

TYSON FURY SPECIAL

THE STORY OF A HISTORIC VICTORY FOR 'THE GYPSY KING' IN LAS VEGAS

FEBRUARY 27 2020

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BOXING NEWS

RETURN OF THE KING

Fury thrashes Wilder to reclaim
heavyweight pole position

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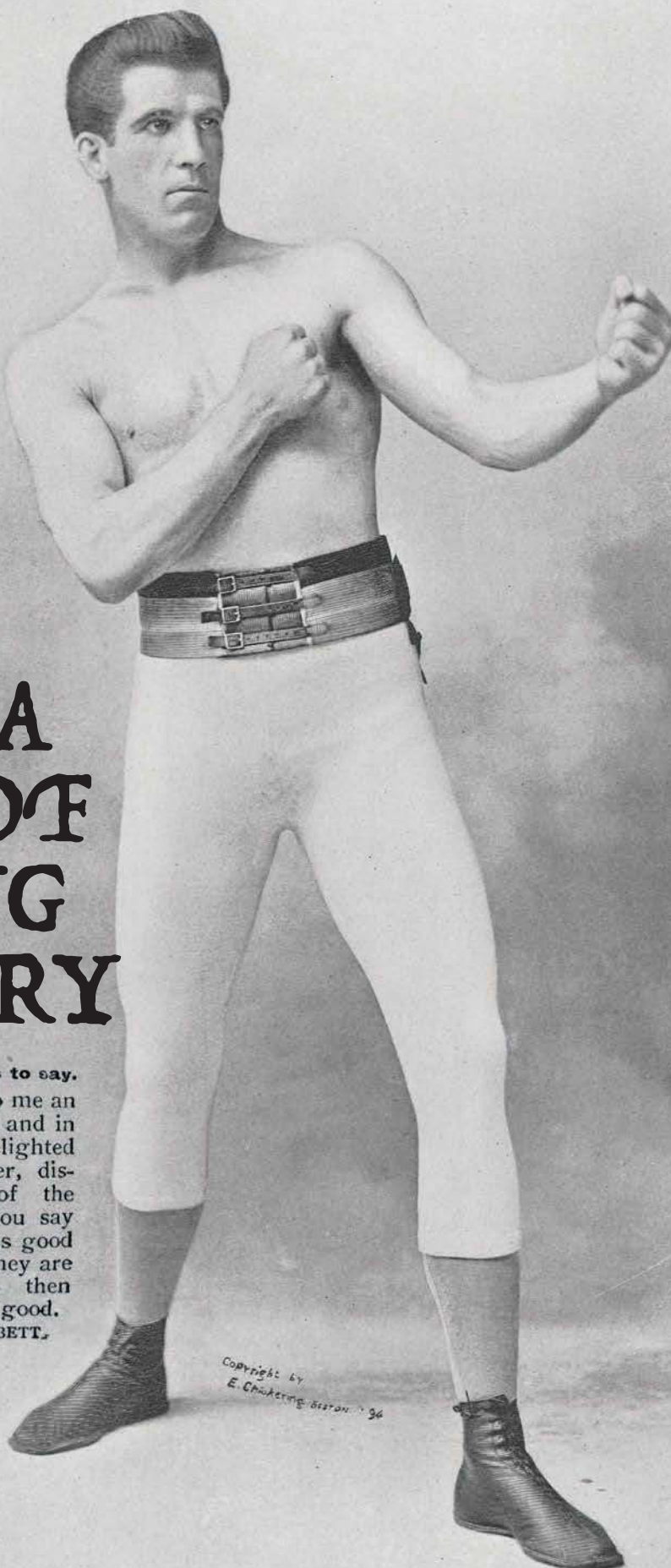


OWN A PIECE OF BOXING HISTORY

What a World's Champion has to say.

I have just had handed to me an advance copy of "Boxing," and in a word I must say I am delighted with it. I must, however, disagree with that part of the Editorial Ideas in which you say that this first issue is not as good as future ones will be. If they are to be better than this, then—gee whiz!—they will be good.

JAMES J. CORBETT.



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Israil Madrimov

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BOXING NEWS

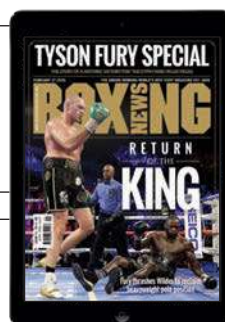
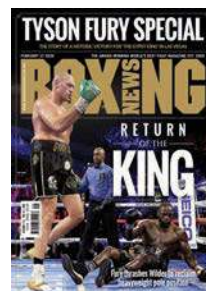


Photo: MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK



HEAVY HEAD:
Wilder makes his way to the ring



Cover photography
AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Wilder must address what really went wrong before entering into third fight with Fury



Matt Christie

@MattCBoxingNews

Editor

I T should be no surprise that the first thing Deontay Wilder did when he got out of hospital was declare his intention to again fight the man who put him there. The clause in the contract, that stipulated the loser of the Tyson Fury-Wilder sequel had 30 days to sign for fight three, is something that almost every boxer would trigger in

the immediate aftermath of a defeat, however humbling that loss might be.

The anguish and humiliation boxers feel after losing, particularly boxers like Wilder whose fearsome reputation was stripped away so completely, must be truly unbearable. Wilder, a brave and proud man, will simply not be able to rest nor admit the truth of what the world witnessed on Saturday night: That Tyson Fury was the significantly superior fighter in their Las Vegas rematch.

The excuses quickly came from his corner, namely lead coach Jay Deas, and later by the fighter himself. The main problem was the lavish black armoury Wilder wore to the ring (some kind of high-tech panther suit that had red flashing eyes and no doubt cost a fortune). It was so heavy, they said, it sapped him of the energy required to win

once he got there. As excuses go, it's right up there with David Haye's bruised toe.

The truth of the matter might well be that the suit was too heavy. It certainly looked it and, if you think about it, lugging it from the dressing room to the ring is far from ideal. But Wilder should blame no one but himself if that was the case – it seems unlikely that the thick black costume was a surprise that was forced upon him before the biggest fight of his life. It appeared, as we saw him on the big screen bare-chested and waiting to enter the arena, that he left it until the last possible moment to dress up thus suggesting he was well aware of its mass.

At worst, it was an excuse designed to take credit away from the fighter who beat him. At best, it was appalling planning.

The actions of Deas in the immediate aftermath were also regrettable. Before he blamed Wilder's outfit, he brazenly

pointed the finger at his assistant, Mark Breland, for having the audacity to wave the towel of surrender when it was clear Wilder was taking the kind of hammering that is almost impossible to come back from. If reports are true that Breland's services have since been dispensed, both Wilder and Deas should make sure they take a long hard look in the mirror before embarking on a third bout with Fury. For victory to be gained in fight three, which at this juncture seems the longest of long shots, they must accept and address what truly went wrong. Even if the costume was partly to blame, then Breland's actions should only be championed. If he hadn't signalled enough was enough, Wilder may now not be in a position to fight another day.

But fight another day he will. That's what boxers do. We shouldn't be too hard on him for trying to justify his performance in the days that followed his only loss. Boxers need to believe that something else was at play, that it wasn't merely a case of losing to a better fighter. Wilder is going through the motions of a boxer trying to find his way back.

Anthony Joshua had do that after losing to Andy Ruiz Jr. He did so differently, though, choosing to keep any excuses, however valid, completely to himself. Tyson Fury also accepted the draw with Wilder in good grace, despite having reason to complain.

Both went on to triumph magnificently in returns.

TRULY HONOURED...

WE are delighted to have won two more SJA Awards, the Oscars of sports journalism, at Monday night's ceremony.

The BN website came out on top of a shortlist that included the *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, Mail Online and Sky Sports to be named the Best Sports Website of 2019. A huge, huge achievement.

We also won Special Sports Edition, for the fourth year in a row, for our bookazine, *110 Years of Boxing News*.

That's five SJA Awards for BN in four years and testament to the editorial team's efforts and the support of our readers.

Follow us and keep up to date

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Coming next time

● WE catch up with Scott Quigg, again based in the UK after a spell in the US, and find a man eager to make up for lost time when he takes on Jono Carroll in Manchester.

● THE bumper bill in Frisco, Texas, that sees Jay Harris challenge Julio Cesar Martinez, Kal Yafai takes on Roman Gonzalez and Mikey Garcia tackles Jessie Vargas.

● AVAILABLE to download from March 3 and the print edition is in stores on March 5.

On the website

● HOW to use the heavy bag.

● LOOKING back on Roberto Duran defeating Iran Barkley.

● LENNOX LEWIS on the art of winning rematches.

● FOR the first time, David Haye reveals the tactics he had in place to beat Tyson Fury back in 2013.

● FOR all the news you need, read *Boxing News At Five*.

Available on the App Store

Available on Android

'A LOSS ISN'T ALL DOOM AND GLOOM'

Photo: RYAN HAFEY/PBC



FIRST DEFEAT:
At the age of 34, Wilder must come back from a loss for the first time

Far too much emphasis is placed on unbeaten records in this day and age



Mark Massow

*Trainer/
manager*

THE new year is well underway and noises are coming from the Floyd Mayweather camp of an impending return.

Although these hints have been aimed more at the social media sphere than the real boxing fans, when

the self-proclaimed "TBE" speaks certain elements of the sport listen nonetheless. This is in spite of the fact that his best years are far behind him and a new breed have since taken the spotlight.

Mayweather achieved all there was to achieve and at the highest level too. There are some valid arguments that a few of his opponents were past their primes

when he decided to engage them in (very lucrative) fisticuffs, but his longevity and record bears scrutiny in the modern era. And then there's his much-vaunted '0'.

A relatively recent trend to protect an unbeaten record in lieu of any meaningful, competitive contests now hangs over the business end of the sport at all levels.

For the ticket-seller promoting him/herself on social media and proclaiming a 7-0 record against combined opponents with records of 3-112, this is understandable when you appreciate that their career progression depends on their ability to sell the required amount of tickets to warrant a place on the

next show. But let's not get too over-excited.

These wins are often a chance to build a following, perhaps gain a bit of local publicity and an opportunity to find your way in the professional system. The contests themselves are not usually overly competitive, as the journeyman opponent often has one eye on their next engagement and subsequent pay day. The rare upset serves as a warning to respect anyone who steps into the squared circle, but the 40-36/60-54 totals dominate the ticket-seller versus journeyman scorecards up and down the country.

Taking risks is all part of the sport – squaring off against any opponent could be described as risky – but we

have a situation now where the local ticket-seller routinely goes through the motions against an opponent whose wages he himself is paying via his ticket sales, to then announce at the conclusion that he's kept his '0'.

Often you hear of ticket-sellers (and/or their managers) refusing to accept an opponent with a winning record or someone who will generate their own purse and come to win, unless a title is on the line. When two novice pros decide to roll the dice and challenge each other the social media posts of 'daring to be great' start doing the rounds.

Until the industry, including the boxing press, accepts that a loss early in a career, or even when well established, doesn't have to be all doom and gloom then things won't be about to change anytime soon and the whitewash scorecards will be available aplenty.

Ticket-seller versus journeyman is the apprenticeship. If the '0' is to be given the respect it deserves then start counting the wins only when they're not paying for the opponent!

**THE LOCAL FIGHTER GOES
THROUGH THE MOTIONS
AGAINST AN OPPONENT WHOSE
WAGES HE PAYS HIMSELF**



LETTER OF THE WEEK

WELL-DESERVED SUPERLATIVES



SUPERLATIVES are often overused in describing sporting achievements, but in the case of Tyson Fury's astonishing performance against Deontay Wilder to win the WBC heavyweight title they are well deserved. Fury's fantastic achievement in beating Wilder was a tactical masterclass. He outboxed and even outpunched one of boxing's most feared punchers. The next step now is surely a unification fight against fellow Brit Anthony Joshua. Let's sincerely hope that contractual issues and politics between promoters do not deny the public, or indeed the boxers, of this historic fight.

David Doe

DEMOLITION JOB

I DOUBT I can say any more than has already been said about Tyson Fury destroying, schooling and systematically breaking up the big-hitting heavyweight

champion Deontay Wilder. I've been watching boxing for 50 years, but what I saw Fury produce was epic, historic and just amazing. I can best put it like this... When you buy something from a shop, a quality product, you expect it to do what it says on the label. As my adult sons and I gathered to watch the fight on TV, we hoped that Fury and his training team could deliver what they said was on their label – added weight, taking the centre of the ring, going for the KO. My goodness did they deliver all they had promised. It was a demolition job.

Ray Fox

WEMBLEY STADIUM BECKONS

ONCE again, Tyson Fury has proved what an intelligent man he is. His educated boxing display against Deontay Wilder really was a pleasure to watch. Wilder was schooled on the noble art of the sweet science. With Fury now owning

the fabled green WBC belt, and with his willingness to fight anyone, surely Fury versus Anthony Joshua at a sold-out Wembley Stadium can't be that far off?

Owen Hollifield

RIGHT CHOICE FROM BRELAND

ALTHOUGH I fancied Tyson Fury to beat Deontay Wilder in their rematch, I'm not going to claim to have predicted the fantastic performance that Fury produced. It was brilliantly unexpected. In my opinion, Wilder's trainer, Mark Breland, saved his fighter's career and perhaps more by pulling his man out so he could fight another day.

Jamie Ingleby

BACKING UP HIS WORDS

NOT bad for pillow fists! Tyson Fury is a class act who talked the talk and walked the walk against Deontay Wilder.

Neal Parker

IN COMMAND:
Fury [right] is utterly dominant against Wilder

Photo: RYAN HAFEY/PBC



THE PANEL

WHERE SHOULD TYSON FURY'S WIN AGAINST DEONTAY WILDER RANK IN THE LIST OF GREAT BRITISH BOXING PERFORMANCES?



Wayne Alexander
Former EBU champion

Fury's win against Wilder ranks as one of the top five performances by a British boxer fighting abroad. A lot of fans thought he would get knocked out, so it's the manner in which he handled Wilder that is most impressive. It was similar to the way Lloyd Honeyghan walked through Donald Curry.



Kieran Farrell
Trainer/manager/promoter

I definitely think it's up there with the best wins of all time. Naseem Hamed lost to Marco Antonio Barrera, Amir Khan lost to Canelo Alvarez, and Ricky Hatton lost to Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao. Fury, though, has beaten Wladimir Klitschko against the odds and now Wilder.



Gary Logan
Trainer & ex-pro

A brilliant win for Fury in as much as adjustments were made in order to win in dominant fashion against a very dangerous Wilder. But let's keep it real: everyone knows that although Wilder's punch power is amazing, he is technically awful. So, it's debatable to say it's the best British performance ever.



Andy Clarke
Boxing commentator

In my boxing viewing lifetime, I put it in the top rank, alongside Donald Curry against Lloyd Honeyghan and Fury's win against Wladimir Klitschko. The manner of the performance in a fight of that magnitude was electrifying.

HOW WOULD A FIGHT BETWEEN FURY AND ANTHONY JOSHUA PLAY OUT IF IT HAPPENS?

Wayne Alexander

If a fight between Fury and Joshua was to happen next it would be a great British sporting occasion. I see Fury being too much for Joshua. I think Fury would be able to handle Joshua at long and short range in an exciting fight to win by decision or even late stoppage.

Kieran Farrell

I think so long as Fury sees out the first four rounds, he can beat Joshua. But the first four versus Joshua are so dangerous. Sixteen of Joshua's 21 knockout victories have come within the first four rounds.

Gary Logan

Joshua has a much better armoury than Wilder. He has a better repertoire and this gives him a more than reasonable chance. Fury is as complete a heavyweight as there is, but Joshua would not disappoint in this clash. Still, I'm going for Fury in a closer-than-people-think fight.

Andy Clarke

Recent evidence points to a Fury win. He would certainly start as the strong favourite. But until two elite competitors actually meet, nobody can say for sure what will happen.

10 COUNT

WHY FURY vs JOSHUA MUST HAPPEN NEXT

Explaining the reasons why the all-British heavyweight unification clash must take place as soon as possible

1. IT WILL CROWN A TRUE NUMBER ONE

This should be the reason all fights take place, but it is especially important to have some clarity and sense of order at heavyweight.

2. IT WILL BE THE BIGGEST BOXING MATCH TO TAKE PLACE IN OUR LIFETIME

Not only appealing to UK fans, a potential showdown would also make a significant impression throughout the world, thanks to their recent exposure stateside.

