporadic counter attacks. The tempo moved up a gear in round five when Henry struck a right to the temple and Rodriguez (153.6lb) was suddenly tottering around on jelly legs. Coyle piled on the pressure and landed some hurtful leather but experienced official Mickey Vann let him see out the round and from that point the Buenos Aires resident was never again in any serious danger of being stopped. If anything, the 34-year-old warmed to the local man’s power and started popping in some solid ripostes of his own, even indulging in a foot shuffle midway through the ninth.

Coyle’s nose was bleeding more heavily as each of the final three rounds progressed and he used his skills to outbox Rodriguez and cruise to a wide points success on the cards of the three judges. David Irving totalled 118-110 while Emile Tiedt and Vince Feeney concurred at 119-109.

“It’s all about the boxing and that’s what I did tonight,” said Coyle, who trains in Chicago under Sam Colonna. “There’s a time when I wouldn’t have done a job like that and the kid was tough so respect to him.”

Former European lightweight title challenger **Andy Murray** returned from a one-year hiatus to outgun Argentine slugger **Sergio Priotti**. Murray (140.2lb) looked fresh and possessed sharper hands than his game but limited opponent and the Cavan man is now in a position to place his big-fight loss to Gavin Rees firmly in the past. This bout was concluded after the fifth-round when Priotti (139.8lb) –who had sustained a nasty cut to the left eyelid- finally convinced head cornerman Giuseppe Lauri that he wished to retire.

“I was a bit anxious at the start but once I settled down it was fine.

You're not going to just blow these boys away," explained Murray post-fight.

Chester's **Chris Goodwin** claimed the vacant WBF lightweight title with a unanimous points verdict over Hungarian **Istvan Kiss**. Scores were 117-111 (Mickey Vann), 117-112 (David Irving) and 118-110 (Vince Feeney) and the pair had seemed fairly evenly matched when matters took a bizarre turn in the tenth-round. Kiss pulled away from an innocuous exchange and proceeded to be violently sick across the ring and over the ropes. After a brief consultation with the doctor and referee Emile Tiedt, Istvan (133.4lb) returned to action and was understandably timid for the remainder of the contest. Goodwin (134.4lb) never stopped motoring forward and was good value for his victory.

Brendan Fitzpatrick pushed his career back on track with a third-round stoppage win over Ballayhaunis veteran **John Waldron**. The pair swapped heavy shots from the off but Dubliner Fitzpatrick (173lb) was notably sharper and a bloody-nosed Waldron (173.9lb) buckled first from the exchanges and took a knee midway through the third. Moments later another body assault saw John turn his back and allow ref David Irving to call a halt at 1-12.

John's younger brother **Michael Waldron** opened his pro slate on a positive note after posting a 39-37 win over fellow debutant **Brandon Peake** in an all-southpaw affair. 19-year-old Peake (149.9lb) is Ireland's youngest registered professional and, like his opponent, looked extremely nervous during a tentative opener. By the end both men were exhausted but lanky Waldron (147.4lb) managed to do that bit more to impress referee Emile Tiedt.

Roscommon grafter **Darren Cruise** appeared slightly unfortunate to concede a six-twos verdict to Buncrana debutant **John Hutchinson**, with apprentice referee Vince Feeney's 59-55 score appearing wide. Hutchinson (162.1lb) was game throughout but it was Cruise (163.25lb) who produced any rare moments of quality.

Wilton Heads the Pack of Belfast's New Breed – 9th September 2012

Jane Wilton and Peace Promotions announced themselves as a dual force on the Belfast boxing scene with a solid six-fight show at the Holiday Inn. Linking up with experienced fight figure Alan Wilton will now help Peace supremo Mark Dunlop grow his own fight stable as the pair plan an October 13 Ulster Hall show to keep the ball rolling.

That will feature flyweight **Luke Wilton** in a title shot of some description and Wilton (8st 11lb 10oz) limbered up with a three-round destruction of Bulgaria's **Gaulin Paunov**. Down three times in total until referee Kenny Pringle accepted the towel at 2-04 of the round, southpaw Paunov (8st 11lb 4oz) was unable to deal with 'Winky's' strength inside.

"Some people say that I can't punch hard but my last few opponents would suggest otherwise" said Wilton post-fight.

The show opened with the ringing of ten bells in memory of highly-respected amateur boxing stalwart Dave Thompson who sadly passed away.

Veteran coach John Breen, who recently celebrated 50 years in boxing, was back in the corner helping to guide featherweight hope **Marco McCullough** to a 40-35 success over stubborn survivor **Hyusein Hyuseinov**. McCullough (8st 13lb 6oz) has skills but Hyuseinov (8st 12lb 6oz) held on against the odds. Kenny Pringle officiated.

Willie Thompson (10st 10lb 14oz) is closing in on an Irish title shot next month and the Ballyclare man kept busy with a 40-35 victory over **Liam Griffiths**. Griffiths (10st 13lb) was deducted a point for holding in the third and hung in there to concede on John Lowey's card.

Matthew Wilton (10st 12lb 10oz) had the edge in ability that allowed him to outmaneuver Luton's **Gavin Putney** (11st 8lb 10oz) by a score of 40-35 on Mr. Pringle's card. Putney took a knee in the final round.

Poleglass prodigy **James Tennyson** (8st 12lb 2oz) made his debut with a fourth-round knockout over Bulgarian **Fikret Remziev**. John Lowey intervened at 1-57 as Remziev (9st 11lb) shipped too many punches.

DUBLINER **Brendan Fitzpatrick** (11st 8lb 12oz) headed north to outpoint slippery southpaw **Paul Morby** (11st 12lb 4oz). Kenny Pringle totaled 40-36.

Tennyson Impresses On Holiday Inn Debut – 10th September 2012

Irish boxing prospect James Tennyson got his professional career off to a flying start on Saturday, September 8 with a fourth-round knockout win over Bulgarian opponent Fikret Remziev. The Poleglass starlet ended a successful stint in the amateur code for the lure of the paid circuit and at just 19 years of age is looking to take his time and gradually improve while climbing the ladder to title glory.

“I wasn’t going for the stoppage tonight and it was always a bonus if it happened so when it came I just took it. I got brilliant support from my fans who all made a lot of noise,” said the self-styled ‘Baby Faced Assassin’.

“I won three Irish titles as an amateur, four Ulster and five Antrim titles. I represented Ireland in the President’s Cup and won a multi-nations gold medal in Portugal [he also beat Commonwealth bronze medallist Enda Kennedy for the Antrim Intermediate title]. I train in Belfast’s Kronk gym on the Antrim Road alongside Dee Walsh and Daniel McShane.”

James has linked up with Mark Dunlop’s recently devised organisation Peace Promotions, who ran Saturday night’s show in the Holiday Inn venue in association with long-established boxing stalwarts Jane and Alan Wilton. Tennyson next fights in the Ulster Hall on October 13 -where a monster 12-fight bill is being prepared- and will no doubt take another huge army of fans with him from Poleglass. The talented super-featherweight remains level headed when it comes to talk of future opportunities.

“I’ll have to leave all that to Mark because he calls the shots. I want to keep moving forward up the ranks and progressing as a professional. It was a slightly slower pace tonight and I planted my feet more than when I was an amateur. There wasn’t a great deal of difference from the way I boxed then and I always had more of a pro style anyway.”

A familiar face to Lisburn boxing fans, Ralph McKay, worked Tennyson’s corner in tandem with head trainer at the Kronk, Tony Dunlop.

“Ralph has looked after me since I was a young boy boxing as an amateur,” explained James. “I get great sparring now with Daniel McShane, Matt Wilton, Marco McCullough and Jamie Conlan. I’m always working on my fitness and I want to get as fit as possible.

“The Ulster Hall will be fantastic on October 13 and the best experience that you can get.”

Wilton Craves Big Title Tests for His Frequent Belfast Headliners – 12th September 2012

Luke Wilton is making quite a habit of featuring in Belfast headliners and the flourishing flyweight gets another chance to impress his growing legion of followers on October 13 in the Ulster Hall. Luke chalked up his most recent victory in the Holiday Inn on Saturday, September 8 against spidery Bulgarian Galin Paunov. ‘Winky’ was grateful for another fleeting spell of ring time and is glad to be keeping active.

“Having more fights suits me,” agreed Wilton, “and this was another win under my belt. I don’t know what’s happening with all of these stoppages. Some people say that I can’t punch but as the rounds go on I’m wearing opponents down with body shots and taking them out. I’m training for a 12-round fight against a tough, durable [but as yet, unnamed] former champion. He’s no mug and has a good record. I’ve done a bit of sparring with Matthew and been around the amateur gyms. Stevie Quinn Jnr came down for a while and we got a couple of days’ sparring in.”

Luke fancies a crack at either fast-improving Liverpoolian Kevin Satchell or veteran Stoke scrapper Chris Edwards who clash soon for the British title. Both men would offer a much stiffer test than Paunov, who was outgunned but at least came to give it a go.

“He was tough and it took me a couple of rounds to get going and he offered plenty of movement but I caught up with him in the end. This is what Belfast needs. There are no fights and then they all seem to come around all at once. If we can keep this going for six, eight or twelve weeks then it’s good for all of the fighters involved. I was only getting two fights a year before now and it wasn’t doing me any good.

“This is what I’ve needed tonight and I can’t wait for the next fight,” Luke concluded.

Fitzpatrick Punching Back Into the Mix

– 14th September 2012

Finglas super-middleweight Brendan Fitzpatrick returned to the ring on September 8 and is busy putting his career back on track after suffering a shocking first professional defeat at the hands of Ciaran Healy. Brendan's name is now being linked with a possible all-Dublin clash against former Irish champion Anthony Fitzgerald. The 28-year-old 'Finglas Firecracker' was most recently seen piling the hurt on to Southampton journeyman Paul Morby in Belfast's Holiday Inn.

"I felt like everything I hit him with was hurting him but he's had a lot of fights and knows how to survive," commended Fitzpatrick, straight after the bout. "I wasn't planning on stopping Morby and you never go looking for the stoppages, you just look for the win. Tony Jeffries couldn't stop him over eight rounds and I had him in trouble a couple of times but it just didn't happen so I think it was a good win overall."

Brendan's career was moving along nicely until he bumped into the fists of Belfast slugger Healy last June and was subsequently disposed in the opening round of their National Stadium clash. While Fitz acknowledges that Healy caught him fair and square he still insists that he is the better man and can ascend to title glory, with a Healy rematch ranking high on his list on priorities.

"Against Healy I just got caught and fair play to him, he beat me but if I boxed him one hundred times more he'd never catch me again with that shot," suggested the man trained by John Breen and Eamonn Magee.

"No disrespect to him and I don't want to sound cocky but that's the way I see it. Of course I'd take a rematch. If you don't get disappointed when you get beaten then there's something wrong with you. I just took a break and I knew that I would box again; it was just a question of when. I was hitting Healy to the body in that fight and he was whingeing on my shoulder. Ciaran's a sound fellow but I have the beating of him."

A third-round knockout victory in Castlebar over Ballyhaunis's John Waldron helped jump start Brendan back into the public consciousness and he is open to suggestions when discussing his next move. Wherever that ends up taking place, rest assured Fitzpatrick will have a healthy army of supporters following his progress.

"I want to say a big thanks to all of my fans because I always take a big crowd wherever I go and to travel from Dublin up to Belfast and make so much noise was fantastic," he agreed. "I'll just see how it goes before talking about my next move. I enjoy fighting and I actually hurt

my elbow in sparring a few weeks ago so I couldn't use the left hook as much tonight. The left hook is a great punch to use against the southpaw but I couldn't really get it going.

"Hopefully the opportunities will come along. I never doubted myself at any time but I never thought that Healy would beat me and I certainly never thought that he would KO me. I want to put that right and when the time comes I'll be ready. There is talk of a possible date in Dublin, around November, so I'll take a few days off, race my pigeons, do a bit of hunting and then get training."

Matthew Wilton Enjoying the Boxing Buzz

– 14th September 2012

Matthew Wilton may have turned professional four years after brother Luke but the east Belfast prospect is in no hurry to hurtle up the ladder and emulate his older siblings' title achievements. Wilton got a second win under his belt on Saturday, September 8 (both have come at the Holiday Inn venue) and the main aim is now getting down in weight to eventually compete in the ten stone light-welterweight category.

"My next fight will be at 10st 7lb and then down to 10st," confirmed Matthew, who is expected to feature on the Ulster Hall show next month. "I turned pro for the buzz of it and seeing Luke doing it, I wanted that for myself. Everybody wants a title but we'll just see how it goes and I'm not promising anything. I want to be on the undercards and get plenty of fights."

Opponent on the night, Gavin Putney of Luton, came in with a distinct weight advantage and that was probably the main reason that Wilton did not manage to halt the sturdy journeyman. It wasn't through lack of effort though, as Matthew put his punches together well and upped the spite level in the fourth and final round, forcing Putney to take a knee. The away man survived and offered stiffer resistance than Wilton's debut opponent, James Smith, who managed to compete for a round before bailing out with a hand injury.

"He (Gavin Putney) stuck it out in the end and I kept plugging along and trying for the stoppage but what can you do?" asked the 22-year-old. "I felt the weight difference when he hugged and held on to me. I couldn't really twist him around nor do much. I'm not fussed about stopping him or not, it's a learning curve. I tried to box and work my way inside and it was a good enough performance.

"I believe that I'm on the next show in the Ulster Hall [opponent since named as Liam Griffiths] and then out in November when they're running in the Holiday Inn again. I love it all and I'm getting good training with Bernardo and Oscar (Checa). I'm not waking up in the morning thinking I have to do this or that; it's all still nice at the minute. It keeps me busy and I'm not having to go away and train for six months and then have nothing at the end of it. October 13 is definitely something to look forward to."

Peake Primed for Second Pro Fight – 23rd September 2012

Brandon Peake is back from an intense training camp in Tenerife and the welterweight is now raring to go ahead of his second professional contest. Peake will star in Belfast's Ulster Hall against unknown quantity Alec Bazza on Peace Promotions' debut card. The southpaw is eager to put in to practice all of the experience he has picked up off his trainer - reigning Irish light-middleweight champion Lee Murtagh.

"I can't wait to feel the atmosphere in the famous Ulster Hall and hopefully it will bring me my first win of many," buzzed the Mayo man. "There has been a lot of strength and conditioning work going on in Tenerife and high altitude running. I know very little about my opponent Alec Bazza, just that he is a little older than I am. I was truly astonished at the crowd support that I had in Castlebar for my debut and hopefully there will be a similar crowd in Belfast as there is a bus going from Ballyhaunis."

Peake made his debut on August 17 in Castlebar's Royal Theatre against fellow first-timer Michael Waldron and after four hard fought rounds Brandon conceded a narrow 39-37 verdict on referee Emile Tiedt's scorecard.

"I was glad to have my debut in my home county and of course I was disappointed with a first fight loss, but this is boxing and you can't win them all – I'll learn from the experience. I've been fitting the training in around my college work, so there will be no stone left unturned come fight night."

Coach Murtagh will also fight in Belfast on October 13 when the Leeds-based veteran defends his recently attained Irish crown against Ballyclare dangerman Willie Thompson. The southpaw has been impressed with Peake's desire and application out in Spain and the youngster has sharpened his tools with sparring sessions against highly-rated duo Danny Coughlan and Phelim Halligan, as well as some tough local boxers.

"Brandon is doing great over here, there's been a few swear words from him about our track workouts but he's gritted his teeth and done what he can," explained Murtagh. "To be honest it's the hottest camp I've had out here. We've all got burnt and we're only out in the sun on the track then out of it all day. Things are looking good for him and I may get him some fights in Tenerife as I've made more contacts with promoters."

Murtagh has no doubt that Peake will be ready to turn his fortunes around and show the Irish faithful what he's all about on October 13.

“Alio [Alan Wilton] tells me that Alec Bazza is 30 years old and a bit of a battler,” added Murtagh. “But I’ve told Brandon to treat him like he would anyone else and train his best, which he has been doing by coming out to Tenerife with me and the rest of the team. He will be fully prepared come fight night.”

Moving On Up: Marco McCullough Is On the Rise – 23rd September 2012

Belfast featherweight Marco McCullough notched up another win on Saturday, September 8 and the ever-improving youngster is now looking to increase the stipulated rounds of his contests as he progresses towards title class.

“I’m just scraping on to these shows at the moment and I’m training for longer-round fights but I can’t seem to get any,” lamented McCullough. “Hopefully I can get myself into the British top ten rankings. I was hoping to get on the Frampton bill but it didn’t work out and I hear now that Tyson Fury’s coming back so with a bit of luck I’ll get on there. John (Breen) is doing his best, he’s on the phone every day rooting for me, trying to get a break so fair play to him.”

Marco spent his Saturday evening pounding unexpectedly durable Bulgarian Hyusein Hyuseinov to a four-round points defeat as part of Alan Wilton’s latest Holiday Inn extravaganza. Hyuseinov took his lumps and came back for more, making a mockery of the supposedly ‘soft touch’ label that sometimes –often unfairly- follows around imported boxers.

“I never expected him to be that tough,” agreed Marco, “because he fought Jamie Conlan and Jamie stopped him in the third and I was trying to prove a point but he was so tough. He fought Jamie at flyweight so maybe the extra bit of weight helped him but I hit him with everything and fair play to him for surviving. Every time I landed a clean one it looked like it was hurting him but I just couldn’t finish the job. I was trying to blow him out but I couldn’t so I had to step back and box to get the four rounds under my belt. I like to put a show on and he was an experienced opponent who held on well. Respect to him because a few of the shots that I landed to the head actually hurt my hands!”

The talented 22-year-old, once a product of Cairn Lodge amateur boxing club, is now 3-1 (2 KOs) as a pro after turning over in June, 2011. The sole loss was a rather baffling points reverse to recent John Simpson victim Dai Davies. The shock reverse occurred on McCullough’s home turf too.

“Loads of people thought I won that fight, including Sky Sports, but that’s how it goes sometimes,” he amiably conceded. “I asked for a rematch with Dai Davies but fair play to him he’s moved on up the British rankings. He’s fighting 12 rounds and I can understand that he wouldn’t want a rematch but maybe one day we’ll get him back.”

For now, gaining valuable ring time and extending his winning streak is all that concerns McCullough.

“It was good to go the distance and in a small ring too which meant that I had to work hard. I’m doing four rounds at the minute so I’m trying to push on to six and eight rounders and then we’ll see what happens.”

Frampton Steams Through Molitor On the Way to World Glory – 23rd September 2012

Carl Frampton took another step up the boxing ladder with a sixth-round knockout victory over Canada's former two-time world title holder **Steve Molitor**. After a possible European super-bantamweight clash with champion Kiko Martinez fell by the wayside 'The Jackal' was left with a wholly different proposition in the form of quality southpaw mover Molitor. Any problems he may have been presented by the change in opposition were quickly diminished as Carl bulldozed in to the 32-year-old from the first bell and stamped his authority on the Odyssey Arena main event.

Frampton (8st 9lb 10oz) swiftly found the range for his powerful overhand right and had Molitor (8st 9lb 4oz) sprawling across the ring looking for respite via some tactical holding. The second session followed a similar pattern before Frampton's solid blows forced a knockdown in the third when 'The Canadian Kid' shipped a clipping right that sent him into the ropes for a count just as the bell rang. Veteran referee John Keane took a look at the visitor and allowed him back out for the fourth-round but he was soon tasting the canvas again from a chopping right. Steve rode out the storm in the fifth stanza but it proved to be a false dawn as he was down and out midway through the sixth, stopped at 2-21 after shipping an accumulation of punches. Blood trickled down the back of Molitor's head; he trudged back to his corner cutting a disconsolate figure while trainer Billy Martin bellowed his displeasure at referee Keane. All three judges (Ian-John Lewis, Howard Foster and Marcus McDonnell) had Frampton in front 50-43 at the time of the stoppage. Carl retained his Commonwealth and IBF Intercontinental super-bantamweight titles and talk now persists of a possible outdoor world title extravaganza next summer.

"I knew this was going to be a tough fight and I pushed myself hard in training," said Frampton post-fight. "Steve Molitor is a world class opponent and this was the big test. I'm still open to fighting both Rendall Munroe and Scott Quigg though."

Meanwhile, retirement may now loom for Molitor: "I thought that I could have continued in the fight but the ref said that I didn't seem interested," he lamented. "Carl has a good team behind him but he still has some learning to do."

Paul McCloskey took his first step towards erasing the ghosts of a shock stoppage loss to DeMarcus Corley in May, by outpointing **Manuel**

Perez over 12 engaging rounds. There was plenty of pre-fight debate between promoters Matchroom and McCloskey's camp over who the opponent should be and as it turned out Perez was the perfect foil. Highly-ranked by the WBA, the light-punching Hawaiian hung in and took his lumps but never truly threatened to push the former European light-welterweight champion into career obscurity.

Perez's face was puffed up and reddened early on as McCloskey (9st 12lb 8oz) established a neat rhythm, using his unorthodox ring smarts to draw Manuel inside and tame him with sharp combinations. Perez (9st 13lb 10oz) occasionally threatened and enjoyed moderate success to the body but never really pulled McCloskey from his comfort zone. Paul's quality cameos came to the fore in the eighth and he was too slick and drawing away on the cards by the tenth-round.

Perez marched forward more, on the instructions of his corner, and probed inside but lacked the fizz in his shots to turn around a fight that was always drifting beyond his reach. Third man Howard Foster was only ever called upon when McCloskey pushed his head into Perez's face. Judges Ian-John Lewis, John Keane and Marcus McDonnell all scored widely in the Dungiven man's favour, totalling 118-110, 118-111 and 118-112 respectively. Promoter Eddie Hearn later stated that Paul was quite literally fighting for his future.

"I could have gone back down to domestic level but I haven't got time for that, I wanted to get back in (at world level) as quickly as possible and see where I was at," said McCloskey, who picked up the WBA Intercontinental title for his troubles. "The Corley loss was one bad night in seven years of boxing. I feel that if I'm at my best I can beat anybody."

Eager to muscle back in to the title groove Belfast's **Martin Lindsay** was expecting a British and Commonwealth title crack at holder Lee Selby. But despite the Welshman weighing in as normal on Friday he was taken sick overnight and advised by the doctor not to box, so Lindsay was left with a non-title eight-rounder. Substitute opponent **Renald Garrido** was originally scheduled to fight Scott Cardle and found himself enjoying a stone advantage over Lindsay, who had his work cut out trying to keep the heavier Frenchman at bay. Lindsay (8st 13lb 6oz) burned off months of inactivity while posting a hard fought 80-73 win over stubborn Garrido (9st 13lb 6oz) who refused to give ground. Martin damaged a knuckle in the process while Ian-John Lewis handled the contest.

Khalid Yafai notched his third pro win but was forced to go the distance for the first time after **Victor Koh** refused to buckle over six hard fought sessions. Yafai (8st 7lb) showed an impressive variety of

moves, including some tasty body shots that had Koh (8st 5lb 10oz) holding on, but the Mexican saw it through to concede 60-54 on Paul McCullagh's card.

Martin J. Ward started off his lightweight assignment against Lithuanian **Simas Volosinas** in fine form, snapping in classy combinations from an impressive assortment of angles, giving his opponent little time to settle. Ward's hands began to drop as the bout wore on, however, and he gradually lost the initial spark as Volosinas (9st 5lb 12oz) hung in valiantly. Ward (9st 12lb 4oz) sported a bloodied nose by the end and was visibly tired but will be all the better for this experience. Paul McCullagh's 40-36 verdict was a formality.

Scott Cardle continued his education with a 40-36 win over **Francis Maina**. Cardle (10st 9lb) grew increasingly frustrated with late-replacement Maina (10st 13lb) who grabbed and wrestled after being dropped by a nicely-placed right hand to the ear in the second-round. Boxing long after midnight did not improve Cardle's mood as he growled his way to the end of the contest before ref Paul McCullagh deservedly raise his hand.

Two 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallists appeared on the undercard. Dungiven's **Eamonn O'Kane** is edging towards title class and participated in a cracking contest against Birmingham brawler **Terry Carruthers**. Neither man gave an inch throughout the bout and even when it seemed O'Kane (11st 4lb 12oz) was getting the upper hand Carruthers (11st 13lb 12oz) stormed right back into it with his marauding assaults. Ian-John Lewis totalled 59-55 in favour of O'Kane.

The second Commonwealth achiever was well-supported **Paddy Gallagher** who marked his debut with a 40-37 success over dogged survivor **William Warburton**. Welterweight Gallagher (10st 9lb 14oz) seemed understandably nervous at his big-card presentation and toiled to make a dent in Warburton (10st 11lb). John Lowey was the third man with Ian-John Lewis scoring.

Middleweight prospect **Dee Walsh** got a handy six rounds under his belt by outfoxing **Robert Studzinski** 60-54. Languid mover Walsh (11st 7lb 8oz) felt the visitor's weight advantage early on and elected to pick his classy ripostes off the back foot after slashing Studzinski (11st 13lb 10oz) across the forehead in the opener. Ian-John Lewis refereed.

First-timer **Ben Mulligan** failed to launch his pro career on a positive note by dropping a 39-37 verdict to southpaw **Mariusz Bak**. Poland's Bak (9st 5lb 2oz), fighting out of Brentford, landed repeated straight lefts and remained one step ahead of Mulligan (9st 4lb 10oz) who tried hard but lacked the requisite skills to trouble his opponent. Ian-John Lewis scored on behalf of novice ref John Lowey.

The World Awaits: McCloskey Gets His Career Back On Track – 25th September 2012

Whatever the future may hold for Paul McCloskey, his one-sided outpointing of Hawaiian Manuel Perez showed that the Dungiven man still knows his way around a boxing ring. Some observers suggested that the 32-year-old's career may be about to skid off the tracks after a shock stoppage loss to DeMarcus Corley, but the former European title holder reckons there is life in the old dog yet.

“A lot of people in the media were giving me a lot of stick and saying that I was past it and I had to prove them wrong tonight,” he said. “I could have gone back down to domestic level but I haven't got time for that, I wanted to get back in (at world level) as quickly as possible and see where I was at. It wasn't my best performance but I won the fight comfortably and you have to be critical of yourself if you want to get anywhere in this game. I had a bad night against Corley and that was a big shock to me and a big kick in the teeth. I had one bad night in seven years of boxing. The Khan thing was different because it was a defeat from a cut. I feel that if I'm at my best I can beat anybody and if you don't feel like that then you shouldn't be in this business because it's a tough and dangerous game.”

McCloskey is eager once again to swim with the big fish and his name has been linked with an Amir Khan rematch. Danny Garcia was also mentioned during a short interview with Sky Sports' Adam Smith after the domination of Perez. Promoter Eddie Hearn had initially been looking to drop Paul in with a British title level foe, with names like Alex Arthur and Derry Mathews being mentioned, but manager Francie McNicholl was adamant that his man should remain in the world title contention.

“A lot of people don't realise that Paul was fighting for his career tonight and he was under a lot of pressure,” agreed Hearn. “To go and win every round against a top ten world ranked opponent is impressive. Confidence-wise he was growing all the time and we are back in the top ten of the WBA and who knows where we go from here?”

McGuigan and Hearn Plotting World Title Route – 26th September 2012

Irish ring legend Barry McGuigan was suitably impressed with his charge Carl Frampton on Saturday, September 22 when the Tigers Bay puncher forcibly removed Steve Molitor from title class. Punishing the Canadian import did not only allow Carl to defend his titles but also potentially push himself into the reckoning on a world level.

“I have no doubt that Carl can achieve great things but he has a lot of learning to do still,” McGuigan told Sky TV’s Adam Smith after the bout. “I like the fact that he stayed on the guy non-stop, attacking him with fast feet and then moving back and giving himself time to counter. Steve Molitor was clever and difficult to hit and we ground him down and nailed him. We will map out the career towards a world title fight and if that means stepping back and fighting Quigg or Munroe then we’ll do that, even though we are further on.”

Eddie Hearn, the main man over at promotional powerhouses Matchroom, has lofty ambitions for the Belfast boxer: “Carl’s going to be top five in most of the governing bodies now and I’d like to see him move forward and fight a final eliminator for the IBF world title. Let’s do a world title in the summer here next year,” he said.

Hearn's Dilemma – When Will Frampton Fight Next? – 26th September 2012

Eddie Hearn is uncertain whether Carl Frampton's next outing will come at the end of this year or at the beginning of the next. With Hearn now firmly installed as the only boxing player on Sky Sports, it will be up to him to work Frampton in to the TV schedule, with a deal that makes sense and suits all parties.

“It's always possible [he might be out later this year], but it's difficult. It's a horrible time to fight. Do you go back out in December; do you go out in January? It depends what opportunities come around and we're in a very strange position where we may even get offers for a world title next. I'd like to go down the route of being a mandatory challenger like Kell Brook because I don't want to see Carl go into a five-fight option deal with another promoter in America. I'd like him to get into a mandatory position, where he gets a fair crack at a world title with no ties.”

Speaking at the post-fight press conference, Frampton's mentor Barry McGuigan was relatively unsurprised at the main event performance that his man served up for a buoyant Belfast crowd.

“He didn't surprise me at all, everything's great in hindsight but I felt he would go through this guy,” admitted Barry. “He loves to spar, he loves to work hard he's up against welterweights in the gym. There's all sort of talk about gym wars and guys getting the upper hand but this guy infuses me with confidence because he's so strong, so powerful and so clever.

“I said (to Carl), don't say you're going to knock him [Molitor] out because it only puts pressure on yourself, and also people might then think he's cocky. It's not cocky when you're right but there's only one Muhammad Ali. There are too many assholes out there - it's refreshing to have him. He doesn't need to be nasty, he can fight, and that's all that matters. He's the loveliest kid in the world, such a nice, generous kid but he can really fight.”

Cocky or not, few would disagree with that sentiment.

Frampton Still Open to Domestic Dust-Ups – 2nd October 2012

Carl Frampton is still open to fighting domestic rivals Scott Quigg and Rendall Munroe even after scoring a career-best win over Canada's former world title holder Steve Molitor.

“They said they were too far on in their careers to fight me but I'm further on in my career now than they are but I'm still willing to fight those guys,” stated Carl. “I'm open to fighting Rendall Munroe and Scott Quigg. I'm not that far away from a world title and I'll fight anyone but I'll leave it to Eddie (Hearn) and Barry (McGuigan) to decide.”

Even though Molitor's reflexes were not at the level that they were a few years back, he still offered a stern test of Carl's credentials and the Tigers Bay man responded in style. Peppering his southpaw opponent from the opening bell with spiteful combinations, Steve was never allowed to settle into his groove; a testament to the ferocious pace set by 'The Jackal'.

“I knew this was going to be a tough fight and I pushed myself hard in training. Steve Molitor is a world class opponent and this was the big test. I needed to set a high pace from the start and that's what I worked on in training; I know I can punch hard and I just need to land the shots. At some point we knew we would get him out of there and I don't think he liked the pace too much. I made him miss a lot and he made me miss too. I was on him the whole time and that was the plan.

“I want as many fights here in Belfast as possible and the crowd was amazing. We want to start packing this place out soon,” added Frampton.

Murtagh Triumphs Over Thompson in Irish Title Clash – 14th October 2012

At the ripe old age of 39 **Lee Murtagh** is enjoying a career renaissance. The Leeds southpaw fulfilled his Irish title dream in July with a retirement win over Joe Hillerby and in this Ulster Hall outing he successfully defended the light-middleweight crown against Ballyclare's **Willie Thompson**. The pair had exchanged pre-fight verbal, prompting promoter Mark Dunlop to hire extra security at the weigh-in. The animosity transferred itself over to the main event as both men left nothing to chance, meeting quite literally head on and grappling inside to gain an advantage by fair means or foul.