3. ALL THINGS ARE NOW EQUAL

Forget Joshua owning three belts (WBA, IBF and WBO) and Fury only one (WBC). Based on accomplishments, Fury's victories over Wilder – a man Joshua never fought – and Klitschko – a man Joshua fought only when past his prime – trump anything on "AJ's" record. It's a 50-50 fight in every sense.

4. BOTH ARE IN THEIR PRIME

Last year was an up and down one for Joshua, 30, but it ended on a high note with revenge over Andy Ruiz Jr. Fury, 31, meanwhile, went through the motions against Tom Schwarz and Otto Wallin and then showed he is at the peak of his powers in dismantling Deontay Wilder.

5. THERE IS NO INTEREST IN A REMATCH BETWEEN FURY AND DEONTAY WILDER

Given the one-sided nature of their second fight, the anticipation ahead of a potential Fury-Wilder III would be dramatically reduced to say the least.

6. THERE IS NO INTEREST IN JOSHUA FIGHTING KUBRAT PULEV

Joshua-Pulev seems to have been on the cards for two years now and not once during that time has it sounded in the slightest bit appealing. Yes, Pulev is Joshua's IBF mandatory, but who really cares about belts these days?

7. DILLIAN WHYTE SHOULD BE MADE TO WAIT

Whyte's immediate reaction to Fury beating Wilder was to claim he is next in line to face the "Gypsy King". Yet his recent troubles with UKAD, as well as a lacklustre showing against Mariusz Wach, will hardly have the boxing world begging to see him now challenge Fury.

8. OLEKSANDR USYK SHOULD BE MADE TO WAIT

The 'Usyk at heavyweight' experiment is all well and good, and it might even produce the best of the lot, but for now the Ukrainian should be made to wait his turn.

9. IT WILL FILL A FOOTBALL STADIUM IN SECONDS

Both Fury and Joshua have won fights in stadiums before and the setting is seemingly made for them.

10. IT IS A CELEBRATION OF BRITAIN'S DOMINANCE AT HEAVYWEIGHT

All four of the world heavyweight titles are currently held by boxers born and raised in Great Britain and this is not something that happens all too often.

A WEEK OF WONDERS

Photos: MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK



THE LOOK
Fury and team
celebrate a
momentous
victory

Thoughts from
a magical
heavyweight
trip to Las
Vegas



**Steve
Bunce**

@BigDaddyBunce

Voice of boxing

In a long week of illusions, delusions, fake weight, Cajun rice, blood, guts and thunder, the city of Las Vegas regained a crown. The boxing crown.

It was heavyweight, make no mistake.

For two days Mike Tyson was in a booth taking cash for a quick picture and people waited in line for their spin with the old king.

I caught Lennox Lewis late on Thursday night measuring the ring, an anonymous lump of a

fighting man, in the belly of the boxing beast surrounded by hard-hat workers. He was looking at the ring with just a bit too much longing for my liking. Big men playing a small part in a Las Vegas revival.

"I would always come down the night before," Lewis told me. "I wanted to check the ring, check the ropes, make sure everything was good. I always made sure it was checked on the night." In his brawl with Ray Mercer the ropes on the ring at Madison Square Garden had been loosened. "Nah, man. They are not doing that to me. I got that changed." It was all part of what Lennox fondly called boxing's "politricks".

There was a refreshing absence of skullduggery during the week, odd when you take into consideration the amount of lawyers, suits and those

in shades that follow our boxing caravan. And this fight certainly had contrasting extremes and existing hostile relationships between the two fighters. Two low-key, stable, cool sets of trainers helped keep it civil when it most certainly was not: Messrs Lee, Steward, Deas and Breland are good guys and being in their company was one of the privileges.

I first wrote about Andy Lee when he was a skinny boy at Repton boxing in the schoolboy championships. Andy and his brother Ned, gentlemen both. Ned was first to greet me after the fight in Tyson's dressing room. It was Andy who ushered in Tommy Hearns for a Kronk reunion, a beautiful moment in that room of pure joy. That was a privilege to witness. A lot of big men

had something in their eyes for that one.

And then the new champion in his underpants talking to Mike Costello, not 30 minutes after the win; Fury beaming and going back over history. "I told you all for years and years." Standing to attention as he talked, wearing nothing but his kecks. The new champion totally at home. That was a privilege.

I sat for a bit before leaving the MGM Garden that night. It was perhaps midnight, over two hours since the last punch was thrown, when I was basically thrown out. I never wanted it to end. It had been a privilege.

On the flight out I made a few notes: 'Liston and other Las Vegas dead. Where is Robert Wangila buried?' That was the Sunday before the fight, on the Sunday after the fight I grabbed a coffee with Gene Kilroy at the Avenue in the MGM. It's a ritual.

Gene asked our waitress where she was from and how long she had been in Las Vegas. "I'm from Kenya, I came to Las Vegas 31 years ago with my first husband," she told us. She floated away, came back with the coffee jug. "Why did

you come to Las Vegas?" Gene asked.

"We came here for my husband's work, he was a boxer," she replied.

"Robert Wangila?" I asked.

"You knew my husband?" she said, shocked and pulling out her identity card to show me. "I kept his name." The name tag read: Grace Wangila.

"He was with Bob Arum. But not at the end." The end was

his last fight, a main event at the old Aladdin in 1994; Wangila was stopped in round nine, collapsed in the dressing room and died two days later with Grace at his side. He was just 26, had won 22 of his 27 fights, had lost his way a bit, but had he won that

night he would have fought for the title the next year. Those are the lonely final numbers for Wangila, the first African to win an Olympic boxing gold medal. He did it when he was just 20.

I did know her husband and I also know Kevin Sanders, the man in his

corner that night at the Aladdin. I knew the fight still lived inside his head. Lurking, dangerous and dark, a memory that will never shift.

Two years after that fight Sanders pulled Nigel Benn out against Steve Collins in their rematch because he regretted not sparing Wangila the ninth round, the last 72 seconds of his fighting

life. It is likely that the damage was done and it would not have made any difference; Wangila was not left out cold on the canvas, Sanders carries no blame. There was a lot of unpleasant talk at the time about just how hard and desperate his gym life in Las Vegas had been. It

is often too easy to forget the torrid life most fighters have in the city, a harsh life far from the palatial homes of the few.

I never did ask Grace where her beloved husband is buried – it seemed trivial. Talking to her was another privilege in a week of wonders.

'I WOULD ALWAYS COME DOWN & CHECK THE RING THE NIGHT BEFORE THE FIGHT'



LIVING LEGENDS: Tyson, Lewis and Holyfield together in Las Vegas before Fury-Wilder II

WITNESSING GREATNESS

Fury's
victory
over Wilder
dominates
this week's
media
review,
writes
George
Gigney

BROADCASTS

THERE'S no point starting anywhere else; for a mammoth event, BT Sport put on a mammoth broadcast that ran from midnight to 7am. There wasn't any actual boxing until around 100 minutes in, though this was always billed as a four-fight telecast, so if anyone was up and spent that first couple of hours feeling shortchanged, that's on them.

Although the Wilder-Fury II undercard was atrocious, the show didn't feel overly bloated. Given the size of the fight, plenty of big-name fighters – active and retired – flocked to the MGM Grand and the cameras picked them all up, filling time while we waited for the big one. There were a few misplaced ringside interviews with the likes of Vinnie Jones and Gordon Ramsay – who no doubt know their boxing, but can't exactly be considered experts – that made the £25 pay-per-view fee a little harder to swallow.

David Haye, who was doing punditry and providing colour commentary in between rounds, didn't shy away when praising Fury on his performance, stating that he had "witnessed greatness" in Las Vegas. To his credit, despite picking Wilder to win, from the very first round Haye wasn't afraid to critique the defending champion as Fury bludgeoned him around the ring.

There perhaps wasn't quite enough consideration on commentary around the possibility of Wilder's ear being injured – plenty thought his eardrum was perforated in the third, though at the time of writing that's not been confirmed.

The on-screen team were also unanimous in their desire for Fury to now go on and fight Anthony Joshua – a Sky fighter – rather than a trilogy fight

with Wilder, providing further proof that none on either side of the UK broadcast divide try to operate in a vacuum.

One thing that struck me about the broadcast was how well the build into the main event was handled. There weren't any poorly placed advert breaks – in fact, there were very few breaks – and nothing was dragged out. Though BT's foray into the PPV sphere is still in its infancy, they've firmly proved themselves a legitimate competitor to Sky Sports.

Prior to their PPV show, BT also had a broadcast live from London that ran from 8pm through to midnight, totalling 11 straight hours of boxing programming. Their new agreement with ITV also began on Saturday night, with the latter portion of the York Hall card also being aired on

the terrestrial channel.

That partnership could be huge for the sport.

Sky continued their coverage of the Golden Contract tournament on Friday night, and credit to the commentary team for their balanced calling of the Tyrone McKenna-Mohamed Mimouna bout, which ended in a controversial decision in

favour of McKenna.

YOUTUBE

Unsurprisingly there was a huge amount of content pushed out over the past week, though perhaps the most excessive was the official final press conference chaired by Joe Tessitore, who did his best to keep the quarrelling heavyweights at bay.

The event stretched to an hour and – due to it being broadcast live on TV in America – actually had advert breaks. I've never seen anything like it. On YouTube, this meant we just had silent footage of Wilder and Fury sitting a little awkwardly on stage during those advert

Photo: JOHN GURZINSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



breaks. However, it was definitely a step up from past press conferences for huge fights, which usually feature a stream of executives giving pointless speeches ad nauseam.

The press conference was emblematic of the strain put on both fighters by their media obligations during fight week, which seemed to be on another scale to anything prior.

The post-fight press conference was a lot more interesting, particularly as Wilder's trainer, Jay Deas, shed some light on the corner's decision to throw in the towel. He confirmed it was Mark Breland who threw it, but also said he disagreed with the decision – as did Wilder himself – arguing that he would rather his man go out on his shield. That's a worrying comment; a trainer should never be braver than their fighter, but perhaps it



is more a case of Deas trying to remain in Wilder's good books. Indeed, footage from the corner of Breland throwing in the towel shows Deas not protesting at all.

In the mayhem of Fury's dressing room after the fight, BT managed to grab his new trainer, SugarHill Steward. In a bizarre move, Steward said he's now considering retiring as a trainer of professional fighters as he's now achieved everything he wanted to. Where that would leave Fury after their wildly successful collaboration is anybody's guess.

In ESPN's post-fight analysis, Max Kellerman made an interesting observation about the first knockdown and how, technically, the right hand that dropped Wilder was around the back of the head and technically illegal. If it

transpires that Wilder's equilibrium was disrupted by that shot because of an ear injury, Kellerman explored the idea of that being used as a selling point for a trilogy fight.

PODCASTS

There are few things I enjoy more than an instant analysis post-fight podcast. The 5 Live with Costello and Bunce episode was typically enlightening. They grabbed a word with Andy Lee, part of Fury's camp, who highlighted the significance of Fury winning in the seventh round. Emanuel Steward was born on July 7 and both his first and second names consist of seven letters. Lee also said he wouldn't give away any secrets when Fury's weight was brought

up, perhaps suggesting Tyson wasn't as heavy on the night. Fury was seen chugging water just before the weigh in, so his official weight may have been some sort of ploy.

On that same episode, Frank Warren described Fury's performance as the best he's ever seen from a British fighter – a huge statement from someone as experienced as Warren.

The Fight Disciples provided entertaining coverage during fight week, though some of their views after the fight seemed short-sighted. The pair argued that Anthony Joshua is now a "paper champion" and his titles no longer hold meaning in the wake of Fury's win, which is nonsense. It's one thing to say Fury is now the division leader, but another thing entirely to completely disregard Joshua's achievements.

BRUTAL:
But were all of
Fury's punches
legal?

PLANT LOOKS ELSEWHERE

Caleb turns his attentions elsewhere after turning down Canelo

HAVING distanced himself from a fight against **Saul "Canelo" Alvarez**, stating he wouldn't have enough time to prepare for it, IBF super-middleweight belt-holder **Caleb Plant** has now set his sights on bouts against fellow titlists Callum Smith and David Benavidez.

According to Plant, his team have made contact with Smith, the current WBA super-middleweight leader, with a view to making that fight happen, while Benavidez, owner of the WBC strap, has emerged as a possible future foe following some foul-mouthed back and forth on social media between the pair.

Posting to Instagram, Benavidez wrote: "First of all, you just turned down a fight with Canelo that's still 10 weeks away. If

you think you're better than every other super middleweight, why turn that fight [Canelo] down with plenty of time left? You're a p***y that just talks out of his a**, that's why.

'TELL OSCAR WE CAN GET CRACKING IN THE FALL WITH CANELO'

"Now that everyone knows that you're a p***y, you try and lie and say you sent an offer to Callum Smith and GGG [Gennady Golovkin] to fight. Why don't you tell Luis DeCubas [Plant's manager] to send me an offer tomorrow for a unification bout between me and you and we'll get it done, little boy.

"All you do is run your f**king mouth like a b***h and only fight bums like Mike Lee and Vincent Feigenbutz. That's why you think you're the s**t.

"We can get this fight done ASAP!

Tired of waiting and hearing you run your mouth. Let's get it done."

Plant revealed last Thursday that he is looking for a fight against Callum Smith or, failing that, former world middleweight ruler Gennady Golovkin, who has often flirted with the idea of making a move to 168 pounds.

"We've sent offers to Callum and GGG," Plant said. "Hopefully, we hear back soon and if not, tell Oscar [De La Hoya] if he thinks I'm scared [of Canelo Alvarez], then let's get it cracking in the fall with Canelo."

De La Hoya may have other ideas. He reacted to Plant turning down a May 2 date against Canelo by stating the American would never again get the chance to make life-changing money opposing the Mexican superstar.

Then again, this is boxing. De La Hoya wouldn't be the first promoter to go against his word; to be lying yesterday and telling the truth today.

NOT SCARED:
Plant insists he is not running away from Canelo

Photo: BRETT CARLSEN/GETTY IMAGES



Photo: GEOFF CADDICK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



REUNITED:
Joshua and Pulev
were originally set
to fight in 2017

JOSHUA VERSUS...

Kubrat Pulev looks favourite to challenge 'AJ' at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium

ACCORDING to reports, promoter Eddie Hearn has confirmed a deal has been struck for Anthony Joshua to defend his WBA, IBF and WBO world heavyweight titles against Kubrat Pulev at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on June 20.

That's good news for Pulev, who has been chasing Joshua since 2018, but bad news for the rest of the division and for fans hoping for something bigger and better.

After all, this IBF mandatory obligation could turn out to be just one of many obstacles the men in suits use to delay the one fight the world wants to see: Anthony Joshua vs. Tyson Fury. Another obstacle, equally perplexing, is this: Deontay Wilder, the dethroned former WBC heavyweight champion, has 30 days to trigger a rematch clause against Fury.

It's hard to fathom why he would, given the one-sided nature of their second fight on Saturday (February 22), but millions of dollars and the possibility of landing a Hail Mary punch could have something to do with it.

Should Wilder fancy his chances, a third fight with Fury will take place later

this year. If, however, he opts out, Hearn says there is a possibility a step-aside agreement with Pulev can be arranged, which would see Fury fight Joshua next.

He told Sky Sports: "He's [Fury] promoted by Bob Arum predominantly. Frank Warren is also involved, MTK are his management company. I've spoken to Top Rank and I've spoken to MTK straight after the fight.

"Everybody is very clear on this. Everybody wants this fight: Anthony Joshua, Tyson Fury, MTK, Top Rank, Frank Warren, Matchroom.

"There are some hurdles to overcome on the broadcasting, but nothing too much.

"I promise you this fight will happen. If we have to fight [Kubrat] Pulev, we've got to beat Pulev, and if he has to fight Wilder, he's got to beat Wilder again.

"Both of those things will happen. Fury will beat Wilder again and Joshua will knock Pulev clean out, despite Bob Arum telling us very differently.

"You will get this fight. We will do everything that it takes to make this fight.

"Last time, you had us and Team Wilder and we were locking heads. Right now, you have two guys and two camps that genuinely want and will do everything they can to make this fight. It

is the only fight.

"When are we ever going to get the chance of two British world heavyweight champions fighting for the undisputed title against each other? It's never happened before it will never happen again.

"We'd be clowns, we'd be idiots if we didn't make this fight. We

believe we win the fight, they believe they win the fight, so let's see it."

Clowns and idiots conspired to make a pig's ear of Anthony Joshua and Deontay Wilder unifying the heavyweight division in 2018 and 2019. Let's hope the same mistakes aren't repeated here with Fury vs. Joshua.

**'WE'D BE
CLOWNS IF WE
DIDN'T MAKE
FURY VERSUS
JOSHUA'**

ACTION

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

Reporters' star ratings for main events and undercards are based on in-ring entertainment, competitiveness and whether overall expectation was met

ALL HAIL THE KING



Photos: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

**'I WASN'T BAD FOR
SOMEONE WITH
PILLOWS FOR
FISTS WAS I?'**



DOMINANCE:
Fury celebrates after handing
Wilder a frightful beating



Tyson Fury
turns in
sublime
showing to
hammer
Deontay
Wilder and
wow the
boxing world



Matt Christie
@MattCBoxingNews
RINGSIDE

🇺🇸 LAS VEGAS

FEBRUARY 22

★★★★☆ MAIN EVENT

★★★★★ ATMOSPHERE

T

HE story of a boy who was named after Mike Tyson continues to astound. The kid grew up to be six-foot-nine and a fighting man who

bamboozled opponents with a frame so gargantuan it had no business being so nimble and elusive. He used it to box on the backfoot, to switch, to slip punches, to dance. Then one night, with Mike Tyson watching at ringside, **Tyson Fury** reinvented his style, planted his feet and produced one of the most impressive heavyweight beatdowns Las Vegas had seen since fans were naming their kids after Mike Tyson.

Tyson, the troubled savage who is now at peace, jumped into the air with his arms aloft at ringside, proud of the man he inspired to fight. **Deontay Wilder**, dubbed by many as an even bigger hitter

than "Iron" Mike was the man forced to take such a humbling and public thrashing in front of him.

Dropped in rounds three and five and stopped in the seventh when his co-trainer, Mark Breland, threw in the towel, Wilder left the ring without the WBC belt he had successfully defended 10 times before. Fury, 51 eventful months after ousting long-term champion Wladimir Klitschko in Germany, is the leader of the heavyweight division again. This time he is loved, not only the WBC champion but the people's champion with a soaring reputation.

The battered and bewildered Wilder complained about the stoppage, at first thinking it was the actions of the referee Kenny Bayless. Jay Deas, the Alabama fighter's lead coach, objected too. He had told Breland, a former welterweight champion of high regard, not to throw the towel when he gestured he might at the end of the sixth. Wilder must be allowed to 'go out on his shield', Deas said. Yet he was helpless in a corner, his spindly legs barely able to hold him up, his eyes glazed and slow to focus. Go out on his shield? Much longer and he would have been out on a stretcher. ➤

ACTION

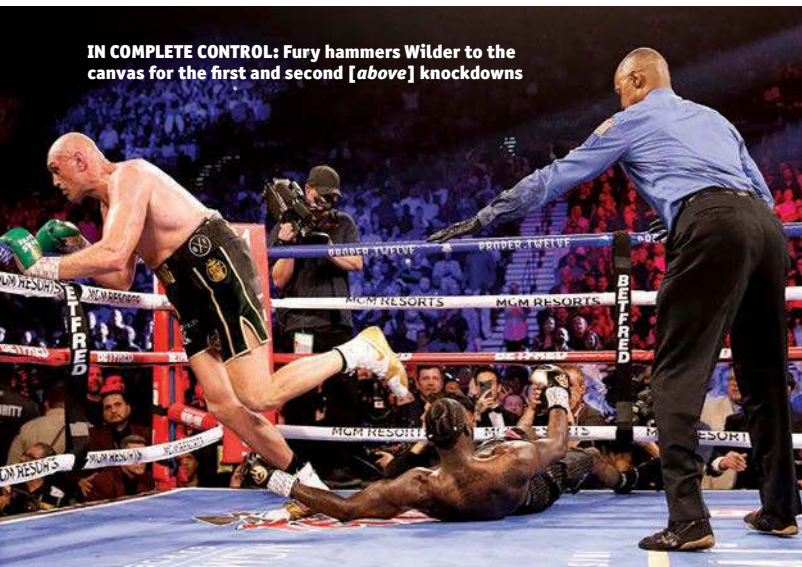


THE END: A groggy Wilder is about to be rescued by his corner

Photos: ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS/STEVE MARCUS



IN COMPLETE CONTROL: Fury hammers Wilder to the canvas for the first and second [above] knockdowns



PREDATOR: Fury attacks and Wilder can't keep him off



➤ Wilder had already entered dangerous ground and if there are any issues with the ending, they can only be that it came too late. Wilder's balance was shot to pieces and defending himself was difficult. The fact that Breland, by virtue of not being the head coach, was not permitted to throw the towel under the rules and regulations, should be a moot point.

That the 34-year-old went to hospital in the immediate aftermath, to treat a two-centimetre cut in the concha of his ear that required seven stitches, should only underline the absolute necessity of the fight being stopped.

Such an injury should partly explain why Wilder's balance was so poor from the early going. The second knockdown in particular was evidence of that: A left hand up high was followed by one to the body. Wilder's legs, as he scrambled to get out of the way, crossed and he tripped over himself. There were at least three occasions when he completely lost his footing without taking a punch, careering forwards and backwards like a child attempting to ice skate for the first time.

None of that should detract in any way from Fury's performance. The injured ear was caused by Fury's bullying fists, so too the punches that wreaked havoc with Wilder's equilibrium. Tyson, 31, attacked from the opening bell, sitting down on a forceful jab, cutting off the ring on faultless feet, doing exactly what was required to win and doing exactly what he said he would do all along. He put Wilder under pressure he'd never experienced before and did what many expected Wilder to do to him.

As early as the opening moments, Fury, composed yet spiteful, looked like the winner. And though he took a hefty right hand in the second (which resulted in a sizeable bruise), he never relinquished control. Wilder, by the end of that session, was under severe pressure. Fury was simply walking him down, making it all look so easy and making it look like fighting back was the hardest thing in the world for the American.

A huge right hand dropped Deontay in the third. Badly buzzed, he tried to indicate he had slipped. Fury moved in to remind him what had put him on the deck. Another right hand, the formation of which was perfectly disguised behind his long left lead, crashed into the Wilder's temple. The ferocity from Fury was astonishing.

He had told the media for weeks beforehand that he was coming to knock Wilder out, that their first fight – which

ended in a contentious 12-round draw and saw Fury famously out cold in the last round only to miraculously wake up before he was counted out – had taught him all he needed to know about the "Bronze Bomber". Yet the media doubted his word. Last week, *Boxing News*, courtesy of this writer, published an article that predicted Fury would lose inside the distance, that his plan to go for the knockout was either hot air or badly misjudged. Frankly, who am I to doubt Tyson Fury, a fighter who knows more about the complexities of fighting than I ever could.

The all-consuming sensation that the Englishman was about to prove me wrong took hold moments before the fight as he made his way to the ring during one of the most memorable entrances in MGM Grand history. Smoke bellowed from beneath the throne he sat on. He was pushed to the ring by scantily clad women. Relaxation consumed him as sang along to Patsy Cline's version of the Willie Nelson song, *Crazy*. He stood up, wearing a plastic crown and king's outfit he had purchased from eBay, and blew kisses to the crowd who went ballistic with admiration.

If Fury was the villain in Germany, when he outthrust Klitschko over 12 rounds, he was every inch the hero here. As he looked out into the audience, with the 60's love song still booming through the speakers, he bowed again before stepping into the ring. He was so relaxed, so at ease and so not remotely crazy, despite the theme tune, two scenarios sprang to mind: Either he was preparing to say goodbye or, as it transpired, he was on the brink of the most spectacular performance of his entire career.

Wilder's own entrance is already destined for infamy. He blamed his defeat on the 40lb costume he wore, that his body was already aching as he stepped into the ring.

"Going up the stairs [into the ring] I knew immediately it was a different change in my body condition. After the second round, I had no legs," Wilder said.

"In the third round, my legs were just shot all the way through. But I'm a warrior and people know that I'm a warrior. It could easily be told that I didn't have any legs or anything. People asked if there was something wrong. There was



TALKING POINT

THOUGH both Fury and Anthony Joshua will likely have one interim fight each, we're optimistic that negotiations will soon begin for a Fury-Joshua blockbuster. Be warned, though, Omar Khalil, who did so much to stage Joshua-Ruiz in Saudi Arabia, was in Las Vegas last week.

something wrong but I tried to bluff.

I knew I didn't have any legs because of my uniform."

The punches he was taking couldn't have helped his leg situation either. Certainly they didn't help his face which was badly swollen. By the end of the sixth round, Wilder was being blasted with every shot. He opened the seventh with courage but it wasn't long before Fury's long arms toyed with the champion's defences, teasing them, making them look crude and amateurish.

A left-right-left scored in close. Wilder retreated to the corner, yearning for the one-in-a-million punch to turn things around. The end was approaching but there would be no miracle.

Wilder tried to cover up as more right hands slammed into him but he could do nothing but take them. It was all over at 1-55 of the round.

The day before at the weigh-in when Fury came in at 273lbs, significantly heavier than in the first fight, there were murmurs that he was not in peak condition.

It was all part of the plan that, with the help of new trainer Javan "SugarHill" Steward, was perfectly formed. Former WBO middleweight titlist Andy Lee's involvement, and the wonderful Kronk connection, played a huge part, too.

But it is the fighter, that kid named after Mike Tyson who grew up to be heavyweight champion of the world, who we must single out for the highest praise. He was gracious and charming in victory while insisting this new style is here to stay. What it really all points to is a boxer of extreme wisdom, talent and – crucially when mapping out greatness – ever increasing versatility.

When motivated and focused, Tyson Fury is a truly special boxer, one who we will likely be talking about as one of the best of them all in years to come.

THE VERDICT Awe-inspiring from Tyson Fury who, in this form, will be so very hard to beat.

FIRE WITH FIRE: Fury keeps Wallin off with forceful attacks of his own

'IN THE THIRD ROUND MY LEGS WERE JUST SHOT ALL THE WAY THROUGH'

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

Martin edges closer to another title shot after flattening Washington, writes **Matt Christie**

★★☆☆☆ UNDERCARD



HARLES MARTIN is chasing a rematch with Anthony Joshua. Sounds insane but he moved a step closer, at least to another shot at some kind of title, when he flattened **Gerald Washington** in six rounds of their IBF heavyweight eliminator.

Washington seemed to wobble Martin with a right hand as a lifeless first round came to an end. He tried to follow with another right, but it was telegraphed and Martin swept inside and stung him with a right and a left. After two minutes and 50 seconds of tedious action, there was something to get excited about.

The rest of the fight followed a similar pattern as Martin clumped Washington

with his left hand occasionally, before really loading up on one in the sixth that ended the fight at 1-57.

The truth: Neither fighter really had any business being involved in a 'world title eliminator' despite the IBF classifying this as such and though the heavyweight division is in fine fettle at the very top, the amount of titles and rankings out there makes champions and contenders out of too many undeserving fighters.

Mexico's excellent **Emanuel Navarrete** retained his WBO super-bantamweight title for the fifth time when he halted the plucky Filipino **Jeo Santisima** at 2-20 of the 11th round.

A wicked left hook to the body dropped his rival's guard and the champion switched up to the head. Under serious pressure and looking hurt, Santisima's corner threw the towel as referee, Russell Mora, dived in.

The destruction was excellently done

and had been in the making since the opening bell.

Navarrete probed early, looking for clues and openings. A left hook downstairs in the second found the target. The champion, one of the sport's most underrated fighters, ramped up the pressure in the third, firing blows into his rival's body and head. Santisima responded well in the fourth when a looping overhand right sent Navarrete into the ropes.

The Mexican seemed to go for the finish in the fifth as he raided Santisima with chopping punches, before wisely taking a breather in the next. Though not quite as quick or destructive, watching Navarrete in full flow, as he pummels the resistance out of his rivals, brings a young Manny Pacquiao to mind.

Standing at just under 6ft 6ins but weighing barely 154lbs, **Sebastian Fendura** is a sight to behold. One

Photos: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES





WHIRLWIND:
Navarrete is the
most impressive
fighter on the
undercard

FULL RESULTS

Tyson Fury (273lbs), 30-1 (21), w rsf 7
Deontay Wilder (231lbs), 42-1-1 (41); **Charles Martin** (254lbs), 28-2-1 (25), w rsf 6 **Gerald Washington** (236 1/2lbs), 20-4-1 (13); **Emanuel Navarrete** (122lbs), 31-1 (27), w rsf 11 **Jeo Santisima** (122lbs), 19-3 (16); **Petros Ananyan** (142lbs), 15-2-2 (7), w pts 10 **Subriel Matias** (142lbs), 15-1 (15); **Sebastian Fundora** (143 1/2lbs), 14-0-1, w pts 10 **Daniel Lewis** (153lbs), 6-1 (4); **Javier Molina** (141 1/2lbs), 22-2 (9), w pts 8 **Amir Ahmed Imam** (141 1/2lbs), 22-3 (19).

journalist said a few days before he took on Aussie **Daniel Lewis**. "Surely, before long, someone is going to catch him on the chin and knock him into next week."

Thomas, though he tried, couldn't even knock Fendura into the ropes. The spidery southpaw, of Coachella in California, invites punches because of his size. His long arms take a long time to get back to defend after he's thrown a shot and thus leave gaping holes. Thomas regularly clipped his opponent with counters but Fendura - who makes a peak Tommy Hearn look blubbery - picked the better shots. The left uppercut in particular was an impressive and accurate blow.

After only previously venturing as far as the sixth, Fendura showed good stamina. In the 10th and final round he was on his toes and scoring with his jab. The scores in his favour were 97-93, 98-92, 99-91 and the referee was Robert Byrd.

Russian **Petros Ananyan** notched a

minor upset when he rallied down the stretch to overtake **Subriel Matias**, taking a deserved unanimous 10-round decision. There were two scores of 95-94 and one of 96-93. Matias started sharply, his fast hands crafted combinations that scored frequently. Yet his rival was unperturbed by the shots coming his way and, by the halfway mark, he looked like the stronger fighter.

A huge right, bowled over his shoulder, thudded into the Puerto Rican in round seven. The prospect, who came into this bout on a wave of 15 stoppage wins from 15 fights, drooped into the ropes and could do nothing to avoid a replica right hand moments later. Three more rights came, each one on target, before a left sent Matias reeling across the ring. With the ropes catching him, referee Byrd administered a standing eight count.

In a bizarre bout, Morecambe's **Isaac Lowe** retained his unbeaten record when he scored a lopsided points win over the experienced **Alberto Guevara**

at featherweight. Between them, for a variety of fouls, they lost three points apiece. Guevara went down on the cards by the unusual scores of 96-87 (twice) and 95-88. The robust Guevara, who was stopped by Shakur Stevenson in three rounds last year, was decked in the eighth round from a right hand but looked more likely to get disqualified by referee Vic Drakulich than knocked out. Lowe has now won four of his last five away from home.

In a competitive super-lightweight crossroads bout - curiously only scheduled for eight rounds - Norwalk, California's **Javier Molina** was too busy for the slick **Amir Ahmed Imam** of Charlotte, North Carolina. Molina found space beneath his rival's longer arms to punish the body but the scores, 79-73 and two of 78-74, didn't really tell the right story of a close bout. Jay Nady refereed.

THE VERDICT Forgettable.

BOSSING IT:
Fendura clouts
Thomas [far left]
while Molina is too
busy for Imam



BATTLE CRY:
Foster is thrilled with
his rematch victory

Photos: ACTION IMAGES/ADAM HOLT



FOSTER PROVES POINT

Reid forced
to retire
after six

⊕ BETHNAL GREEN

FEBRUARY 22

★★★★☆ MAIN EVENT

★★★★☆ UNDERCARD

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE



**Simon
Euan-Smith**
RINGSIDE

A

FEW days before
Brad Foster's
rematch with **Lucien
Reid**, Foster's
manager, PJ Rowson,
said to me: "Brad
resents always having

to travel to defend his titles.

"If he goes into the fight with that
attitude, Reid won't stand a chance."

Maybe it was the resentment – or
maybe Foster, like a true pro, learned
lessons from a below-par performance.

At any rate he dominated his British and Commonwealth super-bantamweight title defence, and Reid, whom many thought unlucky to get only a draw in this York Hall ring in September, was retired by his corner after six rounds.