Neither boxer entered as a renowned puncher and early on the exchanges were messy, with referee Paul McCullagh guilty of not breaking them quickly enough as in-fighting descended into holding deadlock. Murtagh (10st 13lb 6oz), who had Paul 'Silky' Jones in the corner, suffered an ugly swelling to the forehead in round seven yet gritted his teeth to push Thompson (10st 13lb 6oz) back and force him to work off the ropes. Ultimately, Lee just about did enough to prevail 96-95 for McCullagh.

He is now eyeing a rematch with Hillerby on Tyson Fury's December 1 Belfast headliner.

"I opted to go to war when he made it clear he was busting me up with the head, which he said he would do," Murtagh commented. "I hope the fight was a worthy top of the bill at the Ulster Hall. My career is having an Irish summer!"

Stevie Quinn Jnr showed maturity beyond his years to stay calm and outbox **Ryan McNichol** in an all-southpaw affair. Quinn (8st 13lb 4oz) suffered a multitude of cuts across his face but used his superior skills to tame McNichol (9st 7lb 14oz) en route to a 40-37 success on Kenny Pringle's scorecard.

Debutant **Daniel McShane** sold a bucket load of tickets and revelled in the fanatical support he received. Once inside the ring though McShane (9st 3lb 6oz) took a little time to settle and find his range against **Evgeni Geshev**. A borderline body shot in round three instantly discouraged Geshev (9st 3lb) who was counted out by Kenny Pringle at 0-43.

Featherweight **James Tennyson** dispatched **Tibor Meszaros** in the first-round. Tennyson (9st 2lb) clearly has a touch of quality about his work but John Lowey's termination of Meszaros (8st 12lb 8oz) 52 seconds into the session was too hasty.

Marco McCullough continued his pro education with a one-round blowout of Bulgaria's **Valentin Marinov**. John Lowey counted Marinov (8st 12lb 2oz) out at 48 seconds of the opener after McCullough (9st 11lb 4oz) had landed a rib crunching right to the torso.

Debutant **Paul Quinn** got off to a promising start with a one-sided points win over **Ignac Kassai**. Kenny Pringle totalled 40-36 for Quinn (9st 11lb 2oz) who had Johnny Eames in his corner and looked better when he took a step back and outmanoeuvred Hungarian Kassai (8st 13lb 8oz).

Paul Moffett made his weight advantage tell over **Gavin Putney**, forcing the Luton man to retire at the end of the second-round with a shoulder injury. Moffett (12st 2lb 2oz) has a no-frills approach and pressured Putney (11st 9lb 2oz) for the duration. Kenny Pringle officiated.

Matthew Wilton (10st 8lb 14oz) was too busy for **Liam Griffiths** (11st 3lb), securing a 40-36 verdict for John Lowey's reckoning.

It's back to the drawing board for **Gerard Healy** (11st 6lb 12oz) who dropped a 39-37 decision on Kenny Pringle's card to **William Warburton** (10st 12lb 10oz).

Original headliner Luke Wilton was left without an opponent and the diminutive flyweight boxed a four-round exhibition against cruiserweight Moses Matovu.

Sauerland Wants to Take One Back for Denmark **– 26th October 2012**

German promoter Kalle Sauerland is looking forward to the ‘Question of Honour’ super fight on December 8 in Herning and reckons that when his man Mikkel Kessler and opponent Brian Magee take centre stage, their styles will produce a barn-burning scrap. Kalle was visibly pleased with the generally complimentary nature of the recent Europa press conference that gave Irish boxing fans a glimpse of Kessler and local hope Magee.

“The people of Belfast are very friendly and we had quite a press turnout,” lauded Sauerland. “The ticket sales are going well and we are expecting a full house of around 13,000. Mikkel has been around the top of the game for a long time and he wants to become a four-time world champion.”

Kalle also commended the staying power of 37-year-old Magee and praised his willingness to travel abroad and tackle the best fighters in the super-middleweight division.

“Brian has already done a job on two of our guys, by knocking out Larsen and Markussen and we want to take one back for Denmark on December 8,” he said.

Pat Magee: ‘One Punch Can End Kessler Fight’ – 26th October 2012

Belfast manager Pat Magee believes that the December 8 showdown between his charge Brian Magee and Mikkel Kessler is so exciting because it can be ended with a single shot. Both men come into the Herning scrap having removed their most recent opponents via the short route and the fight veteran thinks that the KO chemistry means this fight will not last the distance.

“Brian knocked out (Rudy) Markussen with one punch and Kessler knocked out (Allan) Green with one punch and for that reason it’s a match made in heaven,” reckoned Pat.

“This fight has been a long time in the making and we started talking about it around March. We got great feedback from Denmark and they really want to see another Dane fight Magee. I knew that Kalle Sauerland would eventually bend to the will of the Danish people. Brian wanted to fight the best in the world so we went after Kessler and Brian has shown great commitment to the game.”

Indeed, as a long-time servant of the fight game himself Pat Magee is one of the savviest negotiators around and has steered Brian to a string of lucrative pay days over the last few years, taking his man abroad to face and defeat tough local opposition. The Magees work closely with JR Rooney as part of a close knit team that has remained together since Brian’s pro debut back in 1999. Panamanian Bernardo Checa took over training duties from respected coach Harry Hawkins when joining the setup in late 2009. Between the two of them, Kalle Sauerland and Pat Magee have worked to ensure that this fight will be broadcast live to around 50 countries worldwide.

“It’s PPV in the Nordic countries and people who can’t travel will be able to see it at home [in Ireland and the UK] probably on Sky TV and it will be viewed in America,” added Pat. “It’s a world class fight and going to be something special.”

Magee Fight Is a Question of Honour for Kessler – 29th October 2012

Mikkel Kessler is on a mission to preserve Danish pride when he clashes with Brian Magee on December 8. Magee has busied himself as a road warrior in recent years, travelling the globe in search of lucrative away fights. Two of his victims were from Denmark and Kessler is aiming to stop the Lisburn southpaw from completing an unlikely hat-trick.

“Rudy Markussen and Mads Larsen are good fighters and he beat them so it’s payback time!” chuckled the ‘Viking Warrior’.

“I will train for Magee like I trained for my previous opponents. The Danish people have seen Magee fight twice before and they know that he is very good. It’s definitely a question of honour.”

Victory here would land Kessler the currently vacant WBA super-middleweight crown. Enticing rematches with Carl Froch and Andre Ward, or a money-spinning clash with Sauerland stablemate Arthur Abraham, are being pushed to one side as he focuses on Magee. Mikkel is just glad to be fighting again after injury looked set to end his career.

“When I had the problem with my eyes I thought that I would have to quit,” he admitted. “Of course because of my profession eye problems worried me and I thought it was the end. I was very sad to come out of the Super Six tournament and out of my dreams.”

Kessler is now training exclusively under Jimmy Montoya, who once worked with Alexis Arguello. Returning to Herning (the scene of his 2010 win over Froch) in front of an anticipated 13,000 crowd sees the 33-year-old edging closer to his goal of becoming a multiple ‘world’ champion.

“Brian Magee is an awkward fighter who’s fast and smart and he throws a lot of punches. I’ve fought on the road myself so I know what it’s like and I respect Brian for travelling. I like fighting in Denmark but if Kalle (Sauerland) had said we have to fight in Belfast then no problem. Home advantage can put on pressure or inspire you. That’s what’s keeping me motivated to fight and the buzz of wanting to become a four-time world champion.”

Magee and Kessler Ready to Battle in a ‘Question of Honour’ – 30th October 2012

Lisburn boxer Brian Magee is busy preparing for another crack at a world title and the 37-year-old travels to Herning in Denmark on December 8 to tackle Mikkel Kessler. Kessler, nicknamed ‘Viking Warrior’, is one of the finest super-middleweights to have graced the scene in recent years and is aiming to chop down Magee and become a four-time world title holder.

“Mikkel needs no introduction and he’s somebody that I’ve admired for a long time in my division,” said Magee, speaking at a press conference in the Europa Hotel. “It’s a pleasure getting the chance to fight him because I’m chasing my dreams. He’s a good fighter in the ring but a good guy out of the ring too so I’m looking forward to fighting him. I’ve been to Denmark twice and knocked two guys out so fingers crossed on December 8th I can be successful again.”

Magee has become a well-known figure in the Northern European nation after knocking out local fighters Mads Larsen and Rudy Markussen. The ‘Question of Honour’ tagline being attached to this show sees Kessler –who is on a higher plain than his less decorated countrymen- aiming to stop Brian from scoring an unlikely hat trick of wins on Danish soil.

“Markussen and Larsen are good fighters and he beat them so it’s payback time!” laughed Mikkel Kessler who was in Belfast to help promote the super fight. “I will train for Magee like I trained for my previous opponents. The Danish people have seen Magee fight twice before and they know that he is very good. It’s definitely a question of honour.”

Sauerland Sees Plenty of Options for Kessler-Magee Winner – 30th October 2012

Promotional powerhouse Kalle Sauerland reckons that big fight options are plentiful for the winner of the December 8 showdown between his charge Mikkel Kessler and Lisburn's Brian Magee.

“This is one division where options are no problem as there are so many big fights out there. We can talk about Arthur Abraham, Carl Froch and Andre Ward, so a lot of options,” he said.

Kessler has already fought two of the three names mentioned, having taken Froch's belts and unbeaten record back in 2010, before travelling to America, in a bout also part of the innovative Super Six tournament, and losing to Ward. That was a rough-and-tumble affair that still rankles with Kalle.

“Against Andre Ward we had the worst referee I've ever seen in a boxing ring,” he argued. “Mikkel had three cuts after five rounds and there are always excuses but just look at the tape yourself, there are headbutts and elbows. We have been chasing Mr. Ward for a rematch but he chooses his own opponents. People who have been in the ring with Mikkel don't tend to want to give him a rematch. Andre Ward is very protected by his network in the States. For the winner [of the Magee fight] it could possibly lead to a Froch fight.

‘Mikkel's fight with Calzaghe was a very tough fight and a financially very interesting fight. He was under certain pressures going in and had a bad training camp. He always wanted a rematch, maybe in Denmark, and it never happened. But let's first concentrate on December 8 and this great advert for boxing. I see this fight as being a war, with two punchers coming out and going to war.’

World Champion: WBA Elevate Brian Magee – 1st November 2012

Brian Magee has been elevated to full world championship status by the World Boxing Association (WBA). The organisation, who are currently in Jakarta enjoying their 91st annual convention, were rightfully lobbied by manager Pat Magee to install Brian as ‘regular’ champion after the WBA initially asked Team Magee to relinquish the interim belt so that number two Stanyslav Kashtanov and number four Server Yemurlyayev could contest it.

Pat argued that if anything unforeseen happened from now until the Magee-Kessler bout in December then Brian could be left in title limbo. As it stands Kessler will be Magee’s first mandatory contender for the crown and all agreed purses for that fight remain unchanged.

The winner of the aforementioned all-Ukrainian scrap could be next in line if Brian were to upset the odds and defeat Kessler, or a possible fight next summer against WBA ‘super’ belt holder Andre Ward could also come to fruition. For now, all of his focus remains on that mega-fight in Herning. But, as Pat agrees, holding the WBA world title adds massively to Magee’s boxing legacy when he hangs up the gloves.

Brian Magee: ‘Kessler Fight Is Bigger Than Bute’ – 9th November 2012

Lisburn boxer Brian Magee believes that his December 8th clash with Mikkel Kessler is a bigger opportunity than his previous world title adventure against Lucian Bute. Brian travelled to Montreal, Canada in March 2011 to face the IBF title holder, then an undefeated southpaw on the cusp of superstardom. Despite putting up a brave effort Magee was stopped in ten rounds by Bute.

“This is definitely bigger than the fight with Bute because even though Bute was a big star in Montreal, Kessler is known and respected around the world,” opined Magee, who was recently upgraded by the WBA to full world title holder. “It’s a harder fight as well because they don’t give away world title belts; you have to fight these guys to win them. It’s the stuff of dreams. As Mikkel says himself you do your running and work hard in the gym to get the big wins.”

Magee may now be pushing towards 40 but the classy southpaw is like a fine wine that gets better with age. Since turning professional way back in 1999 Brian has amassed an impressive 41-fight record that includes 36 wins, four losses and one draw, with 25 wins arriving via the big knockout.

“I’ve done a lot of hard work behind the scenes to get into these positions,” he revealed. “I feel good and if I fought myself now against when I was 28 or 29 then I would back myself to win. In these big fights anything can happen. In my eyes Kessler is probably the greatest Danish boxer ever and one of the best super-middleweights of the past decade.

“It is a pleasure to get to fight him; this is massive for me. I’ve been in Denmark twice and fingers crossed on December 8 it will be a great fight and I will be successful - it is fantastic for me. To have a long career you have to look after yourself but you also need people to look after you and get you the right fights. Kessler has been one of the best fighters in the division over the past decade and somebody to be admired.”

Brian can call on previous good form in Denmark having beaten two local boxers there in the past two years.

“I have been there twice before and have been treated like a king so it is probably easier to go there than to stay at home,” Magee concluded.

‘Age Is Just a Number For Magee,’ Says Sauerland – 10th November 2012

Brian Magee may be in the twilight years of a long and successful career but according to German promoter Kalle Sauerland, the Lisburn man is just part of a growing number of quality boxing veterans.

“If you look at world boxing now then you see the Klitschko brothers and you see Sergio Martinez,” opined Sauerland. “Those are examples of what can be done if you look after yourself. Look at Martinez before he turned 34 and you see an average light-middleweight and then just a couple of weeks ago we watched him do a job on Chavez Jnr.”

Brian is four years’ older than his December 8 opponent, Danish superstar Mikkel Kessler, but has kept himself in fine condition since turning pro in 1999 following a high-quality amateur run that is now often forgotten given the longevity of his paid endeavours. Magee also competed in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

“It’s a testament to the way Brian has looked after himself,” praised Kalle.

Kessler Feared That He Would Have to Quit Boxing – 22nd November 2012

Mikkel Kessler has revealed that he thought his time in professional boxing was over after injury forced him out of the innovative Super Six tournament. The ‘Viking Warrior’ has suffered from various ailments in the past, including a long-running back complaint that reared up before his clash with Joe Calzaghe, but damage to Kessler’s eyes nearly pushed the 33-year-old permanently out of the sport.

“When I had the problem with my eyes I thought that I would have to quit,” he recalled recently. “There was something wrong with the nerve in my eyes and you think about your health and it seemed that my career was over. But then it cleared up and my eyesight got better day-by-day until after about half a year it started to come back. The problem was with both eyes, I was seeing things cross-eyed. Of course because of my profession this worried me and I thought it was the end. I was very sad to come out of the Super Six tournament and out of my dreams.”

That is now firmly in the past and Kessler is aiming for big money rematch showdowns with Carl Froch and Andre Ward if he can get past his pre-Christmas assignment against Brian Magee on home soil. Now that Magee has been elevated to full championship status by the WBA, Kessler is his willing challenger and revelling in a new fight schedule.

“I’ve felt fit now for a long time and apart from being a boxer for so long at my age, there is always a little problem here and there but I haven’t felt like I don’t want to train or anything like that. Training [exclusively] with Jimmy Montoya has made a difference and my style is a little more aggressive these days. We have an American southpaw coming over for sparring but I can’t remember his name.”

Freshly back into his stride with a knockout win in May over perennial contender Allan Green (in a fight not without some difficult moments for the Dane) Mikkel is totally re-dedicated to boxing and leaves no stone unturned in pre-fight preparations.

“In this game it’s important how you train and eat and I have an organic farm that drives two hours to get to me and bring a special kind of meat. You have to have the right diet,” he said.

“I came back with a great knockout win over Green and my shape is better because I’m fighting twice a year now. I was injured and had to give the WBC title away that I won against Froch. I’m in a better routine now than before. That Froch fight was also in Herning and it was a great atmosphere. It’s Christmas time and I’m happy to have so many people coming out to my fight and make it almost a full house if not totally full

[a 13,000 crowd is anticipated].

“I obviously don’t know Brian’s strategy but I have seen his previous fights and he will be coming to win so that’s why it maybe won’t go the distance. It’s a fight that can be ended with one punch,” Kessler concluded.

No World Title for Fury Says Jeff Mayweather – 29th November 2012

Kevin Johnson's new trainer Jeff Mayweather is unconvinced by the credentials of unbeaten heavyweight Tyson Fury. Putting it bluntly, 'Jazzy Jeff' does not foresee Fury fulfilling Mick Hennessy's prophecy of world title glory – especially while the Klitschkos hold all of the belts that matter. A far cry from the usual trash-talking image of the Mayweather clan, Jeff is more reserved and considered in his approach, but the veteran trainer has aligned himself with another fast talker in the form of 33-year-old Johnson.

“Both men like to talk and that's how I first heard of Tyson, bragging on a radio interview,” explained Mayweather, who was a solid boxer, amassing a 32-10-5 record during a career that ended in 1997.

“When I watched Fury myself for the first time I wasn't impressed by anything that he did, he's just a big man. The skillset is miles apart in this fight but he *is* a big heavyweight guy so one punch can change anything. Skill-for-skill though it's not a contest and Johnson will walk away with the win on Saturday night.”

Mayweather's opposite number, Tyson's uncle and trainer Peter Fury, obviously has different ideas and says that this is the most physically ripped Tyson Fury that has entered a ring thus far during his unbeaten 19-fight career.

“He's in great condition and we have a good game plan in place,” said Peter Fury. “I'm not going to disrespect their man like he (Mayweather) did with Tyson because Johnson is tricky, awkward and has very good skills. Kevin Johnson is fighting the best Fury we've seen yet. We want 50-50 fights and Johnson's no pushover, no walk in the park and that's why he is an avoided boxer. Nobody else would step-up to take this fight because Tyson is something special.”

Fury Takes Aim at ‘Fat Pudding’ Johnson – 29th November 2012

We’ve had stand-up comedy routines, heartfelt ballads and raucous singalongs and no matter what takes place at Tyson Fury press conferences there’s always plenty to discuss at the end. This time the Wythenshawe scrapper resorted to some good old fashioned insults to try and unnerve his American opponent, Kevin ‘Kingpin’ Johnson. Tyson is more than aware that he has a fair match on his hands both in and out of the ring, with Johnson equally adept at waxing lyrical about his abilities while dismissing the qualities of his opponent. Putting that aside, when the enticing Odyssey Arena main attraction begins on December 1 it is unlikely that either man will be taking the threat of his foe too lightly. Fury used the recent Malone Lodge press conference as a chance to flex his verbal muscles.

“Look at the state of the fat pudding, this bum,” scolded Tyson, walking over with the microphone to confront his opponent. “Johnson is getting smashed, look at the chubbiness of him. Everyone knows that Johnson will put up a fight and go home with a big pay cheque as a happy loser.”

Meanwhile, serial jabber ‘Kingpin’ was less than complimentary in his assessment of Fury’s last opponent, Belfast brawler Martin Rogan, who Johnson sparred with three years ago in Breen’s gym. Kevin inferred that he had given ‘Rogie’ the run around with his superior speed and self-proclaimed set of skills. Johnson was not the only recipient of Fury’s wrath as the former British and Commonwealth champion let rip on the potential adversaries (including David Price) that he believes are running scared of a showdown.

“Many others were offered this fight and refused it,” Fury claimed. “Denis Boytsov took the fight and then he said he had no notice, decided he wasn’t ready and needed more time. Boytsov is a one-trick pony and I’ll not be fighting him now, I’ll see what Vitali decides to do regarding Arreola-Stiverne.”

Chris Arreola and Bermame Stiverne clash on January 26 in a WBC semi-final eliminator in a bid to face off against champion Vitali Klitschko, if Vitali decides to carry on boxing rather than pursue his out of the ring interests. Arreola has already fought Vitali once before and was forced to retire after ten rounds of punishment at the fists of the giant Ukrainian. Stiverne is a once-beaten, and grossly untested, power puncher from Canada.

“We don’t know what Vitali is going to do, whether he will retire and

go into politics or fight on,” said promoter Mick Hennessy. “If he retires then Arreola and Stiverne fight for the vacant title and we will look at the winner.”

That scenario would present a very winnable path to global glory, but for now Tyson Fury is just focused on Atlanta’s Kevin Johnson, the man looking to put a dent in all of those best laid plans.

“The best heavyweight in the world is boxing in Belfast on Saturday night,” added Tyson. “It’s an honour to be here and I’m not going to let anybody down.”

Kevin Johnson: Giant Fury Won't Dominate Me **– 30th November 2012**

Kevin Johnson has sent a defiant message out to Tyson Fury ahead of their December 1 clash in Belfast by claiming that his talent and experience will make a mug out of Mick Hennessy's prize asset. 'Kingpin' can talk well enough but how does he plan to close the range and negate Fury's height and reach advantages?

"How in the hell will Fury dominate me? I use my reach better than him and I'm the bigger man. You want a fight Fury? Don't hold me, let the hands go," Johnson implored, before calling out to the referee (who was not present) to resist Tyson's attempts to grab and wrestle.

"Fury's just trying to motivate himself and get psyched up but he needs to understand that he's playing with the college professor and I'm taking him to school. I've seen everything they are trying to do, this is his real test."

Kevin's two career losses both occurred when he left the comfort zone of fighting in America. A wide points' reverse to Vitali Klitschko and a Prizefighter final loss to Tor Hamer are two blemishes on the slate that, in some people's eyes, serve to highlight Johnson's limitations. Not that the sharply dressed Atlanta man would necessarily agree.

"Prizefighter is a completely different setup and I would never do that again. I beat two people in Prizefighter, some people thought my win over Sosnowski was controversial but I accept my wins and I accept my losses, but I'm not a two-round fighter. I lose the first three rounds of most of my fights. Finally everybody will see me working at 100 per cent on Saturday night. Training with Jeff (Mayweather) means the missing piece has been found. I have everything, let's use it. I've been sparring with some of the strongest guys to help me get off what I need to get off in the Odyssey."

Johnson's lack of physical advantages was laid out bare against Vitali Klitschko but according to the 33-year-old visitor, Fury is nowhere near the Ukrainian's level and too inexperienced to handle 'Kingpin's' skills.

"This is a totally different fight. Fury is an amateur and Klitschko is a vet, two completely different fighters. I was in preparation for something else before I got the call for this fight, training kicked up another gear and I was 90 per cent ready when the phone call came in. I've been training for three months and the guy I was going to fight was a tall guy anyway so not much of a difference.

"I tell you now, the fight with Tyson Fury will end before seven rounds," Johnson predicted.

Tyson Fury: I'm the Greatest Heavyweight Since Lennox Lewis – 30th November 2012

Tyson Fury has plenty to say regarding his December 1 clash with Kevin Johnson and the unbeaten heavyweight took aim at both 'Kingpin' and trainer Jeff Mayweather for questioning his current credentials and long-term potential.

"I'm the greatest heavyweight since Lennox Lewis and this mug is just a part of the Tyson Fury show," asserted Fury. "Jeff Mayweather has a lot to say but he'll eat his words on Saturday night. I want an official apology after the fight when I've smashed his man to bits."

Tyson was also disdainful at the suggestion that his performance will send out a message to rival big men, such as domestic nemesis David Price. One thing is for sure, the 24-year-old Wythenshawe native will be in stellar condition in the WBC 'semi-final eliminator' with Johnson.

"My achievements speak for themselves and I don't have to impress any other heavyweight," he said. "I've been in camp over in Belgium doing regimental running and sparring. It's been mental as much as physical, training in a forest in complete solitude. I've been in terrible shape in the past and my conditioning is second-to-none this time. I've got 8.2 per cent body fat and I'm the natural athlete in this fight. Johnson is a pudding, just look at the shape of him. He likes to 'old man' no-name American fighters but he's stepped out of his comfort zone and my body punches will cut him in half. I hope he man's up and fights but I guarantee he'll lie on the ropes and try to play possum."

Following his latest broadside, Tyson did at least concede that after suffering from opponent rejections or withdrawals (most notably Denis Boytsov) he would at least give credit to Kevin Johnson for preparing hard and coming over to fight (he hopes). Fury also took a break from his oral sparring with 'Kingpin' to face local TV cameras and call out another well known heavyweight.

"Wladimir Klitschko I want you next, believe the hype because Tyson Fury will be the Irish heavyweight champion of the world," bellowed the Odyssey headliner.

Johnson Reckons He's One of the Most Feared Heavyweights Out There – 30th November 2012

Kevin Johnson has praised Tyson Fury for stepping up to the mark and facing him on December 1. The American heavyweight has, somewhat bizarrely, described himself as one of the most feared heavyweights on the circuit.

“A lot of guys wouldn't take this fight because they won't fight up to their level of opposition. I applaud Fury, not one top ten would fight me because I'm one of the most feared heavyweights out there. This fight won't go the distance, it will be electrifying. Heavyweights put each other away and I've been working on putting my man away in a casket.”

Fury labelled that final remark as “tasteless” but quite often the emotive pre-fight rhetoric spills over and becomes unsavoury or just plain weird. Johnson also had plenty to say regarding the sparring sessions he shared with Martin Rogan a few years' back.

“There's a difference between US fighters and Irish fighters, a difference between Martin Rogan and myself,” he chuckled. “I was too hot to handle, too cold to hold.”

Kevin dropped a wide points decision to division ruler Vitali Klitschko back in 2009. Despite using his ring smarts and back foot antics to frustrate the veteran champion ‘Kingpin’ was ultimately left claiming the scant moral victory that Klitschko was unable to hurt or stop him.

“Klitschko is easy to hit but they have that pull back style and with their height they are barely reachable,” he admitted. “I have the best jab in the heavyweight division and I never miss with over 50 per cent of my jabs but against Vitali I did, which shows that he has a very awkward style.”

Show promoter Mick Hennessy took time to praise ‘Kingpin’ for stepping in at relatively short notice when other fighters apparently went thumbs-down on the opportunity.

“We tip our hat to Kevin for stepping up to the plate because there was a hell of a lot of so-called top fighters that turned this fight down. This fight is going to be something special; this is going down in the history books,” said Mick.

Fury Overcomes Johnson in Tame Odyssey Affair **– 1st December 2012**

Tyson Fury edged ever closer to his dream of fighting for a world title by widely outpointing **Kevin Johnson** in Belfast's Odyssey Arena. Whether it was a masterful display of boxing or a dull snoozefest of a main event depends on personal opinion and even though Johnson motored forward more than expected, it was too much to suggest that he ever truly forced the fight. 'Kingpin' failed to land his much vaunted jab often enough to worry Tyson and while leaning away from Fury's punches may have taken the sting out of the shots when they arrived, it meant that Johnson was rarely in a position to counter punch.

Fury (17st 10lb) took control from the opening bell, imposing his increasingly impressive physique upon the American and as the early rounds passed by it was Tyson landing all of the shots that mattered. Johnson (17st 2lb) parried and weaved, using the ropes and saving plenty in the tank for an assumed late round surge that never actually materialised. Helping out in Johnson's corner was Belfast trainer John Breen who clearly saw the fight slipping away from the Atlanta man and implored him to close the gap and press Fury. Head coach Jeff Mayweather cut an extremely passive figure, choosing to impart a few whispered instructions rather than the firework that was required to spark his man into life.

A loose-limbed Fury shuffled his feet and worked the angles to keep Johnson guessing and help close out the fight. Such a tactically disciplined performance, coupled with the surprise southpaw destruction of Martin Rogan two fights ago, serves to further prove that Tyson is now a fighter who can adapt his style and work to a game plan. While a far cry from the gung-ho fan-friendly slugger that walked a fine line against Nicolai Firtha and Neven Pajkic the Wythenshawe man clearly has an eye on his ring longevity.

Referee Howard Foster, who toiled hard to keep the big men active, deducted a point from Fury in round seven for punching off the break. It was a rare moment of success on the scorecards for Johnson who conceded by wide margins of 119-110 for Marcus McDonnell and 119-108 for Terry O'Connor and Steve Gray.

Post-fight, Tyson once again took aim at the Klitschko brothers, while later dismissing David Price's credibility as a potential future opponent. This bout served as a WBC 'semi-final eliminator' with the other half of the tangled web, Chris Arreola and Bermane Stiverne, due to clash in January 2013. Johnson, meanwhile, had made numerous promises during

a raucous pre-fight press run but ultimately the 33-year-old failed to pressure with any great conviction and once again cut a figure that was just happy to go the distance.

“This guy’s a world-class fighter so I boxed to a game plan,” said the 24-year-old victor, now unbeaten in 20 contests. “I never went in there to knock him out because I’d watched all of his other fights, including against Klitschko, and he makes you miss and makes you pay.”

“What a controlled display of boxing. These are the type of matches that I like to watch,” added promoter Mick Hennessy.

Kevin Johnson’s performance did little to dent his self-confidence: “Tyson moved and held and I pressed the action all night,” he reckoned. “Any man who comes into the ring with me and wins is definitely closer to a world title fight. I’m not a slouch or a bum.”

Chris Eubank Jnr took another positive step towards title class with a wide points’ win in his first eight-rounder. Opponent **Bradley Pryce** was not overawed, as expected from a 45-fight campaigner who once held the Commonwealth title, but apart from sticking bravely to the task and taking heavy punches, he never looked like derailing the Eubank freight train. Spearing his man with a fast and accurate jab Eubank Jnr (11st 9lb) let his speed and skills do the talking, by bloodying Pryce’s (11st 9lb) nose and standing resolute whenever the Welshman landed a sporadic power punch.

Eubank Jnr is more of an accumulative hitter than a one-punch knockout artist, whose slick footwork and movement allowed him to move in and out with relative ease to pepper Pryce with combinations. Referee Steve Gray’s 80-73 card only awarded Bradley a share of one round and even though the victor’s dominance was unquestioned, Pryce gave a commendable effort, especially after absorbing some solid blows in the final round.

“I could’ve gone and knocked this guy out but I want to get rounds and learn as I go along,” said Eubank Jnr.

In a long-simmering grudge match Lurgan’s **Stephen Haughian** (10st 8lb) raced out of the blocks and dropped **John O’Donnell** (10st 8lb) heavily with a well-timed right hand followed by body punches. Groggy O’Donnell just about saw out the danger and boxed his way back into the contest by picking some eye catching shots throughout an evenly-matched scrap, eventually winning 77-76 on Steve Gray’s card. Haughian landed some good shots but a 17-month ring absence began to take its toll as the bout wore on.

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In a clash of styles, **Phill Fury** (11st 2lb) marched forward and impressed ref John Lowey enough to claim a 78-74 verdict over Belfast counter puncher **Joe Hillerby** (11st 4lb). Fury even had a point deducted for rabbit punching in round five and ended the fight with a nasty cut over the right eye when things got messy.

The finishing line must surely be in sight for 40-year-old veteran **Darren Corbett** (17st 6lb) who went over on his ankle while loading up a haymaker against prospect **Conall Carmichael** (15st). Paul McCullagh called it off after 2-18 of the opener, scheduled for four-threes.

Local crowd-pleaser **Daniel McShane** (9st 4lb) pressured stubborn survivor **Janis Puksins** (9st 5lb) for the duration, claiming a 40-35 formality on Paul McCullagh's card. Puksins took a knee in round one.

In a lively encounter, **John Hutchinson** (11st 5lb) and **Gerard Healy** (11st 5lb) punched themselves to a standstill before John Lowey awarded Hutchinson a 40-37 victory.

Well-supported **Paul Quinn** (9st) came close to halting **Tibor Meszaros** (8st 12lbs 7oz) but settled for a 40-36 verdict from Mr. Lowey, with the Hungarian proving resilient.

Paul McCullagh scored 40-36 for the fast-improving **Matthew Wilton** (10st 6lb) as he defeated **Jozsef Garai** (10st 6lb).

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Marco McCullough (9st 11lb) outworked **Michael Kelly** (10st 5lbs)

for 40-36 on Steve Gray's reckoning.

Peter Fury Slams John Breen's Corner Tactics **– 3rd December 2012**

Tyson Fury's trainer and Uncle Peter Fury may be a man of few words but when he has something to say the Manchester man is not afraid to let rip. Peter spoke out at the post-fight press conference, after Tyson's lopsided decision win over Kevin Johnson, to castigate the role played by veteran Belfast trainer John Breen in Johnson's corner.

"I am a little bit disappointed in John Breen," confirmed the elder Fury. "Breen rang me before the fight, he said 'Peter, do you mind if I go in Kevin Johnson's corner. I won't say a word; I am not going to advise him. I am not going to help Kevin Johnson. I am going to pass the bucket and be the cut man.' I told him to make himself some money and that we didn't mind. But what I could hear in the corner was John telling Kevin to knock Tyson's block off, to do this and do that. Jeff didn't say a word."

Kevin Johnson, meanwhile, put forward a different version of events. The American mover briefly sparred in John's gym three years ago, when helping to prepare Martin Rogan, and is on friendly terms with the Breen Team.

"Let me give you a small correction, because I am an honest person and Breen is a good guy," countered 'Kingpin'. "When you go home and watch the fight you will see he never gave me a strategic method to employ against Tyson. Jeff gave every strategic method to follow. The only thing Breen advised me to do that you heard was, 'you're behind, if you want to win, you have to knock him out'. Breen is a good guy and he told me that he is very good friends with Tyson and he felt bad coming into my corner. I said I need him as a cut man and that is it. Of course he told me I was behind but that wasn't advice to trade off against anybody. Without Breen the fight wouldn't have went ahead. The fight would have gone the way it did regardless of anything else. He won the fight cause he was as long as shit. He is just unbelievably long. He actually bends out of harm's way."

Despite this impassioned response, Peter Fury was unabashed and had his own beliefs as to why Breen behaved the way he did.

"Obviously John was trying to impress Jeff because he is a Mayweather, but as a team and a family we don't need anyone's help. Tyson is going to the top and that's the bottom line."

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Price Is Not a Worthy Opponent Reckons Team Fury **– 4th December 2012**

With Tyson Fury and David Price fighting on the same weekend, fans and critics were offered the irresistible opportunity to compare opponents and performances. Price removed the ancient figure of Matt Skelton, who, despite his advanced years, came to have a go and was duly dispatched in two rounds. Fury outfoxed and outfought world-class opponent Kevin Johnson, who adopted a frustratingly negative approach and failed to push the prospect out of his comfort zone. Rather unsurprisingly all members of ‘Team Fury’ viewed their man as the one who came out in a stronger position and the potential threat of Price was roundly dismissed.

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“There’s no comparison between the performances,” scoffed Mick Hennessy. “Price wouldn’t beat Kevin Johnson – I know that for a fact. Kevin’s well known to a UK audience now, he’s just got out on terrestrial TV. So if Price is the real deal, and it’s not a massive pay day he’s looking for with Tyson, then take this man (Johnson) on.”

Price’s manager Frank Maloney had apparently made a hot-off-the-press £650,000 offer to try and lure Fury into the ring but the news was met with little enthusiasm at Saturday night’s post-fight press conference.

“It’s just ridiculous, they’re just trying to jump on the back of this man’s publicity,” continued Mick. “Tyson’s on terrestrial TV, he’s the most talked-about heavyweight in the world right now. In one breath he [Maloney] says it’s a stadium fight and then he goes and offers that money. If it’s a stadium fight and a pay-per-view fight then he’s not even remotely in the ballpark figure, he’s not even close. He’s contradicting himself by offering that money and saying it’s a stadium fight.

“Frank Maloney insulted Tyson, he said some things he never should

have said so we basically said if David Price wanted the fight and step up on his own and acknowledge the fact that Tyson is Number Three in the world and had more fights than him and fought better opposition, if he wanted to acknowledge that and sit at the table and do a sensible deal then we'd take the fight."

Tyson himself was also scathing about the offer and the 24-year-old went on to question Price's ability to match him in the ring.

"I never saw his fight it but I can gather what he did. He's never changed since he was an amateur, he's the same one-two. There's a difference between what I call 'European fighters' – they just don't move, they come forward like this [hands up], throw a one-two and a left hook. They pump some weights and they go forward and throw some big shots. Is that [£650,000] just for me or is that between the two fighters? By the time you took the tax away you might as well not even fight – pay everybody, take your money, split your money between two people...."

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'Kingpin' Johnson was also asked for his opinion on David Price and he pulled no punches in deriding the Liverpoolian. It is not forgotten, however, that Johnson made similar noises before his efforts against Fury.

"Price is a piece of shit," he said bluntly. "So he beat somebody's grandfather last night that he's supposed to beat in 33 seconds? This guy (Fury) just fought a legitimate heavyweight. What's the difference between me and Matt Skelton? Even your grandfather knocked him out! I'd whoop Price's ass on a one-day notice. That's the notice that the postman would get to go to his front door."

The final part of the jigsaw, Tyson's trainer and Uncle Peter Fury,

took the last word and is clearly no fan either.

“We’re taking on world-class fighters,” he said. “David Price is not even on a good domestic level and on his performance yesterday, well, Matt Skelton comes forward, the guy couldn’t even move out of the way, he was on the back rope, chin up in the air, what would Mr Johnson have done with that?”

Fury Rubbishes ‘Old Man’ Vitali’s Recent Run of Opposition – 5th December 2012

Fresh from his wide points’ victory over Kevin Johnson, Tyson Fury set about rubbishing the recent level of opposition entertained by Vitali Klitschko. The Manchester heavyweight is not impressed by Dr. Ironfist’s run of easy nights and reckons that it will be a whole lot different if he gets to tackle the 41-year-old.

“Vitali is an old man and he ain’t the same Vitali who fought Kevin Johnson,” opined Fury. “Dereck Chisora, a journeyman, took him and pushed him close. This other guy, Manuel Charr, was landing shots on him. Anybody with a pair of eyes can see Vitali is on his way down now. He will not fight me, I’ll have any money that says Vitali Klitschko will not step in a ring with Tyson Fury, he’ll hang up his gloves first. I want Vitali or Wladimir, let’s get it on.”

It is indeed likely that Klitschko will quit the ring rather than continue trading blows for a living and instead opt for a role in Ukrainian politics. Tyson certainly thinks so anyway.

“He won’t fight me, for sure. He’s on the slide, I’m a young 6ft 9” heavyweight and he won’t fight me, he’s going to pack it in. If his brother [Wladimir] wants to step into his place, let’s get it on. I beat him once in a sauna, let’s have it in the ring.”

“If Vitali was to continue we could probably make a fight for as early as April,” confirmed promoter Mick Hennessy. “The final eliminator is taking place in January but then you’ve got to think that a fight with Vitali really is a stadium fight so then you’re looking at May-July - there is that conflict. We would love the Vitali fight, if he continues and he wants to sit down and be fair, the fight will happen and they know that as well. I’m going to be putting in a call over the next couple of weeks.

“Tyson’s in pole position for the WBC,” continued Hennessy, “and we have to see what Vitali’s going to do; if he’s going to go into politics. Once he makes that clear in December, then we’ll know the decision. If he decides to hang his gloves up, then Arreola and Stiverne will fight for the vacant title and Tyson is next in line. If he decides to fight the winner of Arroela and Stiverne in January, then Tyson will be next against the winner of that, so we’re in pole position either way.”

Kessler Has Big Respect for New Champion Magee – 6th December 2012

Now fighting as the official challenger to recently elevated WBA ‘world’ champion Brian Magee’s newly acquired belt, Mikkel Kessler enters the ring on December 8 full of respect for the Lisburn man’s talents.

“I have big respect for Magee, he’s a nice guy and a fighter and it’s only when we get into the ring that we don’t like each other that much,” chuckled the 36-4-1 Danish superstar.

“Brian’s an awkward fighter who’s fast and smart and he throws a lot of punches. It’s difficult to say what his weaknesses are [they sparred before Kessler fought Froch] because he’s actually moderate in all areas. He doesn’t hit that hard but he can land one good shot and people go down and he punches well to the body. Brian does not say stupid things, he just comes to fight and I’m sure he will give a great fight.”

Mikkel has been lamenting some of the injuries that have forced him away from the ring for sustained periods, including an optic nerve issue that threatened to remove him permanently from the sport.

“I’ve had some bad injuries, been away for a long time and then come back,” he admitted. “I still feel good about boxing and I’m happy to go training. I respect Brian for taking this fight and for not wanting to fight a bum; he’s a real fighter and he’s going to get a real fight on the night. That’s what’s keeping me motivated to fight, the buzz of wanting to be a four-time world champion.”

O’Kane Suffers First Pro Loss As Ryder Cruises Battle of the Unbeaten – 8th December 2012

Eamonn O’Kane lost for the time in his professional career when the 30-year-old was stopped in the eighth-round by fellow unbeaten prospect John Ryder in the London Olympia. O’Kane set a fast pace from the opening bell, pressing in to Ryder’s chest and loading up with his trademark lead right hands. Ryder preferred to stand on the outside and try to pick Eamonn off with right hooks and jabs from the southpaw stance. O’Kane moved on to back foot in the fourth-round, either as a tactical maneuver or a sign that he was maybe feeling the pace. Gerry ‘Nugget’ Nugent implored his charge to motor forward more at the end of the seventh but the Dungiven middleweight walked on to a straight left hand early in the eighth and never truly recovered. Running on a tank fast emptying of fuel, O’Kane tried to fiddle his way out of the harm’s way but Ryder hunted him down and landed the clinical shots to force a stoppage at 1-33 of round eight. The fight was a British title eliminator and Ryder moves to 13-0 (8 KOs) while O’Kane suffered his first career blemish, dropping to 8-1 (3 KOs).

“I knew that he was a tough, game opponent and it worked out alright,” said Ryder, who is targeting British champion Billy Joe Saunders. “I was working in the gym on moving off the back foot and using the jab, trying to meet him on the way in and catch him coming. He’s very strong and throws wild shots that might not catch you flush but on the side of the head.”

Brave Byrne Pushes Jones Close and Gets Career Back on Track – 8th December 2012

Dean Byrne boxed his way to a draw with experienced American Carson Jones in the London Olympia. Byrne started brightly, using an array of skillful punches to befuddle the Oklahoma man, who was timid and wary of Dean's sharp blows. As the eight-rounder wore on, however, Jones started to find the range and landed some left hooks to the body that slowed the Dublin native. Byrne was cut under the right eye in the seventh following a slashing hook from Carson, yet the proud Irishman battled on to claim a share of the glory. Byrne was in training for a six-round contest next weekend but stepped in at extremely short notice after Carson Jones's original opponent Lee Purdy withdrew from a proposed bout for a minor IBF belt. Perhaps Byrne can now jump in and get a crack at Purdy next March.

26-year-old Jones was taking part in his 48th fight and pushed Kell Brook to the wire in July. This performance and result puts Byrne right back into the mix at welterweight and his display should be commended. Referee Ian John Lewis resisted the urge throughout to jump in and stop either man, totaling a 76-76 scorecard.

"I was really up for the Lee Purdy fight," lamented Jones. "I thought I might have won by one or two points but I take nothing away from him, it was a draw and that stuff happens."

"That's a win right there, getting a draw with this man on three days' notice," said Byrne. "The Irish Lightning is here to stay."

Brave Showing from Magee But Classy Kessler Hacks the Body Down – 8th December 2012

Despite a gutsy showing, Lisburn's Brian Magee suffered a third-round knockout loss to Mikkel Kessler in Herning, Denmark on Saturday, December 8. Magee went down twice from body shots in the second-round and just about made it to the bell but the one minute respite in between rounds was not enough to save the 37-year-old. Just seconds into the third-round another crunching body blow from 'The Viking Warrior' had Brian down on his knees for a third and final time, once again from a swiping right hand to the torso. Panamanian referee Luis Pabon called it off after 24 seconds of the round and Kessler took Magee's WBA super-middleweight title in devastating fashion.

"I came to fight and the first shot he caught me with to the body stung me and hurt me bad," a disconsolate Magee told Danish TV post-fight. "I won my other two fights here with body shots so that's some of my own medicine back! Mikkel is a great champion and he's treated me with respect throughout the build-up."

Tyson Fury Reveals His ‘Name and Shame’ List – 9th December 2012

Tyson Fury has lashed out at the multitude of heavyweight rivals that he claims avoided him before Kevin ‘Kingpin’ Johnson jumped in and took the fight on December 1 in Belfast. Russian puncher Denis Boytsov was the first man to sign up and agree to match giant Fury but then opted out, citing the reasons for withdrawal as a lack of preparation time.

“Boytsov struggled with Vinny Maddalone and I played with Maddalone,” scathed Tyson. “Kevin Johnson would destroy Boytsov, he wouldn’t land a punch. He ain’t going to fight me. I’m going to name and shame all of the heavyweights who turned this down on a lot of notice – Denis Boytsov, Tor Hamer, Ruslan Chagaev, Michael Grant. There was also Tomasz Adamek, ‘Fast’ Eddie Chambers and Johnathon Banks.”

A member of the press proceeded to ask if Alexander Povetkin had been approached, given that Povetkin had been reportedly keen to fight the previous, less mobile, incarnation of Fury. Tyson reacted to that suggestion with disdain.

“Povetkin is a complete pussy, he doesn’t want any part of me. I was after Povetkin when I was a fat, overweight kid. We’ll see what you can do Povetkin, you WBA paper champion.”

And what about the elephant in the room, David Price?

“I’ve moved up to WBC Number One, Price is British champion, where’s the comparison? This is an eliminator for the WBC, this isn’t an eliminator for the Commonwealth or British title. I won them two years ago.”

“If Price wants the fight he can pay Maloney his purse and let them come and do the negotiating,” added trainer Peter Fury who is refusing to sit around the negotiating table with arch-nemesis Maloney.

Consequently, the Wythenshawe boxer is eyeing a knockout in his next fight and fast on the lookout for a lumbering behemoth to spark out to send the fans home happy.

“I don’t think we can get a much better boxer than Kevin, but maybe somebody bigger and slower so fans can get what they want – a knockout,” scoffed Tyson. “Maybe Marius Wach because he’s a big slow guy, about 6ft 8” and 270lbs. He’ll come forward for a fight and no doubt we’ll tag him with big shots and knock him out.”

Michael Waldron Primed for New Year Explosion – 22nd December 2012

Despite suffering an injury that has curtailed his promising progress, Michael Waldron is training hard for his next professional contest and is now focusing on a February outing to help flex the muscles. The Mayo boxer recently lifted the lid on how he has found the first few months as a fledgling pugilist.

“I had my first pro fight in August against the very tough Brandon Peake, I didn’t box to the best of my ability but was happy to get the win,” admitted Michael. “Everyone then saw in Brandon’s second pro fight against Noel O’Brien that he is a tough, tough kid and can bang, so I was happy to win and that fight will stand to me down the line.

“Since that fight in August I was due to fight on the ‘Rumble in Dublin’ card against Gavin Prunty but due to an injury I had to withdraw. I picked up an injury in training and at first I thought it was my cruciate ligament. I feared that I’d be out for up to six months but thankfully it wasn’t and I returned to training last week so hopefully that fight may go ahead sometime next year. My next fight will be in February 2013 so I have put the head down and will get myself in the best shape of my life by the time fight night comes. I’m going to leave no stone unturned and will look to add a second win to my name.”

Michael is a grounded individual with a solid training team around him. The thoroughly professional setup that he now enjoys will only improve his skills as a boxer.

“I’m back training in the Castlerea boxing club under my brother John and the other coaches, Finton and Paddy Sharkey. These guys have a good programme set for me for the next 11 weeks and I’m looking forward to every minute of it. It will be torture but fight night I’ll be ready for whoever and whatever is in front of me. I will train six days a week and travel to Dublin on a number of occasions for sparring in Crumlin and work outs with top trainer Phil Sutcliffe. I’ll travel across to UK for training but can’t go in to detail on that yet. I can’t confirm anything on my next fight only that I’m out in February and I can’t wait.

“I hope to have few fights early in the New Year which will open a few doors for me and fingers crossed I can then land an Irish title fight late next year. I’d love to win the Irish title and the sky’s the limit after that but for the time being my sights are set on that goal.”

At such a young age there is no need to rush Waldron into big fights. Careful planning and meticulous out-of-ring preparation will help him to move forward at a steady pace before progressing on to Irish title

contests and then, who knows?

“My goal from day one was to be successful in boxing and you only get out what you put in,” he agreed. “I’m only 24 so I’m not going to rush things but on the other hand I am not going to wait around.”

Sauerland Monitoring Irish Talent **– 23rd December 2012**

In an interview with Irish-boxing.com Kalle Sauerland has explained just how tough it is negotiating terms with savvy veteran Pat Magee and also revealed that his organisation are checking out Irish boxing talent.

“Pat Magee is probably the toughest negotiator that I’ve ever dealt with in my near 16 years in the business,” said Kalle, who predicted pre-fight that Mikkel Kessler-Brian Magee clash would generate around three or four million dollars.

“Before settling on Magee we looked at Kelly Pavlik (as a possible opponent) who for me is a bit of a joke; he’s clearly just hanging on for a payday. We had an approach from HBO to make that fight in the summer. There is a bit of history between myself and Kelly Pavlik going back to negotiations for a fight with Arthur Abraham where we talked for nine months and nothing came out of it. A week after Ward beat Dawson we talked about that fight but there were so many storylines to the Magee-Kessler fight.”

Sauerland later confirmed that his promotional team are looking at branching out into the Irish and UK markets and are currently monitoring some well-known talented names. One such name briefly linked with the Northern European powerhouse was John Joe Nevin, who eventually signed up to the British Lionhearts World Series of Boxing team.

“We are set up a bit differently from most boxing organisations in that we have a sporting director and a scouting system. I know of Nevin and I like him, at the moment I cannot see anything happening but if the terms were right then we would certainly be interested in Nevin.”

Nevin was one boxer but are there any more names he can tell us about?

“There was one more Irish name on our radar,” teased Sauerland, refusing to bite.

“The UK is also a market that we will go to; it’s just a question of when. Our business started in Germany, but we are doing shows in Finland and Denmark and we want to grow the business all over the place. We can only do that by delivering good fights. Mikkel is our Danish flagship but we are doing five shows a year with young kids coming through on the undercard. When Mikkel is gone there has to be someone filling the gap.”

Casey Looking to Cause a ‘Big Bang’ in 2013 – 10th January 2013

Willie Casey is looking to give his career a much-needed boost by making 2013 a year to remember. The former European super-bantamweight champion endured a mixed 2012 that included a loss to Andreas Evenson in Denmark and a points win over Jason Booth in July which turned out to be the last piece of action for a frustrated Casey, whose career had looked to be on the up when he signed for Emerald Promotions in the February. According to the Limerick man he has been willing to engage but no suitable opponents have stepped up to the mark.

“I’m looking to get myself back out there, it’s almost like that I have been left in the dark as no one seem to want to fight me and if they did they would be calling me out,” lamented the 31-year-old. “I have spent the last few weeks at home with my family and now we are going in to the New Year I want to let them [potential opponents] all know that I am still here and I am hungrier than ever.”

Casey’s name has often been linked to Sheffield slickster Kid Galahad but neither party has managed to nail an actual date down. That would be an intriguing bout for both fighters and if it doesn’t come off then Willie could provide a credible test to the likes of Scott Quigg, Carl Frampton or even a rematch with Paul Hyland.

There are some big names out there and I know I can mix it with any of them so in 2013 you better look out ‘cause I will be back with a big bang,” he said.

Anthony Cacace Named as Irish Boxing Prospect of the Year – 6th February 2013

Unbeaten talent **Anthony Cacace** was named as Prospect of the Year at the recent Irish Boxing Awards. The Belfast crowd-pleaser has now vowed to keep up the momentum after hitting the ground running since making his pro debut in February 2012. Reeling off six wins and winning the Irish super-featherweight title in a record period of time, the 24-year-old, who boxes out of the Emerald Promotions stable, was present with trainer Sean McCullagh and manager Chris Graham to accept his trophy.

“It has been a good year for me and hopefully this coming year will bring even more,” enthused Cacace, who sparked Mickey Coveney in one-round to earn the domestic belt.

“More fights and more titles [is what I want next]. I am really proud of this award, especially picking it up in my first year. Obviously it gives you a confidence boost to win and to hear good things about how you’re doing and hopefully I can move on to bigger things.”

Anthony also acknowledged the previous winners of the Prospect of the Year award, two of which have gone on to enjoy plenty of professional success already.

“You see the likes of Carl Frampton and Martin Lindsay, previous winners, doing well and fighting for titles and hopefully I can follow their footsteps. I am boxing in Chicago on March 10 and after that I have Kris Hughes. Hughes fought Frampton so he isn’t a nobody; it’s kind of a test and hopefully I will come through it and do well.”

Irish Hero Tips Frampton to Get the Job Dunne – 7th February 2013

Carl Frampton has revealed that he was pleasantly surprised to hear Bernard Dunne's glowing endorsement of his abilities ahead of the European title clash with Kiko Martinez on February 9. The Belfast brawler also admitted that he will have to be wary of the concussive power that 'La Sensacion' carries in his fists.

"I have heard a couple of things Bernard Dunne said and he is very complimentary and he didn't have to be," commended Carl. "He says Martinez is a better fighter now, but to be honest I think Martinez just caught Dunne cold. I think Dunne would probably agree with me and say that he took Kiko too lightly and felt he would win easily. I haven't spoken to him [Bernard] but he is saying I should win the fight."

Martinez is over in Belfast trying to acclimatise to the less than favourable temperatures and is keeping sharp under the watchful eye of Panamanian Bernardo Checa, along with his usual training team that includes Pablo Sarmiento.

"I know Kiko has real punching power," said Frampton. "The only opponent I ever took lightly in my life was Robbie Turley. Well, I didn't take the fight lightly but I was a bit over confident and believed I was a bit too good for the guy. I then put in one of my lesser performances. I will never make that mistake again especially when you have a dangerous puncher in front of you. That is the thing with Kiko, everyone is saying you ride the early storm and be careful the first few rounds, but he knocked Jason Booth out in the tenth. He carries his power well, he doesn't fade and I will have to be careful."

Boxer of the Year Frampton Prepares for Kiko War of Attrition – 8th February 2013

Carl Frampton has expressed his delight at being named Betfair Boxer of the Year at the recent Irish Boxing Awards in the Europa Hotel on Wednesday (February 6). The former Prospect of the Year is busy preparing for the biggest night of his professional career thus far when Carl tackles Spanish dangerman Kiko Martinez in the headline attraction of a quality Odyssey bill all set for Saturday, February 9.

“It’s a very proud moment for me,” agreed ‘The Jackal’ when presented with his award by the Irish Daily Mail’s Ciaran Gallagher. “A couple of years ago I won Prospect of the Year and to be given Fighter of the Year when there are so many great fighters about at the minute - Andy Lee, Matthew Macklin and Pajo Hyland, all boxing and performing well in America- it is a great honour and privilege.”

Frampton believes he is vastly improving with each fight and rates his last two outings as proof that he is adapting swiftly to the rigours of the paid code, following a highly-successful amateur career.

“My last two fights were definitely my two best performances to date,” he said. “The Molitor win was a very good win for me, but I would rate the Hiraes win above that. I think he was a good fighter. People don’t give him the credit he deserves. It seems those two fights set me apart from the other guys and now I am going to win this European title and hopefully win a world title by the end of the year. It does give you a little confidence going into the fight. You get confidence from your previous performances and I am on a bit of a roll now and I am getting better and better.”

It has been suggested that Carl may adopt the same sort of box-and-move tactics for Martinez that worked so well against Raul Hiraes when the pair clashed in Nottingham for the IBF Intercontinental strap last May. The former Celtic and Commonwealth title holder is, however, keeping tight-lipped about his actual strategy.

“You might (see that style) or you might not,” he said coyly. “I think I can outbox this guy and out fight this guy. The way he is talking you would think he is the strongest Spaniard in the world. He thinks he is a bull and no one can live up to his power, but I reckon I am as strong if not stronger than him. I know he is going to come at me. I haven’t had that yet as no one I have fought wanted to stand and trade with me. Once I hit this guy let’s see how eager he is then to come forward and to stand toe-to-toe.

“I am not silly I know this is going to be a tough fight. Kiko is a bigger puncher than I have ever faced. He is dangerous and he has been training hard. He is making some bold predictions and saying some silly things but we will see come fight night.”



World Title Shot a Possibility for Frampton, But He Still Wants Quigg – 8th February 2013

Despite being fully focused on Kiko Martinez this coming Saturday, Carl Frampton is steadily moving towards the lofty heights of world level contests. With the likes of Abner Mares, Nonito Donaire and Guillermo Rigondeaux currently floating about with various splinters of the belts, Carl and his team have spotted a potential opportunity if he manages to repel the heavy-handed Spaniard standing in his way for European glory.

“It could possibly happen as the next fight after Martinez,” said the Belfast boxer, when quizzed on future world title possibilities. “The IBF title is vacant and Alejandro Lopez and Jonathan Romero fight for that title a week after I fight Kiko. Barry has already been on to the IBF and they are happy to let the winner of that fight fight the winner of Kiko and myself.”

Indeed, Colombian Romero travels to Lopez’s native Mexico on February 16 when the pair clash for the IBF’s vacant portion of super-bantamweight silverware. While Carl would surely fancy a go at either of these lesser-known names, the fight he craves is against a domestic rival all too familiar to fight fans in Ireland and the UK.

“Scott Quigg is the fight I would love next but if they still don’t want to take that then we can move on and start looking at world titles,” he stated. “We are only one or two fights away from a world title.”

Frampton Smashes Martinez to Become Euro Champ But Lindsay Fails to Tame Beastly Selby – 9th February 2013

Carl Frampton emphatically jumped up to the next level of his career by becoming the first man to knock out **Kiko Martinez**. Frampton completed the task in front of his growing Belfast faithful, creating an electric atmosphere inside a packed Odyssey Arena. Martinez was swiftly relieved of his European super-bantamweight title when Carl drew him in before landing a flush right hand straight on the button, sending Kiko to the canvas and out of the equation at 2-46 of the ninth-round.

Carl was already on a high going into the biggest night of his pro career (so far) having picked up the Boxer of the Year award based on his progress in 2012. At the same awards ceremony, in the Europa Hotel, mentor Barry McGuigan was recognised for his contribution to the sport by being inducted into the Irish boxing Hall of Fame. Carl wasted little time in showing Martinez just how much of a learning curve he has been on in recent fights by using his superior skills to outbox, putpunch and outmaneuver ‘La Sensacion’ before landing the hammer blow that brutally ended Martinez’s brief title reign.

“I proved I’ve got a good chin. I could feel his power but he didn’t hurt me and he didn’t make my legs wobble but you can see from my face that he hits hard,” Carl revealed straight after the EBU win. “He’s not been wobbled before but I took him out. The plan was to box from the outside but when we traded, I felt I got the better of him. I want to be a world champion. I feel the buzz and it's getting better. The best man won on the night but he’s a tough man; I was hitting him and he was coming back.”

Martin Lindsay may have failed in his attempt to take possession of **Lee Selby’s** British and Commonwealth featherweight titles but the west Belfast battler impressed many at ringside with a display of courage and heart that extended beyond the call of duty. Lindsay planted his feet and wound up the big shots round-after-round, trying desperately to offset the swaggering qualities of Welshman Selby. The visitor, however, showed speed, power and no small amount of skill in his talented fists to keep Lindsay at bay throughout. The only black mark on Selby’s copy book was occasional moments of distasteful showboating - which bordered on mockery at times- but the away man is surely destined for bigger things. The judges’ scorecards came in at 118-110, 117-111 and 118-109 in

Selby's favour with his dominance unquestionable.

"I had a gameplan on the night to take him into the later rounds and then see what happened," said the always classy Lindsay afterwards. "But he was strong the whole way through and he is a good fighter. He also seemed to have very long arms and he could keep it at range. He was strong and big for the weight, but I thought I did alright against him. I have no complaints about the result and I am just waiting to see what comes up next. I have started back doing some light training and I am looking forward to getting back in there."

Fitzgerald Pushes Lee Hard While O’Kane Gets Back to Winning Ways – 9th February 2013

In a televised all-Ireland showdown on the Frampton-Martinez undercard, **Anthony ‘The Pride’ Fitzgerald** pushed **Andy Lee** to the final bell before conceding a ten-round points verdict. The 98-94 total awarded by referee Steve Gray in Lee’s favour did not really tell the full story, even though the Limerick man had landed enough quality to edge the bout. It was Fitzgerald who came out with most credit to his name. After forcing the action throughout, admittedly not always with the highest degree of method in his work, the Dubliner made sure that Lee was frequently backed up and made to work at a high pace, while landing his fair share of right hands to ensure that a slight element of doubt about the outcome always remained.

In his previous bout Lee had challenged Julio Cesar Chavez Jr in Mexico for the world title and as an amateur competed in the 2004 Olympic Games. He had recently switched to train in London with Adam Booth following a long stint in Detroit under the tutelage of the late legendary trainer Manny Steward. All in all he is a fighter of pedigree. This mattered little to Fitzgerald, a rough-and-tumble boxer from the Phil Sutcliffe stable in Crumlin. The 27-year-old won and defended his Irish title with distinction during the boom period that domestic boxing enjoyed across Ireland in the not so distant past.

He also holds a stoppage win over fiery Frenchman Affif Belghecham who Lee comprehensively outpointed (bar a nail biting last round) in 2009. Anthony brought a sizeable and vocal pocket of fans up from Dublin to cheer him on and they certainly played their part, helping to motivate their man when he seemed to be lagging in the mid rounds. Both landed heavy shots, Lee characteristically sagged on the ropes at times and looked a spent force, as he so often does, only to suck it up and come back to land some classy lead right hooks and spiteful lefts to the body. Fitzgerald absorbed everything that came his way and kept on pitching. He can certainly take pride in his performance and, as Phil Sutcliffe stated later, has moved himself on to another level in his career. Lee, meanwhile, was maybe being litmus tested as a potential future opponent for Matchroom middleweight star Darren Barker. My preference would be a long-simmering clash with Matthew Macklin in Limerick but Macklin may have heftier targets on his radar.

“I knew he was a hard man and had a lot of determination coming into the fight,” said Lee after the bout. “I knew he was going to be very motivated. He’s a tough fella and a hard man to put away but he stuck in

there and took some hard shots.”

Eamonn O’Kane had his first rehabilitation bout after suffering at the classy fists of John Ryder in London last December. O’Kane won gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and enjoyed a highly-successful amateur career that saw him mix with the world’s elite before gaining valuable experience in the World Series of Boxing. All of this prior knowledge seemed to have gone out of the window in the early days of his pro career as O’Kane morphed from intelligent pressure fighter to one-dimensional brawler. This style did garner him the Prizefighter crown but he needed more than a good engine and intense workrate to outlast Ryder after agreeing to take part in an intriguing battle of prospects. Stopped in eight rounds after adopting an energy-sapping high tempo approach, O’Kane followed his friend Paul McCloskey’s lead and switched trainers, moving over to work with highly-regarded Panamanian Bernardo Checa.

In this fight with Shepperton’s **Gary Boulden**, Eamonn started off more patiently, boxing behind a jab and better selecting the moments to pounce. The benefits of his new training regime will take time to come through and by the end of this six-rounder he was back inside and looking to do some damage the old fashioned way. Eamonn explained post-fight that Boulden’s style was awkward and he tended to dip low and look to counter, making him more difficult to pin down. The Dungiven man suffered a cut on the left cheek and a slight battle scar over his left eyebrow but managed to stay one step ahead to claim a 59-56 comeback win on Paul McCullagh’s scorecard.