"Elusive" was how *BN* described Reid in the first fight, but this time Foster simply didn't allow him to be. Both started fast, shooting out jabs (but tending to fall short in the opener) – but by the second Foster's pressuring was starting to pay off. Reid (Hackney) lashed back when he could, but took stick in Foster's corner. He escaped but Foster (Lichfield) was quickly back on to him, landing both hands and manhandling his rival to the ropes.

Reid tried to create space in the third, but was falling short – though he did land a decent left-right counter as Foster came in. In the fourth a Reid supporter behind me was bellowing: "Be first, Lucien!" – the

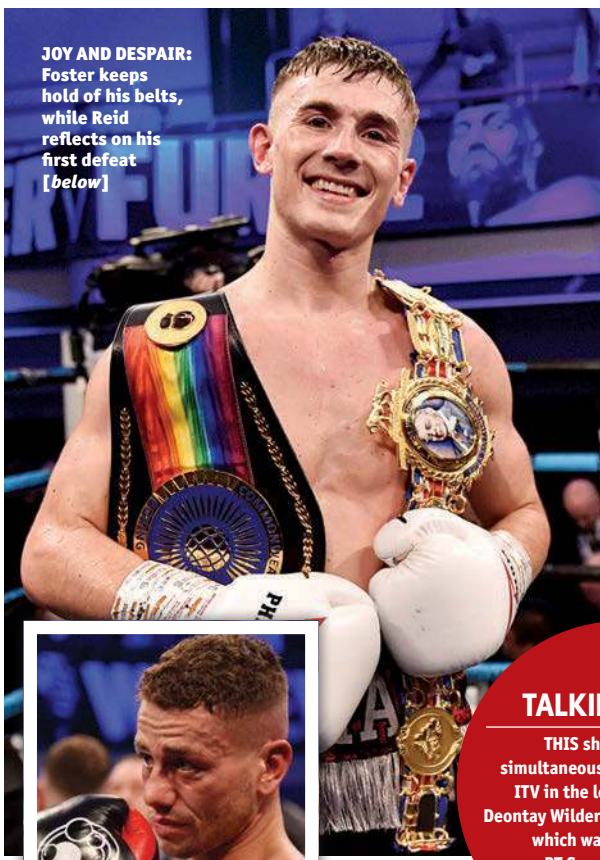
problem was, Foster wouldn't let him.

The fifth was untidy, with a lot of tangling, and Reid was wrestled over – but the sixth saw Foster in total command, and indulging in some rough stuff, with warnings for a low blow and using the heel of the glove.

In between Foster kept up the pressure and Reid took a beating – caught in a neutral corner, he tried to duck and eventually got away, but was caught on the ropes and under intense pressure. His corner called referee Victor Loughlin over in the interval, and compassionately retired their man.

The chief support on this Queensberry Promotions bill saw Newham's **Umar Sadiq** take a step closer to British super-middleweight champion Lerrone Richards, winning a unanimous decision over Welshman **Kody Davies** in their 10-round official eliminator refereed by

JOY AND DESPAIR:
Foster keeps
hold of his belts,
while Reid
reflects on his
first defeat
[below]



IN CHARGE:
Foster pumps
out his jab



TALKING POINT

THIS show was aired simultaneously on BT Sport and ITV in the lead-up to the big Deontay Wilder-Tyson Fury rematch, which was broadcast by BT Sport Box Office.

and after another tangle Mr Every sent Sashev back to his corner after 1-39.

Not the pro start Ali (Keighley) would have wanted – he was the aggressor from the outset and tried to make use of his height advantage. Sashev incidentally wrecked Brandon Ball's unbeaten record via first-round KO in this ring last March.

Taken the distance for the first time in his last bout (admittedly after nearly 14 months out), Banstead's **Louie Lynn** returned to the quick route by halting Spain-based Nicaraguan **Brayan Mairena** in the third of a scheduled six.

Referee Every called it off after 39 seconds, with Mairena taking stick on the ropes – he and his corner protested, but there was little point in his taking any more. The visitor showed plenty of courage, always coming back after being tagged.

A right to the head dropped Mairena in the first – he was up at once, and Lynn was on him immediately, referee Every pulling them apart to administer the eight-count. Mairena gamely went back on the attack, taking everything Lynn threw.

Lynn was on target with solid shots in the second – a left hook sent Mairena back and three successive head-shots had him grabbing for safety. Another Lynn attack in the third was enough for Mr Every. In previous fights in England Mairena had gone the distance with champions Thomas Patrick Ward, Isaac Lowe, Kid Galahad and Reece Bellotti.

Sam Noakes (Maidstone) flogged **Des Newton** (Plymouth) twice and raised a grotesque swelling under his right eye, prompting referee Every to call it off after the first of a scheduled six. It was Newton's 15th loss in 23 bouts, but the first inside the distance.

In sixes, referee Jeff Hinds had **Willy Hutchinson** (Carstairs) beating Latvian **Edgars Sniedze** by 59-54 (Hutchinson was docked a point in the fifth for headwork) and there were 60-54 wins for **Dennis McCann** (Bexleyheath) over Spain-based Nicaraguan **Pablo Narvaez** (Every) and Southampton's **Ryan Garner** over Stockport's **Jamie Quinn** (Hinds).

In fours, Mr Hinds awarded 40-36 wins to Luton's **Alex Bishop** over Spain-based Nicaraguan **Eligio Palacios**; Northampton's **Eithan James** over Worcester's **Michael Mooney**; and **Henry Turner** (High Wycombe) over **Daryl Pearce** (Birmingham).

THE VERDICT After that debatable draw five months ago, no arguments this time.

FULL RESULTS

Brad Foster (121 1/4lbs), 12-0-2 (5), w rtd 6 **Lucien Reid** (120lbs 10oz), 8-1-2 (4); **Umar Sadiq** (167lbs 13oz), 10-1 (6), w pts 10 **Kody Davies** (166 1/2lbs), 10-1 (2); **Alex Bishop** (144 3/4lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Eligio Palacios** (143 3/4lbs), 7-51-5; **Louie Lynn** (125lbs 5oz), 6-0 (5), w rsf 3 **Brayan Mairena** (124 1/4lbs), 10-16-1 (4); **Eithan James** (141lbs 10oz), 3-0, w pts 4 **Michael Mooney** (141lbs 13oz), 9-73-2 (3); **Muhammad Ali** (125lbs 10oz), 1-0, w dq 2 **Stefan Sashev** (128lbs 7oz), 5-28-1 (5); **Ryan Garner** (131 1/2lbs), 9-0 (6), w pts 6 **Jamie Quinn** (136lbs 10oz), 7-100-2; **Sam Noakes** (138lbs), 3-0 (3), w rsf 1 **Des Newton** (138lbs), 8-15 (2); **Henry Turner** (141lbs 7oz), 2-0, w pts 4 **Daryl Pearce** (144lbs 2oz), 1-8; **Dennis McCann** (119lbs), 6-0 (4), w pts 6 **Pablo Narvaez** (121 1/2lbs), 9-20-7 (1); **Willy Hutchinson** (178 1/4lbs), 11-0 (7), w pts 6 **Edgars Sniedze** (179lbs 3oz), 6-30 (6).

Michael Alexander. Scores were 98-92 (Victor Loughlin), 97-93 (Howard Foster) and 96-94 (Marcus McDonnell).

Southpaw Davies tried to get close but was boxed off, and Sadiq scored effectively with lefts to the body in the second. There was a decent exchange in the second but when Davies (Pontllanfraith) came in he was caught, again, by counters – and when Davies landed a fair right to the body in the fourth Sadiq promptly hit back.

It was Sadiq's turn to score with a right to the body in the fifth, and he continued to counter effectively as Davies came in. A big attack drove Davies back in the seventh but he rallied gamely in the eighth, which saw the advantage switch from one to the other. By the ninth there was some puffiness around Davies' left eye and a large swelling on Sadiq's right cheek.

The 10th saw Davies still pressing, Sadiq moving, trying to use his extra reach. Davies had the last word – a big left hook at the bell – but it was Sadiq alone who was lifted up by his team before the verdict was announced. It was Davies' first defeat after 10 straight wins.

The pro debut of former Olympian **Muhammad Ali** degenerated into low farce, with opponent **Stefan Sashev** of Bulgaria being disqualified in the second round for what referee Lee Every termed "ungentlemanly conduct." It was scheduled for four.

Southpaw Sashev was wrestled over three times in the first and once in the second, and the referee warned both twice in the opener – finally docking Sashev a point for holding. Another tangle earned Sashev another warning in the second, and both went over –

Tyrone to
meet Davies
in intriguing
*Golden
Contract*
140lb final

⊕ BETHNAL GREEN

FEBRUARY 21

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE



**Simon
Euan-Smith**
RINGSIDE

TYRONE MCKENNA earned his place in the MTK *Golden Contract* super-lightweight final, taking a hard-fought unanimous verdict over Frenchman **Mohamed Mimoun** at York Hall.

After a thrilling 10-round, which could well be one of Britain's Fights of the Year, McKenna took the decision by two scores of 96-94 (Kieran McCann and Marcus McDonnell) and a 97-93 (Chas Coakley).

That last I thought a tad wide – but many rounds were very close, with just a punch or two separating them. The judges were obviously impressed by McKenna's

clever boxing rather than Mimoun's aggression and heavier hitting.

Also at stake was McKenna's WBC International title – and when the scores were read out, at the words "and still ..." Mimoun began to celebrate. When he realised he'd lost, he reacted furiously – and several ringsiders had him ahead. It was that sort of fight.

Both suffered facial damage, with McKenna (Belfast) sustaining a cut by the right eye in the sixth which reopened in each following round. Both had damage to the left eye by the end of the third and Mimoun's face especially was looking banged up by the halfway point – and there was a swelling below his right eye.

Mimoun pressed forward, McKenna moved and countered – and when Mimoun got close McKenna punched

with him. Several times McKenna was trapped against the ropes but he hit back gamely and refused to be overwhelmed.

No doubt realising it was close, McKenna came out strongly for the 10th, but Mimoun came back and they slammed away in an exciting finale.

McKenna was bundled over near the end – and at the final bell, both fighters threw up their arms. This could well go on again – and it wouldn't need any label.

Referee was Victor Loughlin.

McKenna's opponent in the final will be

Hackney's **Ohara Davies**, who halted Tottenham's **Jeff Ofori** after 1-06 of the sixth.

The end was sudden. Ofori switched to southpaw and Davies banged in a big right to the head – and followed up with both hands. With Ofori taking stick on the ropes, referee McCann signalled the end.

TALKING POINT

THE *Golden Contract* semi-finals at light-heavyweight are scheduled to take place on Friday March 20, once again at York Hall. Hosea Burton, Liam Conroy, Serge Michel and Ricards Bolotniks are the four contenders.

McKENNA WINS WAR

Photos: SCOTT RAWSTHORNE/MTK GLOBAL



GRUELLING:
McKenna [left]
and Mimoun go
into the trenches

Ofori was dropped at the end of the third, by a right clip, but was up quickly. He was also wrestled down in the fourth.

Davies found the range more quickly, and Ofori was grabbing for safety in the second – though he came back spiritedly to have Davies backing off.

Davies tried to keep Ofori on the end of a long jab in the third – and when Ofori pressed forward he was caught by counters. Davies was always finding the target more, and was using his reach well in the fifth (though he was warned for an elbow).

A left hook had Davies on the run, and he shipped a combination in his own corner at the bell – both came out aggressively for the sixth, but Ofori left himself open, and paid the price. Unrequired judges were Chas Coakley, Marcus McDonnell and Victor Loughlin.

The featherweight final will be between Cromer's **Ryan Walsh** and Liverpool's **Jazza Dickens**, who both came through in 10-rounders, against **Tyrone McCullagh** and **Leigh Wood** respectively – Walsh unanimously, Dickens on a majority (I thought he won).

McCullagh (Derry) used his height and southpaw style to make things awkward early on. But Walsh (reigning British champion) kept up the pressure, occasionally switching to southpaw – and dominated the second half, dropping McCullagh twice.

Both were bundled over in the fifth, and warned by referee McCann – and a solid right forced McCullagh to hold. Another staggered McCullagh in the sixth – he grabbed for safety but finally went down on his back, getting up at “four.”

McCullagh kept things at long range in the seventh, but was twice shaken by rights in the eighth, and by the ninth he had swellings on both cheeks. A left hook sent McCullagh staggering back and he went down, jumping up quickly for the



ON THE MARK: Dickens slams a right into Wood's face, while Davies catches Ofori with the same hand [below]

eight count – and he was wrestled down at the bell.

Walsh kept up the pressure in the last, and took the verdict by 96-92 (Loughlin) and two scores of 97-91 (McDonnell and Coakley). It was McCullagh's first loss after 14 wins, but he can come again.

Southpaw Dickens kept up the pressure throughout his bout with Wood (refereed by McDonnell), taking the verdict by 96-94 (McCann) and 95-94 (Loughlin) against a 95-95 from Mr Coakley.

When Wood landed a right flush in the first, Dickens simply smiled – and soon after Wood was shoved down. A left hook had Wood holding, but he started working counters, and by the second there was a bump under Dickens' left eye.

Dickens was generally outworking his man, I thought, though Wood never stopped trying – and Dickens occasionally left himself open, and was duly punished. Wood's aim was to create space but he



found it hard to keep Dickens off. A left hook to the head had Wood holding in the sixth, and in the seventh he was rocked by a combination – but when Dickens followed up, Wood blazed back.

Wood was under pressure at the start of the 10th but rallied gamely, landing both hands.

A four-rounder between debutants saw Rainham's **William Hamilton** halt Battersea's **John Shearer** after 2-54 of the second.

Hamilton caught his southpaw opponent with a right to the jaw in the first, and in the second a similar punch had Shearer down for “two.” Hamilton was on target (though he picked up a warning for elbowing) – two more rights had Shearer down again, for “two,” and referee Coakley waved it off after completing the eight-count.

In other fours refereed by Mr Coakley there were 40-36 wins for London debutant **Burim Ahmeti** over Irlam's **Ryan Hibbert**; Sidcup's **Elliot Whale** over **Lee Hallett** (Canning Town); and Londoner **Inder Bassi** over Hull-based Lithuanian **Zygmantas Butkevicius**.

THE VERDICT The **Golden Contract** tournament now has two quality finals to look forward to.

FULL RESULTS

Ohara Davies (139lbs 14oz), 21-2 (16), w rsf 6 **Jeff Ofori** (139lbs 5oz), 10-2-1 (3); **Tyrone McKenna** (139lbs 2oz), 21-1-1 (6), w pts 10 **Mohamed Mimoune** (139lbs 10oz), 22-4 (3); **Ryan Walsh** (125lbs 13oz), 26-2-2 (12), w pts 10 **Tyrone McCullagh** (125lbs 6oz), 14-1 (6); **Jazza Dickens** (126lbs), 29-3 (11), w pts 10 **Leigh Wood** (125 3/4lbs), 23-2 (13); **Burim Ahmeti** (178lbs 13oz), 1-0, w pts 4 **Ryan Hibbert** (179lbs 9oz), 0-6; **Elliot Whale** (149lbs 2oz), 2-0, w pts 4 **Lee Hallett** (146 1/2lbs), 1-29; **Inder Bassi** (159 1/4lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Zygmantas Butkevicius** (160 1/2lbs), 2-31; **William Hamilton** (197lbs), 1-0 (1), w rsf 2 **John Shearer** (200lbs 14oz), 0-1.



THE FINALISTS: [From left] McKenna, Davies, Dickens and Walsh

SUPER COOPER

Dan impresses
Andy Whittle
at ringside

FULL RESULTS

Dan Cooper (199 1/2lbs), 9-1-1 (4), w rsf 5 **Jamie Hughes** (198lbs 3oz), 8-1 (2); **Lewis Booth** (146lbs 3lbs), 12-0, w pts 10 **Tom Young** (146lbs 10oz), 8-2 (3); **Jason Cunningham** (135 1/4lbs), 2-16; **Maxi Hughes** (142 3/4lbs), 20-5-2 (4), w pts 4 **Kris Pilkington** (140lbs 10oz), 2-6 (1); **Levi Kinsiona** (149 3/4lbs), 7-1 (1), w pts 4 **MJ Hall** (148lbs 2oz), 2-52-2; **Jay McFarlane** (276lbs), 12-5 (5), w pts 4 **Phil Williams** (257lbs), 3-22-1 (1); **George Rhodes** (155lbs 2oz), 6-1-1, w pts 4 **Dale Arrowsmith** (154 1/2lbs), 2-35-1 (1); **Jack Roberts** (144lbs 6oz), 4-0, w pts 4 **Gary McGuire** (151lbs 14oz), 1-16; **Taylor Watkins** (144lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Paul Scaife** (144lbs 2oz), 0-4; **Conner Kelsall** (121lbs 14oz), 1-0, w pts 4 **Jake Pollard** (124lbs 10oz), 0-17.