Martin Rogan dusted off some ring rust in anticipation of his appearance at the next heavyweight Prizefighter on February 23. ‘The Iron Man’ of course won the first ever showing of the innovative eight-man tournament back in 2008 and his career has been a rollercoaster ride ever since. Last seen being removed in five rounds by Tyson Fury last April this is perhaps Rogie’s, rather cliched, one last shot at glory. Prizefighter glory that is. Not this four-round points win over blubbery Czech **Ladislav Kovarik**, who, despite his excessive girth, did fight back and refused to buckle even though Rogan gave him plenty to worry about. After two rounds of solid work Martin took a step back and put the last two rounds ‘in the bank’ before ref Steve Gray raised his hand in a 40-36 formality.

Proud warrior **Tommy Tolan** came to have a go as usual but found the furious gloves of **Callum Smith** just too hot to handle. Former quality amateur Smith made his intentions clear from the get-go, planting his feet and looking to knock the fight out of Tolan. A thumping left hook put Tommy down heavily early in the contest and he did well to

drag himself vertical and convince referee John Lowey that he could continue. The 39-year-old was afforded that chance but found himself instantaneously caught up in a blizzard of hard punches that eventually left him sprawled in a neutral corner. Fledgling ref Lowey, a very good fighter in his day, was off raising Smith's hand when he should have been paying more attention to stricken local boxer Tolan who attempted to make it back to his corner, as chief trainer Gerard McCafferty jumped in to aid him. The time of the stoppage was recorded at 2-31 of the first-round and Smith is one to keep an eye on.

It was a far cry from New York for **Grzegorz Proksa**, last seen contesting a version of the world title against Gennady Golovkin, as he started the evening's boxing with a nondescript points win. Hungarian **Norbert Szekeres** did nothing more than last the six-round distance while Proksa eased back into action with little concern.

Jamie Conlan Leads the New Breed on Belfast Undercard – 9th February 2013

Jamie Conlan got his career moving again in emphatic fashion by registering a late knockout victory over Liverpool's **Mike Robinson** on the big Odyssey undercard. Entering the ring wearing a sombrero along with a new moniker 'The Mexican', Conlan pulled out a left hook to the body that the great Julio Cesar Chavez would have been proud of, to end Robinson's game challenge at 2-43 of the tenth and final round. Conlan was up against it from the off in this contest, which was an official eliminator for the British and Commonwealth super-flyweight titles. Not only had he been inactive for over a year but the 26-year-old suffered a cut over the right eye early on in the bout. Luckily, cornerman Eamonn Magee is an excellent cutsman and managed to keep the laceration under control for the duration of the bout.

Jamie's luck turned in the second when he reeled off a classy left hook combination to body and head that dropped former English title challenger Robinson to the canvas. It was never plain sailing though and the visitor, who enjoyed two quality tear-ups with Ashley Sexton, motored forward constantly, applying pressure and testing Conlan's resolve throughout. That was until midway through the final round, with the bout seemingly in the balance, Jamie landed one of his trademark body blows that visibly hurt 'Robbo'. Hunching in and staggering back to the ropes Robinson tried to shake it off, but managed only a few moments of respite before a replica blow crunched into the ribs and he crumpled to the canvas. John Keane doled out the count and despite the resilient Liverpoolian's efforts to get up and carry on, he was in visible discomfort and duly stopped on his feet. Conlan, who can clearly punch, moves to 9-0 (5 KOs) while Robinson drops to 5-5-3.

There was plenty of other local interest on the undercard where three well-supported fighters continued along their respective learning curves.

Daniel 'Insane' McShane entered the ring once again sporting a Hannibal Lecter mask and gave his vocal following plenty to cheer. McShane loads up with every shot he throws and dives into each attack with impatient fervour. Mansfield-based Latvian **Pavels Senkovs** offered more resistance than many opponents would have mustered, especially as he was taking punishment way after midnight. Heads clashed frequently and it threatened to boil over at times, with McShane docked a point in the final session for a headbutt. It was all smiles at the end, however, when the home fighter took a deserved 39-36 verdict on Steve Gray's card.

Marco McCullough has stopped trying to boil down to featherweight and looks to have filled out nicely, coming in just under 10 stone. The Belfast talent followed up a good win last time over ex-Irish title challenger Michael Kelly with a one-sided beating of **Ibrar Riyaz**. The visitor absorbed plenty of heavy leather and suffered a cut under the left eye in round three but dutifully stuck to his task and saw out the distance. Referee John Lowey awarded Marco every round over four-threes.

Another recent addition to the ever-growing numbers of Irish prospects made his first home appearance and looked impressive. Lightweight **James Fryers** grabbed a debut win in London late last year and got back into the groove here with a 40-36 victory over **Billy Smith**. Fryers showed good variety and laid traps for his veteran foe who knows how to see out a fight. Smith went over and spoke to Fryers' corner after the bout to acknowledge their man's ability. Paul McCullagh officiated.

Eddie Hearn Plots Frampton Route to World Title – 10th February 2013

Kiko Martinez knocked out and European title achieved; that's two ticks off the checklist for Carl Frampton. Talk of world title opportunities are now resurfacing and a potential opening with the IBF could be the most viable option. Alejandro Lopez and Jonathan Romero contest that vacant strap on Saturday, February 16 in Tijuana, Mexico and Frampton's team would surely fancy their man against either of these decent, but unexceptional, boxers.

"After the IBF title is fought for, I expect them to put out an eliminator for a mandatory position and I expect us to be in a position to be nominated for that," said promoter Eddie Hearn after his man's demolition job. "That's an option, the WBC is an interesting situation at the moment, Kiko is very heavily world ranked – which is something as well that's going to make a big difference."

Eddie will now pursue matters with the IBF and hopefully persuade the organisation that it is in their interests to manoeuvre the belt in a Belfast direction. Selling tickets and setting up a vociferous Odyssey Arena crowd should not be a problem if the Martinez bout is anything to go by.

"It was a brilliant night. The atmosphere was amazing. A number of things...a lot has opened up for him over the last few weeks," calculated Hearn. "I've just emailed the IBF and said about the unbelievable night in Belfast. The performance obviously matters but if you've got the backing that he has here, it does make a difference in terms of what governing bodies think of you, whether that's right or wrong, that's life."

Putting the IBF option to one side, Scott Quigg's name once again bubbles to the surface and Hearn confirmed that Sky had approached him the day before the fight and said they would like a show in Belfast on May 11. One phone call to the venue and it was booked. Unfortunately, as often happens, the best laid plans have already been pushed back to June as Frampton recovers from the rigours of his latest outing.

"I think he's beyond Quigg but that's a fight that everyone wants," Eddie responded, to the inevitable talk of a money-spinning showdown with the Bury rival. "TV wants it, the public want it but just because they want it doesn't mean it's the right thing for Carl. We'll sit down with Barry but really the aim is to become a world champion, not to fight Scott Quigg. We've got to provide the best route to make that happen, and if we can get that opportunity with the IBF to become the mandatory challenger."

Just because Carl has dispatched his Spanish nemesis does not mean that the next move will become any clearer, with talk of voluntary defences, mandatory requirements and possible title vacations buzzing around the ‘big four’ belts that Frampton now craves. If the Belfast hero gets a shot next then it would likely come as the fruit of negotiations over a voluntary opportunity rather than as a mandated contender.

“I do like the position where you have no options, no ties, you control your own destiny, it’s a great position to be in,” commented Eddie after Barry McGuigan mentioned Abner Mares’s decision to vacate the WBC title.

“Frampton’s blessed to be in a lower weight division, with a huge backing and huge following. Generally, in a weight division that’s not particularly lucrative, that’s a great position to be in for Carl. It means you can bring people over for the right money and that’s going to make sense. You can give Carl a huge pay day and give the world champion a pay day and in most divisions you don’t get to do that.”

Say That Again? Frampton Can't Recall Final Blow That Ended Kiko's Euro Reign – 12th February 2013

Some pundits were calling it the perfect punch. Carl Frampton, the man who landed the vaunted final blow, suggests otherwise, mainly because he can't recall which well-placed shot ended his bout with Kiko Martinez.

"I don't really remember much about the shot. Looking at him afterwards it took a few seconds for him to get up so it must have been a decent shot," said 'The Jackal' modestly.

"I think I proved I have a good chin. He caught me with some clean shots and he had the Cleto Reyes on and they are dangerous gloves. I felt his power definitely but he never once shook me and he is a big puncher."

Frampton's chin was still up for debate, with the Tigers Bay man having ticked pretty much every other box during his early ring education. Martinez had never been seriously hurt or wobbled before and never on his backside as a professional. The newly crowned European champion soon changed that statistic.

"He had never even been wobbled and he has been in with some good opposition and I took him out. I listened to my corner," said Frampton. "The plan was to box him from the outside early on and stand a bit more later on. I probably moved a bit too much early on, but we can rectify that. When Shane told me to stand with him I felt my uppercut worked well. I feel like I am getting better on the inside. He wanted a fight, but when I stood with him I think I was out-fighting him. His antics before the fight were to make me stand and fight and when I did it I think I outfought him.

"He was tough and he took a lot of shots. It was a great night, but we are not there yet. I want to be a world champion so this is sort of halfway there. I do feel the excitement and the buzz building and its getting bigger. The atmosphere here tonight was amazing and I think his antics at the weigh-in added to that a bit. I want to be respectful to Kiko. He is a tough man. Barry and Shane were saying I never really hit him to clean, but I was hitting him and he was coming forward. He shook my hand after the fight. He is a good champion. The Kiko we saw at the weigh-in isn't the real Kiko."

No Pain – No Gain for Refreshed O’Kane – 15th February 2013

Change is never easy, especially when old habits and inclinations are ingrained into a fighter’s psyche. Just ask Eamonn O’Kane, who made the first step from come-forward aggressor to back foot boxer in his six-rounder against Gary Boulden on Saturday, February 9. O’Kane has moved over to train with the Checa brothers, Oscar and Bernardo, and was looking to rebuild following a stoppage loss to John Ryder.

“It was great to get the win on such a big night and eradicate that loss from just before Christmas,” he said after outpointing Boulden. “They are great guys (the Checas) and they are easy to work with. It’s a change and a breath of fresh air so I am enjoying it.”

The Dungiven man is also eyeing a chance to fight in Derry and give his supporters something to cheer, while regrouping for another assault on domestic honours.

“Hopefully we can get the finger out to get this show sorted for Derry. They were talking about April but I’m not sure what’s happening with that. Whatever happens, I will be back in the gym in a week’s time.”

Frampton Admits to Kiko Power and Targets Further Improvement – 17th February 2013

Carl Frampton admitted post-fight that Kiko Martinez did indeed punch as hard as his record suggests and that he could feel a high degree of physical strength up close. But despite Kiko landing cleanly, the Spaniard was unable wobble or seriously dent the hometown hero's charge towards world glory.

"I never felt any tingles or anything," confirmed the new EBU super-bantamweight champion, "but I could definitely feel his power – you can tell from the face that he's a puncher. There was one point where I hurt him a couple of times and my uppercut was working well but after about seven rounds I thought I was going to start getting to him.

"There are a few things that went wrong and we can change them. Maybe I gave him a little too much space when I should have... I was boxing to tactics for the early part of the fight, boxing off the back foot, but I could have been holding the centre of the ring a little bit more but it was only my 16th fight."

All things considered, this was a mature, confident performance from a high-quality fighter who is fast moving towards the business end of the super-bantamweight division.

"I'm still learning and I just dismantled a good European champion so I'm pretty happy with the performance," concluded Frampton.

Lindsay's Courage and Selby's Quality Provide Perfect Mix – 19th February 2013

Martin Lindsay has gracefully conceded that Welshman Lee Selby was clearly the better man after going down widely on the cards in his crack at Selby's British and Commonwealth featherweight titles. Lindsay was looking to regain the British title that he had lost to Scotland's John Simpson on a bleak winter's night back in December 2010. Selby had blitzed Simpson in five rounds in the meantime to take control of that title and it always looked like being an uphill struggle for Lindsay. Despite soaking up many harsh blows, including some extremely rough-looking shots to the body, the Immaculata man sucked it up and showed true courage and dignity to last the course.

"The gameplan was to stay in the fight over the first six rounds," Lindsay explained post-fight. "We knew he had fast hands so it didn't matter if we were losing rounds because we knew he hadn't been beyond eight rounds so the plan was to test the waters then. But he surprised me because he wasn't just an eight-round fighter, he proved he was good. I came back at the end of the first round and said to me coach 'that distance suits me and everything's sound'. But then in the second he landed a good body shot and nearly wobbled me to the head after that.

"As it went on in the seventh and eighth I was thinking 'I'm getting back into this here', but then the tenth was a bad round and he landed a couple of heavy shots on me. There was nothing I could do. I just had to survive the 11th and come out in the 12th trying to throw a few haymakers, hoping to catch him."

Putting in the gym work has never been an issue for Martin. He just came up against a fighter that is surely destined for big things.

"I always train hard; I didn't realise just how good Selby was," commended the classy 'Mac Man'. "He was long in the arms and picked his shots well. For every winner there's a loser so you have to give him his due – he is a brilliant fighter."

Time for The Board to Step-Up and Grant Conlan Title Shot – 20th February 2013

Tucked away on the graveyard shift in a sparsely filled Odyssey Arena, Carl Frampton had dutifully dispatched Kiko Martinez when Jamie Conlan climbed in between the ropes to level out a year of frustration on Mike Robinson. After hitting Robinson harder than the Liverpool man had ever felt before (in Mike's own words), Conlan now hopes he has sent a loud enough message to British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC) Secretary Robert Smith -who was seated at ringside- and that the ruling body will do the decent thing and give him an overdue crack at domestic honours.

“I’m glad I got the nine and a half rounds but I’m also glad I got the knockout as it made a bit of a statement,” bubbled Conlan. “Nobody knocks him out and he is a tough nut but I cracked him. It was brilliant; it was the fight I expected it to be. There were points where you would question yourself and I had to dig deep because he was a really tough fighter. He had a hard head but I got it done in the end.”

Jamie had dropped the visitor with a classy combination in the second-round and it appeared at the time that he may have found Robinson’s number sooner than anticipated. As it turned out ‘Robbo’ sucked it up and came back to push the local man hard, until a peach of a body shot (twice over) cut Mike in half and he was stopped on his feet.

“I knew it was a flash knockdown (in round two) because his eyes were clear and he gave his head a shake,” said the self-styled ‘Mexican’. “I looked over to the corner and John Breen just said to relax and break him down. But it was the body shots we were working on although I eased off a bit in the middle rounds, but came back at the end.”

Now Conlan and manager/trainer John Breen will look to put a bit of pressure on the powerful suits to grant him a chance at domestic glory.

“The next thing for me will be the Commonwealth title in May hopefully,” suggested the 26-year-old. “But I want to be active, I got five stitches [from a facial injury] but I will move on. I got that in the first-round but when I went back to the corner I thought it was a pimple until they started working on it. But I have had a lot to deal with over this past while so I’m just glad to get over it and come back with a win.”

Jamie Conlan stepped up to another level and proved that he belongs in title class. Now the Board must make their move and grant him a shot.

McGuigan Lauds Frampton Performance and Credits Bernard Dunne – 21st February 2013

Barry McGuigan may have been a little perplexed by the way the experienced trio of judges were scoring Carl Frampton's fight with Kiko Martinez before the stoppage arrived, but the former featherweight world champion is happy with the power and poise his young charge displayed, regardless of how the three wise men were interpreting matters.

“No one has ever dropped that guy, and Carl did it with one half a shot straight down the middle. I have always said he has concrete in his hands,” buzzed Barry.

“Bernard Dunne made a very salient point about two weeks ago - he said Kiko is a better fighter now than the Kiko that beat [him]. He [Dunne] just disrespected him, came out with his hands low and walked on to a shot. He walked in there kamikaze style and never recovered. If you look at Kiko, he has got better and he's much better defensively, he throws combination punches, rolls his head.”

One observant scribe commented post-fight that Kiko's power is perhaps overrated while his skills are underrated. ‘La Sensacion’ motored forward consistently but for my money at least it was ‘The Jackal’ landing all of the quality shots.

“I was surprised at the scoring but when a guy walks forward you've got to give him points for pressure – but it has to be effective pressure and I didn't think it was. However, I'm happy for them to disagree with me – but I think two rounds is silly. Remember Kiko is one-year older than Carl, he's not an old man,” concluded McGuigan.

Shane McGuigan: ‘Carl Outboxed and Outfought Kiko’ – 23rd February 2013

Shane McGuigan has given a glowing endorsement of Carl Frampton’s abilities after the Tigers Bay puncher followed instructions to the letter and stopped Kiko Martinez.

“I told him to start holding his feet two rounds before,” revealed Shane. “When Carl was pushing him back and staying on the inside Kiko didn’t like it. He couldn’t launch his shots. When Carl was staying nice and tight on the inside you could see he was hurting Kiko. He only half hit him with that shot.”

McGuigan had invested valuable time in studying the Spaniard’s habits and knew where the weaknesses were, ready for his fighter to exploit.

“For Kiko to load his power he needs to set his feet so Carl worked to offset that. He moved a little bit too much at one stage and then when he started to throw the right hook over the top and cut Kiko we said it was time to stand with him. He did exactly what he said he would; he outboxed him and outfought him,” said McGuigan.

Irish Elite Championships 2013 Full Report – 23rd February 2013

Joe Ward is undoubtedly the great new hope of Irish amateur boxing. At just 19 and with a strength and poise beyond his tender years the Moate clubman beat Neilstown's **Kenny Egan** for the third time in a row, prompting the 31-year-old 2008 Olympic silver medallist to announce his retirement. Egan, a ten-time Elite Championships winner, officially passed the torch to his young adversary and admitted that his time in the limelight is over. Kenny was never able to stamp his authority in this 81kg final and even when he landed his jab and moved inside, all that awaited was the slashing hooks and brute force of Ward. A standing count in the second-round just added to Egan's woes and he was well beaten at 25-5.

"Ken Egan is a wonderful boxer and he's been a wonderful ambassador for Ireland," commended Ward. "It's sad this day had to come but it's like any other legend, it has to end sometime."

"I don't think I could go any further with the talent that's waiting in the wings," agreed Egan, following a lengthy standing ovation.

In a mouth-watering showdown between two of Ireland's best, Grangecon southpaw **Ross Hickey** bit down on his gumshield and landed the classier combinations in round three to secure the 64kg title. **Ray Moylette** of St. Anne's -a 2008 World Youth gold medallist- had been landing right hands for fun and staggered Hickey at the end of the second to leave it all to play for. Ross found his range just in time to take the fight 15-11.

Michael Conlan of St. John Bosco, Belfast won his third National title in a row by beating **Chris Phelan** 20-9. Conlan had come from behind to defeat the Ryston man in last year's final but the 2012 Olympic representative was always in control of this one. Slipping inside and out, changing stances and generally befuddling his game opponent, Conlan showed why he is untouchable domestically at 52kg.

Another former Olympian in action was **Adam Nolan** (Bray), who claimed 69kg honours by a score of 23-12. That margin did not tell the full story, however, as opponent **Willie McLaughlin** (Illies GG) went hell-for-leather in the final round trying to turn around an 11-point deficit. He nearly achieved the unthinkable in the dying seconds when some heavy blows had Nolan staggered and clinging on desperately. Willie was unable to finish the job and Nolan's blend of courage and class bagged him the Boxer of the Night award.

Belfast heavyweight **Tommy McCarthy** scored another Elite Final

knockout, with Drimnagh's **Jimmy Sweeney** the latest victim. Southpaw Sweeney pushed the action throughout but the heavy-handed McCarthy landed a clubbing right hand in the third-round that forced the referee to terminate proceedings. The Oliver Plunkett man was ahead on points in this 91kg affair.

New 60kg king **Sean McComb** has quickly ascended into the public consciousness following impressive displays in previous rounds and the Holy Trinity youngster employed a tight guard and plenty of southpaw wiles to power past **George Bates** (St. Mary's). McComb built an early lead and never let up until the final bell, cruising home 19-7.

Declan Geraghty began brightly against **Gary McKenna** in their 56kg bantamweight bout and showed all the moves before dropping McKenna with a quality right hook. Coasting at 10-3 the Crumlin boxer strangely took his foot off the gas for the next two sessions and allowed McKenna (Old School) to see out the distance, settling for a 16-7 win.

Hugh Myres opened proceedings by securing the 49kg title with a 17-8 victory over Belfast's **Thomas J. Waite** (Cairn Lodge). The usual boss at light-flyweight, two-time Olympian Paddy Barnes, did not enter the Championships after suffering from flu.

Two middleweight powerhouses met head-on in a high-tempo scrap. Finn Valley's **Jason Quigley** landed the sharper blows on **Roy Sheahan** (St. Michael's Athy) to secure a 15-6 win at 75kg.

In the 91+kg category **Sean Turner** (Drimnagh) outmuscled **Niall Kennedy** (Gorey) for a 21-8 victory. Kennedy did well to take the punches of heavy-handed Turner and last the course.

Katie Taylor boxed an international four-twos against Poland's **Karolina Grazczyk**. Taylor prevailed 28-5 but the southpaw visitor played her part in the 60kg contest.

In the female finals, Ryston bantamweight **Dervla Duffy** dominated **Michelle Lynch** (Golden Gloves) en route to a second-round stoppage at 54kg. **Michaela Walsh** (Holy Family) squeezed past **Joanna Lambe** (Carrickmacross) 14-13 at 57kg and at 64kg **Kelly Harrington** (Corinthians) beat **Sarah Close** (Holy Family) 13-10.

Full Results:

(1) 49kg: (Light-flyweight) – Hugh Myres (Ryston) beat TJ Waite (Cairn Lodge) 17-8

(2) 57kg: (Featherweight) – Michaela Walsh (Holy Family) beat Joanna Lambe (Carrickmacross) 14-13

(3) 52kg: (Flyweight) – Michael Conlan (St John Bosco) beat Chris Phelan (Ryston) 20-9

(4) 64kg: (Light-welter) – Ross Hickey (Grangecon) beat Ray Moylette (St Anne's) 15-11

(5) 56kg: (Bantamweight) – Declan Geraghty (Crumlin) beat Gary McKenna (Old School) 16-7

(6) 60kg: (Lightweight) – Sean McComb (Holy Trinity) beat George Bates (St Mary's) 19-7

(7) 75kg: (Middleweight) – Jason Quigley (Finn Valley) beat Roy Sheahan (St Michael's Athy) 15-6

(8) 91kg: (Heavyweight) – Tommy McCarthy (Oliver Plunkett) beat Jimmy Sweeney (Drimnagh) KO3

(9) 81kg: (Light-heavyweight) – Joe Ward (Moate) beat Ken Egan (Neilstown) 25-5

(10) Additional Bout 60kg: (Lightweight) – Katie Taylor (Ireland) beat Karolina Grazczyk (Poland) 28-5

(11) 69kg: (Welterweight) – Adam Nolan (Bray) beat Willie McLaughlin (Illies GG) 23-12

(12) 54kg: (Bantamweight) – Dervla Duffy (Ryston) beat Michelle Lynch (Golden Gloves) RSC2

(13) 64kg: (Light-welterweight) – Kelly Harrington (Corinthians) beat Sarah Close (Holy Family) 13-10

(14) 91+kg: (Super-heavyweight) – Sean Turner (Drimnagh) beat Niall Kennedy (Gorey) 21-8

Boxer of the Tournament: Adam Nolan, Bray BC

Frampton: 'I Beat the Best Version of Martinez' – 25th February 2013

Talk of Kiko Martinez being past his sell-by-date may have briefly circulated before the big Odyssey European clash but few can deny it was a fully motivated, all-action version of 'La Sensacion' that graced the ring on fight night. Kiko is now managed by top ten pound-for-pound resident Sergio Martinez and had been enjoying some solid sparring and training in preparation for his date with destiny. Make no mistake, this was not the shell of a boxer that beat Dougie Curran in the Emerald Roadhouse in late July by way of a wide 59-55 margin that served to mask Kiko's stale performance.

"This was the best Kiko Martinez, he gave a good performance but I think I controlled it," said a buoyant Frampton after the fight. "I think I would have been ready for him [last September, when the pair were originally due to meet] because I don't think he was as good then as what he is now. I think he has prepared better, he was in America and he's been with a new team. I think his head was all over the place, we saw his performance in the six-rounder (in the Emerald Roadhouse) and he wasn't great."

Carl admitted that he has always been confident in his own ability but when you beat a good champion like Kiko Martinez, it's always going to give you a bit of extra confidence.

"I'm a confident guy, I believe I can get to the top," he confirmed. "I don't want to be arrogant about it but that's what I believe. I don't want to sound cheesy or anything but you can talk about destiny. I've been doing this since I was seven, there were a couple of times when I was about 15 or 16 and I didn't want to box anymore after a couple of things like struggling to make weight and when you want to have a drink with your mates and stupid things. But I stuck at it, kept my head down and I'm dedicated now and want to be a world champion."

The belt clearly means means a lot, as you would expect with Carl being the number one super-bantamweight in Europe. He also revealed that the strap was "nice looking" and weighed in lighter than the IBF Intercontinental title, which is a bit heavy to carry about. There is no doubting that the EBU crown carries more weight in terms of boxing prestige and on the world stage. Frampton also paid homage to the fantastic support that he received from a packed house, roaring him on to victory.

"The reception was great, everyone was standing on their feet and making a lot of noise," he concluded.

Book Review: Ringside with the Celtic Warriors by Thomas Myler – 27th February 2013

Ringside with the Celtic Warriors is the latest offering from veteran Irish boxing writer Thomas Myler, a man who has seen plenty of comings and goings during his time covering the sport both in Ireland and abroad. Myler's credentials and keen eye for a story make this a must-read for fight fans.

Charting the activities of 1920s light-heavyweight world champion Mike McTigue and charismatic heavyweight Jack 'The Gorgeous Gael' Doyle, Myler moves through to more recent times with the exploits of Barry McGuigan, Steve Collins and Wayne McCullough. He then arrives bang up to date with Olympic heroine Katie Taylor, the ultra-talented Bray girl whose ring achievements are helping to drive a whole new generation of female athletes into the sport of boxing. Thomas also pays homage to Belfast legend Rinty Monaghan who won the world flyweight title back in the late 1940s.

One of the most interesting chapters in the book, for me personally, was Myler's angle on the career of Bernard Dunne, who claimed a world title at super-bantamweight in 2009. This piece not only looked back across his amateur and professional achievements but served to bring the book right up to date and ensures that it will appeal to boxing fans of all generations. This is not just a nostalgic look at the fistic heroes long since consigned to boxing folklore.

The photographs (covering sixteen pages worth) are a great addition to the book, helping to capture the adulation of the ring and putting faces to the names. One particular snap featuring the author tackling an interview with Muhammad Ali solidifies the authority and credibility of Myler's writing – he really is someone who has been there and done it.

The tagline sums up perfectly Irish boxing, both amateur and professional, celebrating its, "major contribution to the long, rich history of the sport."

Having sat next to Thomas at many shows across Ireland I can attest to his vast knowledge of the sport, not only on the domestic circuit but also further afield. He has penned other titles that include Sugar Ray Robinson: The Inside Story, Boxing's Hall of Shame and Boxing's Greatest Upsets. This latest book will make a fine addition to the collection of any Irish boxing fan.

Irish Boxing Prospects Star in Ten-Fight Dundalk Show – 10th March 2013

There was plenty of excitement on offer for local fight fans at the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk on Saturday, March 9 with 2012 Irish Boxing Prospect of the Year **Anthony Cacace** leading the charge. Cacace tucked another six rounds under his belt, bettering **Zsolt Nagy** in every department en route to a 60-53 formality on referee David Irving's scorecard. Anthony dropped durable Nagy in the fourth-round with a looping right hand and the Hungarian visitor did well to skirt away from trouble and last the course as Cacace displayed a fine array of skills. The Emerald Promotions talent, who will now focus on a ten-rounder in early April versus Kris Hughes, moves his professional record to 7-0 (3 KOs).

Another exciting fighter making waves is featherweight **James Tennyson**. The Poleglass pug made sure opponent **David Kis** was never able to find a rhythm by bulldozing through him in the opening round. Some well-placed right hands made room for a crunching body attack that forced ref Irving to call a halt with barely a minute gone. The bout was optimistically scheduled for eight rounds which means that Tennyson is now eligible for an Irish title shot.

In a cruiserweight encounter Warrenpoint's **Declan Trainor** won his Irish debut convincingly. Opponent **Tamas Danko** was dropped three times in the opener and Trainor will meet far stiffer tests as he progresses. Trainor was based in Australia when he first donned the pro gloves and has taken his time returning to the ring but could be a useful addition to the domestic circuit at cruiserweight or, more likely, at light-heavyweight after a slim down. David Irving called it off with a rueful smile at 1-57 when Danko completed his trinity of knockdowns.

Daniel 'Insane' McShane brought his vocal army of fans to Dundalk and sent them home happy by dispatching southpaw **Ignac Kassai** in the second-round. McShane put Kassai on the canvas in the first-round with an accumulation of blows and the Kronk boxer never let up until midway through the second session when Mr. Irving stopped the contest at 0-31.

In the nominal main event **Christina McMahon** took a 79-74 verdict over Polish import **Karolina Kopinska**. These two ladies produced the fight of the night and never stopped punching throughout the bantamweight attraction (contested over eight-twos). Both were punched out at the end but McMahon got the nod from Paul McCullagh.

Phil Sutcliffe Jnr wanted more time in his debut outing but packed too much power for **Zoltan Kovacs**. The away man probably could have boxed on from a heavy first-round knock down but the writing was on

the wall. Sutcliffe even took a swipe at his stricken foe as he lurched around on the floor and was rightfully admonished by father and trainer Phil Snr. Ref Mr. McCullagh terminated proceedings at 0-63.

Matthew Wilton may have seen brother Luke fall short in his British title chance recently but the older sibling stopped chunky Hungarian **Milos Balaz** in the first-round with a quality left hook to the torso. Baraz was out of his depth and had already visited the floor before the finishing blow, recorded at 2-30 with Mr. Irving officiating.

Anthony Fitzgerald wasted little time in building on his impressive performance against Andy Lee recently by outpointing Hungarian survivor **Laszlo Haaz** 60-53. Haaz was dropped in the third-round but commendably stuck to his task and lasted the distance. This good old fashioned dust-up was overseen by Paul McCullagh.

In a bloody affair, **Willie ‘Sandman’ Mitchell** stopped **Brandon Peake** in three rounds as Peake shipped too many unanswered blows on the ropes. Game as you like but lacking ring smarts and professional nous Peake is winless in three attempts with the last two defeats coming via stoppage. First-timer Mitchell is far from exceptional but did enough to warrant Mr. McCullagh’s intervention at 2-35 of the third.

Noel O’Brien was too heavy-handed for **Tibor Meszaros**, knocking him out in two rounds. A right hand-left hook combination dropped Meszaros and he never recovered. Paul McCullagh had seen enough at 0-58 of the session.

Waldron Eager to Fight Mitchell On April 27 Show – 27th March 2013

Michael Waldron is itching to keep his fledgling career on course and the 24-year-old Ballyhaunis scrapper is keen on a scrap with Willie ‘Sandman’ Mitchell. Waldron believed that he would be mixing with Mitchell on April 27 in Belfast but that now seems to be off the agenda. Michael contacted Irish-boxing.com to explain the situation from his point of view.