⊕ DONCASTER

FEBRUARY 22

★★★★☆ MAIN EVENT

★★★★☆ UNDERCARD

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

THERE was another success for the Carl Greaves stable when in the bill-topper at The Dome, Lincolnshire's **Dan Cooper** secured a fifth-round stoppage victory over wildly popular Bentley southpaw **Jamie Hughes** in an eliminator for the English cruiserweight title.

The tall Ruskington puncher had found himself on the receiving end of a fair few meaty lefts as his stocky opponent pressed strongly in the early stages. Despite that, he never looked overly troubled and when he landed a pair of decent rights of his own in the latter part of the fourth there was a suspicion that the tide was changing.

Buoyed, Cooper opened the next with a right downstairs and now he was holding centre ring, almost stalking, looking for the right shot - which he ultimately found, a short, sharp hook catching Jamie coming in and dropping him heavily to the canvas just in front of his own corner.

He rose on legs that were far from steady, staggered a couple of paces back towards the ropes clearly in no position to continue and Bury referee John Latham was left with no option but to wave it off, much to the derision of some of the noisy ringsiders. The end came just one second shy of the halfway mark.

A second 10-rounder, for the vacant Central Area welterweight title between

home favourite **Lewis Booth** and Leeds operator **Tom Young**, went the way of the former with a 97-94 verdict from Mr Latham. The right man undoubtedly got the nod at the finish, though there was never a deal of daylight between the pair and many rounds proved gritty, nip-and-tuck, hard-to-score affairs.

Lewis was happy to bide his time and then counter once his tattooed opponent committed. He was also that little bit more accurate and his punches a little more precise. But Tom, who was cut on the cheekbone below the right eye after heads bashed in the eighth, began almost every session strongly and tended to finish well too. He was never far behind.

Eight bouts made up the undercard, all of them over four rounds and all running their allotted course, Mr Latham sharing refereeing duties with Andy Brook of Leeds.

Always popular **Maxi Hughes** of Rossington had got the ball rolling, his four against Gateshead's **Kris Pilkington** proving a highly watchable encounter. It finished 40-37 for Maxi, though the never-say-die attitude of Pilkington, who replied with regular bursts, ensured that both were the recipients of a generous round of applause at the finish. Referee was Bury's Latham.

Like Hughes, Doncaster's **Jason Cunningham** is staying busy while keeping an eye on the future. He ticked over with a shut-out win from third man Brook against Mottram's "Lil Smokes" Michael Horabin, easing through the first three sessions before upping the tempo a little towards the finish.

Former amateur standout **Conner**

Kelsall produced a sparkling debut performance, leaving Bradford's Jake Pollard, who time after time saw his replies find only thin air, little option but to applaud the new addition to the paid ranks.

Fleet of foot and employing a fine variety of shots as he worked at times behind a staccato jab, super-bantam Conner wasted precious little. The highlight of his four rounds probably came when he left an increasingly frustrated visitor holding from a clubbing left to the body.

Mr Latham didn't need to check his card at the finish.

Scarborough's **George Rhodes** hadn't boxed since being stopped late by Sheffield's Dan West almost three years previously and he took a couple of rounds to get to grips with things against Hyde's **Dale Arrowsmith** who, more aggressive and up for it than I've seen him for some time, came flying out of the traps. I had it all square at the finish, giving the man from Cheshire the first two, but the Leeds official saw it slightly differently and duly raised George's arm for a 39-37 win.

The same official took charge of the heavyweight four between Glasgow's **Jay McFarlane** and Swindon's **Phil Williams**, which went ahead just before the main event. Certainly not one for the purists, it finished 40-36 for the tattooed Scot, who sent Phil's gumshield flying with a right in the third. Williams, bested, picked up a bloody nose along the way and also slight swelling above the eye.

In only his second pro contest Spottborough's **Taylor Watkins** began quickly, too quickly in fact, and he almost paid the price when, having opened a first half lead against Sheffield's still-winless **Paul Scaife**, he ran out of steam towards the finish.

Watkins duly edged it 39-38 on the card of Mr Brook thanks to his particularly strong early work - but Paul's confidence was growing and he was having the better of things late on.

The two remaining contests both saw the home corner triumphing to the tune of 40-36, Doncaster's tall **Jack Roberts** securing victory number four with a trouble-free success against Glasgow's **Gary McGuire** in a bout overseen by Andy Brook, while Sheffield's **Levi Kinsiona** looked relaxed and frequently switched stance as he returned to winning ways against Brierley Hill southpaw **MJ Hall**. John Latham refereed.

THE VERDICT Two good 10-rounders are backed by a solid undercard on this Steffy Bull promotion.



WINNING TEAM: Cooper celebrates in Doncaster after getting his ninth victory from 11 outings

UNBEATEN:
Cathy McAleer
is 4-0



LADIES NIGHT

Cathy wins again but Kirstie has to share

⊕ BIRMINGHAM

FEBRUARY 22

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

WITH the rematch for the Midlands Area flyweight title between David Seymour and Matt Windle having fallen by the wayside, the second show at Villa Park in just a fortnight consisted of six four-round contests, two of them ladies bouts.

Those two ladies contests both duly went the distance. Belfast's unbeaten **Cathy McAleer**, boasting quite a weight advantage, went over old ground to complete the double over Bulgarian **Teodora Hristova**, an opponent she'd outscored 40-38 over the same distance on her debut a little over a year ago.

There were no shared sessions this time though, referee for the night Kevin Parker scoring a shut-out in Cathy's favour.

Pensnett's **Kirstie Bavington** had to settle for a share at the conclusion of her four against Lithuania's **Vaida Masiokaite** who, on something of a run, had claimed both a draw and a victory in her two most recent visits to these shores.

It finished 38-38, meaning that "Bavvo" has now drawn two of her six paid outings to date.

There was a 38-38 finish too in the battle of the Nathans, Newark referee Parker unable to split Sutton Coldfield's **Nathan Bendon** and Sheffield's experienced **Nathan Hardy** at the finish.

There were home victories, all via the long route, in the three remaining bouts.

Leamington super-feather **Danny Quartermaine**, previously an amateur with Cleary's ABC, impressed on his debut, taking all four rounds against Reading's **Ibrar Riyaz** despite conceding a chunk of weight, while Wolverhampton welter **Conah Walker**

also scored a shut-out against Driffield's bearded **Danny Little** in what was his eighth pro outing.

The four between Stroud's **Max Mudway** and Manchester-based Czech **Jan Ardon** proved a little closer, with Ardon doing enough to take a share of one round on the referee's card.

THE VERDICT Shame the title fight fell through, but the rest of the bill pick up the slack.

FULL RESULTS

Conah Walker (155lbs 2oz), 7-0-1 (2), w pts 4 **Danny Little** (156 1/4lbs), 8-67-2 (1); **Max Mudway** (159lbs 14oz), 4-0, w pts 4 **Jan Ardon** (161 1/4lbs), 1-2; **Nathan Bendon** (153lbs 2oz), 3-2-1 (1), drew 4 **Nathan Hardy** (152lbs 14oz), 9-30-5 (3); **Cathy McAleer** (122lbs 2oz), 4-0 (1), w pts 4 **Teodora Hristova** (115 3/4lbs), 2-10-2; **Kirstie Bavington** (146 1/4lbs), 3-1-2 (2), drew 4 **Vaida Masiokaite** (141 1/4lbs), 2-7-4 (1); **Danny Quartermaine** (130lbs 6oz), 1-0, w pts 4 **Ibrar Riyaz** (145lbs 2oz), 6-177-4 (3).

WHIRLWIND WALE

Josh blows away Kayumba in three rounds, writes Ashley Ball from ringside

⊕ BARNSELEY

FEBRUARY 21

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

JOSH WALE took seven minutes to further cement himself as a featherweight challenger on Dennis Hobson's bill at the Metrodome. Hometown hero Wale took out Tanzanian southpaw **Iddi Kayumba** with exactly a minute gone in the third of a scheduled 10.

Wale, in his 14th year as a pro, took the first round to weigh up the visitor, who looked to pop off shots on the move.

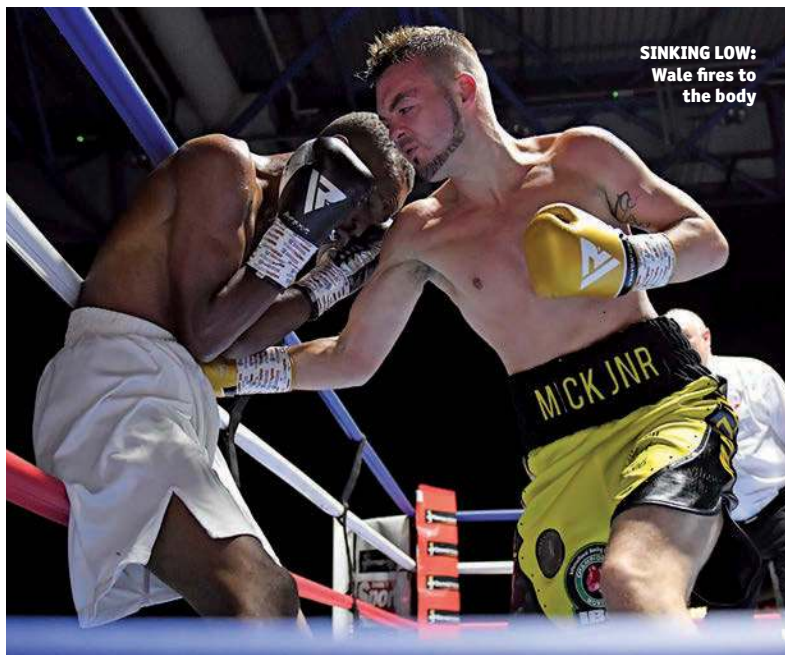
Once content with what the African had to throw, Wale stepped up the attack in the second and almost wiped Kayumba out with a blistering right hand which he followed up with a body shot to send him to the canvas.

A crippling hook to the body followed in the next round and though Kayumba rose in time, referee Phil Edwards could see the agony in his face and waved it off.

Mr Edwards had to count up the scores from two earlier contests as Sheffield's **Perry Howe** and **Sufyaan Ahmed** got wins.

Howe overcame **Elvis Dube** 40-37 by using his natural height advantage to

Photo: KEITH TURNER



SINKING LOW:
Wale fires to
the body

fend off any ideas the Derby man might have had about winning away.

Ahmed was dominant against Kent's **Ricky Leach**, winning 40-36 and momentarily having Leach in bother when he put his shots together in more rapid combinations.

John Latham oversaw the other half of the bill and scored an upset for **Gabriella Mezei** over unbeaten German **Cheyenne Hanson**. The Romanian looked bemused to have been given the win 39-38 but it had been close.

Kash Ali ambled by Devon-based Pole **Kamil Sokolowski** 58-57. It was a lacklustre showing from the big Rotherham heavyweight. Sokolowski will rue not taking advantage sooner against the unimpressive Ali.

Sheffield's **Keanen Wainwright** got to the evasive **Daniel Alder** in the second round to score a knockdown in a 40-35 victory over the Thamesmead man.

THE VERDICT Bigger fights to come for Wale up at featherweight.

FULL RESULTS

Josh Wale (125lbs), 31-11-2 (15), w rsf 3 **Iddi Kayumba** (124lbs), 12-3-2 (7); **Kash Ali** (229lbs 2oz), 17-1 (8), w pts 6 **Kamil Sokolowski** (228lbs 6oz), 8-17-2 (3); **Perry Howe** (196 1/2lbs), 1-0-1, w pts 4 **Elvis Dube** (193 1/2lbs), 9-8-4-2 (6); **Sufyaan Ahmed** (129lbs 6oz), 5-0, w pts 4 **Ricky Leach** (127 1/2lbs), 3-51-1; **Keanen Wainwright** (139 1/4lbs), 4-1 (1), w pts 4 **Daniel Alder** (138lbs 6oz), 1-7; **Gabriella Mezei** (131 1/4lbs), 10-23-5 (3), w pts 4 **Cheyenne Hanson** (127lbs 6oz) 6-1 (5).

DODGE'S DELIGHT

Dean impresses down in lower weight class, writes Will Hale

⊕ TAUNTON

FEBRUARY 21

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

YEOVIL'S **Dean Dodge** moved to 10 fights unbeaten with a wide 60-55 verdict in a six-threes against Birmingham's former English super-bantam king **Sean Davis** atop a Priority Promotions card at the Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

Dodge, who weighed in as a super-feather but was a lot bigger by fight time, looked sharp and fast

as he took both centre ring and the initiative in the opener. He has an excellent engine and his constant pressure forced Davis to work hard to stay in the fight and then to seek to hold as the contest progressed.

Even though Dean was overeager at times, at the close Lee Cook's tally reflected my own.

In the supporting six-threes, again officiated by Cook, Chard's **Paul Roberts** returned to action after a year out to take a 59-56 verdict over Lithuania's **Marius Vysniauskas**. The visitor was dangerous with hooks but Roberts adapted well, using excellent footwork and straight punches to stop the bigger puncher from getting set.

Dublin's **Ryan O'Rourke** scored

a four-threes shutout on Mark Bates' tally as he bested Plymouth's game **Chris Adaway**. Rourke tried to close the gap and fight in range, but the experienced Adaway was able to negate Ryan's aggression and poke fun at him by comically celebrating each time he landed a shot cleanly.

Torquay's **Shane Medlen** likewise notched up his own four-threes shutout on Bates' card as he overcame Thornton Heath's **Richard Samuels**. After an entertaining first session in which they traded leather, Shane found his rhythm and used his fast feet, good jabs and straight shots to punish the Londoner for his poor footwork and static head.

Finally, Lydney's **Lewis van Poetsch** extended Yeovil debutant

Robert Green but ultimately dropped a 40-36 verdict on Cook's ledger. Van Poetsch was often able to catch the incoming traffic on his gloves.

THE VERDICT Dean impresses with a rounded performance.

FULL RESULTS

Dean Dodge (131lbs), 9-0-1 (3), w pts 6 **Sean Davis** (134lbs), 14-12; **Paul Roberts** (114lbs), 3-2-1, w pts 6 **Marius Vysniauskas** (116lbs), 2-7 (1); **Ryan O'Rourke** (146lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Chris Adaway** (146lbs), 10-64-4 (1); **Shane Medlen** (149lbs), 3-3 (1), w pts 4 **Richard Samuels** (148lbs), 1-10; **Robert Green** (166lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Lewis van Poetsch** (174lbs), 9-121-2 (2).

SHORT AND SWEET

Heffron dispatches Budera inside a minute, writes Terry Dooley from ringside

Photo: KAREN PRIESTLEY

OLDHAM

FEBRUARY 22

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

OLDHAM'S **Mark Heffron** outgunned **Ondrej Budera** of the Czech Republic from the get-go at the Leisure Centre (Back Flash Promotions).

A right hook to the body in the first of this scheduled four-threes was followed by a right hand to the head that floored Budera heavily. Referee Mark Sarginson ended the contest at 0-59.

Shaw's **Jack Rafferty** had to settle for a six-round decision win over Mexico's **Ismael Molina Moreno**. The first three rounds were hard for Rafferty, but he earned a 60-54 verdict on referee Steve Gray's scorecard.

Manchester's **Sean Fennel** got a win over Telford's **Dean Jones** courtesy of a 59-55 card from Mr Gray.

Zak Miller against "TBA" was pulled, much to the disappointment of TBA's travelling support, so Manchester's **Connor Burton** sent **Nabil Ahmed** back to Batley battered and bruised after scoring a second-round stoppage. Gray waved off the count at 2-53 after Ahmed was floored.

Halifax's **Jabran Bilal** has been



MISMATCH:
Heffron
overwhelms
Budera

inactive since losing his debut (a first-round defeat) to Victor Edagha in November 2018, but came back to beat the vastly experienced **Chris Jenkinson**, who lost all four sessions en route to a 40-36 defeat on referee Sarginson's card.

Manchester's **Connor Ward** handed Sheffield's **Qasim Hussain** his 101th defeat, Sarginson turning in a 40-36 card.