“I was offered a fight with Willie Mitchell on his debut at 10st 7lb but for personal reasons I was unable to accept the fight,” he said. “Last week I was asked again would I fight Willie, this time in Belfast on April 27, where I accepted straight away and I’d make 10st 7lb. I didn’t have to think twice about it as I’m back training and ready to go. But to be honest Willie and his camp don’t seem too keen on it as they said they want me coming in at 10st 5lb and yet during the week they said 10st 2lb. If they wanted this fight they would stick by what they first said at 10st 7lb. At the minute I’m walking around at 73kg but would come to 10st 7lb just to show I’m not walking away. I see they’re going for the easier option of bringing in a lad from Hungary and if Willie wants a test then just accept my challenge.”

Both men enjoyed debut victories over Brandon Peake, with Michael beating Peake in August 2012 on points over four rounds while Mitchell stopped Peake in Dundalk earlier this month.

“Willie is up in the air at the minute after stoppage Brandon Peake who I beat in my debut on points, but I would take him down a peg or two if we fought,” stated Waldron.

“I’m a different fighter to Brandon and I know I’d outwork him [Mitchell] and so do they and that’s why they’re using these excuses of changing weights as they just don’t want it to happen. I’m not the sort of lad to come on giving out about lads and I respect Willie and his team, but I’m sure the people would prefer to buy tickets to watch more domestic fights than bringing in lads for pay days, we’re both novice pros at the moment and heading towards the same goals of Irish title glory. Someone’s 0 would have to go and it wouldn’t be mine. They have my number so just give me a ring and I’ll be there to fight.”

Tennyson Set for Irish Title Shot On Belfast Show – 25th April 2013

Poleglass boxer **James Tennyson** is looking to push himself to a higher level on Saturday night and become the super-featherweight champion of Ireland. James will enter the ring in St. Kevin's Hall, Belfast as the youngest pugilist in well over 50 years to fight for the prestigious domestic crown. The 19-year-old faces former belt holder **Mickey Coveney** over a scheduled distance of ten-threes, in the headline attraction of an exciting seven-fight card being staged by Mark Dunlop's Peace Promotions.

The self-styled 'Baby Faced Assassin' will have fans travelling from as far afield as Scotland, all hoping to witness his ascent from prospect to champion. James has been enjoying some quality sparring in Dublin's Celtic Gym with Stephen Ormond, who himself is sharpening the tools ahead of a fight with Istvan Kiss on March 3. Ormond has faced Mickey Coveney twice already and has been offering his young spar-hand some advice. Not that Tennyson is unfamiliar with the wily veteran either, as Coveney held out for six rounds when the pair met in Scotland earlier this year with the Belfast Kronk starlet prevailing by a score of 59-54.

"I have been training very hard to make sure I am as well prepared as possible; I can't wait," Tennyson told Irish-boxing.com. "There is a big-time buzz picking up about the fight and tickets are going well. Hopefully I will have another good crowd with me. I didn't think I would have an Irish title fight this soon in my career and I am delighted to be fighting for a title. I will let Mark (Dunlop) my manager decide what is next for me after April 27, but I am happy with the progress I have made so far."

The pick of the undercard sees undefeated cruiserweight **Conall Carmichael** face **Courtney Owen** in his first eight-threes contest. The west Belfast boxer is looking to blow off the cobwebs as he prepares for the Prizefighter competition next month in the York Hall.

Another big punching cruiserweight, Warrenpoint's **Declan Trainor**, is gunning for his third straight KO in as many rounds in an all-Irish encounter with one-time light-heavyweight champion, 'The Ballyhaunis Express', **John Waldron**. A decent fighter in his day, County Mayo native Waldron has lost his last nine fights (seven by knockout) and will have an almighty task trying to stop 'The Terminator' from pushing on to bigger bouts.

Matthew 'Speedy' Wilton steps up a notch when he faces the more experienced **Johnny Greaves** in his first six-threes contest. Wilton has

been steadily going about his business on the domestic scene and dropping weight while sharpening his skill-set.

Paul ‘The Mighty’ Quinn will look to build on a bright career start when he squares off with **David Kis** of Hungary over four-threes. 22-year-old Quinn is trained by Johnny Eames and sets up as a neat boxer. This is his third outing having registered two points wins thus far.

Iain Butcher, a flyweight contender from Motherwell, will warm up for his British title challenge in July against Kevin Satchell when he takes on **Andras Vargas** of Hungary.

Looking to force his way into Irish title contention is **Eddie ‘Top Gun’ Nesbitt**, the Emerald Promotions fighter who takes on **Michael Stupart** of Edinburgh over a scheduled four-threes.

Recent British title challenger **Luke Wilton** and fledgling welterweight **Willie Mitchell** have both been forced to withdraw from their respective bouts due to training injuries.

Tennyson Affirms Status with Coveney Destruction – 29th April 2013

James Tennyson reinforced his status as one of Northern Ireland's rising boxing prospects with a two-round stoppage of **Mickey Coveney** at St. Kevin's Hall, Belfast. The 19-year-old also picked up the vacant Irish super-featherweight crown and improved his record to 6-0 (5 KOs). Tennyson (9st 3lb) was eager to improve on the last meeting between the pair -a routine six-round points win in Wishaw last December- and wasted little time loading up on Coveney (9st 4lb) and repeatedly backing him into corners. The well-supported youngster has been enjoying some quality sparring of late, with Carl Frampton and Stephen Ormond using his services to sharpen up for title bouts.

31-year-old southpaw Coveney made it through the opening round, but suffered a nick to the right eye that Tennyson immediately targeted. The beginning of the end arrived midway through the second when Coveney threw a right hand lead and wheeled away in pain; the result of an old muscle tear. The wily veteran shook himself down and came out for more but the home fighter, who uses the 'Baby Faced Assassin' moniker, smelled blood and turned up the heat. Coveney was clearly lacking mobility and unable to avoid the heavy artillery. Coveney's corner sensed how futile his challenge had become and flung in the towel, prompting referee David Irving to intervene at 1-41 of the round and confirm Tennyson's first taste of title glory.

"It's a real honour to be the youngest ever Irish super-featherweight champion," said Tennyson, who will drop back down to featherweight for a May bout in Scotland. "I'm not concerned with calling out names I'll just fight whoever my manager Mark Dunlop puts in front of me next."

Belfast's **Conall Carmichael** limbered up for the Prizefighter cruiserweight tournament on May 18 with a fourth-round retirement win over **Courtney Owen**. 34-year-old Carmichael trains under the watchful eye of Harry Hawkins and enjoyed a highly successful amateur career. This was switch-hitting Conall's (14st 5lb 3oz) first scheduled eight-rounder as a pro and he was always ahead, bloodying Owen's nose in the third and causing some nasty swelling under the Nottingham man's left eye. This forced trainer Carl Greaves to call over ref John Lowey and withdraw Owen (14st 1lb 2oz) at the end of the fourth. Carmichael is a neat boxer but may be a little too upright against the more flexible Prizefighter participants.

Matthew Wilton recorded an impressive fourth-round stoppage win

over ubiquitous survivor **Johnny Greaves**. Wilton (10st 4lb 8oz) has quietly gone about his business on the domestic circuit, dropping weight and gaining rounds while hoping to emulate the success enjoyed by brother Luke. Matthew boxed steadily behind the jab and waited for his openings as Greaves (10st 5lb 2oz) skirted in and out of range. A head clash early in the fourth-round cut Greaves across the scalp and just moments later a sharp right hand deposited him to the canvas. The East Ham southpaw rose on wobbly legs and Kenny Pringle decided to wave it off at 1-08, much to Greaves' annoyance.

Motherwell's **Iain Butcher** crossed the Irish sea for a routine six-round points win over **Andras Vargas**. Butcher (8st 8lb) displayed an impressive repertoire of moves and Vargas (8st 10lb) responded with commendable staying power. Butcher next faces undefeated Kevin Satchell for the British flyweight title in July. Paul McCullagh scored this one 60-54 in the 20-year-old's favour, as he moves to 8-0 (2 KOs).

County Down prospect **Paul Quinn** registered the first knockout on his professional slate with a one-round destruction of hapless Hungarian **David Kis**. Quinn (9st 2lb 8oz) started fast and dropped Kis (9st 2lb 3oz) with an accumulation of blows, sending his fervent army of supporters into full song. The shaken visitor dragged himself vertical but was down and out several seconds later with Paul McCullagh calling it off at 2-32 of the opener.

Eddie 'Top Gun' Nesbitt had too much firepower for **Michael Stupart**. Nesbitt (9st 7lb 4oz) set a hot pace and found Stupart (9st 6lb 5oz) relatively easy to hit; lashing home right hands while absorbing the odd shot in return. Ref Kenny Pringle jumped in at 0-22 of round two with Stupart shipping punches on the ropes.

Belfast's City Hall Hosts the 'Fearless' Event On Tuesday Evening – 13th May 2013

Belfast's City Hall will host a live boxing event for the first time on Tuesday, May 14 as familiar faces on the local fight scene combine for the 'Fearless' fight card, put together in honour of heroic four-year-old Oscar Knox who has been battling a rare form of cancer and was recently given the all-clear.

Belfast Deputy Mayor Tierna Cunningham chose the Oscar Knox Appeal as one of her charities of the year and Ms. Cunningham entrusted Chris Hughes, of the Hughes Leisure company, with running an evening of entertainment at the City Hall in aid of the appeal. After a short deliberation Chris decided on a night of pugilism and along with dad Mickey began putting together an enticing seven-fight attraction. Emerald Promotions' main man Chris Graham is also involved in creating this high-quality domestic line-up.

Kevin O'Hara will be hoping to break his professional title hoodoo when he clashes with Dundalk's Michael Kelly for the vacant Irish light-welterweight crown in the headline attraction. O'Hara has come up short -with two thoroughly commendable displays- in British and Commonwealth title efforts against Ricky Burns and Gary Sykes respectively in recent years. 'Sweet Pea' conceded a narrow decision to Eddie Hyland for the Irish super-featherweight title in 2008 and was beaten over ten rounds in 2005 by Willie Limond for the Celtic belt. Standing in his way this time is former quality amateur Kelly who contested the Irish title in 2010 but was defeated by Frankie Gavin in five rounds. This is a good fight between two boxers hungry for domestic silverware.

"The only Irish title I could have boxed for was the light-welterweight title, it was the only one vacant," said O'Hara. "It's a big step up from super-feather but I'll never make that again, I'll be dropping down to lightweight after I win this title. Everyone knows Oscar's story and the fight he has on his hands so for myself and the rest of the lads to be able to play our part in helping him is an honour."

The only fighter being flown in for the show is highly-touted heavyweight prospect Hughie Fury who mixes with Belfast-based Ugandan Moses Matovu. Ray Ginley steps up in class against Paul Moffett as the pair contest the Celtic Warrior title (a recently conceived eight-round belt), while John Hutchinson and Gerard Healy renew hostilities over eight rounds in a long overdue rematch of their barnstorming four-rounder last year.

Joe Hillerby meets Darren Cruise at light-middleweight, debutant Jamie Kennedy tackles Willie Mitchell at lightweight and Marco McCullough will have his hands full with Dublin's Noel O'Brien. Crumlin hope Phil Sutcliffe Jnr continues his pro education at light-welterweight against Mayo first-timer Liam Finn.

The doors will open for business at 7pm with tickets for the 600 capacity venue all but sold out.

O'Hara Ends Title Hoodoo with Victory On Belfast 'Fearless' Card – 15th May 2013

Kevin O'Hara finally bagged a title at the fifth attempt when the likeable Belfast native outboxed Dundalk's Michael Kelly for a 77-75 success. Even though the mooted Irish title was absent, O'Hara left the ring with the Celtic Warrior belt and, more importantly, a route back to big fights following a three-year hiatus. Referee David Irving scored the bout relatively closer than expected, given O'Hara's higher workrate and sharper combinations. Kelly (9st 13lb 2oz) offered stubborn resistance and landed some well-timed right uppercuts and an underused jab that brought him breathing space. Kevin suffered a cut left eye that was expertly dealt with by cornerman Eamonn Magee; the only blemish on a good scrap between former gym mates. Trainer John Breen hopes that this win will serve as a catalyst for O'Hara (9st 12lb 8oz) to re-dedicate himself to the sport and slim down to lightweight for one last stab at domestic glory. This six-fight 'Fearless' card was organised in aid of the Oscar Knox Charity.

Marco McCullough bagged himself a Celtic Warrior belt with a third-round destruction of Dubliner **Noel O'Brien**. McCullough (9st 6lb 9oz) looked the boss after shaking off some opening-round ring rust and timed a right uppercut to perfection to send O'Brien (9st 10lb 6oz) to the canvas in the second-round. Noel regrouped but found McCullough's rangy jab a constant menace. Shipping a left hook early in the third-round O'Brien was down again and on shaky legs before a final barrage, culminating in a classy straight right hand, prompted Paul McCullagh's intervention at 2-49. McCullough is now seeking to fight Willie Casey for an Irish title in July.

Hughie Fury enjoyed considerable physical advantages over Belfast-based Ugandan **Moses Matovu** and used all of his ability to tame Moses over four rounds. Matovu (14st 7lb 8oz) skirted round the ring to avoid Fury's impressive jab, yet it wasn't until the final round that Hughie (17st) planted his feet and dished out some heavy blows. John Lowey refereed as Fury claimed a formality 40-36 total for his third pro victory.

The lightweight clash between **Willie Mitchell** and debutant **Jamie Kennedy** was one of the best Irish small hall brawls of recent years. Neither man gave an inch for the entirety with Kennedy (10st 3lb 2oz) often on wobbly legs and Mitchell (10st 4lb 4oz) looking one punch away from pure exhaustion. Southpaw Willie dragged up some reserves in the final round and looked to have claimed a deserved victory. Novice ref John Lowey left the decision to ringside scorer Paul McCullagh who

instead awarded Kennedy a 39-37 win.

John Hutchinson and **Gerard Healy** renewed hostilities over eight rounds with Healy looking to avenge a 2012 reverse. This one failed to catch fire and quickly descended into a messy brawl with heads and elbows finding the target more frequently than punches. Heads clashed in the first-round and Healy (11st 3lb) recoiled with a cut over the right eye, while Hutchinson (11st 4lb 7oz) suffered a nosebleed in the second. Healy reeled away from a clinch in the third with a gushing wound to the scalp, prompting David Irving to call time at 2-33. Under Boxing Union of Ireland rules it was classed as a technical draw.

Phil Sutcliffe Jnr removed tentative first-timer **Liam Finn** with a second-round knockout. An extremely raw and nervous Finn (10st 5lb 6oz) looked to hold whenever possible. Sutcliffe Jnr (10st 6lb 1oz) landed a solid left hook to the body at the end of the first-round that dropped Finn to his knees, before a replica shot ended matters at 61 seconds of the second session. Paul McCullagh officiated.

Frampton and McGuigan Confirm New Start and Future Plans – 31st May 2013

Barry McGuigan and Carl Frampton have confirmed the details behind the Matchroom exit and freshly inked four-fight agreement with BoxNation TV. The first of these takes place on July 20 in Wembley when Carl defends his IBF Intercontinental super-bantamweight strap against a yet-unnamed opponent. A victory on that show, which features Dereck Chisora and Billy Joe Saunders, will see Frampton embark on three consecutive bouts in Belfast, pencilled in for September and December of this year and February 2014.

“We will be promoting three big shows in Belfast over the next year. We are thrilled to be on board with Frank Warren who has a rich history of success with boxers in British, European and world titles over the last 25 years; he’s broken the record on that one,” said Barry McGuigan, who will promote the shows alongside ‘Team Frampton’.

Barry also had his say regarding the recent parting of the ways with promotional powerhouse Matchroom Sports and their exclusive links with Sky Sports. Barry decided that it was time to pursue other options and BoxNation presented a viable alternative to showcasing his young fighter’s talents.

“Matchroom offered us a deal which was just insufficient and BoxNation came and offered us a deal that was substantially better in every department and it’s as simple as that,” confirmed the former WBA featherweight champion. “We have no problem with Matchroom or Sky, they are great at what they do and they can get on with their thing but we’ll prove to people that we will do magnificent shows, put on big fights and this kid’s going to win the world title.

“We will use Irish fighters, North and South, and give the fans a chance to see local kids being kept active in good fights. We are not going to be told that it’s too expensive to come over here and that it’s too difficult; we haven’t heard that once from BoxNation. This kid can fight and that’s the bottom line. People seem to forget that I used to be a fighter and that’s the difference between me and all of these other guys and he is my priority. That makes me more aware of what can happen and we’re thinking about the future, what’s ten years down the line.”

BoxNation’s representative on the day, George Warren, is clearly enthused by the prospect of getting involved with the Frampton story and gaining a foothold for his channel across the Emerald Isle.

“Carl is unquestionably one of the most exciting prospects in the

country and it's fantastic that subscribers of BoxNation are going to be able to see him win the world title and hopefully in Belfast, then defend it a couple of times in Belfast," said Warren. "Barring Froch-Kessler name me one of the biggest fights that have happened recently that hasn't happened on BoxNation? That's what we are doing, building a channel and securing the best fighters that we can."

For his part Frampton was quick to establish that the business dealings were not conducted without his knowledge and confirmed that he is now playing a key role in the structure of his career.

"What we've got here is not just a good deal but an unbelievable deal," enthused 'The Jackal'. "We are going to be boxing in Belfast which is what I wanted to do. There are exciting times ahead and I'm genuinely looking forward to this relationship that we have. I'm part of this promotional team as well and this is better for me as we know everything that's happening and going on. There's no decisions made without me giving the go ahead, I'm involved in all discussions; nothing's done over my head because we are all one team. I'm grateful for the opportunity."

Barry McGuigan Has World Title Holders On Frampton Radar – 1st June 2013

Barry McGuigan has his sights set firmly on the world title holders of the super-bantamweight division and envisages a possible crack at the IBF crown in February 2014 if all goes to plan. Assuming Colombian Jonathan Romero is still in possession of the belt then he could find himself on a plane to Belfast to defend against Carl Frampton who is looking to defend his IBF Intercontinental title in the meantime.

“We are now on the way towards a world title, ranked number three [with the IBF] and already looking to take the next available challenge and become mandatory challenger,” explained McGuigan. “We think that Jonathan Romero will be boxing a voluntary on August 17 and then possibly fight Jeffrey Mathebula sometime in October and then hopefully be available to fight Frampton in January or February. If not then we’ll be chasing the winner of Leo Santa Cruz and Victor Terrazas for the WBC title and we are also looking at the WBO.”

Carl is ranked in or around the top ten of all four governing bodies and Ring Magazine have him at number three in the world (with arch nemesis Scott Quigg positioned at number four). Provided Jonathan Romero gets past his prospective voluntary followed by a mandatory defence against tough South African Mathebula -who has gone the distance with Celestino Caballero and Nonito Donaire- he may yet end up facing Frampton. Whichever scrap comes off next, the Frampton story, which has so far featured mainly on Sky TV, will continue elsewhere.

“BoxNation is a fantastic channel, they have been getting all the big fights recently and we are thrilled to be a part of them,” said Barry McGuigan. “All of the titles are open for us and the only guy we would be reluctant to fight at this stage -but would do maybe in nine months or a year’s time- is Guillermo Rigondeaux. He’s very talented but very awkward and doesn’t sell any tickets so he’s the only guy we’d avoid for the next year or so.”

McGuigan also blasted spurious comments made on social media, labelling it ‘spoiler stuff and nonsense’, before vowing to carry on regardless by moving forward with the new TV deal and promotional plans. The proposed Belfast dates include September/October of this year followed by January/February and May/June in 2014. Frampton will be eager to put aside a period of indecision and level his frustration out on a yet-to-be-named foe in Wembley on July 20. Trainer Shane McGuigan

added that the uncertainty surrounding a fight date was not ideal but Carl's gym ethic always leaves him primed to make weight and deliver a quality performance regardless of the circumstances.

"We had a date to fight and it got delayed so we were training for that and then we were going to be put out on the Luke Campbell debut show as an undercard fight in Hull which didn't make much sense. That was pushed back to July 13 and we took two weeks off and sparred and trained to keep in shape," said Shane.

Frampton Still Hopeful of Coaxing Quigg Into the Ring – 1st June 2013

Carl Frampton may be busy plotting a path to world title glory but the Belfast super-bantamweight still wants to lay the ghost of Scott Quigg to rest before continuing his ascension to the top. It's easy to see why fans covet a match between the talented duo and it would be one of domestic boxing's missed opportunities if the fight fails to materialise. Frampton also hit back at virtual critics who have been suggesting that his move to BoxNation was a contrived strategy for avoiding the Bury brawler.

“One thing I've been reading over the last couple of days is that with us moving ship we are avoiding Scott Quigg but that's a senseless opinion,” countered the European champion. “I'd love that fight and I definitely want to fight him. There's only one reason why the fight hasn't happened yet and it's nothing to do with Quigg or Ricky Hatton, it's because Joe Gallagher doesn't want it - simple as.”

According to trainer Shane McGuigan, Carl believes more than anybody that he's capable of bettering Quigg were the clash to be made. Frampton's head coach is also buoyed by Ricky Hatton's comments last week that he's keen for the fight to still be made.

“It will be a great fight between two fresh and young guys and whoever loses can still go on and have a career afterwards,” said Shane. “People get caught up that it's a make-or-break kind of fight and my opinion is that Carl will completely destroy him but I think that if he does, and it's a good fight, then Quigg can always go on and make a career for himself.”

“We have been looking at Scott Quigg for the last two years,” added Barry McGuigan, “and he doesn't want anything to do with us but we are hoping things will change. Carl is ready to fight for the world title now and if we got a shot at the title in September then we'd take it if the belts became available.”

‘The Jackal’ confirmed that they will play the waiting game for a world title shot as the IBF and WBC belt holders sort out their respective differences -through mandatories, voluntaries and so forth- and then he'll be ready to step in. But he agreed with McGuigan that if a governing body comes knocking before next February, however, he will not hesitate in accepting the challenge.

“If the opportunity comes then I'm ready to jump in straight away, if someone offers us a world title fight then I'm happy to take it in September/October,” said Frampton.

Frampton a Key Player In New Promotional Agreement – 6th June 2013

Carl Frampton has responded to suggestions that the Matchroom split and BoxNation link-up were somehow conducted without his agreement by reinforcing the fact that he will play a key role in any future career moves. Frampton will indeed be working on the promotional side of things alongside manager Barry McGuigan when the first of the three planned Belfast shows goes ahead in September of this year.

“It’s been made out as if everything has been done behind my back but I’m the main man in this team and if I don’t keep on winning then we’re going nowhere,” confirmed ‘The Jackal’. “I was definitely frustrated waiting for fights to be made, getting pushed to the backburner and if you’re waiting two and three weeks for an easy answer then it’s not good. I want regular fights and things seemed to be slowing up a bit.”

Regardless of the specific reasons for the Matchroom disconnect, it was clear that the powerhouse promoters were acting on a commitment to sign marquee names and as a result, dates and TV appearances would be at a premium for the existing talent. George Groves, Tony Bellew and Ricky Burns all made the switch from Frank Warren’s stable and with David Haye appearing on the radar, as well as debutant Luke Campbell and a host of other names, something had to give. Frampton and his team decided to move over to Warren’s BoxNation channel and plot a path from that standpoint.

“I got a much better deal from BoxNation and Frank and this is much better for me and my family,” added the Tigers Bay boxer. “People are being showcased on Sky a lot more than I ever was and they gave me big fights and a platform to perform on but after that it went dead until I was fighting again whereas other guys were on there being promoted constantly every week.”

Carl’s first assignment under the new banner will be on July 20 in Wembley as the super-bantamweight defends his IBF Intercontinental title in a bid to shake off some ring rust before a formal assault on world honours.

“There’s a few names floating about for July 20 but I don’t want to say anything until its concrete. I don’t want to be taking a massive step back from Kiko Martinez, I want to be fighting someone of a similar level to Kiko or maybe even better because that will progress my career and we’re looking at the big fights from now,” he concluded.

Irish Talent Will Benefit from Frampton's Belfast Return – 8th June 2013

One interesting opportunity to arise from Carl Frampton's decision to sever ties with Matchroom sport and go it alone is the undercard slots for at least three Odyssey shows that will now be open to a cluster of young hopefuls. When Barry McGuigan promoted Carl's fights against Yuri Voronin (September 2010) and Gavin Reid (December 2010) in the Ulster Hall as part of his early ring education, the Clones Cyclone gave undercard opportunities to Lurgan duo Ryan Greene and Stephen Haughian as well as exciting super-flyweight prospect Jamie Conlan, who is now closing in fast on a British title shot. Conlan may well return to the McGuigan fold to stake his claim for domestic honours as an Odyssey Arena support act.

"We are looking at Jamie Conlan as well as Anthony Cacace, Daniel McShane, James Tennyson and the young kid Ryan Burnett," said McGuigan, who will soon start weighing up options. "Paul McCloskey could bounce back and we feel he's got plenty left in the tank, plus there's also Brian Magee. If these guys want to come and discuss things then we're here, with BoxNation giving the TV exposure."

McGuigan marvelled at the electric atmosphere that was generated by an ecstatic crowd during Frampton's knockout win over Kiko Martinez in February. He feels that the momentum can only increase and even bigger nights are on the horizon.

"I've never heard an atmosphere yet as a promoter like the last one against Martinez, it was extraordinary and we believe it will be bigger and better in our planned dates. As long as this guy keeps doing what he does, and we know that Shane will meticulously take care of that end of things, then this will get very exciting."

George Warren, who was on hand to speak on behalf of Frank Warren and his multiple interests, is keen to build a solid following in Belfast and sees home advantage in big title fights as a key proponent to achieving glory.

"Carl's best chance of winning a world title fight is in Belfast and we've seen Jamie McDonnell down at bantamweight and Carl Froch both showing the difference that home advantage can make," Warren stated. "From our perspective, with me talking personally for the channel and Frank Warren Promotions, all of this stuff about who's promoting what is irrelevant. The bottom line is that we have a fantastic talent in Carl that you can see him on the channel that brings you the best boxing

and the rest is history so let's move on and build something.

“Things can obviously change in boxing but the plan is for Carl to fight on our Wembley show and then get him back out late September-early October, Barry wants to put on a final eliminator and then push on for the world title shot. Hopefully we can squeeze in a defence and then see what it's about, by keeping him busy along the way.”

Co-promotions and managerial issues were clearly cited by Matchroom Sport in their press release statement that confirmed the split. While BoxNation will televise the action, barring July 20 it will be a joint McGuigan-Frampton initiative handling the promotional duties.

“After July 20, the fights in Belfast will be our promotion, Team Frampton and McGuigan will be promoting over here,” confirmed Barry. “I want to give young Belfast kids regular fights and we are at least going to have three of the four-fight deal taking place in Ireland.”

Michael Sweeney Wants Conall Carmichael for the Irish Title – 13th June 2013

Mayo cruiserweight Michael Sweeney is ready to knuckle down and work his way to fitness in a bid to realise a long-standing Irish title dream. Sweeney is targeting a scrap with recent Prizefighter participant Conall Carmichael and hopes that they can contest domestic honours on the Carl Frampton show proposed for September.

“A Sweeney vs. Carmichael fight in Belfast would be good; Conall is a good fighter and a true gent but this is boxing and I want that Irish title,” stated ‘The Storm’. “I hear that Ian Tims is injured so he should vacate and box the winner of me and Carmichael.”

Sweeney tackled Tims back in March 2011 on the Casey-Rigondeaux undercard in Dublin’s City West venue. Despite being a skilled operator and enjoying a reasonable start, Sweeney struggled to keep pace in the later rounds and allowed his marauding opponent to power home and take the Irish title on a 97-95 verdict. Question marks were raised about the Ballinrobe man’s fitness as a result and this is an issue that he is keen to rectify, especially after suffering a retirement loss in his most recent outing to Stephen Simmons for the Celtic crown.

“I lost my last fight because I wasn’t in shape as people could see,” confessed Sweeney. “I’m back in the gym now, I’ve changed a few things and working at home makes it better because, as they say, a happy fighter is a good fighter. I hear that Frank Warren Promotions are doing shows in Belfast in September so why not make a fight between me and Carmichael for the undercard? I want it so let’s do it.”

Sweeney also kept an informed eye on events in Canada last weekend when Adonis Stevenson shocked light-heavyweight ruler Chad Dawson with a one-round blitz. Michael was a regular spar-hand in the late Emanuel Steward’s Kronk Gym and shared the ring with Dawson when preparing the southpaw slickster for his 2011 encounter with Adrian Diaconu.

“Stevenson is a hard puncher and Dawson just got caught but that’s boxing,” the 30-year-old sympathised. “I’ve sparred with Dawson in Detroit and he is slick and fast. I also spent time with Emanuel Steward in Austria and Detroit sparring with Wladimir Klitschko that helped me a lot. That was great experience but now I have to get back on track and this is my last shot. The passing of Emanuel was a shock when I heard the news as he was a powerful man that would help everyone and got my name out there. We spoke a lot over the phone and I still have him in my

prayers. I spent time with Andy Lee as well; Andy is a nice guy.”

Sweeney is now looking forward to linking up with Peter Fury and his team at their Belgium training base in July for some quality workouts alongside Tyson and Hughie as well as Michael’s younger brother Gary Sweeney, a promising novice.

Frampton Looking to Make a Statement in Orozco Showdown – 28th June 2013

Carl Frampton has spoken of how important it is to make a statement against Fabian Oscar Orozco on July 20. The Belfast boxer is also fully aware of the fact that his opponent will be coming in with nothing to lose and a big opportunity to shoot up the IBF ratings if he pulls off the upset.

“It’s a big jump I’ve made from Sky to BoxNation and it’s important for me to look good,” stated ‘The Jackal’. “I got a bit of criticism before off the the Sky commentators when I beat Raul Hiraes. They treated me a little bit unfairly. I gave the guy (Hiraes), who was a very good fighter, a boxing lesson. It is important for me to look good and be exciting because that’s what sells tickets. I am a ticket-seller but I want to appeal to the masses. I want people to come out and watch me.”

Carl sees only slight comparisons between Orozco and previous opponent Kiko Martinez. The San Juan native is taller than Kiko and Frampton believes that his work is a little more refined than the Spaniard’s.

“He has a nice tight defence, he tries to hold the centre of the ring but he seems to counter quite well,” assessed the reigning European super-bantamweight king. “He blocks a lot on his gloves and then tries to counter your shots. He’s definitely cleverer than Martinez but probably not as big a puncher; he can definitely dig a bit though and I think he stopped four of his last five. It’s not going to be an easy fight for me but I’ve stated before that I didn’t want to take a massive step back from Kiko Martinez after looking so good in that fight. I think this fight is definitely going to benefit my career.”

Frampton currently enjoys a number six ranking with the IBF while Orozco sits further behind at 14. This means that the Tigers Bay prodigy goes into the bout with more to lose, especially as potential world title chances are now within touching distance.

“I have more to lose but I don’t want to be taking easy fights that aren’t going to benefit me,” Carl reasoned. “He’s got big backing in Argentina and he thinks he can come over here and upset the applecart. There’s more pressure but I reckon I perform better when there’s pressure on me to deliver.”

Frampton Looking to Dispatch Orozco On Route to World Title – 29th June 2013

Carl Frampton will keep his world title ambitions ticking along on July 20 with an IBF Intercontinental title defence in Wembley. Opponent on the night is Fabian Oscar Orozco, a capable Argentine boxer who has previously competed at title level but is leaving his native land to fight for the first time.

“This guy is a very talented guy,” said Frampton’s manager Barry McGuigan. “He’s strong and determined, very much like Sergio Martinez and at 27 years old he can box and he can fight. He took this fight immediately when we were offered it, even though he had a fight (already scheduled) we’re told it’s a safe opponent.”

Hindsight of course is a wonderful thing and that opponent turned out to not so safe after all. A week after the conference call where the quotes for this article were taken, Julian Aristule knocked Orozco out in two rounds for the IBF Latino super-bantamweight title. The Wembley bout, however, still goes ahead as planned at the time of writing.

“They’re very much coming over here with a winning mentality, a winning attitude,” concluded McGuigan on the call. “They believe they can win and what’s more, it’s about exciting fights. We want to have an impact for our first fight on BoxNation and we’ve picked a guy who can really fight. The fans are going to be thrilled with this.”

Double Wilton Success and Joy for Burnett On Holiday Inn Card – 28th June 2013

Luke Wilton moved one step closer to a second crack at the British flyweight title with a points win over previously undefeated **Kallum De'Ath**. 'Winky' had been preparing for a third fight with Usman Ahmed before switch-hitting De'Ath stepped in and posed a variety of problems with his awkwardly effective style. Wilton (8st 6lb 6oz) started tentatively but upped the pressure as the rounds progressed, driving De'Ath (8st 9lb 2oz) back while the visitor found a home for a right hook to the body. Wilton suffered a bloodied nose in the fifth but marched forward, aided by De'Ath's sudden fatigue. Luke's superior fitness down the stretch secured a 58-57 decision on referee Paul McCullagh's scorecard.

"I need to be fighting flyweights but it was either face Kallum tonight or nobody so I took it," said Wilton.

Ricky Hatton's protege **Ryan Burnett** marked his first professional appearance in Belfast with a stylish second-round stoppage of Slovakia's **Elemir Rafael**. The 21-year-old won a gold medal at the 2010 Youth Olympics and medical complications that stunted his early progress are now firmly in the past. Burnett (8st 6lb 12oz) wasted little time in peppering Rafael (8st 12lb 4oz) with classy combinations while trying to steer clear of some cynical spoiling tactics. Elemir tasted the canvas in round one and was taking a beating in the second before referee Hugh Russell counted him out at 2-05 (of a set four-threes).

Luke's younger brother **Matthew Wilton** overcame London-based Nigerian **Ideh Ochuko**. Wilton may have been forgiven for thinking he was in for a handy outing when a well-placed right hand sent Ochuko to the floor in the opening round but the away man battled back to push Matthew harder than any of his previous six opponents. Wilton (9st 13lb 10oz) ended with a deep cut above the right eye and toiled to suppress the strength and workrate of Ochuko (9st 12lb 4oz). Paul McCullagh scored the bout 77-74 to Wilton who picked up a minor belt for his troubles.

Reigning Irish super-featherweight champion **James Tennyson** displayed too much ferocity for opponent **Andrei Hramyka**, en-route to a seventh knockout in eight flawless wins. To his credit Hramyka (9st 5lb 4oz) stuck in for longer than expected, especially after a sharp right busted open his nose and sent blood spraying across the canvas. Tennyson (9lb 4lb 14oz) picked his shots with calculating menace and a

maturity beyond his 19 years. Comprehensively outpunched for every second, the Belarusian was eventually rescued at 2-49 of the opening session (scheduled for six-threes) by third man John Lowey.

Tennyson's Kronk stablemate **Daniel 'Insane' McShane** sent his vocal legion of supporters home happy with a fourth-round knockout win over **Ivans Levicki**. McShane (9st 13lb 10oz) started fast and ripped solid shots in to head and body, pushing his rangy foe on to the back foot. Both men tired as the bout progressed and Levicki (10st 11lb 2oz) landed some sporadic blows to remind the fans' favourite that he was still involved. The resistance lasted until a solid right hook to the ribs forced Hugh Russell to count Levicki out at 0-47 of the final round.

Kazakhstan's **Zhanat Zhakiyanov** (8st 13lb) lived up to his lofty reputation with a fourth-round stoppage of **Michael Escobar**, a Nicaraguan based in Spain. John Lowey called it off at 2-04 with Escobar (9st) shipping punishment on the ropes.

Brendan Galbraith of BoxRec News said: "Overall, this was a value for money small hall show that found the right balance of showcasing up and coming local fighters with competitive matchmaking."

Burnett Looking Forward After First Belfast Success **– 2nd July 2013**

Ryan Burnett had his hands full with awkward Slovakian Elemir Rafael but the youngster managed to break his opponent's resistance and send his fans home happy with a second-round knockout win. Following on from a win in Liverpool last month Burnett wasted little time in pressuring oft-beaten Rafael, peppering the visitor with classy combinations.

“That was tough, he was awkward and very difficult to figure out,” admitted Ryan, who lost his cool with the spoiling tactics of the visitor in round one. “I got into it and picked my shots. I got a bit giddy [with Rafael's grabbing] but the corner calmed me down and I put him away in the second. Ricky was telling me to feint and take it easy, just to get my jab going. I couldn't even get close to him so I stayed nice and tight.”

This is just the second step on a long road for Burnett who is only 21 years old and set for a steep learning curve over the coming months. He is looking for further hometown appearances after this first pro victory in Belfast.

“I want to reach my potential,” continued Ryan, who is setting a five-year plan towards title glory. “I get great sparring with heavier guys in Ricky's gym which is really helping me to gain experience. Boxing as a pro here is great and I want to get on the Frampton shows that are coming to Belfast. This is a different game to the amateurs and I'm enjoying it.”

Matt Wilton Passes Toughest Test of His Professional Career – 3rd July 2013

Matthew Wilton scored the best win of his career so far on Saturday night when the 23-year-old dug deep to see off the spirited challenge of Ideh Ochuko. Wilton dropped the Nigerian in the opening round but that proved to be a false dawn as Ochuko motored into gear and pushed 'Speedy' to the limit.

"I was happy enough, especially after catching him with that right hand in the first round I thought it was going to be an early night but it turned out to be anything but!" laughed Wilton in the changing rooms after his bout. "He's tough, I hit him with everything and wobbled him a couple of times but he stood up to it."

Sparring sessions with Eamonn O'Kane and Paul McCloskey will hold Matthew in good stead for future title opportunities. He came through adversity as well in this bout when a cut opened up on the right eye and immediately threatened to cause problems but was stymied by his corner team of Alan Wilton and Oscar Checa. Oscar said afterwards that he was pleased with Matthew's win and hopes he will pick better shots in his next outing.

"We clashed heads then I felt a wee trickle and I wasn't sure how bad it was until I got back to the corner," revealed Wilton. "I've seen it in the mirror and it's not too pretty. Eight rounds will stand by me in the future; I'll take a week off and then get back to it in the gym. He (Ochuko) wasn't too happy with the decision. My corner said after three rounds to pick it up but I didn't want to 'blow up' because I hadn't even been four rounds before and I had to pace it for eight. The right hand and left hook were working; I learned a few things in there tonight from him so it's all about getting experience."

Matthew is starting to add a bit of meat to his punches, especially after making a small but noticeable statement in his last fight by halting rugged journeyman Johnny Greaves. After turning pro a couple of weight divisions above his natural limit, the man now ranked at number 29 in the BoxRec rankings has slowly boiled down to light-welterweight where he intends to campaign for the foreseeable future.

"I started off as a pro at 11 and a half stone so I've brought it down gradually to light-welterweight and I'm happy at that weight," concluded Wilton.

De'Ath Win Not Enough for Disappointed 'Winky' – 3rd July 2013

Even though he battled through a host of stylistic conundrums to take a points verdict, flyweight Luke Wilton has admitted that taking the fight with Kallum De'Ath in the Holiday Inn was a mistake. Luke snatched a razor thin 58-57 decision from referee Paul McCullagh but the bout was in the balance from beginning to end.

“He was far too big for me and to be honest I regret taking the fight,” said a despondent Wilton after the Ormeau Avenue show had concluded. “It was a hard fight, he was big and strong and difficult to hit cleanly. Last Friday afternoon I was told about the fight and I didn't know anything about De'Ath; I'd never heard of him before. Ricky Hatton used to have him and he said he couldn't crack an egg! Kallum had obviously watched and studied me; I didn't know he switched and I hate southpaws, full stop. It's a win at the end of the day. He caught me with some big hooks to the body but you can outbox me and I'll still keep coming, you have to hit me with a hammer to stop me coming forward. He was always working at me, a complete nightmare.”

De'Ath's languid, rangy demeanour would pose problems for many lower weight operators with domestic title aspirations. Reigning British and Commonwealth flyweight champion Kevin Satchell has been training alongside Luke over the past week and the Liverpoolian sent his spar-mate a post-fight text explaining in his own colourful way just how difficult De'Ath is to pin down. Title fights will have to wait in the meantime because Luke has some out of the ring matters to take care of.

“My wife's due a baby soon so I'm taking a break after two hard fights and then back in September,” he said. “I need to start fighting flyweights again, people at the right weight, although it's difficult to find opponents. It was either fight Kallum tonight or fight nobody and I stood up to him and fought back.”

Mixed Results for Macklin, Gavin and Nesbitt In Weekend Bouts – 1st July 2013

In Connecticut **Matthew Macklin** was unable to halt the unstoppable force that **Gennady Golovkin** is fast becoming. ‘Mack the Knife’ struggled from the start to cope with the clubbing power of Golovkin’s punches and a sickening left hook to the body midway through the third-round dropped Macklin heavily and he was promptly counted out of his WBA middleweight title challenge. Golovkin moved to 27-0 while hopefully Matthew will now fight Andy Lee, Matthew Murray or Darren Barker.

“Without a shadow of a doubt, he’s definitely the best kid I’ve ever fought,” Macklin told Sky Sports. “I had a plan to exploit his weakness which was his lack of experience - he’s only been ten rounds once - but credit to him, he didn’t even let me get into any kind of rhythm at all. He was patient, he was hard to hit clean, kept the pressure on, picked his punches well and that body shot took it out of me.”

Another Birmingham boxer of Irish descent, **Frankie Gavin**, enjoyed better luck in his big fight against fellow unbeaten welterweight **Denton Vassell**. Gavin added Vassell’s Commonwealth title to his own British strap when Denton retired at the end of the seventh round with a broken jaw. Gavin’s sharp southpaw jabs and overhand lefts had seen him dominate much of the action, although Vassell did enjoy success in the fifth with his right hand. Gavin can now target fights with Kell Brook and Lee Purdy in a bid to reignite his stuttering career and start fulfilling his vast potential.

On the undercard in Liverpool of the Gavin-Vassell double-title showdown there was little joy for Belfast super-featherweight **Eddie Nesbitt**. ‘Top Gun’ was stopped in the opening session (of a scheduled six-threes) by former Commonwealth champion **Stephen Smith**.

O’Kane Beats Fitzgerald for Irish Title But There’s No Joy for Returning Murphy – 13th July 2013

Eamonn O’Kane is the new Irish middleweight champion following a 97-94 victory over **Anthony Fitzgerald** at the Fairways Hotel. The well-matched pairing first locked horns 14 months ago in the Prizefighter tournament where O’Kane earned a three-round split decision and the Dungiven man came on strong in the second half of this contest to secure a rematch success.

Eamonn benefitted from pre-fight sparring with Gary O’Sullivan who had vacated the Irish belt. Fitzgerald grabbed the early initiative, marching forward behind a tight guard as O’Kane (11st 5lb 5oz) tried to implement the changes instilled by his new coaching team of Bernardo and Oscar Checa. Increased head movement and a solid jab worked early on but soon enough O’Kane reverted to type and entered the trenches. Fitzgerald (11st 5lb 2oz) boxed behind a compact jab in the third-round but narrowly avoided a deduction by referee Mickey Vann for a low blow and rabbit punch combination. He also suffered a cut to the scalp in that session while O’Kane fought against a rapidly-closing right eye in a predictably bruising encounter. Roared on by a sizeable following that served to provide an electric small hall atmosphere, there was little to choose between the combatants throughout the contest.

O’Kane was landing low blows too frequently for Vann’s liking in the eighth and was duly reprimanded with a one-point deduction. The 2010 Commonwealth Games Gold medallist was, however, starting to put rounds in the bank with Fitzgerald staying inside too long after throwing his combinations. The Dubliner sagged a little in round nine as O’Kane increased the pressure and pulled away to secure his first pro title success.

“Fitzgerald proved in Prizefighter and again in there tonight that he’s a warrior,” said O’Kane. “Maybe I’ll get another chance at John Ryder. I took that fight at short notice, it was my own fault.”

Paddy Murphy’s homecoming bout didn’t exactly go to plan when the Australian-based Newry prospect was held to a 77-77 draw by **Peter McDonagh**. Murphy (10st 11lb 7oz) raced out of the blocks and tried to put the Bermondsey fighter to sleep early but McDonagh (10st 12lb) hung in and hurt the hometown favourite with a right hand in round two. The bout swayed back-and-forth with both men having their moments. Mickey Vann was unable to split them after eight and Murphy will now look to address his shortcomings in preparation for a slot on the Haye-Fury undercard.

“My game plan went out of the window from round one but what a tough nut Peter McDonagh is. I certainly don’t dispute the draw,” said Murphy.

Hughie Fury improved his record to 7-0 with a routine victory over **Ivica Perkovic**. Hughie employed a quality jab and impressive foot movement to stalk his more experienced foe. Perkovic (19st 10lb 4oz) was fleshy around the middle and adopted a cagey, back-foot approach with a big emphasis on survival. Fury (17st 8lb) picked away at what little target he could find during this scheduled six-threes, before piling on the pressure throughout the fifth with the Croatian noticeably tiring. It was no surprise when his corner instructed referee Paul McCullagh of a retirement at the end of round five.

Steve Collins Jnr will have a tough time emulating the world title achievements of his illustrious father but the cruiserweight debutant got off to a winning start against **Stanislavs Makareno** in a four-twos. Makareno (13st 7lb) was a late replacement for Moses Matovu and worked hard enough to keep things competitive. Former rugby player Collins (14st 3lb) set a ferocious pace and was worthy of his 39-37 victory on Emile Tiedt’s scorecard.

Philip Sutcliffe Jnr scored his third knockout in as many pro outings with a first-round destruction of **Radoslav Mitev**. The Bulgarian visitor (10st 2lb 9oz) attacked Sutcliffe (10st 2lb 7oz) with looping hooks from the opening bell but walked on to a body shot late in the session and crumbled. Paul McCullagh counted him out at 2-57 in no position to continue, much to the dismay of switch-hitting Dubliner Sutcliffe. It was optimistically scheduled for eight rounds.

Luke Keeler prevailed in a rough-and-tumble middleweight brawl with rugged veteran **Tommy Tolan**. Belfast’s Tolan employed his full set of tricks to keep the novice at bay for the early rounds. Keeler (12st) turned up the heat in the third-round after an ugly welt appeared under Tommy’s right eye. Keeler did enough to take the decision 40-36 on Emile Tiedt’s reckoning while Tolan (12st) held firm.

Taggart Targets Fagan Fight to Fulfill Irish Title Dream – 18th July 2013

Omagh boxer Dee Taggart is desperate to reignite his career and finish on a high by realising a long standing ambition of winning an Irish title. Taggart has not laced up the gloves in nearly two years but believes now is the perfect time to brush off the cobwebs and rumble with any forthcoming rivals for domestic glory. Oisín Fagan, a name well known to Irish fight fans, is high on the hit list.

“Oisín Fagan is keen to fight me and that was a fight John Breen always wanted for me; it would be a good fight,” stated Taggart. “It would be a fight between two honest boxers, because Oisín is a sound wee man but if I was given the chance to fight him for an Irish title I’d win in style and finish my journey, my dream and my career with the only thing I’ve ever wanted in boxing - an Irish title.”

Taggart has revealed that getting intermediaries to agree on opponents, times and dates of fights is an extremely frustrating part of the business and with less shows across Ireland in the current climate the pair may have to square off further afield. Dee has also lifted the lid on what has been an increasingly frustrating period for him after suffering a shock loss to Sid Razak in September 2011 that left the Tyrone battler disillusioned with the sport and contemplating permanent retirement.

“At the Odyssey Arena on 10th September I was meant to be in the ring at five-thirty but I got in at twenty-past 12,” he recalled. “I was weight-drained and then had to wait six hours, but because of who I lost to and all I’d been through I spoke to everyone around me and they all told me to retire. I wanted to fight on and get two rematches and go for titles. Boxing is not fair, [people said] Dee Taggart’s a bum, he’s useless. I was in a bad way for months after the fight because I walked away from boxing and even the coaching. I did the one thing I never do, I quit. I listened to everyone but me. You see, in boxing you need the right team, you can’t do it on your own and that’s what I was doing.

“I decided to move on with my life and got engaged but it’s always tortured me. I’m from a housing estate called Strathroy, full of hard, proud people and they all keep asking me why not come back. One guy who I went to primary school said, “Dee you’re from the ‘roy, you have to come back. What type of Strathroy man wants to go out on his back?” and that was the truth. This is what a fight with Oisín is about. He will be a heavy favourite but that’s fine, I respect Oisín he’s a gentleman.”

‘Gael Force’ Fagan is also keen on the matchup but cited some logistical issues that have arisen to so far stop the bout was coming to

fruition. The 39-year-old has had his own issues to contend with of late, since deciding to dust the gloves off for one last shot at professional glory.

“We’ve talked about that [fighting Taggart] before and I’m on for the fight, but I don’t think either of us are promoted; hence, I’m not sure whose card we’d fight on,” lamented Fagan, a former Irish lightweight champion. “I was speaking to [matchmaker and PR guru] Luca Di Caro who was saying he’s got something coming up in York Hall next month.”

Oisín was hoping to fight WBF lightweight ruler Chris Goodwin but on more than one occasion the fight failed to materialise for various reasons.

“I turned up to York Hall and he did too, but 4lbs too heavy. I was in serious shape and I actually saw that he looked scared, but I gave him until the next day to make it. He then came in a poxy 15lbs too heavy!”

That seems to be the extent of the veteran’s luck just lately but he believes that things may be about to change. Taggart and Fagan have had inactive spells during their respective careers and flirted with retirement but both men believe that an agreement can be made and an all-action Irish title fight between the pair could soon be making its way to a big show undercard in Ireland or beyond.

Irish Champion O'Kane Moving On from Ryder Defeat – 19th July 2013

Irish middleweight champion Eamonn O'Kane is moving on past the stoppage defeat he suffered at the unforgiving fists of John Ryder in his only pro defeat to date. Eamonn has settled in to life training under the educated gaze of Bernardo Checa and his brother Oscar who are building a thriving new Belfast base. O'Kane was also pleased to have finally settled the score with Anthony Fitzgerald and, in his eyes, put to bed any lingering doubts over his split decision Prizefighter win from the first meeting between the pair.

“I'm learning and I'm just delighted because it's the monkey off your back, if you want to call it that,” he said after the Dundalk Irish title win. “Everybody's whispering and all that there, that's it settled now, I boxed him from start to finish and won the fight clearly. Fitzgerald's a true warrior, he was a warrior against Andy Lee, he was a warrior in Prizefighter, he's been a warrior in all his fights but I was by far the better boxer out there and I think I showed that.”

While falling back on his core attributes of physical strength and natural fitness O'Kane is now working on adding a touch of finesse to his arsenal.

“That was the plan, I've boxed as an amateur, obviously, I've won big medals as an amateur so to prove I can box, it was just a matter of getting re-trained. ‘Nugget’ Nugent was always telling me those things, to box a bit more, but sometimes you just need a new man telling you and that's Bernardo telling me now.”

Eamonn dedicated the win to the memory of Nugent's wife Marie who sadly passed away recently. He also praised the entire Immaculata team who took him so far throughout a highly successful amateur career and into the fledgling stages of his professional endeavours.

“Gerry ‘Nugget’ Nugent and the Immaculata team, Alfredo Meli and all the guys, they are brilliant and I'm grateful for all the things they did for me at the Immaculata. I can't thank Bernardo Checa [enough] for taking me on though because he didn't have to take me on, he's a very prestigious coach. He's got Brian Magee, Paul McCloskey, very good boxers, Martin Rogan, they're winning titles and fighting big fights. I'm grateful to all the team, Oscar and the guys in there are great at helping me out.”

The Dungiven boxer feels his skills progressing already and would love to avenge a sole pro defeat to John Ryder. If Ryder beats Billy Joe Saunders when the pair meet in Stratford, England on September 21 then

he could move out of sight, but if he loses then there is always a chance that O’Kane could catch up with him again.

“Maybe I’ll get a chance at John Ryder, maybe I’ll not,” hoped Eamonn. “I took that fight at short notice, it was my own fault. ‘Nugget’ told me not to take the fight but I wanted the opportunity and I wasn’t ready for it because I wasn’t in physical condition. I’m wildly improving, they’re in there [the coaches] every day, pushing me, driving me and getting the best out of me. That’s only a fraction. I can move onwards and upwards and fight better boys.”

Onwards and Upwards for Steve Collins Junior After Impressive Debut – 19th July 2013

Steve Collins Junior got his professional boxing career off to a solid start in the Fairways Hotel with a points win over Stanislavs Makareno. Collins showed a clear appetite for the sport by entering the ring in good condition and setting a hot pace for the duration of his four-round cruiserweight debut. The level-headed novice later admitted that he has a new-found respect for boxers like his world championship-winning father.

“I do indeed – it just shows how tough you have to be,” puffed Steve in the dressing room straight after his debut bout. “I took a lot of big shots and stayed going forward. There was no advice [from Collins Senior], he just said to me ‘son I know you have a big heart and I know you’re tough – work hard and you can do this’. I didn’t do great to be honest.”

That response was perhaps a little over critical for a first-timer with no amateur experience. Collins showed plenty of strength and desire to push Makareno on the back foot and earn a 39-37 verdict from referee Emile Tiedt.

“I was a bit sucked in by the crowd,” he said. “It was my first time stepping into the ring so I was a bit off my game. I got caught with a lot more shots than I thought I would and it’s my first time in against a guy who was my height – I’m used to fighting taller guys. So it was a new experience for me. My shots were hurting him and at one stage I had the air taken out of him. I loved every bit of it. After the first round I was catching my breath, but yeah it was great.”

Despite the buzz of a first fight and first victory, Steve is by no means getting carried away. Next stop is a slot on the July 20 Dereck Chisora-Malik Scott undercard in Wembley, where another of Paschal Collins’s stable will aim to score a big win. Undefeated Cork puncher Gary O’Sullivan meets Billy Joe Saunders.

“I’m on a Frank Warren card under Gary ‘Spike’ O’Sullivan in the Wembley Arena. I just decided to take a few fights and see where this goes. I have another fight next week and a few more in the future hopefully. I want to see how this goes first before saying what I’m going to do or whatever. I just have to be realistic.”

‘Spike’ Sparring Pushed O’Kane On to Irish Title Success – 20th July 2013

Recently-crowned Irish middleweight ruler Eamonn O’Kane has revealed that preparations for his 97-94 win over Anthony Fitzgerald in Dundalk on July 12 were aided by ex-champion Gary O’Sullivan. Cork banger O’Sullivan gets his big break on Saturday, July 20 against unbeaten London star Billy Joe Saunders and O’Kane reckons that O’Sullivan’s chilling punching power could make all the difference. Eamonn also admitted that he would be willing to defend his domestic belt against spar-mate ‘Spike’.

“Why not? Spike’s a gentleman, he helped me get ready [for Fitzgerald] and I helped him get ready [for Saunders],” explained Eamonn. “I hope he knocks Billy Joe Saunders out because ‘Spike’ O’Sullivan can punch. He’s a great lad, a great trainer and all the team in there, Paschal Collins and the lads, are very professional. They train hard and I’m grateful that they allowed me in and I think they’re grateful that I came down to spar as well. Spike’s going to do a great job [on Saturday night] because he’s been training very hard.”

After a high-quality ten rounds of title action O’Kane managed to up the ante down the stretch and outpoint Fitzgerald by three points on Mickey Vann’s scorecard in the big domestic showdown. It was a good win for the Dungiven man who is slowly working his way past a sole defeat to John Ryder last year. He is now searching for some veritable challengers to his newly acquired all-Ireland strap.

“Who can I defend it against? I’ll definitely defend it against whoever,” Eamonn welcomed, before realistically admitting that the likes of Matthew Macklin and Andy Lee are never going to come back to fight for an Irish title. “There’s Anthony Fitzgerald, but I already beat him. O’Sullivan is moving on to bigger and better things. Who’s going to fight for the Irish title? I’d definitely love to defend it.

“I think this win puts me in the top 15 in Europe. I’m willing to move on and build on this performance. I’ve been with them [Bernardo Checa and his new training team] since just after Christmas so I’m learning and starting to implement some of the stuff; I hoped I showed that tonight. Sometimes you think you boxed better than you actually did, but I think I was back to boxing again. I tried not to get involved in a war and I stuck to boxing and proved I can box.”

Whether or not O’Kane had grown stale under the tutelage of former amateur coach Gerry ‘Nugget’ Nugent is debatable but he does seem to be revelling under his fresh start in Belfast’s recently-opened All Origins

gym.

“Forget about titles, I’m happy just making an improvement. I’ve been training hard. Bernardo’s guiding me, Oscar’s guiding me, there are other guys in the gym that are guiding me and they’re going to push me on to bigger and better things, no doubt,” he concluded.

No Disputing McDonagh Draw for Newry's Paddy Murphy – 23rd July 2013

At the final bell it appeared that Paddy Murphy might have done enough to snatch victory. Taking into account the fact that the Newry man was very much the 'home' fighter and that he'd relentlessly ploughed forward for the duration of his scrap with Peter McDonagh, he would be forgiven for thinking that a strong case for victory had been presented to scoring referee Mickey Vann at the conclusion of eight combative rounds. Putting that aside, opponent McDonagh had more than held his own after shaking off an opening-round assault and the Bermondsey veteran even stunned Paddy in round two before chasing his tail throughout.

Veteran fight scribe Gerry Callan has seen a fair few fights during his time covering the sport for the Irish Daily Star. Callan immediately stated as the final bell rang that he fancied the draw and had scored the bout even. MC Harry McGavock announced the 77-77 split and confirmed that Gerry had indeed called it spot on and it turns out that Murphy isn't ready to argue about the decision either.

"What a tough nut Peter McDonagh is," agreed Paddy, after negotiating his way past a throng of fans and well wishers. "I didn't work well inside and I feel I was lucky to get the draw. I certainly don't dispute it. My game plan went out of the window from round one, I didn't blow myself in the first-round but I did try to put him away when the game plan was to box. I was told McDonagh couldn't hit but he caught me with a good shot in the second-round on the top of the head and he hurt me a bit. I should've jabbed more and listened to my corner."

Having completed his previous ten contests in Australia, following a successful amateur career in Ireland, Murphy had brought over his Brisbane-based trainer Gareth Williams to marshall the corner. Williams thought Paddy had nicked the decision but either way both men lamented the 25-year old's reluctance to stick to the pre-fight strategy and instead try to please the fans with a tear-up.

"Tonight, I didn't keep it long or work inside," continued Murphy, who now has eight wins from ten bouts with a couple of draws. "I felt a bit flat and my punches were off so it's back to the drawing board. I got sucked into a dogfight and he didn't take the jab away from me, I gave it to him. I thought I caught him early and so I just let them go which I probably shouldn't have. I wasn't listening to the instructions of my coach Gareth Williams who was telling me to jab to the chest. I was happy to work inside and push him back but that's not what we'd worked on."

Murphy also refuted suggestions that levels of competition both in the paid ring or sparring in the gym were perhaps a little softer in Australia and insisted that he has been receiving the highest quality of education in and out of the squared circle down under.

“As I was saying before the fight in interviews, the level of boxing in Australia is great. I’ve been sparring two boys out there that went to the Olympics and Cameron Hammond from our club beat John Joe Joyce comprehensively a couple of years ago. Damien Hooper beat Joe Ward at the Youth Olympics and I’m training with them every day. I would certainly recommend this to the other Irish lads out in Australia to come home and fight. I wouldn’t be surprised over the next couple of years if three or four Irish titles were across the other side of the world. My last fight [in Australia] was supposed to be a step-up but I just boxed off the back foot for ten rounds, nice and easy.”

Paddy will now look to push the downbeat emotions to one side as he moves on towards an enviable slot on a massive undercard set for September. Even though he is talking about the McDonagh fight in negative terms it is on the record as a draw and he still boasts an undefeated ledger.

“I got a draw in Hong Kong two fights ago and I thought I won every round that night but tonight it was a tough fight and a fair result,” he said. “My next fight is on the Haye-Fury September 28 card in Manchester. I’m disappointed with myself but I’ll live to fight another day.”

Aussie Coach Williams Insists Murphy Can Still Reach the Top – 24th July 2013

Paddy Murphy's coach Gareth Williams feels that his charge did enough to win against Peter McDonagh on July 12 in Murphy's homecoming bout. Despite the scoring deadlock Williams is ready to extract the positives and move on from a 77-77 draw. Paddy himself did not dispute the score delivered by veteran referee Mickey Vann but his Brisbane trainer felt it was slightly harsh.

"I'm disappointed because I thought we won by two rounds," lamented Gareth. "I'm not one hundred per cent happy with Paddy's performance because he didn't follow the plan, which was to jab the chest and use a double jab. We thought that Peter (McDonagh) could be a little flat-footed from the footage we had seen of him. Maybe the crowd got to Paddy, he came out for the first-round like a bull from a gate. He just likes to fight, even though he has the best jab in the business but he just didn't use it at all tonight.

"I thought we had won maybe six rounds to two or five rounds to three, but either way we won it. Paddy started off well but credit to Peter's experience because he knows how to take the rounds, riding the punches and coming on at the end of the rounds. It's not a loss for us, Peter is a worthy opponent and people thought we were mad taking this because it's not an easy fight. Paddy said that he wasn't coming over for an easy fight, he wasn't going to rip-off the fans and his family."

McDonagh was indeed a solid opponent, just as original headliner Michael Kelly would've been had he not withdrawn from the Dundalk show after being named at the original press conference. Coach Williams also runs shows back in his native Queensland and was recently awarded with a three star AIBA coaches rating. He revelled in the atmosphere generated by an excitable Fairways Hotel crowd and despite this latest setback the Aussie still believes Murphy can make inroads at a high level.

"Paddy is an exceptional kid and he'll make it," Williams affirmed. "He's 25 years old, that's his tenth pro fight and you learn so much from these fights. He's a dedicated kid who gets up at 6am doing strength and conditioning training, he's the ultimate professional always living the life. I believe he's got the goods."

The team will now regroup and prepare for a slot on the big Manchester PPV bill headlined by Tyson Fury and David Haye. Murphy may wish to have a warm-up fight before that event but his trainer is not so keen.

“September 28 will be a great occasion and Paddy might want to go out before that but I’m saying no, it’s rest time for us. There’s no chance he overtrained for tonight, we have that side of things all tailored with special people on board. The occasion got to him tonight, which I didn’t think would happen. But he dealt with the crowd and a solid opponent so it’s all good experience.”

Frampton Fights Parodi In October 19 Belfast Return – 14th August 2013

Carl Frampton will return to the Odyssey Arena, Belfast on Saturday, October 19 against Frenchman Jeremy Parodi. Barry McGuigan expressed his delight at the opponent who offered little hesitation in accepting the opportunity whenever he was approached. Parodi holds a 35-1-1 record with nine knockouts and a sole loss to Arsen Martirosyan. He holds the IBF International title which will be on the line alongside Frampton's IBF Intercontinental and European super-bantamweight belts.

“This will also serve as an eliminator for the IBF super-bantamweight world title which will be contested this Saturday between Jonathan Romero and Kiko Martinez,” explained Barry.

“The winner will then have to face Jeffrey Mathebula and then us. We’ve spoken to [South African promoter] Branko Milenkovic and he said they would be happy to bring Mathebula over to Belfast should they win. We offered the Parodi fight to Hugo Cazares who said yes and then changed his mind. All of the young lads on the undercard will thrive off the back of Carl’s shows. BoxNation are happy to come here and the city is starving for big fights.”