Manchester's **Dan Booth** was motoring along nicely prior to meeting Spain-based Nicaraguan **Alexander Zeledon** yet may now have to ponder whether facing four opponents with a combined record of 23-333-12 had

prepared him for the game visitor, who did enough to earn a 39-38 win for Mr Sarginson.

Belfast's **Matthew Fitzsimons** took on Blackpool's **Ed Harrison** and was awarded a 39-37 win on Gray's scorecard.

Rob Parry floored Rochdale's **Andy Bishop** in the second only for Bishop to come firing back and win the third. In the end, though, Parry parried enough shots to win the fourth and earn a 39-36 win on Sarginson's card.

THE VERDICT Heffron far too good for this level of opposition.

FULL RESULTS

Mark Heffron (176lbs), 25-1 (19), w rsf 1 **Ondrej Budera** (180lbs), 12-16-1 (8); **Jack Rafferty** (154 1/2lbs), 12-0 (7), w pts 6 **Ismael Molina Moreno** (148 2/4lbs), 3-2-1 (3); **Sean Fennel** (137 3/4lbs), 7-0 (1), w pts 6 **Dean Jones** (137 2/4lbs), 1-25; **Connor Burton** (129 3/4lbs), 3-0, w rsf 2 **Nabil Ahmed** (129 3/2lbs), 0-8; **Jabran Bilal** (157 1/4lbs), 1-1, w pts 4 **Chris Jenkinson** (160 1/4lbs), 11-73-3 (4); **Connor Ward** (146 1/4lbs), 3-0 (1), w pts 4 **Qasim Hussain** (151lbs), 4-101-2; **Alexander Zeledon** (150 1/4lbs), 6-22-3, w pts 4 **Daniel Booth** (153 1/4lbs), 4-1 (1); **Matthew Fitzsimons** (135 3/4lbs), 5-1 (1), pts 4 **Edward Harrison** (134 3/4lbs), 0-2; **Rob Parry** (179 3/4lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Andrew Bishop** (170 3/4lbs), 0-12.

TRIPLE JOY

Andy Whittle sees smiles all round as boxing returns to the Holiday Inn

WARMSWORTH

FEBRUARY 21

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

AFTER a successful first year in the paid ranks, Armthorpe lightweight **Josh Padley** is looking to kick on in 2020 – and in Seaham's **Jordan Ellison** he faced a significant step up in quality of opposition.

Not that Padley seemed particularly fazed at all in front of his own supporters at the Holiday Inn, where he turned in an

impressive performance on the way to securing a 60-54 victory from referee-for-the night Howard Foster.

Ellison, who picked up some reddening by the left eye, had exited the ring between the bottom two ropes late in the second. Thankfully, the ring was a particularly low one, so he was able to continue without having suffered any misfortune.

Nicaraguan **Geiboord Omier**, an 11th hour sub, never looked liked avoiding a 50th career defeat in a scheduled six against another Armthorpe man in the shape of **Ryan Stevenson**, who was looking for his eighth straight success.

With a veritable army of supporters cheering him on,

Stevenson dictated from the outset. His superiority over a reluctant-to-engage opponent increased with every passing round and there were no complaints when the under-fire visitor's was pulled out by his corner at the end of the fourth.

Super-welterweight **Cameron Kaihau** lived close enough to walk to the venue, so understandably had a fair few supporters urging him on. Having already outpointed highly experienced Victor Edagha and Lewis van Poetsch, he went in with Stourbridge's **Kevin McCauley**, for whom it was bout number 231 and who had been outpointed by the aforementioned Stevenson a couple of years previously.

No real surprise that this one should finish 40-36, though McCauley made a more than decent fist of it – sufficiently so that I thought he might just get credited with a share of the opener.

It was a good little scrap that deservedly brought applause.

THE VERDICT A full house at Warmsworth gets decent fare.

FULL RESULTS

Josh Padley (138 1/2lbs), 4-0, w pts 6 **Jordan Ellison** (139lbs 2oz), 11-29-2 (1); **Ryan Stevenson** (153lbs), 8-0 (2), w rtd 4 **Geiboord Omier** (155lbs 14oz), 4-50-1 (3); **Cameron Kaihau** (155lbs 2oz), 4-0, w pts 4 **Kevin McCauley** (158lbs 2oz), 15-204-12.

'THIS WILL BRING THE BEST OUT OF ME'

Ahead of the biggest fight of his career, against Roman Gonzalez in Texas, Kal Yafai talks to John Dennen

K

AL YAFAI won the WBA super-flyweight title all the way back in 2016. He remains Britain's longest-reigning current world champion but has the most important fight of his career so far coming up. He meets Roman Gonzalez on Saturday February 29 at The Ford Center at The Star, Frisco in Texas. "Chocolatito" is 32

years old but with 50 fights, and only two losses, he has long been considered one of the greats of the lighter divisions.

How much are you looking forward to this particular fight because I guess it's your biggest one since winning the world title in the first place?

I'm very, very excited. Since the fight got announced I've been buzzing really. I can't wait.

Some of your recent fights must have been difficult to get up for too?

Most definitely, very, very difficult. But this one, it's a fight I've been wanting for a long time, for a good few years.

He's one of them, he's someone you kind of idolise, then you've got to fight him. I'm just really happy that I've got this fight. I'm really relishing it. But I'll be going into the fight very confident and very determined to go there and demolish him at some point.

What are the things he does well that you admire about him and where do you see weaknesses?

His strengths are he's got a good engine and his punch variety is very good. His angles, he uses angles well. He hasn't got many weaknesses but he gets hit at times. I just think I can capitalise on that and I will do.

He's a great fighter, no doubt about it but I just think I'll find my opportunities. Those opportunities will come and I'll take them.

Do you think he's probably not as highly rated now as he should be, after just a couple of losses, because he's still a very good fighter?

No doubt about it. He's had those losses. He had a good break. The way I'm looking at it, he's had his good break, he seems to be rejuvenated, he's come back with two knockout wins even though his opposition hasn't been great. He's done what he's needed to do and he looks great. He looks like he's back on form.

I'm going in there expecting the best Roman Gonzalez but at the same time you've got to think that he is getting on, he's had a long career, about 15 years, 50 fights. It's going to take a toll on his body at some point and I'll do what I can to make the most of that.

There are not too many big-name opponents in your division, but he's probably the biggest name opponent you could have?

He's the biggest name. The reception of the fight when it was announced, it was pretty big so he's a massive name in the sport, in the division. I couldn't ask for a better fight even now. The unification fight didn't happen. [Juan Francisco] Estrada got injured. **You're Britain's longest-reigning current world champion but do you feel appreciated?**

I hope so, after the fight. It's one of those things. I know I'm not appreciated, I know I don't get as much coverage as maybe I should do as a world champion. But it's not something that really

bothers me. As long as I achieve what I want to achieve in my career. Win the titles, come out with a good reputation and make the money I want to make. That's the main thing for me, financially securing my family's future.

Have you given much thought to what comes after this fight?

I don't think there'll be a homecoming [fight immediately]. I doubt it. I think I'd jump straight into a unification.

I think that'll be the one next, even though I'd like to come home. I'm going to keep on being a road warrior for a bit longer.

So after a couple of low-key fights, 2020 is going to be a huge year for you?

100 percent. I think this is the year that I will achieve everything I want to achieve and secure my future, which is really important to me. Especially securing my family's future. I'm in the sport to achieve my dreams, achieve what I want, be the best I can be.

Has it been hard to keep your focus?

I think with the motivation and the focus, I'm always professional in what I do, especially when I'm training. I know I'm a true professional. But sometimes I know I do switch off. When I can't get up for some of these fights,

I underperform. The top fighters I fight, I always train very well. This fight will bring the best out of me.

And will you be back to watch your brother Galal at the Olympic qualifier next month?

Yes, normally I'd stay out here. But I'm coming back because it's a very important time, a very busy month for our family. Galal at the Copper Box, then the week after we've got Gamal fighting for the European title in Italy. It's a massive few weeks but it's exciting at the same time. When we're retired, at 40 or 50 years old we can sit round and talk and laugh about the good times, all of us travelling the world and doing what we love.

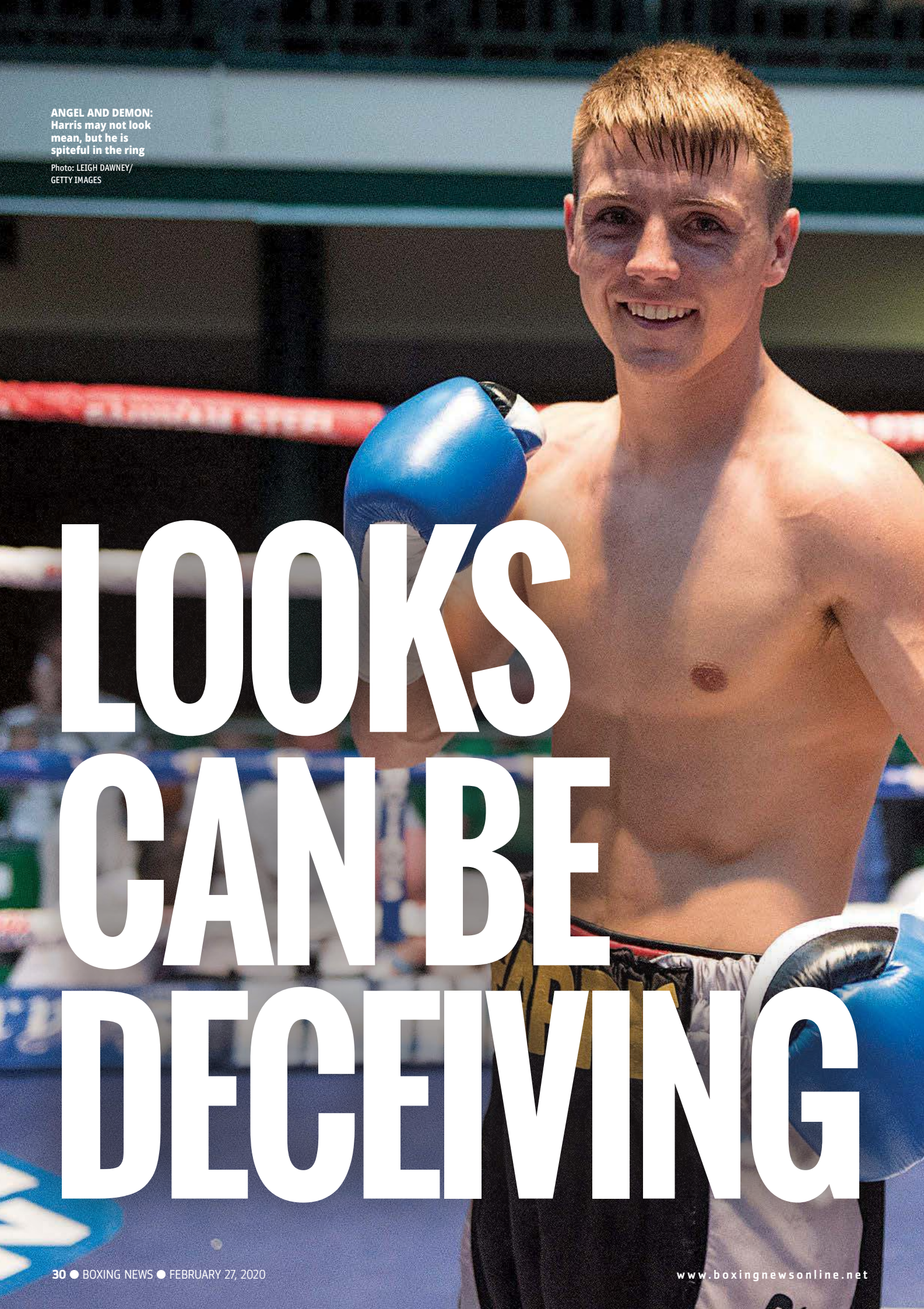


WORLD CHAMPION:
Yafai shows off his gold, surrounded by his team

'I'LL BE GOING INTO THE FIGHT VERY DETERMINED TO DEMOLISH HIM'

PRIMED FOR BATTLE:
Yafai is ready to put
it all on the line to
retain his world title



A full-page photograph of a young male boxer with short brown hair, smiling broadly at the camera. He is shirtless, showing his muscular physique, and is wearing blue boxing gloves. He is standing in a boxing ring, with the red and blue ropes visible in the background. The lighting is bright, highlighting his features and the texture of his skin.

ANGEL AND DEMON:
Harris may not look
mean, but he is
spiteful in the ring

Photo: LEIGH DAWNEY/
GETTY IMAGES

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

Jay Harris tells Louis Daniel why Julio Cesar Martinez would be unwise to underestimate him



ITTLE Jay Harris gives a knowing smile at suggestions that he resembles livestock being led to the abattoir.

On the 29th of this month, the angelic-featured, gentle-voiced, slender-framed

Swansea flyweight – who moonlights as a forklift driver for Amazon and still lives at home with his folks – gets to share a prize ring with menacing Mexican mangler Julio Cesar Martinez at The Star in Frisco, Texas, USA (read Mexico!), for the cherished green WBC strap. Politely, there aren't too many predicting that happy Harris' first venture on the world stage shall prove a successful one.

But for once, the generally passive and habitually cordial Welsh wizard begs to differ.

"I'm a 7/1 underdog, I'm told. Good odds, that is," claimed the mild-mannered Welshman when we met up recently at the Llanrumney Phoenix ABC gym in east Cardiff.

"Timing is everything. This has all fallen into place at exactly the right time for me. I'm 29 now, getting on a bit for a flyweight, but in the lower weights we get to the top quicker. [WBA boss Artem] Dalakian and [ex-WBC king] Charlie Edwards both got there in around 15 fights, so no way could I knock this back. I've always said, if I got to fight for a world title, I could retire a happy man.

"This might be my only chance. I know I've reached the top without being favouritised, fast-tracked. I done it the hard way, done the small hall shows, won a Commonwealth title, got the European. The world title is next."

The conundrum is that nobody knows exactly how good Harris might be. Prior to punching for pay, the eldest son of 1988 British featherweight czar Peter Harris bagged three Welsh Senior ABA titles and, in 2012, won the GB Championships.

Though beaten just four times in 36 starts in a vest, opportunities at the major international meets were invariably blocked off by Barry's brilliant Andrew Selby (a dual European amateur champion who also medalled twice at the Worlds), a fighter Harris never had the chance to box or even spar.

Openings have been similarly restricted since he joined the paid brotherhood in July 2013, even though hooker Harris has done everything asked – retaining a spotless 17-fight slate whilst hoovering up gongs.

"I last lost to Daniel Chapman in the 2011 Welsh ABA final up at 56kgs [almost featherweight], so I'm definitely confident," says hugely under-exposed Harris.

"But I've been close to quitting several times. As Commonwealth champ, 10-0,

a British title shot fell through and it all went stale for about nine months, nothing. I was actually losing work and money. Richie Garner and Mo Prior kept me going on small shows but I told my dad, 'I've had enough.'

"However, my family convinced me I'd done it pretty much all my life so I needed to see the journey through. Then MTK came along and I decided to stick it. Thank God I did. Within a year, MTK delivered this shot. Mental!

"Since the world title fight was announced, my phone has been ridiculous. I'm a big Swansea City fan and they invited me to display my belts on the pitch when they beat Wigan in January. The *Evening Post* and BBC Wales were in touch for interviews but where were they six months ago when I needed them? Even when I was European champion, nothing.

"I was celebrating the New Year in Disneyland, Paris when the offer came. I'm like: 'Get it on.' No hesitation. I do like my grub so was a good stone over but we've had eight weeks to drop it. Then I'll travel out to Texas a week before."

Latterly, under the co-tutelage of his father at the Gwent ABC in Swansea and poker-faced Gary Lockett in the Welsh capital, Harris has evolved into a high-grade technician with a savage body attack. Nine of his 17 victims have fallen down the pothole before the cards were called.

"The last 12 months I've had pretty much perfect performances," claims Harris. "Angel Moreno [comprehensively outboxed for the continental crown in June] and Paddy Barnes [Belfast's double Olympic medallist who was punctured by body shots in his home city in October] were coming off world title shots but I beat both of them comfortably."

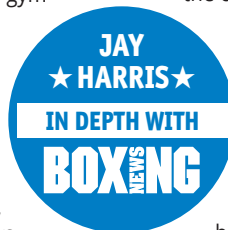
The bookmakers' rather charitable odds perhaps reflect the fact that jovial Jay has completed the 12-round championship trip just twice and is yet to venture beyond UK rings in his seven-year term as a professional. Yet the Welsh waif scoffs at the notion that the occasion might consume him and cause him to freeze.