The undercard will feature middleweight Eamonn O’Kane and super-flyweight Jamie Conlan both taking part in, as yet unspecified, title fights. BoxNation representative Francis Warren made it known that a scrap between Conlan and Paul Butler is on the radar at some point down the line. O’Kane, meanwhile, will be keeping a close eye on the upcoming John Ryder-Billy Joe Saunders bout.

Frampton himself is itching to get back in the ring after his July 20 bout was pulled off the Wembley bill by the BBBofC with the frustrated Belfast boxer raring to go after an intense training camp.

“I thought I could fight and saw no reason why the bout couldn’t go ahead but the Board made a decision,” lamented ‘The Jackal’. “It’s great to be back in Belfast now and edging towards a world title. I would back Romero to beat Martinez when they fight and then Mathebula to beat Romero in the mandatory but it’s close, you never know, Kiko might pull off an upset because Romero likes to go to the ropes.

“We weren’t offered a fight with Romero, in fact when we looked for it we were told he was injured until September. Parodi is ranked number four by the IBF and we are number three so this makes sense. He's a good fighter and he will come to have a right go.”

McGuigan Primes Frampton for World Title Shot Once IBF Roadblock Clears – 16th August 2013

Barry McGuigan's world title master plan is starting to take shape with Carl Frampton now almost within touching distance of a shot at one of the 'big four' titles. The IBF remains flavour of choice for Cyclone Promotions with Carl's October 19 rumble against France's Jeremy Parodi being awarded eliminator status. The winner will look to fight early next year against one of three names: Jonathan Romero, Kiko Martinez or Jeffrey Mathebula.

"After Saturday night Romero [assuming he is victorious] has to fight his mandatory Mathebula within 90 days which takes it to just before Christmas," explained McGuigan. "We have to force ourselves into the mandatory position and Mathebula has already said that he'll come here. If Martinez caused an upset at the weekend then we are pretty sure we'll get him back and we believe we would get Romero over as well."

Barry also revealed that such luminaries as Cristian Mijares and Fernando Montiel had been under consideration for the Odyssey show but both understandably favoured more workable options elsewhere. The former world featherweight king was not closing the door to other sanctioning organisations either and positive discussions have taken place with Leo Santa Cruz's representative Robert Diaz. Leo tackles ex-Rendall Munroe victim Victor Terrazas for the WBC version of the super-bantamweight belts on August 24 in California.

"They [Team Santa Cruz] are very excited at a potential conflict between these guys at some point in the future - we said we'd fight in America and they said they'd come over here so that's positive," enthused McGuigan. "We offered it to WBC number three Hugo Cazares who said yes and then no, so it's difficult. You can understand their position because Carl's number seven with the WBC so it would be a risk for him."

All future plans would come to nought if Frampton was to somehow overlook the challenge presented by Jeremy Parodi, who will arrive in Belfast with a statistically impressive slate and as a relatively unknown quantity. Barry, for one, is not ready to underestimate his threat.

"Parodi is absolutely convinced that he can beat Carl. He's a much improved guy and we have our hands full with this live opponent who is similar in style to Steve Molitor but he's only 26 years old. We are clearing our way through the rankings and getting closer to the title."

Frampton Expects Mathebula to Emerge Victorious from IBF Triangle – 17th August 2013

Carl Frampton's crack at world glory could arrive early next year if all goes to plan and the unbeaten Belfast boxer has been speculating on possible outcomes when the triangle of fighters currently blocking his way settle their differences over the coming months. Jonathan Romero defends the IBF super-bantamweight crown tonight (Saturday, August 17) against Kiko Martinez and provided he prevails the 23-0 champion will then have 90 days to engage mandatory challenger Jeffrey Mathebula.

"I think Romero will be a bit too good for Martinez but I wouldn't be surprised if Kiko beat him to be honest, especially if he comes in in the shape he did against me," predicted 'The Jackal'. "Romero gets brought to the ropes easily and people can unload on him. Kiko will like that and I wouldn't be surprised if he won but I'm edging towards Romero. I'm thinking that Romero will beat Martinez, I think Mathebula will then beat Romero and we'll fight him."

Frampton also dismissed claims made on Twitter the day before that he had turned down a fight with Colombian Romero by insisting that the fight was never formally offered and, in fact, claiming that whenever his team went looking for the bout they were effectively fobbed off by the IBF belt holder.

"They didn't offer it to us, we tried to make the fight with them and they told us that Romero had a ruptured bicep and wouldn't be ready until at least September," responded the reigning EBU super-bantamweight champion. "So we were hoping to be able to fight in September and then the news comes out that he's fighting Martinez in August so it was just a spoof so they didn't have to fight, that's the bottom line.

"I'd be telling lies if I said that I didn't want to go to America for a couple of fights at some stage in my career but the majority of my fights I want to be at home. The atmosphere that was created for the Martinez fight cannot be recreated anywhere in Britain or Ireland, it's special. We don't want to see guys knocking over journeyman on the Odyssey undercard we want it stacked with 50-50 or 60-40 fights but not complete walkovers."

Frampton is fully focused on his next opponent -26-year-old Frenchman Jeremy Parodi- who will enter the ring on October 19 with only one loss on his record, an IBF International title in his possession and a number four ranking with that same organisation. All of these

factors add up to a positive for the hometown hero.

“You have to give credit to Parodi because there are a lot of fighters you would know of that turned this down. He has a decent record, he’s the next available guy to fight and it made sense as an eliminator for a world title. I’m glad to be boxing again and boxing in Belfast is important.”

O’Kane Still Holds Out Hope for Celtic Title Clash – 19th August 2013

Eamonn O’Kane still believes that he can force his way in to the big title mix and reckons that a proposed Celtic title clash with Welshman Kerry Hope will help propel his career to a higher level. O’Kane thought his chance of fighting for the Celtic crown may have arrived last year but despite being highly-regarded by the powers that be Eamonn was unable to nail down his chance.

“I was mandatory for the Celtic title a while back but the fight never happened,” lamented the reigning Irish middleweight champion. “The fight I’m looking for at the minute is with Kerry Hope. He’s a former European champion so it would be a great stepping stone for me. Hope’s boxed good names and like Anthony Fitzgerald he is a tough boy. I was boxing on the Sheffield undercard the night he beat Proksa and I was shocked too [that he pulled it off]. I remember chatting with him the next morning and he was a humble guy so I was delighted that he had won the title. I would love a Celtic title fight at some point in the future.”

Southpaw Hope defied the odds that night in Sheffield with a gutsy, come-forward assault of highly-rated Grzegorz Proksa which ended with an unexpected points win for the Merthyr Tydfil man who left the arena with the coveted EBU middleweight title in his possession. Kerry did swiftly return the belt to Proksa in a rematch just four months later when the Polish boxer stopped Hope in eight rounds during a bad tempered return. Recent whispers of a bout in Derry -with Paul McCloskey and Dean Byrne being linked for a headline clash- have increased over the past week and Dungiven favourite O’Kane confirmed that it is still in the pipeline.

“The Derry show is still a strong possibility. They were looking to run it early September but there were a few issues with the BBBofC on medical grounds. The City of Culture runs out at the end of the year so hopefully we can get it up and running before then,” he said.

Jamie Conlan Eager to Start Punching People In the Face Again – 20th August 2013

Belfast banger Jamie Conlan is looking to return with a statement on October 19 when the talented super-flyweight engages in the first title fight of a four-year career that still has yet to truly ignite. The 26-year-old is not only keen to end his ring hiatus and mix in title class for the first time but he is just happy to be getting paid again for laying some hurt on his opponents.

“I’m excited to be fighting but then again who isn’t excited about punching someone else in the face? It’s a great feeling,” smiled Conlan. “They say there’s going to be a belt involved and that’s what you strive for in the game and what helps your progression. I’m chasing all the same names, I’m chasing anyone. I’ve always said that what the opponent does makes no difference to me because it’s what I do that will matter on the night. I feel too strong for anyone at super-flyweight. I’m big, I hit hard, I’m fast and ready to go. Satchell and Co should definitely take note. I’m under the radar to them at the moment and I want to make a big impression on BoxNation.”

Francis Warren was present at the Europa Hotel press conference to announce Carl Frampton vs. Jeremy Parodi and he clearly has plenty of admiration for the skills that Conlan possesses. Jamie’s trainer John Breen is talking world title shots and Francis admitted that he could match Conlan with Paul Butler if both young fighters keep winning.

“There’s a big possible fight down the line for Jamie against Paul Butler and that would be very interesting,” confirmed Warren. “Jamie’s debut was just before the Rogan fight [the first Sam Sexton encounter in late 2009] at the Odyssey and he will win his first title here hopefully.”

“I asked John Breen if he was interested in Satchell or Butler and he said he’s interested in any of them,” added Barry McGuigan, who is promoting the big October show entitled ‘Frampton Comes Alive’. “Paul Butler’s a very talented kid but Jamie Conlan has got the style to beat him.”

Frampton's Odyssey Shows Will Come Alive for Undercard Hopefuls – 28th August 2013

Just as the likes of Dave 'Boy' McAuley used Barry McGuigan's undercards to aid their own route to lucrative title opportunities, McGuigan reckons that Carl Frampton's big Odyssey headliners can provide springboards for a host of young Irish fighters to do the same. Picking boxers to feature will not be a problem for Cyclone Promotions who are fully aware of the current depth of domestic talent available across Ireland, all desperate to get their chance to shine.

"We have a full undercard, featuring as many Irish fighters as we can, including Jamie Conlan and Eamonn O'Kane for title fights," said Barry McGuigan when discussing who had already been pencilled in for coveted airtime on the October 19 BoxNation-televised card. "There are loads of kids in Belfast who want to get out and even though we can't cater for everybody we have three shows and then hopefully more after that. We are frustrated because we felt Carl was completely fit to fight on July 20 but he'll be even fitter on October 19. We are going to have a number of title fights on the bill."

As well as featuring Jamie Conlan and reigning Irish middleweight champion Eamonn O'Kane on the bill in title fights (with O'Kane most likely meeting Kerry Hope for the Celtic title) Barry is also keen on Dublin's Phil Sutcliffe. The 3-0 light-welterweight has found little trouble in dispatching his opponents so far and would offer a TV-friendly style of fighting with his multiple skills and heavy punch power. Mark Dunlop's duo of Daniel McShane and Irish super-featherweight ruler James Tennyson are both likely to feature and more importantly the pair are able to shift tickets. John Rooney's fighters Paddy Gallagher, Alfredo Meli and James Fryers will be vying for the remaining spots, alongside John Breen's featherweight hope Marco McCullough.

"Jamie Conlan has been on the cusp of fighting a 12-round championship contest for a while now and it has been frustrating for him," admitted Barry, who reckons Conlan is more than capable of beating domestic rival Paul Butler. "Phil Sutcliffe, Daniel McShane, James Tennyson, James Fryers, Patrick Gallagher, there are loads of talented kids all looking to box. Sutcliffe has come up from Dublin, he's a tremendous talent. Marco McCullough is a puncher and we could have him on the card as well. A balance between ticket sellers and talented kids is what we need."

Phil Sutcliffe Plans to Impress the Fans with TV-Friendly Performance – 31st August 2013

Dublin light-welterweight Phil Sutcliffe Jnr is ready to widen his appeal and give boxing fans a favourable first taste of his talents. The Crumlin youngster, who turned pro in March of this year after a successful amateur career, has been making light work of his opponents so far on the paid circuit. Two quick wins in Dundalk and one in Belfast has already placed Irish fans on red alert and now the 24-year-old wants to put in a star performance on the October 19 Odyssey Arena extravaganza.

“It’s a big card and hopefully we’ll be fighting in front of a few more people and with BoxNation TV it means that a lot more people are going to see it,” mused a typically laid back Sutcliffe at the Europa Hotel press conference, organised to announce Carl Frampton’s next move.

“Frampton’s moving up the ranks fairly quickly and he’s in the right place with the right manager which is what you need in boxing. I trained with Carl for his last show before he turned professional and he’s worked really hard.”

Phil has found it difficult to source opponents that are able to absorb his chilling punch power and offer some form of a test, or at least make it to somewhere near the stipulated distance. So far his three bouts have garnered less than ten minutes of action.

“You don’t go in to knock anyone out, if it happens it happens,” he said. “There are plenty of boys that can go a round or two but we just need to take our time. If I get on telly then hopefully I’ll get spotted and it will all get started. I was on trips with Carl [Frampton] and Eamonn [O’Kane], we got on well and had good craic.”

Sutcliffe’s diary is filling up fast as he is now scheduled to fight Dundalk veteran Michael Kelly in an early November ten-rounder that sees professional boxing make a welcomed return to Dublin. Phil will first have to negotiate a successful outing in Belfast and it’s not his style to look too far ahead or start goading potential future rivals into fights either.

“We’ll leave rivalries to the public; I don’t want to be a big mouth. I’m looking forward to getting on more of these types of shows and hopefully after this year I’ll start getting noticed. I was going to go pro, then give up altogether and then I was told by my Dad to get back training [as rumours circulated of promotional interest]. I had trouble with my (right) hand but it’s holding up ok at the moment; it was a concern. I’ve often done six, eight or ten rounds of sparring, getting it

walloped and it's held up fairly well so far.”

O’Kane Eager to Impress Alongside Former Team Mates Frampton and Conlan – 5th September 2013

Eamonn O’Kane is impressed by the progress currently being made by former amateur teammate Carl Frampton and the middleweight reckons that he and super-flyweight Jamie Conlan can both benefit from the exposure on offer from Barry McGuigan’s Cyclone Promotions and BoxNation TV on October 19.

“Carl’s a great fighter who’s been selling shows brilliantly and the Odyssey is a great arena for boxing,” said O’Kane. “I was on the 2004 Four Nations team with Jamie Conlan in Glasgow and I’ve been on a few Irish teams with Carl over the years and then we were on the Matchroom undercards together. We’ve been friends for a long time and we would text each other. Cyclone is a good team and I’m very happy to be on the show. When Barry McGuigan got in touch with Francie [McNicholl, O’Kane’s manager] it all stemmed from there.

“They have a plan to build on each fight and we want all the lads on the bill fighting for belts. I’m not signed up to a contract with Cyclone; it’s more of a gentleman’s agreement. On Sky Sports I was known as a pressure fighter or more of a streetfighter but now Bernardo and the team are correcting the mistakes.”

One fight that Eamonn will be keeping a close eye on is Billy Joe Saunders vs. John Ryder, an all-British superfight between two unbeaten combatants, scheduled for September 21 at the Copperbox Arena. O’Kane was stopped by Ryder in eight rounds and is itching to get back in with the southpaw stylist and show just what he can do.

“I would like to correct the Ryder loss which I took at 13 days’ notice,” he said. “I hope Ryder does a job against Billy Joe Saunders because John’s a nice lad who trains hard in the gym and doesn’t talk any bullshit. Myself, I want to move on and fight for the big titles.

“I would’ve picked Ryder to beat Saunders before his win over ‘Spike’ O’Sullivan but I was impressed by Saunders’ tactics and discipline. Saying that, Spike is a tough puncher and he took it all. I wish Ryder all the best and hopefully he wins and then we can fight again.”

Domestic Results 2012

25th February 2012 - Emerald Roadhouse, Finaghy, Belfast

Willie Casey WTKO1 David Kanalas - Joe Hillerby WTKO1 Aleksandrs Radjuks - Anthony Cacace WTKO1 Ben Wager - Ray Ginley WTKO1 Stuart Maddox - Mark Ginley WPTS4 Johnny Greaves - Gerard Healy WPTS4 Oleksiy Chukov.

14th April 2012 - Odyssey Arena, Belfast

Tyson Fury WTKO5 Martin Rogan (*vacant Irish heavyweight title*) - Joe Hillerby WPTS10 Willie Thompson (*vacant Northern Ireland Area light-middleweight title*) - Chris Eubank Jnr WTKO4 Paul Allison - John O'Donnell WPTS8 Martin Welsh - Michael Sweeney WPTS6 Darren Corbett - Conall Carmichael WPTS4 Moses Matovu - Dee Walsh WTKO4 Tommy Tolan - Marco McCullough WTKO1 Sean Watson - Paul Moffett WPTS4 Ciaran Healy.

27th April 2012 - Holiday Inn, Belfast

Luke Wilton WTKO1 Francis Miyeyusho (*vacant International Masters super-flyweight title*) - Matthew Wilton WRTD1 James Smith - Conall Carmichael WPTS4 Paul Morris - Alfredo Meli WTKO1 Sergej Drob - Paul Moffett WTKO1 Jamie Boness - Moses Matovu WPTS4 Courtney Owen.

5th May 2012 - King's Hall, Belfast

Paul McCloskey LTKO10 DeMarcus Corley - Martin Lindsay WTKO4 Mickey Coveney - *Prizefighter middleweight tournament*: Eamonn O'Kane WPTS3 JJ McDonagh (*final*) - Eamonn O'Kane WTKO1 Ryan Greene (*semi-final 1*) - JJ McDonagh WPTS3 Joe Rea (*semi-final 2*) - Eamonn O'Kane WPTS3 Anthony Fitzgerald (*quarter-final 1*) - JJ McDonagh WPTS3 Darren Cruise (*quarter-final 2*) - Joe Rea WPTS3 Simon O'Donnell (*quarter-final 3*) - Ryan Greene WPTS3 Ciaran Healy (*quarter-final 4*).

21st July 2012 - Emerald Roadhouse, Finaghy, Belfast

Lee Murtagh WRTD6 Joe Hillerby (*vacant Irish light-middleweight title*)

- Kiko Martinez WPTS6 Dougie Curran - Anthony Cacace WTKO6 Mickey Coveney - Mark Ginley WPTS6 Andrejs Podusovs - Ray Ginley WPTS4 Jody Meikle - Ciaran Healy WPTS4 Alan Donnellan - Stephen Reynolds WPTS4 Moses Matovu - Paul Moffett DPTS4 Tommy Tolan.

17th August 2012 - Royal Theatre, Castlebar

Henry Coyle WPTS12 Marcelo Alejandro Rodriguez (*WBF light-middleweight title*) - Chris Goodwin WPTS12 Istvan Kiss (*vacant WBF lightweight title*) - Andy Murray WRTD5 Sergio Omar Priotti - Brendan Fitzpatrick WTKO3 John Waldron - John Hutchinson WPTS6 Darren Cruise - Michael Waldron WPTS4 Brandon Peake.

8th September 2012 - Holiday Inn, Belfast

Luke Wilton WTKO3 Galin Paunov - Matthew Wilton WPTS4 Gavin Putney - Brendan Fitzpatrick WPTS4 Paul Morby - Willie Thompson WPTS4 Liam Griffiths - Marco McCullough WPTS4 Hyusein Hyuseinov - James Tennyson WTKO4 Fikret Remziev.

22nd September 2012 - Odyssey Arena, Belfast

Carl Frampton WTKO6 Steve Molitor (*Commonwealth and IBF Intercontinental super-bantamweight titles*) - Paul McCloskey WPTS12 Manuel Perez (*WBA Intercontinental light-welterweight title*) - Martin Lindsay WPTS8 Renald Garrido - Khalid Yafai WPTS6 Victor Koh - Eamonn O'Kane WPTS6 Terry Carruthers - Paddy Gallagher WPTS4 William Warburton - Dee Walsh WPTS6 Robert Studzinski - Scott Cardle WPTS4 Francis Maina - Martin J. Ward WPTS4 Simas Volosinas - Ben Mulligan LPTS4 Mariusz Bak.

13th October 2012 - Ulster Hall, Belfast

Lee Murtagh WPTS10 Willie Thompson (*Irish light-middleweight title*) - Daniel McShane WTKO3 Evgeni Geshev - Matthew Wilton WPTS4 Liam Griffiths - Marco McCullough WKO1 Valentin Marinov - James Tennyson WTKO1 Tibor Meszaros - Stevie Quinn Jnr WPTS4 Ryan McNicol - Paul Quinn WPTS4 Ignac Kassai - Paul Moffett WRTD2 Gavin Putney - Gerard Healy LPTS4 William Warburton.

3rd November 2012 - National Basketball Arena, Tallaght, Dublin

Anthony Cacace WTKO1 Mickey Coveney - Brendan Fitzpatrick WTKO1 Joe Rea - Joe Hillerby WPTS8 Robert Long - Christina McMahon WPTS8 Stephanie Ducastel - Ray Ginley WKO3 John Waldron - Luke Wilton WTKO2 Stefan Slavchev - Stephen Reynolds WTKO2 Ruslan Bitarov - Noel O'Brien WTKO4 Brandon Peake - James Tennyson WTKO1 Ignac Kassai - Eddie Nesbitt WTKO3 Damian Lawniczak.

1st December 2012 - Odyssey Arena, Belfast

Tyson Fury WPTS12 Kevin Johnson - Chris Eubank Jnr WPTS8 Bradley Pryce - John O'Donnell WPTS8 Stephen Haughian - Phill Fury WPTS8 Joe Hillerby - Conall Carmichael WRTD1 Darren Corbett - Marco McCullough WPTS4 Michael Kelly - John Hutchinson WPTS4 Gerard Healy - Daniel McShane WPTS4 Janis Puksins - Matthew Wilton WPTS4 Jozsef Garai - Paul Quinn WPTS4 Tibor Meszaros.

Domestic Results 2013

9th February 2013 - Odyssey Arena, Belfast

Carl Frampton WTKO9 Kiko Martinez (*European super-bantamweight title*) - Martin Lindsay LPTS12 Lee Selby (*British and Commonwealth titles*) - Andy Lee WPTS10 Anthony Fitzgerald - Jamie Conlan WTKO10 Mike Robinson - Eamonn O'Kane WPTS6 Gary Boulden - Marco McCullough WPTS4 Ibrar Riyaz - James Fryers WPTS4 Billy Smith - Daniel McShane WPTS4 Pavels Senkovs - Martin Rogan WPTS4 Ladislav Kovarik - Callum Smith WTKO1 Tommy Tolan - Grzegorz Proksa WPTS6 Norbert Szekeres.

9th March 2013 - Fairways Hotel, Dundalk

James Tennyson WTKO1 David Kis - Daniel McShane WTKO2 Ignac Kassai - Declan Trainor WTKO1 Tamas Danko - Christina McMahon WPTS8 Karina Kopinska - Noel O'Brien WTKO2 Tibor Meszaros - Anthony Fitzgerald WPTS6 Laszlo Haaz - Anthony Cacace WPTS6 Zsolt Nagy - Matthew Wilton WTKO1 Miklos Baraz - Willie Mitchell WTKO3 Brandon Peake - Philip Sutcliffe Jnr WTKO1 Zoltan Kovacs.

27th April 2013 - St. Kevin's Hall, Belfast

James Tennyson WTKO2 Mickey Coveney (*vacant Irish super-featherweight title*) - Conall Carmichael WRTD4 Courtney Owen - Matthew Wilton WTKO4 Johnny Greaves - Iain Butcher WPTS6 Andras Varga - Paul Quinn WTKO1 David Kis - Eddie Nesbitt WTKO2 Michael Stupart.

3rd May 2013 - Carlton Hotel, Dublin

Stephen Ormond WTKO2 Laszlo Balogh (*vacant WBU lightweight title*) - Gary O'Sullivan WTKO3 Tadas Jonkus - Karl Brabazon WTKO1 Mihaly Voros - Luke Keeler WTO1 Renato Toth.

14th May 2013 - City Hall, Belfast

Kevin O'Hara WPTS8 Michael Kelly (*vacant Celtic Warrior light-welterweight title*) - Hughie Fury WPTS4 Moses Matovu - Gerard Healy TD3 John Hutchinson - Marco McCullough WTKO3 Noel O'Brien -

Philip Sutcliffe Jnr WTKO2 Liam Finn - Jamie Kennedy WPTS4 Willie Mitchell.

28th June 2013 - Holiday Inn, Belfast

Matthew Wilton WPTS8 Ideh Ochuko (*vacant International Masters Bronze light-welterweight title*) - Luke Wilton WPTS6 Kallum De'Ath - Ryan Burnett WTKO2 Elemir Rafael - Daniel McShane WTKO4 Ivans Levickis - James Tennyson WTKO1 Andrei Hramyka - Zhanat Zhakiyanov WTKO4 Michael Escobar.

12th July 2013 - Fairways Hotel, Dundalk

Eamonn O'Kane WPTS10 Anthony Fitzgerald (*vacant Irish middleweight title*) - Paddy Murphy DPTS8 Peter McDonagh - Philip Sutcliffe Jnr WTKO1 Radoslav Mitev - Hughie Fury WRD5 Ivica Perkovic - Luke Keeler WPTS4 Tommy Tolan - Steve Collins Jnr WPTS4 Stanislavs Makareno.

World Results 2012

Key: PTS = Points, TKO = Technical Knockout, KO = Knockout, NC = No Contest, D = Draw, TD = Technical Decision, RTD = Retired.

January 14: Robert Stieglitz WPTS12 Henry Weber (*WBO super-middleweight title*).

January 20: Guillermo Rigondeaux WKO6 Rico Ramos (*WBA super-bantamweight title*).

January 28: Miguel Vazquez WPTS12 Ameth Diaz (*IBF lightweight title*).

February 4: Yoan Hernandez WPTS12 Steve Cunningham (*IBF cruiserweight title*) - Julio Cesar Chavez Jr WPTS12 Marco Antonio Rubio (*WBC middleweight title*) - Scott Quigg WTKO8 Jamie Arthur (*British super-bantamweight title*).

February 18: Vitali Klitschko WPTS12 Dereck Chisora (*WBC heavyweight title*) - Tavoris Cloud WPTS12 Gabriel Campillo (*IBF light-heavyweight title*) - Jorge Arce WTKO5 Lorenzo Parra (*WBO bantamweight title*).

February 25: Nathan Cleverly WPTS12 Tommy Karpency (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) - Adrien Broner WTKO4 Eloy Perez (*WBO super-featherweight title*) - Denis Shafikov WRTD8 Lee McAllister (*European light-welterweight title*).

March 2: Sonny Boy Jaro WTKO6 Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (*WBC flyweight title*).

March 3: Wladimir Klitschko WTKO4 Jean-Marc Mormeck (*WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight titles*) - Jamie McDonnell WTKO4 Ivan Pozo (*European bantamweight title*).

March 7: Daniel Geale WPTS12 Osumanu Adama (*IBF middleweight title*) - Billy Dib WRTD6 Eduardo Escobedo (*IBF featherweight title*).

March 10: Ricky Burns WPTS12 Paulus Moses (*WBO lightweight title*) - Orlando Salido WTKO10 Juan Manuel Lopez (*WBO featherweight*

title).

March 18: Sergio Martinez WTKO11 Matthew Macklin (*The Ring middleweight title*) - Kell Brook WPTS12 Matthew Hatton (*welterweight*).

March 23: Gavin Rees WRSF7 Anthony Mezaache (*European lightweight title*) - Enzo Maccarinelli WPTS12 Shane McPhilbin (*British cruiserweight title*) - Gary Buckland WPTS12 Paul Truscott (*British super-featherweight title*).

March 24: Danny Garcia WPTS12 Erik Morales (*vacant WBC light-welterweight title*) - Jeffrey Mathebula WPTS12 Takalani Ndlovu (*IBF super-bantamweight title*).

March 27: Yota Sato WPTS12 Suriyan sor Rungvisai (*WBC super-flyweight title*).

March 30: Nkosinathi Joyi WPTS12 Katsunari Takayama (*IBF strawweight title*).

March 31: Brian Rose WPTS12 Max Maxwell (*British light-middleweight title*).

April 4: Koki Kameda WPTS12 Nouldy Manakane (*WBA bantamweight title*) - Tepparith Singwantha WRSF9 Tomonobu Shimizu (*WBA light-flyweight title*).

April 6: Shinsuke Yamanaka WPTS12 Vic Darchinyan (*WBC bantamweight title*) - Takahiro Ao WPTS12 Terdsak Kokietygym (*WBC super-featherweight title*).

April 13: Felix Sturm WRD9 Sebastian Zbik (*WBA middleweight title*).

April 14: Juan Manuel Marquez WPTS12 Serhiy Fedchenko (*The Ring Magazine lightweight belt*).

April 21: James DeGale WTKO4 Cristian Sanavia (*European super-middleweight title*) - Derry Mathews WTKO6 Anthony Crolla (*British lightweight title*) - Anselmo Moreno WTKO8 David De La Mora (*WBA bantamweight title*) - Omar Narvaez WPTS12 Jose Cabrera (*WBO super-flyweight title*).

April 27: Tony Bellew WKO5 Danny McIntosh (*British light-heavyweight title*).

April 28: Billy Joe Saunders WKO1 Tony Hill (*vacant Commonwealth middleweight title*) - Chad Dawson WPTS12 Bernard Hopkins (*WBC light-heavyweight title*) - Jhonny Gonzalez WPTS12 Elio Rojas (*WBC featherweight title*).

April 29: Paulie Malignaggi WRSF9 Vyacheslav Senchenko (*WBA welterweight title*).

May 5: Floyd Mayweather Jr WPTS12 Miguel Cotto (*WBA light-middleweight title*) - Saul Alvarez WPTS12 Shane Mosley (*WBC light-middleweight title*) - Marco Huck DPTS12 Ola Afolabi (*WBO cruiserweight title*) - Chris John WPTS12 Shoji Kimura (*WBA featherweight title*) - Kompayak Porpramook WRSF5 Jonathan Taconing (*WBC light-flyweight title*).

May 12: Junior Witter WPTS12 Colin Lynes (*British welterweight title*).

May 19: David Price WKO4 Sam Sexton (*vacant British heavyweight title*) - Darren Hamilton WPTS12 Ashley Theophane (*British light-welterweight title*).

May 26: Carl Froch WTKO5 Lucian Bute (*IBF super-middleweight title*).

June 1: Billy Joe Saunders WPTS12 Bradley Pryce (*Commonwealth middleweight title*).

June 2: Brian Rose WPTS12 Kris Carlaw (*British light-middleweight title*) - Leo Santa Cruz WPTS12 Vusi Malinga (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Beibut Shumenov WPTS12 Enrique Ornelas (*WBA light-heavyweight title*) - Donnie Nietes WPTS12 Felipe Salguero (*WBO light-flyweight title*).

June 9: Timothy Bradley WPTS12 Manny Pacquiao (*WBO welterweight title*) - Randall Bailey WTKO11 Mike Jones (*IBF welterweight title*) - Jorge Arce NC5 Jesus Rojas (*WBO bantamweight title*) - Guillermo Rigondeaux WKO5 Teon Kennedy (*WBA super-bantamweight title*).

June 16: Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. WRSF7 Andy Lee (*WBC middleweight title*) - Scott Quigg TD3 Rendall Munroe (*interim WBA super-bantamweight title*) - Sergey Rabchenko WTKO7 Ryan Rhodes (*vacant European light-middleweight title*).

June 20: Kazuto Ioka WPTS12 Akira Yaegashi (*WBC and WBA strawweight titles*).

June 30: Cornelius Bundrage WKO7 Cory Spinks (*IBF light-middleweight title*).

July 7: Wladimir Klitschko WKO6 Tony Thompson (*IBF, WBA and WBO heavyweight titles*) - Kell Brook WPTS12 Carson Jones (*IBF international welterweight title*) - Grzegorz Proksa WRSF6 Kerry Hope (*European middleweight title*) - Gavin Rees WTKO9 Derry Mathews (*British and European lightweight titles*) - Nonito Donaire WPTS12 Jeffrey Mathebula (*WBO super-bantamweight title*) - Tyson Fury WKO5 Vinny Maddalone (*vacant WBO Intercontinental heavyweight title*) - Lee Haskins WPTS12 Stuart Hall (*vacant European bantamweight title*) - Chris Eubank Jr. WPTS6 Terry Carruthers (*middleweight*).