"As a kid you dream of fighting in America. It's going to be an unreal event, press conferences alongside all those top world champions. Mental," says a salivating Harris, who features alongside the Mikey Garcia-Jessie Vargas and Kal Yafai-Roman Gonzalez fights.

"With Garcia topping the bill there'll be a lot of Latinos in there but I took 50 or 60 to Belfast and there's been quite a bit of interest for this because flights are a half-decent price at the minute.

"I'll definitely be nervous. It's a massive occasion but it's how you deal with the nerves. Do you let 'em swallow you up, or do you use 'em as fuel? Before Barnes, I was as nervous as I've ever been. There was so much on the line. Victory was likely to present a world title shot while defeat would have cost me my world ratings, my European title, everything I'd worked so hard for. But I used the nerves to my advantage, didn't buckle under the pressure."

Furthermore, any shortfall in top-flight experience will be buffered by a highly ➤



THIS MIGHT BE MY ONLY CHANCE. I DONE IT THE HARD WAY, DONE THE SMALL HALL SHOWS, WON A COMMONWEALTH TITLE, GOT THE EUROPEAN"

► proficient back-up team. Since January 2019, Harris has enjoyed the patronage of MTK – one of the most upwardly mobile promotional outfits on this continent, if not the globe – while father/coach Peter showcased his own ring skills in eight countries and against five world champions. Uncle Mike, Dad's brother, was a two-division Welsh champion in the 1980s who contested British and Commonwealth crowns and fought on three continents. Likewise, mentor Lockett launched his feted left hook rockets in six nations during a 32-fight career that culminated in a 2008 WBC/WBO middleweight title challenge to Kelly Pavlik in Atlantic City.

"I've got good people giving me advice," says Jay. "Dad never pushed me into fighting but, once I started, his influence has been massive. He boxed all around the world and I can tap into all his knowledge. He's constantly at my side."

To accelerate his technical development, the body-snatching boyo has profited from extended sparring assignments with reigning WBA champions Kal Yafai (115lbs) – "the strongest I've been in a ring with" – in Birmingham and Artem Dalakian (112lbs) over in Ukraine.

The former has been providing Harris with sparring tutorials for several years and has been impressed with Harris' progress.

"Jay's improved with each visit. He's a natural flyweight, technically sound and deceptively good at deflecting and parrying shots," assesses Yafai. "This is his one big chance. He's at his peak and entering on a good roll. I definitely see Jay enjoying spots of success in this fight. He and his dad are very nice people so I really hope they can pull something off."

The fortnight jaunt to Ukraine last year proved equally worthwhile.

"We did about 30 rounds and I handled myself really good, didn't take a backward step, which confirms where I am in the game. Artem is a different style to Martinez, more back foot, but quite strong when he let his hands go," says Harris, who has also gone hard rounds with Lichfield's Brad Foster in prep.

Gary Lockett, who has carved a reputation as a cautious and compassionate confidante to his expanding camp of fighters, expresses no reservations about unleashing his figurehead into the lion's lair.

"The champion has probably been in with better opposition. He's a brutal man, a very hard puncher.



Jay's up against it. It's a very tough fight, as world title shots always will be," says Lockett.

"But Jay's been through invaluable 12-rounders with Thomas Essomba [Cameroon's two-time Olympian who Harris tamed to claim the Commonwealth crown in 2017] and Moreno. Through his professionalism and dedication, Jay's now got everything required. Yes, he looks very young but he's mentally tough and will cope well. He brings a fantastic, sharp jab and he can whack. He's blossomed into a really hurtful body-puncher who's got a bit of spite."

Even if you disregard the challenging location, Harris will be confronted by a violent product of the Mexico City barrios; a sinister, nuclear-hitting, merciless atom who is unbeaten in 15 since flunking his October 2015 pro debut.

After mauling Brits Andrew Selby and Charlie Edwards last year – the latter affair being reduced to a No Contest when, after registering a legitimate knockdown in round three, he delivered a savage second clout while the Croydon champ was cowering on his knees – Senor Martinez scooped the vacant belt by blitzing Nicaragua's Cristofer Rosales in nine in Phoenix in late December.

Team Harris have been deep in DVD reconnaissance.

"I saw the loss on his debut – to a southpaw who put it on him, broke his heart – plus his fights with Selby, Edwards and Rosales," discloses Harris. "He's your typical Mexican; a strong, powerful guy with 12

SPAR MATES:
Harris (left)
and Yafai
pose with the
latter's WBA
super-fly belt





knockouts from 15 wins, so I'll be very wary not to get caught with his left hand. He waits for you to throw a lazy jab, steps inside, loads up with the uppercut then barges in throwing loads of hooks.

"He's definitely got a nasty streak. If he can finish you, he will, like most Mexicans. But Charlie was struggling at the weight and Selby said the altitude in Mexico got to him and admits he should probably have gone out a fortnight earlier. As a patriotic Welshman, I intend to atone for Andrew's loss.

"Martinez should be warned that I'm a very big flyweight with a far more aggressive style to Charlie and Selby who prefer to box back foot. He's in for a big surprise. My strength is my body-punching. I've also never been over, amateur or pro... maybe gym [smiles]!"

"Martinez only fights one way. His movement's not very good and he's quite limited in his punching. Look, they'll definitely try to put it on me but Moreno tried that. I held ring centre and ended up bullying him. Same with Paddy. I'm definitely a better boxer [at range] but Julio's world champion so can probably adapt, change stuff in his camp. We'll have to see

what he brings on the night. I could box really nice for 12 or it could be a dog fight. I look forward to seeing how it plays out."

Co-trainer Lockett concurs that the task is far from insurmountable, adding: "From a technical point, Martinez does everything wrong. His feet are all over the place. Selby boxed Martinez's head off for four rounds before getting caught with a brutal body shot. And despite his youth, at times Julio looked very old, slow and tired against Rosales... and he's only had 10 weeks to recover.

"Together, we'll devise a plan to hopefully exploit the Mexican's shortcomings. We're not going there for the chance, we're not going there for the money. We genuinely believe that we will win."

Wales already boasts a rich heritage at 112lbs and Harris is hellbent on joining Percy Jones, Jimmy Wilde and Robbie Regan (Interim) as flyweight champion of the world.

"It's the biggest opportunity of my life and I'm buzzing for it," concludes Harris. "Because of my demeanour, people definitely underestimate me but I'm gonna shock a lot of people. I fully expect to win. My time is now." **BN**

“
WE'LL HAVE TO SEE
WHAT HE BRINGS.
I COULD BOX REALLY
NICE FOR 12 OR IT
COULD BE A DOG FIGHT'
”

ON TARGET:
Harris tags
Essomba
during his
Common-
wealth title
victory

Photo: DAN MULLAN/
GETTY IMAGES

PREVIEWS

Previewing the best
upcoming fights
around the world

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

The star ratings indicate how well the writer believes the fighters match up, the fight(s)' contextual significance, and how good the fight(s) will be

BIG ASK, BIG CHANCE

Photo: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



TALE OF THE TAPE

KAL YAFAI	ROMAN GONZALEZ
@iam_yafai	@chocolatitobox
Jun 11, 1989/30	DOB/AGE Jun 16, 1987/32
Birmingham	HOMETOWN Managua
English	NATIONALITY Nicaraguan
26-0 (15)	RECORD 48-2 (40)
Orthodox	STANCE Orthodox
Jul 7, 2012/23	DEBUT/AGE Jul 1, 2005/18
58	KO PERCENTAGE 80
148	ROUNDS BOXED 238
WWWWW	LAST FIVE FIGHTS WWLLW

WHAT'S HE GOT LEFT?
Gonzalez is not what he was
but remains a top fighter

Gonzalez is a formidable foe for Yafai but he's on the slide, writes Elliot Worsell

★★★★☆ YAFAI-GONZALEZ
★★★★☆ MARTINEZ-HARRIS

SINCE landing the vacant WBA super-flyweight title in 2016, **Kal Yafai** has become one of the forgotten men of British boxing, someone whose title run has been constructed on undercards to little or no fanfare. He has remained unbeaten, making five successful defences of his current belt, yet done little to strengthen his claim to the number one spot at super-flyweight.

This Saturday (February 29) in Frisco, Texas, however, things could be about to change.

For so long treading water, Yafai has at last landed the fight he has been looking for in the shape of a WBA title defence against former three-weight world titlist **Roman Gonzalez**. Undoubtedly it is the challenge Yafai needs, one long overdue. It could drag him out of the shallow end and create greater opportunities down the line. It could be just what is required to highlight his talent and bring out of the best in him.

Yet there is of course danger here too. The flipside to the excitement is that choosing Roman Gonzalez, affectionately known as 'Chocolatito', could be a

decision Yafai later comes to regret if – and it's a big if – the former champion remains fresh enough to drown a current champion still wet behind the ears.

No stranger to big fights, Gonzalez won his first world title, a WBA minimumweight belt, back in 2008 and has been a world champion on and off ever since. Other titles, like the WBA and WBC belts at flyweight, and the WBA belt at super-flyweight, were later added to the collection, and so too were the scalps of men like Juan Francisco Estrada, Carlos Cuadras, Brian Viloria and Edgar Sosa.

But then in 2017 Gonzalez was suddenly made to look human when his WBA super-flyweight title reign, a short-lived one by his standards, was ended by

Srisaket Sor Rungvisai in one of the fights of the decade. The loss showed Gonzalez to be slipping, for it was a fight most expected him to win, but the manner of it wasn't enough for him to be written off completely.

No, that moment arrived in the pair's rematch, when this time Gonzalez wasn't outpointed by Sor Rungvisai but instead dramatically knocked out in the fourth round. Forget losing speed and sharpness. The fear now was that Gonzalez's punch resistance was also on the wane.

Still, that was the knee-jerk reaction. The considered, objective one could be this: Sor Rungvisai has gone on to prove his capabilities as a world champion, despite recently losing his belt to Estrada, and is a better fighter than most gave him credit for going into his first fight with Gonzalez. Moreover, Gonzalez, since brushing himself down following that second Sor Rungvisai loss, has returned with solid victories against Moises Fuentes and Diomel Diocos, both of whom were stopped inside schedule.

None of this is to say Gonzalez is back, or even dispute the theory that he is shop-worn, but what it does suggest, having lost only to Sor Rungvisai in a 50-fight pro career, is that the gifted Nicaraguan is an ideal test for an unproven world champion like Yafai at this point in time.

Admittedly, if Gonzalez, 48-2 (40), was close to his best, few would back Birmingham's Yafai to take rounds from him, much less beat him in a fight. It would be deemed a mismatch and Yafai deemed another Brit thrown in the deep end against a pound-for-pound talent stateside. But one thing we can say for certain is that Gonzalez, in 2020, won't be at his best. Which is why the timing, given the fight takes place this weekend, not in 2016, could be just right.

Yafai, at 30, doesn't have too much time on his side as a smaller man, as Gonzalez, 32, can attest, but is the fresher of the two and certainly buoyed by the momentum and confidence of a champion yet to suffer a pro defeat. He is busy and aggressive. He will be physical with Gonzalez in moments when a 32-year-old with wear and tear would rather he gave him space and time. He will attempt to make the older man feel like he has reached the end.

The fact that five of Yafai's last six fights have gone the full 12 rounds suggests a lack of punch power at the top level but, equally, indicates very good fitness levels, which could come in handy if it is his intention to outwork Gonzalez and break

him down as the fight progresses. Should this be the case, he will need to be wary of Gonzalez's famed counterpunching ability when opening up. He will need to be active but not overzealous. He will need to think as much as fight.

Because if he gets it wrong, and if Gonzalez retains a decent-sized portion of what got him to the top of some people's pound-for-pound lists only a few years ago, this could very quickly become a high-risk, high-reward defence for Yafai, 26-0 (15).

Yes, it appears set up for the champion to win – the timing of both his ascent and the fight, not to mention the gradual deterioration of Gonzalez – but until Gonzalez's demise is signified by more than just a couple of defeats to Sor Rungvisai, a dangerman two or three levels above Yafai's recent opposition, there's an argument to be made that it has been greatly exaggerated. It's not a strong argument, nor is this pick a confident one, but I suspect Gonzalez, someone whose technique and talent is matched by only a handful of boxers in the modern era, might possess enough

of the old magic to edge a close fight on the cards.

Also on the card in Frisco, **Julio Cesar Martinez** defends his WBC flyweight title, a belt formerly owned by Britain's Charlie Edwards, against Wales' **Jay Harris**.

Harris, 17-0 (9), rose to prominence in 2019 when outpointing Angel Moreno to lift the European flyweight title in Cardiff. He then followed this with a fourth-round stoppage of former amateur star Paddy Barnes, which proved to be Barnes' final fight as a pro.

Martinez, meanwhile, has ended each of his last nine fights inside the distance – not including a controversial No Contest when a third-round stoppage of Edwards was overturned – and has quickly become one of the most feared little men on the planet. Having his current title with a nine-round stoppage of Cristofer Rosales in December 2019, the excitement surrounding Martinez, 15-1 (12), is only tempered by him posting a failed performance-enhancing drug test for traces of clenbuterol that same year (a trace considered so small the WBC decided against taking any action, as per new recommendations by WADA).

THE VERDICT Tough, tough fights for the Britons on the card but victory for either will see their reputations rise dramatically.

ONE TOUGH COMPETITOR: Martinez is favourite to get another victory

FIGHT ODDS

KAL YAFAI is 8/13 favourite with Roman Gonzalez being 5/4. Jay Harris' task is underlined by his price of 7/1, with Martinez a largely unbackable 1/16. Elsewhere on the bill, Mikey Garcia is 1/6 to defeat Jessie Vargas (7/2) while Joseph Parker is 1/25 to get past the 17/2 outsider, Shawndell Terrell Winters.

Photo: JOE CAMPOREALE/USA TODAY SPORTS



WELTER WAIT

Despite being trounced by Spence, Garcia is staying at 147lbs, writes Paul Wheeler

★★★☆☆ GARCIA-VARGAS

★★★☆☆ THE REST



FTER winning world titles from featherweight through to super-lightweight, **Mikey Garcia** daringly attempted to

become a five-division champion just under a year ago. The decorated Californian made the jump up to welterweight to challenge fellow pound-for-pound Errol Spence Jr for the IBF crown in March. Both boxers went into the bout boasting unblemished records, yet this was no 50-50 fight.

Whereas Spence had been a welterweight for his entire career, the majority of Garcia's time in the ring had been spent down in the featherweight and super-featherweight categories. The superb skill level of the two fighters was never in question, but with Spence enjoying such a pronounced size

advantage, he was widely expected to triumph. And that he did.

Looking softer than normal around the midriff, and boxing in an uncharacteristically plodding manner, Garcia found himself consistently beaten to the punch by Spence, who made full use of his natural advantages in height and reach. At the conclusion of 12 rounds, not one of the three judges was able to score a single session in Garcia's favour.

Following this one-sided defeat – his first in 40 contests – it seemed the wisest thing for Garcia to do would be to drop back to super-lightweight (where he got the better of Elio Rojas, Adrien Broner and Sergey Lipinets), or possibly even lightweight (where he saw off Dejan Zlaticanin and Robert Easter Jr).

Instead, the Moreno Valley man has chosen to remain at 147lbs, where this Saturday (February 29), in Frisco, Texas, he will take on an opponent who is even taller than Spence and boasts similarly long limbs. Garcia certainly doesn't have any inhibitions when it

comes to fighting bigger men.

In the opposite corner to Garcia at the Ford Center within The Star complex will be ex-WBO welterweight titlist **Jessie Vargas**. After previously flitting between 140 and 147lbs – latterly residing more frequently at welter – Vargas contested a 151lb catchweight fight against Humberto Soto in April last year. Vastly experienced but undersized and far removed from his prime, Soto was KO'd by Vargas in round six.

This victory was rumoured to be a prelude to Vargas becoming a fully fledged super-welterweight. However, the prospect of facing a notable name in Garcia proved to be tempting for the Las Vegas man to turn down, leading to him returning to welterweight.

This weekend's clash, live on Sky Sports Arena (UK) and DAZN (US), will mark Garcia's debut for Matchroom Boxing, with whom he signed a promotional deal in December. After having been in talks with Garcia for over a year, Matchroom boss Eddie Hearn was delighted to finalise the link-up.