July 8: Yota Sato WPTS12 Sylvester Lopez (*WBC super-flyweight title*).

July 14: Danny Garcia WTKO4 Amir Khan (*WBC and WBA light-welterweight titles*) - David Haye WKO5 Dereck Chisora (*heavyweight*).

July 15: Willie Casey WPTS12 Jason Booth (*WBO Intercontinental super-bantamweight title*).

July 16: Toshiyuki Igarashi WPTS12 Sonny Boy Jaro (*WBC flyweight title*).

July 21: Adrien Broner WRSF5 Vicente Escobedo (*WBO super-featherweight title*).

July 28: Robert Guerrero WPTS12 Selcuk Aydin (*WBC interim welterweight title*).

August 18: Juan Salgado WPTS12 Jonathan Barros (*IBF super-featherweight title*).

August 25: Arthur Abraham WPTS12 Robert Stieglitz (*WBO super-*

middleweight title).

September 1: Daniel Geale WPTS12 Felix Sturm (*IBF and WBA middleweight titles*) - Tepparith Kokietygm WPTS12 Nobuo Nashiro (*WBA super-flyweight title*) - Mario Rodriguez WKO7 Nkosinathi Joyi (*IBF strawweight title*).

September 8: Andre Ward WTKO10 Chad Dawson (*WBC and WBA super-middleweight titles*) - Antonio DeMarco WKO1 John Molina (*WBC lightweight title*) - Tony Bellew WRSF9 Edison Miranda - Vitali Klitschko WTKO4 Manuel Charr (*WBC heavyweight title*).

September 15: Sergio Martinez WPTS12 Julio Cesar Chavez Jr (*WBC middleweight title*) - Roman Martinez WPTS12 Miguel Beltran (*WBO super-featherweight title*) - Matthew Macklin WKO1 Joachim Alcine (*middleweight*) - Saul Alvarez WRSF5 Josesito Lopez (*WBC light-middleweight title*) - Daniel Ponce De Leon WTD8 Jhonny Gonzalez (*WBC featherweight title*) - Leo Santa Cruz WRSF5 Eric Morel (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Yoan Pablo Hernandez WPTS12 Troy Ross (*IBF cruiserweight title*).

September 22: Ricky Burns WRSF4 Kevin Mitchell (*WBO lightweight title*) - Juan Sanchez WKO9 Rodel Mayol (*IBF super-flyweight title*) - Krzysztof Wlodarczyk WPTS12 Francisco Palacios (*WBC cruiserweight title*) - Carl Frampton WTKO6 Steve Molitor (*Commonwealth super-bantamweight title*).

October 6: Moises Fuentes WRSF5 Ivan Calderon (*WBO strawweight title*) - Zaurbek Baysangurov WPTS12 Lukas Konecny (*WBO light-middleweight title*) - Adrian Hernandez WKO6 Kompayak Porpramook (*WBC light-flyweight title*).

October 13: Nonito Donaire WTKO9 Toshiaki Nishioka (*WBO super-bantamweight title*) - David Price KO1 Audley Harrison (*British heavyweight title*) - James DeGale WPTS12 Hadillah Mohoumadi (*European super-middleweight title*).

October 20: Danny Garcia WKO4 Erik Morales (*WBC and WBA light-welterweight title*) - Paulie Malignaggi WPTS12 Pablo Cano (*WBA welterweight title*) - Peter Quillin WPTS12 Hassan N'Jikam (*WBO middleweight title*) - Devon Alexander WPTS12 Randall Bailey (*IBF welterweight title*) - Pungluang Sor Singyu WKO9 AJ Banal (*WBO*

bantamweight title) - Omar Narvaez WRSF11 Johnny Garcia (*WBO super-flyweight title*) - Kell Brook WTKO3 Hector Saldivia (*IBF welterweight title eliminator*) - Kenny Anderson WRSF5 Robin Reid (*vacant British super-middleweight title*).

October 27: Miguel Vazquez WPTS12 Marvin Quintero (*IBF lightweight title*).

November 1: Frankie Gavin WPTS12 Junior Witter (*British welterweight title*).

November 3: Marco Huck WPTS12 Firat Arslan (*WBO cruiserweight title*) - Toshiyuki Igarashi WPTS12 Nestor Narvaez (*IBF flyweight title*) - Shinsuke Yamanaka WKO7 Tomas Rojas (*WBC bantamweight title*).

November 9: Chris John WPTS12 Chonlatarn Piriyaipinyo (*WBA featherweight title*) - Ovíll McKenzie WRSF2 Enzo Maccarinelli (*Commonwealth light-heavyweight title*).

November 10: Nathan Cleverly WTKO8 Shawn Hawk (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) - Abner Mares WPTS12 Anselmo Moreno (*WBC super-bantamweight title*) - Leo Santa Cruz WTKO9 Victor Zuleta (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Wladimir Klitschko WPTS12 Mariusz Wach (*WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight titles*).

November 17: Carl Froch WKO3 Yusaf Mack (*IBF super-middleweight title*) - Adrien Broner WTKO8 Antonio DeMarco (*WBC lightweight title*) - Brian Viloria WRSF10 Hernan Marquez (*WBA and WBO flyweight titles*) - Roman Gonzalez WPTS12 Juan Estrada (*WBA flyweight title*).

November 24: Vyacheslav Senchenko WKO9 Ricky Hatton (*welterweight title*) - Scott Quigg WTKO6 Rendall Munroe (*interim WBA super-bantamweight title*) - Martin Murray WTKO6 Jorge Navarro (*interim WBA middleweight title*) - Robert Guerrero WPTS12 Andre Berto (*interim WBC welterweight title*).

November 30: David Price WKO2 Matt Skelton (*British and Commonwealth heavyweight titles*).

December 1: Tyson Fury WPTS12 Kevin Johnson (*heavyweight*) - Austin Trout WPTS12 Miguel Cotto (*IBF light-middleweight title*).

December 8: Juan Manuel Marquez WKO6 Manny Pacquiao (*welterweight*) - Miguel Vazquez WPTS12 Mercito Gesta (*IBF lightweight title*) - Mikkel Kessler WRSF3 Brian Magee (*WBA super-middleweight title*).

December 14: Stephane Jamoye WTKO8 Lee Haskins (*European bantamweight title*) - Brian Rose WPTS12 Sam Webb (*British light-middleweight title*).

December 15: George Groves WPTS12 Glen Johnson (*Commonwealth super-middleweight title*) - Billy Joe Saunders WPTS12 Nick Blackwell (*vacant British and Commonwealth middleweight titles*) - Nonito Donaire WTKO3 Jorge Arce (*WBO super-bantamweight title*) - Arthur Abraham WTKO8 Mehdi Bouadla (*WBO super-middleweight title*) - Amir Khan WTKO10 Carlos Molina (*light-welterweight*) - Leo Santa Cruz WPTS12 Alberto Guevara (*IBF bantamweight title*) - Omar Narvaez WPTS12 David Quijano (*WBO super-featherweight title*).

December 31: Takashi Uchiyama WTKO8 Bryan Vasquez (*WBA super-featherweight title*) - Yota Sato WPTS12 Ryo Akaho (*WBC super-flyweight title*) - Kohei Kono WKO4 Tepparith Kokietygym (*WBA super-flyweight title*) - Kazuto Ioka WTKO6 Jose Alfredo Rodriguez (*vacant WBA junior flyweight title*) - Ryo Miyazaki WPTS12 Pornsawan Porpramook (*WBA strawweight title*).

World Results 2013

Key: PTS = Points, TKO = Technical Knockout, KO = Knockout, NC = No Contest, D = Draw, TD = Technical Decision, RTD = Retired.

January 18: Frankie Gavin WRSF9 Jason Welborn (*British welterweight title*) - Martin Gethin WTKO9 Ben Murphy (*vacant British and Commonwealth titles*).

January 19: Mikey Garcia WTD8 Orlando Salido (*WBO featherweight title*) - Gennady Golovkin WTKO7 Gabriel Rosado (*WBA middleweight title*) - Roman Martinez DPTS12 Juan Carlos Burgos (*WBO super-featherweight title*).

January 30: Daniel Geale WPTS12 Anthony Mundine (*IBF middleweight title*).

February 9: Carl Frampton WTKO9 Kiko Martinez (*European super-bantamweight title*) - Lee Selby WPTS12 Martin Lindsay (*British featherweight title*).

February 16: Adrien Broner WRSF5 Gavin Rees (*WBC lightweight title*).

February 23: Ishe Smith WPTS12 Cornelius Bundrage (*IBF light-middleweight title*) - Tony Thompson WKO2 David Price (*heavyweight*).

February 27: Juan Reveco WPTS12 Masayuki Kuroda (*WBA flyweight title*).

March 2: Richard Abril WPTS12 Sharif Bogere (*WBA lightweight title*) - Donnie Nietes WPTS12 Moises Fuentes (*WBO light-flyweight title*) - Paulus Ambunda WPTS12 Pungluang Sor Singyu (*WBO bantamweight title*).

March 9: Bernard Hopkins WPTS12 Tavoris Cloud (*IBF light-heavyweight title*) - Argenis Mendez WKO4 Juan Carlos Salgado (*IBF super-featherweight title*).

March 16: Timothy Bradley WPTS12 Ruslan Provodnikov (*WBO welterweight title*) - John Riel Casimero WPTS12 Luis Rios (*IBF light-*

flyweight title).

March 21: Billy Joe Saunders WPTS12 Matthew Hall (*British and Commonwealth middleweight titles*).

March 23: Robert Stieglitz WTKO3 Arthur Abraham (*WBO super-middleweight title*).

March 30: Tony Bellew DPTS12 Isaac Chilemba (*WBC silver light-heavyweight title*) - Derry Mathews DPTS12 Anthony Crolla (*Commonwealth lightweight title*) - Gennady Golovkin WKO3 Nobuhiro Ishida (*WBA middleweight title*) - Mario Rodriguez WPTS12 Katsunari Takayama (*IBF strawweight title*).

April 6: Juan Estrada WPTS12 Brian Vitoria (*WBA and WBO flyweight titles*) - Roman Martinez WPTS12 Diego Magdaleno (*WBO super-featherweight title*).

April 8: Akira Yaegashi WPTS12 Toshiyuki Igarashi (*WBC flyweight title*) - Takashi Miura WTKO9 Gamaliel Diaz (*WBC super-featherweight title*) - Shinsuke Yamanaka WTKO12 Malcolm Tunacao (*WBC bantamweight title*).

April 13: Guillermo Rigondeaux WPTS12 Nonito Donaire (*WBA and WBO super-bantamweight titles*).

April 20: Nathan Cleverly WPTS12 Robin Krasniqi (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) - Dereck Chisora WTKO9 Hector Alfredo Avila (*heavyweight*) - Saul Alvarez WPTS12 Austin Trout (*WBC and WBA light-middleweight titles*) - Victor Terrazas WPTS12 Cristian Mijares (*WBC super-bantamweight title*) - Tyson Fury WTKO7 Steve Cunningham (*heavyweight*).

April 27: Sergio Martinez WPTS12 Martin Murray (*WBC middleweight title*) - Amir Khan WPTS12 Julio Diaz (*light-welterweight*) - Danny Garcia WPTS12 Zab Judah (*WBA and WBC light-welterweight titles*) - Peter Quillin WRSF7 Fernando Guerrero (*WBO middleweight title*).

May 4: Floyd Mayweather Jr WPTS12 Robert Guerrero (*WBC welterweight title*) - Abner Mares WTKO9 Daniel Ponce De Leon (*WBC featherweight title*) - Wladimir Klitschko WKO6 Francesco Pianeta (*WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight titles*).

May 11: Ricky Burns WRTD9 Jose Gonzalez (*WBO lightweight title*) - Jamie McDonnell WPTS12 Julio Ceja (*IBF bantamweight title*).

May 17: Alexander Povetkin WTKO3 Andrzej Wawrzyk (*WBA regular heavyweight title*) - Guillermo Jones WTKO11 Denis Lebedev (*WBA cruiserweight title*) - James DeGale WRSF2 Sebastien Demers (*super-middleweight*).

May 18: Devon Alexander WTKO7 Lee Purdy (*IBF welterweight title*) - Lucas Matthyse WTKO3 Lamont Peterson (*light-welterweight*) - Anthony Ogogo WPTS6 Edgar Perez (*middleweight*) - Haroon Khan WKO1 Vicente Medellin (*super-flyweight*).

May 25: Carl Froch WPTS12 Mikkel Kessler (*WBA and IBF super-middleweight titles*) - George Groves WTKO5 Noe Gonzalez Alcoba (*super-middleweight*) - Tony Bellew WPTS12 Isaac Chilemba (*WBC silver light-heavyweight title*) - Omar Narvaez WPTS12 Daniel Rosas (*WBO super-featherweight title*).

June 8: Adonis Stevenson WKO1 Chad Dawson (*WBC light-heavyweight title*) - Juan Carlos Sanchez WPTS12 Roberto Sosa (*IBF super-flyweight title*) - Marco Huck WPTS12 Ola Afolabi (*WBO cruiserweight title*).

June 15: Mikey Garcia WKO4 Juan Manuel Lopez (*WBO featherweight title*).

June 22: Adrien Broner WPTS12 Paul Malignaggi (*WBA welterweight title*) - Sakio Bika WPTS12 Marco Antonio Periban (*WBC super-middleweight title*) - Krzysztof Włodarczyk WTKO8 Rakhim Chakhkiev (*WBC cruiserweight title*).

June 28: Frankie Gavin WTKO7 Denton Vassell (*British and Commonwealth welterweight titles*).

June 29: Gennady Golovkin WKO3 Matthew Macklin (*WBA middleweight title*).

July 6: Tony Thompson WRSF5 David Price (*heavyweight*).

July 13: Robert Stieglitz WPTS12 Yuzo Kiyota (*WBO super-*

middleweight title) - Khabib Allakhverdiev WTKO11 Souleymane M'Baye (*WBA 'regular' light-welterweight title*) - Merlito Sabillo WKO9 Jorle Estrada (*WBO minimumweight title*) - Luke Campbell WKO1 Andy Harris (*lightweight*) - Kell Brook WTKO8 Carson Jones (*light-middleweight*) - Anthony Ogogo WRSF5 Gary Boulden (*middleweight*).

July 20: Dereck Chisora WKO6 Malik Scott (*WBO International heavyweight title*) - Billy Joe Saunders WPTS12 Gary O'Sullivan (*WBO International middleweight title*).

July 23: Koki Kameda WPTS12 John Mark Apolinario (*WBA bantamweight title*).

July 27: Evgeny Gradovich WPTS12 Mauricio Munoz (*IBF featherweight title*) - Juan Francisco Estrada WPTS12 Milan Melindo (*WBO and WBA flyweight titles*) - Jesus Soto Karass WPTS12 Andre Berto (*welterweight*).

August 1: Tomoki Kameda WPTS12 Paulus Ambunda (*WBO bantamweight title*).

August 10: Anselmo Moreno WPTS12 William Urina (*WBA super-bantamweight title*) - Nehomar Cermeno WPTS12 Oscar Escandon (*WBA interim super-featherweight title*).

August 12: Shinsuke Yamanaka WKO1 Jose Nieves (*WBC bantamweight title*) - Akira Yaegashi WPTS12 Oscar Blanquet (*WBC flyweight title*).

August 17: Sergey Kovalev WTKO4 Nathan Cleverly by fourth-round TKO (*WBO light-heavyweight title*) - Darren Barker WPTS12 Daniel Geale (*IBF middleweight title*) - Kiko Martinez WTKO6 Jonathan Romero (*IBF super-bantamweight title*) - Takashi Miura WPTS12 Sergio Thompson (*WBC super-featherweight title*).

August 23: Argenis Mendez DPTS12 Arash Usmanee (*IBF super-featherweight title*) - Jesus Andres Cuellar WPTS12 Claudio Marrero (*WBA interim featherweight title*).

August 24: Jhonny Gonzalez WKO1 Abner Mares (*WBC featherweight title*) - Leo Santa Cruz WTKO3 Victor Terrazas (*WBC super-*

bantamweight title) - Stanyslav Kashtanov WKO10 Jaime Barboza
(*WBA interim super-middleweight title*) - Omar Narvarez WTKO10
Hiroyuki Hisataka (*WBO super-flyweight title*).

Best World Bouts of 2012-13

The following pages will take a brief look back over the past year at some of the more memorable bouts that have graced the world boxing scene. Included below my initial description of each fight is a paragraph of insight taken from a leading scribe (credited) reporting their opinion on the matchup in question.

Danny Garcia WTKO4 Amir Khan - 14th July 2012 in Las Vegas, USA

Khan was looking to bounce back from the second loss of his career, a controversial points reverse to Lamont Peterson, when he bumped in to undefeated Garcia. After failing to tie down an immediate Peterson rematch he commendably agreed to tackle rising star Garcia in this double-title showdown (WBC and WBA ‘super’ light-welterweight belts). Amir started promisingly, using his blinding speed and multiple combinations to dominate his opponent in the opening two sessions. Garcia found his range in the third and uncorked a stunning left hook midway through that stanza to send Khan crashing to the canvas, back to his feet and staggering around like a city centre drunk. Somehow the Bolton boxer managed to escape out of the round but he touched down in the fourth and ref Kenny Bayless decided enough was enough when the 2004 Olympic silver medallist visited the floor for a third time in that same session.

“Danny Garcia pulled off the big upset tonight in Las Vegas, stopping Amir Khan in four rounds to unify his WBC junior welterweight title with the WBA belt Khan brought to the fight, staying unbeaten and making himself a star. Any remaining doubters have now vanished. Garcia (24-0, 15 KO) was outgunned in the first two rounds by Khan (26-3, 18 KO), but though he lost those rounds, he was hanging tough. Khan’s speed advantage was clear, but Garcia kept trying his best to time Khan with counter shots. It was really a hell of a fight, and I think both guys deserve credit. Obviously, first and foremost is Danny Garcia, who won again, still didn’t seem to be anything spectacular, but showed exactly what he’s made of. The guy’s not eye-popping. But he is tough, smart, and crafty at a young age. He can bang, and he can take a shot. He didn’t panic when Khan’s speed owned the early part of the fight. He just kept looking for that opening, and he found it.”

Scott Christ, badlefthook.com

David Haye WKO5 Dereck Chisora - 14th July 2012 in London, England

Haye and Chisora first clashed in Munich when, after Chisora's commendable points loss to Vitali Klitschko, Haye presented himself at the post-fight press conference seemingly to try and goad the eldest Klitschko brother into a money-spinning showdown. As events transpired Chisora ended up leaving the stage and confronting Haye in the crowd, causing a mass brawl which culminated in tripods, glasses and fists flying as photographers poured in to capture the madness. Haye's trainer Adam Booth suffered a cut head and Chisora's trainer Don Charles weighed in with some hefty blows of his own. German police investigated the incident which resulted in the suspension of Chisora's license by the British Boxing Board of Control. When the bout came around Haye was also missing a British license, having allowed his to expire following a brief period of retirement. Promoter Frank Warren drafted in the little-known Luxembourg Boxing Commission to run the show in London, opening a can of worms in the process. The only place to sort out these kinds of disputes is in the ring.....

“David Haye announced his return to the ring in the grand manner with a punch-perfect stoppage victory of Dereck Chisora in an explosive grudge match that delivered the goods in front of 30,000 fans at West Ham's Upton Park. The hostilities that started in Munich five months ago were ended by a stunning left hook that spelt the end of Chisora's challenge at Upton Park. The fight took place despite opposition from the British Boxing Board of Control, whose refusal to sanction the showdown was easily circumvented by having the anonymous Luxembourg Boxing Federation license both fighters. Strong moral objections also existed given that Haye and Chisora were effectively profiting from their disgraceful brawl in Munich five months ago. For all the condemnation, however, interest in the showdown was substantial with the 30,000 tickets sold surpassing the attendance for Lennox Lewis v Frank Bruno in 1993. Only a year ago the prospect of Haye clashing with Chisora was unthinkable as the former WBA world heavyweight champion prepared for a career-defining showdown with Wladimir Klitschko. But his popularity plummeted after a lamentable display with public opinion further turning against him when he blamed the wide points defeat on a broken little toe. Frustrated in his pursuit of Wladimir's brother Vitali, he instead settled for a pay-day against Chisora once their fireworks in Munich had ignited interest in the fight. It clearly irritated Haye that he had to share a ring with someone he

considers vastly inferior, but Chisora's performance tonight proved him wrong."

The Daily Mirror

Vyacheslav Senchenko WKO9 Ricky Hatton - 24th November 2012 in Manchester, England

A fresh start or one futile last stab at title glory? The questions were flying around for months after Ricky Hatton announced that he was ready to end a two and a half year hiatus and step back inside the ring for the first time since being flattened by Manny Pacquiao in May 2009. Comeback opponent Senchenko was considered a safe enough proposition given that the Ukrainian welterweight had previously been halted in nine rounds (on a cut ruling) by non-puncher Paul Malignaggi, handing over his WBA welterweight title in the process. Roared on by an excitable crowd and buoyed by some early success to the body it looked like we could be witnessing 'The Hitman' of old, but Senchenko had other ideas. Riding out the storm the visitor started to time his own counter shots and Hatton began to slowly unravel in the middle rounds. Instinct and experience kept him competitive and Hatton was ahead on all three scorecards when the finishing body shot landed. Ricky's Eastern European foe was, however, noticeably landing the key shots in the rounds leading up to the stoppage.

"The former two-weight world champion, who now has 45 wins and three defeats as a professional, said he was returning for redemption after three years of struggling with depression and substance abuse. And 20,000 raucous fans at the Manchester Arena, plus a host of celebrities and boxing royalty seated ringside, were proof there is still no greater draw in British boxing than Hatton. The pre-fight atmosphere, replete with choruses of "There's only one Ricky Hatton", was redolent of his most glorious nights at the venue, including his defeat of IBF light-welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu in 2005. But there was to be no fairytale return for Hatton against a former world champion whom many had warned against him fighting. Hatton admitted it would be a struggle to shackle his emotions on his comeback but he made a circumspect start. Hatton required treatment in the ring before dissolving into tears, his hopes and dreams, and those of his fanatical supporters, having turned into a nightmare. Hatton had hoped to fight Paulie Malignaggi, whom he beat in 2008 and who won the WBA welterweight crown from Senchenko earlier this year. Malignaggi had already said he would take a rematch but that bout, as well as potential bouts against domestic rivals Amir Khan and Kell Brook, is now highly unlikely to happen. Hatton,

who has learned what many other boxers have learned before him, namely that coming back is hard to do, will probably now concentrate on his training and promoting commitments.”

Ben Dirs, BBC

Juan Manuel Marquez WKO6 Manny Pacquiao - 8th December 2012 in Las Vegas, Nevada

Meeting for the fourth time after three debatable, razor thin contests between two evenly-matched world superstars, Marquez not only scored his first win over Pacquiao but recorded the most emphatic victory of the fight quartet. The pair first met in 2004 and battled to a draw, which was made all the more remarkable due to the fact that Marquez was floored three times in the opening round and almost stopped. Pacquiao went on to win a split decision in 2008 and a majority decision in 2011. Coming off the back of a loss to Tim Bradley and a long run of out-of-the-ring distractions, mainly due to electoral ambitions in his native Philippines, Manny was caught with a thumping right hand that knocked him down and out in the sixth-round and resoundingly confirmed who had got the better of proceedings on this occasion. Rumours now persist of a fifth contest.

“The unthinkable happened as Manny Pacquiao got knocked out by Juan Manuel Marquez sending shock waves back home. As he unleashed a jab, the favored Pacquiao ran smack into a thunderous Marquez right that sent the Filipino flat; face down, to the canvas, motionless for more than a minute. The decisive punch came with barely a second left in the sixth of the 12-round fight before a full-house crowd of 16,348 at MGM Grand Garden Arena. Marquez’s own face was a bloody mess from a barrage of lefts by Pacquiao. “I am very, very happy,” said Marquez, who fought with a bruised nose for the last few rounds. “How do you think I feel? This is a result of all the hard work I did.” Pacquiao was promised more than \$20 million for the fight while Marquez was expected to take home \$6 million. Although he didn’t bring the fight to Pacquiao as promised, Marquez, 39, delivered on his vow to exact revenge on the Filipino hero, who narrowly beat him in the second and third fights of their quadrilogy. It was the first time in 12 years that Pacquiao had been stopped. Not that he was invincible, but Marquez sent the message that the Filipino ring icon was vulnerable, too. [Promoter Bob] Arum said the bout lived up to the hype that it would be even better than their previous bouts, the first of which ended in a controversial draw after Marquez recovered from three first round knockdowns. It was a stunning end to a thrilling non title fight, the fourth one in the last eight

years between the two men. Pacquiao said he would like to fight Marquez for a fifth time.”

Roy Lvarca, Inquirer Sports

Timothy Bradley WPTS12 Ruslan Provodnikov - 16th March 2013 in California, USA

Fresh off the back of a career-best (but rather controversial) win over the legendary Manny Pacquiao, Michigan’s Tim Bradley was expected to keep the ball rolling nicely against the tough, but technically limited, Ruslan Provodnikov. The Russian powerhouse had built a statistically impressive slate by feeding off faded names like DeMarcus Corley, Emanuel Augustus and Javier Jauregui, losing just one fight in 21 outings. His fan-friendly, face-first style offered some indication that he could give Bradley an argument in the Home Depot Center main event but few foresaw him pushing the unbeaten star so close in a scintillating 12-round scrap.

“Timothy Bradley Jr. and Ruslan Provodnikov produced a thrilling and dramatic slugfest that included one jump-out-of-your-seat moment after another...It was Bradley’s first fight in what had been a terrible nine months since he was awarded a highly controversial split decision and the title against Manny Pacquiao in June. Bradley never had a chance to celebrate because almost nobody, save for two of the three judges who scored it for him, thought he deserved to win. The decision was blasted and Bradley bore a significant brunt of the anger. It got so bad that the fighter said he received multiple death threats, even though he wasn’t responsible for judging the bout. Bradley was also stung by criticism that he was a boring fighter. But if anything can help a fighter put such an inglorious episode behind him and make fans embrace him, it’s a scintillating and memorable battle such as Saturday’s -- in which Bradley received a heavy dose of help from Russian brawler Provodnikov.”

Dan Rafael, ESPN

Brandon Rios LPTS12 Mike Alvarado II - 30th March 2013 in Las Vegas, USA

Following a back-and-forth war of epic proportion in October 2012 it was inevitable that Rios and Alvarado would clash again. Rios had been behind on the scorecards in the first matchup, before hurting Alvarado in the seventh-round and ultimately forcing referee Pat Russell to call a halt. Alvarado promised to box more than brawl in the rematch and he stayed true to his word by employing a more savvy style while still

managing to move inside enough to excite the fans. Rios was unable to land his vaunted power shots with any great regularity and allowed Alvarado to dictate the pace for too long in the middle rounds. As bloodthirsty as it might appear, the only logical step for both men must surely be a third fight.

“In handing Rios his first professional loss, Alvarado won the interim WBO light welterweight title. But more than that, he proved the naysayers wrong as he came in with a game plan, stuck to the game plan, and won the fight. The fight was a classic. No sooner did the opening bell ring than the two warriors took up where they left off. Rios, wearing black trunks with red and silver trim, and Alvarado, in red trunks trimmed in white, took turns staggering each other in the first. Rios dazed Alvarado with a power jab in the second. Accepting the premise that it's better to give than receive, Alvarado rocked Rios with a solid right, his signature punch of the night, in the third. It was on.....”

Robert Ecksel, Boxing.com

Denis Lebedev LKO11 Guillermo Jones - 17th May 2013 in Myakinino, Russia

Russian Lebedev had spent the previous two years of his career exciting home crowds by feasting on battle weary legends like Roy Jones Jr and James Toney in defence of the WBA 'interim' cruiserweight belt. He stepped up to face 'Champion in Recess' Guillermo Jones, a Panamanian veteran whose best days were clearly behind him. The older man showed remarkable resistance and gave Lebedev all he could handle before the 11th-round when Lebedev was finally stopped, sporting a grotesquely swollen right eye that would rank as one of the worst injuries seen in a boxing ring for many years. Jones refused to take a post-fight drug test and it was later reported that he tested positive for a banned substance.

“The duel, between a 41-year-old champion in recess for pulling out of an unacceptable number of title defences (Jones) and his interim replacement/mandatory challenger semi-renowned for wiping the floor with faded names (Lebedev), was not the most inspiring on paper. But as you can see, it ended up being neither another Jones withdrawal, nor a Lebedev mercy-kill. It was instead an incredibly brutal, undoubtedly exciting, knock-down drag-out war – one few were expecting from this particular encounter.”

Liam Happe, Eurosport - Yahoo!

Carl Froch WPTS12 Mikkel Kessler II - 25th May 2013 in London, UK

Whenever these super-middleweight behemoths first clashed in Herning, Denmark in 2010 Kessler managed to eke out a decision and burst Froch's unbeaten bubble in a 'Super Six' tournament clash of the highest quality. The Nottingham man coaxed Kessler over to England for the return and did more than enough to take revenge via a 12-round points decision. Froch won the rematch far more comprehensively than Mikkel had won the first fight, by rocking the Dane mid-fight and always appearing to be just one step ahead whenever the pair frequently entered the ring trenches. Regardless of the result, the bout, as expected, lived up to the hype as a spectacle.

“Carl Froch threw nearly a thousand punches to beat Mikkel Kessler on points – one score a ludicrously lop-sided 118-110, alongside more reasonable verdicts of 115-113 and 116-112 – but he surely knows he shared the honours if not the decision with the beaten Dane. Their 12-round war, even more brutal than their first encounter in Denmark three years ago, was one of the finest fights seen in a British ring for a long time, the titles almost superfluous to their commitment. Kessler said that if he lost he would retire; there did not seem the slightest inclination on his part to walk away from the battle as they moved into the championship rounds. How they took some of these punches only they and their doctors would know.”

Kevin Mitchell, The Guardian

Omar Figueroa WPTS12 Nihito Arakawa - 27th July 2013 in Texas, USA

This was perhaps the least predictable fight on the list. In fact, in just the first-round of the contest it looked like rising star Figueroa would quickly steamroll his Japanese opponent who was venturing to the US as a relative unknown with a good record built mostly against little-known fighters. Unbeaten Omar started fast and Arakawa appeared vastly out of his depth, hovering in the pocket, soaking up spiteful combinations. But the visitor was made of sterner stuff than that; he battled back showing superb commitment and incredible fitness to see out the distance and give the Mexican hero all the trouble he could handle for the duration. A cut to Figueroa's nose in the third-round gave the away man hope as he helped to create an unforgettable brawl, despite tasting the canvas twice and losing widely on the cards. If Figueroa fulfills his vast potential he will never forget his duel with Nihito Arakawa.

“In an online poll of fight fans conducted by Golden Boy or Showtime or both or whatever it was, I don’t know, round three of last Saturday’s savage barnburner between Omar Figueroa and Nihito Arakawa was voted the best round of what may have been the best fight so far in 2013. Was this the round of the year so far? Looking back on this fight a few times, and now again just focusing particularly on this round, the unbelievable brutality of what we witnessed still amazes me. It remains a nearly indescribable fight -- if you missed it, you have to see this fight, without question. And if you doubt that at all, just watch this one round. And know that none of the 12 rounds in this fight were dramatically “worse” than this one. The action was just non-stop. The fight was basically outrageous. This had little to no business happening for 36 minutes.”

Scott Christ, badlefthook.com

Closing Comments

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