Photo: MELINA PIZANO/MATCHROOM

TALE OF THE TAPE

MIKEY GARCIA		JESSIE VARGAS	
@mikeygarcia		@jessievargas_	
Dec 15, 1987/32	DOB/AGE	May 10, 1989/30	
Moreno Valley, CA	HOMETOWN	Las Vegas, NV	
American	NATIONALITY	American	
5ft 6ins	HEIGHT	5ft 11ins	
68ins	REACH	71ins	
39-1 (30)	RECORD	29-2-2 (11)	
Orthodox	STANCE	Orthodox	
Jul 14, 2006/18	DEBUT/AGE	Sep 5, 2008/19	
75	KO PERCENTAGE	33	
LWVWW	LAST FIVE FIGHTS	WDDWL	

STICKING AROUND:
Garcia has chosen not to return to a lighter division



"I'm so happy to welcome Mikey to the team," Hearn enthused. "He's a standout star and I'm looking forward to working with him on big fights moving forward."

Commenting on the Garcia-Vargas matchup, Hearn described it as having "all the makings of a [Marco Antonio] Barrera-[Erik] Morales-type war, where the styles should gel brilliantly for a real classic." Considering that the two Mexican legends combined to produce one of the most celebrated trilogies in boxing history, this is some statement. Nevertheless, rather than feeling pressured by Hearn's weight of expectation, Garcia and Vargas – both of Mexican heritage – are confident that they can live up to the lofty forecast.

"I believe our styles are going to make for a great battle and the fans are going to be in for a real treat," Garcia said. Vargas concurred by stating: "It's going to be a great showdown. He's a warrior and so am I. We both always go for the win and do anything possible to get it. It's one of those fights that will generate a lot of attention."

Photo: LEWIS WARD/MATCHROOM

Despite being victorious in his most recent outing, Vargas has only won three of his last seven. His best win during this sequence came when stopping Sadam Ali for the vacant WBO belt. Losing on points to Timothy Bradley and Manny Pacquiao was no disgrace, nor was drawing with Adrien Broner and Thomas Dulorme, though none of these bouts advanced his standing in the sport.

Vargas may not be the quickest, yet his steady jab is a useful weapon, especially when setting him up for two-fisted salvos. He lets his hands go freely and maintains an impressive work rate, as well as targeting the body to good effect.

Like Vargas, the energetic Garcia has a high output, though his numbers were down significantly in the Spence fight. One trait that definitely was on show when he fought Spence was his solid chin. The former multi-weight champ is a top-quality all-rounder whose long list of strengths include his versatility, timing, accuracy, shot selection, jab, combinations, ring IQ and movement.

Although it was difficult to take any positives from his loss to Spence, the contest will at least have allowed Garcia to become more accustomed to performing at welterweight. With the all-action Vargas likely to eschew his height and reach advantages in favour of getting involved in close, expect Garcia to have success with clean counters, resulting in him taking the 12-round verdict.

A pair of heavyweight 10s further down the bill feature New Zealand's ex-WBO title-holder **Joseph Parker**, 26-2 (20), and Russia's **Murat Gassiev**, 26-1 (19) 1NC – a previous unified king at cruiserweight.

Parker and Gassiev can secure inside-schedule victories over Illinois' near-40-year-old **Shawndell Winters**, 13-2 (12), and Virginia southpaw **Jerry Forrest**, 26-3 (20), respectively.

THE VERDICT After the Spence disappointment, Garcia must show improvements against Vargas if he wants to make an impact up at welterweight.



TOUCHDOWN: Garcia [right] and Vargas will collide at the Dallas Cowboys' practice facility

**HEAVYWEIGHT**

over 200lbs/14st 4lbs

1. **TYSON FURY** 30-0-1 (ENG) *[above]*
2. **ANTHONY JOSHUA** 23-1 (ENG)
3. **DEONTAY WILDER** 42-1-1 (USA)
4. **ANDY RUIZ JNR** 33-2 (USA)
5. **DILLIAN WHYTE** 27-1 (ENG)
6. **KUBRAT PULEV** 28-1 (BGR)
7. **JOSEPH PARKER** 26-2 (NZL)
8. **DERECK CHISORA** 32-9 (ENG)
9. **OLEKSANDR USYK** 17-0 (UKR)
10. **MICHAEL HUNTER** 18-1-1 (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHT

200lbs/14st 4lbs

1. **MAIRIS BRIEDIS** 26-1 (LVA)
2. **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI** 31-2 (POL)
3. **YUNIER DORTICOS** 24-1 (CUB)
4. **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** 26-0 (FRA)
5. **ILUNGA MAKABU** 27-2 (COD)
6. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK** 58-4-1 (POL)
7. **THABISO MCHUNU** 22-5 (RSA)
8. **NOEL GEVOR** 24-2 (GER)
9. **KEVIN LERENA** 25-1 (RSA)
10. **ALEKSEI PAPIN** 11-1 (RUS)

LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

175lbs/12st 7lbs

1. **ARTUR BETERBIEV** 15-0 (RUS)
2. **CANELO ALVAREZ** 53-1-2 (MEX)
3. **SERGEY KOVALEV** 34-4-1 (RUS)
4. **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK** 17-1 (UKR)
5. **DMITRY BIVOL** 17-0 (RUS)
6. **ELEIDER ALVAREZ** 25-1 (COL)
7. **JEAN PASCAL** 35-6-1 (CAN)
8. **JOE SMITH JNR** 25-3 (USA)
9. **MARCUS BROWNE** 23-1 (USA)
10. **BADOU JACK** 22-3-3 (SWE)

SUPER-MIDDLEWEIGHT

168lbs/12st

1. **CALLUM SMITH** 27-0 (ENG)
2. **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** 29-0 (ENG)
3. **CALEB PLANT** 20-0 (USA)
4. **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** 22-0 (USA)
5. **JOHN RYDER** 28-5 (ENG)
6. **LIONELL THOMPSON** 22-5 (USA)
7. **ANTHONY DIRRELL** 33-2-1 (USA)
8. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER** 52-3 (GER)
9. **FEDOR CHUDINOV** 22-2 (RUS)
10. **DANIEL JACOBS** 36-3 (USA)

**MIDDLEWEIGHT**

160lbs/11st 6lbs

1. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** 40-1-1 (KAZ)
2. **JERMALL CHARLO** 30-0 (USA)
3. **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** 13-2 (UKR)
4. **RYOTA MURATA** 16-2 (JPN)
5. **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** 29-0 (USA)
6. **CHRIS EUBANK JNR** 29-2 (ENG)
7. **ROB BRANT** 25-2 (USA)
8. **WILLIE MONROE JNR** 24-3 (USA)
9. **KAMIL SZEREMETA** 21-0 (POL)
10. **LIAM WILLIAMS** 22-2-1 (WAL)

SUPER-WELTERWEIGHT

154lbs/11st

1. **JEISON ROSARIO** 20-1-1 (DOM)
2. **JULIAN WILLIAMS** 27-2-1 (USA)
3. **JARRETT HURD** 24-1 (USA) *[above]*
4. **ERISLANDY LARA** 26-3-3 (CUB)
5. **BRIAN CASTANO** 16-0-1 (ARG)
6. **JERMELL CHARLO** 33-1 (USA)
7. **TONY HARRISON** 28-3 (USA)
8. **LIAM SMITH** 29-2-1 (ENG)
9. **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** 31-1 (BRA)
10. **TERRELL GAUSHA** 21-1-1 (USA)

WELTERWEIGHT

147lbs/10st 7lbs

1. **ERROL SPENCE JNR** 26-0 (USA)
2. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** 36-0 (USA)
3. **SHAWN PORTER** 30-3-1 (USA)
4. **MANNY PACQUIAO** 62-7-2 (PHL)
5. **DANNY GARCIA** 36-2 (USA)
6. **KEITH THURMAN** 29-1 (USA)
7. **YORDENIS UGAS** 25-4 (CUB)
8. **EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** 21-1-1 (LTU)
9. **RAY ROBINSON** 24-3-2 (USA)
10. **SERGEY LIPINETS** 16-1 (RUS)

SUPER-LIGHTWEIGHT

140lbs/10st

1. **JOSH TAYLOR** 16-0 (SCO)
2. **REGIS PROGRAIS** 24-1 (USA)
3. **JOSE RAMIREZ** 25-0 (USA)
4. **VIKTOR POSTOL** 31-2 (UKR)
5. **IVAN BARANCHYK** 20-1 (BLR)
6. **PABLO CESAR CANO** 33-7-1 (MEX)
7. **KIRYL RELIKH** 23-3 (BLR)
8. **JOSE ZEPEDA** 31-2 (USA)
9. **EDUARD TROYANOVSKY** 28-2 (RUS)
10. **MARIO BARRIOS** 25-0 (USA)

**LIGHTWEIGHT**

135lbs/9st 9lbs

1. **VASYL LOMACHENKO** 14-1 (UKR)
2. **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** 15-0 (USA)
3. **LUKE CAMPBELL** 20-3 (ENG)
4. **RICHARD COMMEY** 29-3 (GHA)
5. **JAVIER FORTUNA** 35-2-1 (DOM)
6. **YVAN MENDY** 44-5-1 (FRA)
7. **RANCES BARTHELEMY** 27-1-1 (CUB)
8. **DEVIN HANEY** 24-0 (USA)
9. **GERVONTA DAVIS** 23-0 (USA)
10. **LEE SELBY** 28-2 (WAL)

SUPER-FEATHERWEIGHT

130lbs/9st 4lbs

1. **MIGUEL BERCHELT** 37-1 (MEX)
2. **RENE ALVARADO** 32-8 (NIC)
3. **JAMEL HERRING** 21-2 (USA)
4. **JOSEPH DIAZ** 31-1 (USA)
5. **TEVIN FARMER** 30-5-1 (USA)
6. **LEO SANTA CRUZ** 37-1-1 (MEX)
7. **ANDREW CANCIO** 21-5-2 (USA)
8. **MASAYUKI ITO** 26-2-1 (JPN)
9. **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV** 15-0 (RUS)
10. **JASON SOSA** 23-4-4 (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHT

126lbs/9st

1. **GARY RUSSELL JNR** 31-1 (USA)
2. **JOSH WARRINGTON** 30-0 (ENG)
3. **KID GALAHAD** 27-1 (ENG)
4. **CAN XU** 18-2 (CHN)
5. **SHAKUR STEVENSON** 13-0 (USA)
6. **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** 11-1 (MNG)
7. **OSCAR ESCANDON** 26-5 (COL)
8. **CLAUDIO MARRERO** 24-4 (DOM)
9. **EDUARDO RAMIREZ** 23-2-3 (MEX)
10. **JESSIE MAGDALENO** 27-1 (USA)

SUPER-BANTAMWEIGHT

122lbs/8st 10lbs

1. **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** 31-1 (MEX) *[above]*
2. **MUY VARGAS** 34-0 (MEX)
3. **RODOLFO AKHMADALIEV** 8-0 (UZB)
4. **DANIEL ROMAN** 27-3-1 (USA)
5. **TJ DOHENY** 22-1 (IRL)
6. **RYOSUKE IWASA** 27-3 (JPN)
7. **ISAAC DOGBOE** 20-2 (GHA)
8. **BRANDON FIGUEROA** 20-0-1 (USA)
9. **RONNY RIOS** 32-3 (USA)
10. **TOMOKI KAMEDA** 36-3 (JPN)

BANTAMWEIGHT

118lbs/8st 6lbs

1. **NAOYA INOUE** 19-0 (JPN)
2. **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** 29-4 (PHL)
3. **NONITO DONAIRE** 40-6 (PHL)
4. **NORDINE OUBAALI** 17-0 (FRA)
5. **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ** 19-1 (PRI)
6. **JASON MOLONEY** 20-1 (AUS)
7. **LUIS NERY** 30-0 (MEX)
8. **TAKUMA INOUE** 13-1 (JPN)
9. **CARLOS CUADRAS** 39-3-1 (MEX)
10. **JOSHUA GREER JNR** 22-1-1 (USA)

**SUPER-FLYWEIGHT**

115lbs/8st 3lbs

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** 40-3 (MEX)
2. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI** 47-5-1 (THA)
3. **KAZUTO IOKA** 25-2 (JPN)
4. **KAL YAFAI** 26-0 (ENG)
5. **JERWIN ANCAJAS** 32-1-2 (PHL)
6. **FERNANDO MARTINEZ** 11-0 (ARG)
7. **ANDREW MOLONEY** 21-0 (AUS)
8. **GIDEON BUTHELEZI** 22-5 (RSA)
9. **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JNR** 33-4-1 (MEX)
10. **ISRAEL GONZALEZ** 25-3 (MEX)

FLYWEIGHT

112lbs/8st

1. **CHARLIE EDWARDS** 15-1 (ENG)
2. **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** 15-1 (MEX)
3. **KOSEI TANAKA** 15-0 (JPN)
4. **ARTEM DALAKIAN** 20-0 (UKR) *[above]*
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE** 39-2 (RSA)
6. **CRISTOFER ROSALES** 29-5 (NIC)
7. **VINCENT LEGRAND** 31-0 (FRA)
8. **GIEMEL MAGRAMO** 24-1 (PHL)
9. **MAXIMINO FLORES** 25-4-2 (MEX)
10. **JAY HARRIS** 17-0 (WAL)

LIGHT-FLYWEIGHT

108lbs/7st 10lbs

1. **KEN SHIRO** 17-0 (JPN)
2. **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** 14-0 (JPN)
3. **CARLOS CANIZALES** 22-0-1 (VEN)
4. **ELWIN SOTO** 17-1 (MEX)
5. **FELIX ALVARADO** 35-2 (NIC)
6. **EDWARD HENO** 14-1-5 (PHL)
7. **REIYA KONISHI** 17-2 (JPN)
8. **TETSUYA HISADA** 34-10-2 (JPN)
9. **TIBO MONABESA** 20-1-2 (IDN)
10. **AGUSTIN GAUTO** 14-0 (ARG)

STRAWWEIGHT

105lbs/7st 7lbs

1. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** 20-0 (THA)
2. **WANHENG MEENAYOTHIN** 54-0 (THA)
3. **WILFREDO MENDEZ** 16-1 (PRI)
4. **VIC SALUDAR** 20-4 (PHL)
5. **BYRON ROJAS** 27-4-3 (NIC)
6. **JOSE ARGUMEDO** 23-4-1 (MEX)
7. **PEDRO TADURAN** 14-2-1 (PHL)
8. **NKOSINATHI JOYI** 29-5-1 (RSA)
9. **JOEY CANOY** 15-4-1 (PHL)
10. **GINJIRO SHIGEOKA** 5-0 (JPN)

POUND-FOR-POUND

The best of the best

1. **CANELO ALVAREZ** 53-1-2 (MEX)
2. **VASYL LOMACHENKO** 14-1 (UKR)
3. **NAOYA INOUE** 19-0 (JPN)
4. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** 36-0 (USA)
5. **OLEKSANDR USYK** 17-0 (UKR)
6. **ERROL SPENCE JNR** 26-0 (USA)
7. **TYSON FURY** 30-0-1 (ENG)
8. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** 40-1-1 (KAZ)
9. **ARTUR BETERBIEV** 15-0 (RUS)
10. **LEO SANTA CRUZ** 37-1-1 (MEX)

● If a fighter has been inactive for over a year, he will be removed from the rankings, unless he has a fight officially scheduled. Once removed due to inactivity, a fighter cannot be reinstated until he has fought again.

● Each fighter is ranked on the results they have achieved in their own specific weight division (excluding the pound-for-pound list).

● Each fighter is ranked in the division in which their most recent significant fight took place. With regards to catchweight fights, common sense will (hopefully) prevail.

● If a fighter is suspended for failing a drug test, he will be removed from the rankings. He will be eligible for reinstatement after completing a ban, but will be removed indefinitely if he reoffends.

FEBRUARY

FRIDAY 28

The Halls, Norwich

Michael Walsh v Amani Bariki; Connor Vian v Sergio Gugliotta; Joe Steed v Richard Samuels; Bernardo Marime v Lee Hallett; Liam Goddard v s/o; Owen Blunden v s/o; Stevi-Ann Levy v s/o. (Promoter: Shamrock Promotions).

Grand Central Hall, Liverpool

James Metcalf v Fernando Valencia; Nick Ball v s/o; Andrew Cain v s/o; Carly Skelly v Claudia Ferenczi; Connor Butler v s/o; Harry Woods v Karon Thomas; Michael Hedges v Lee Connelly; James Heneghan v Scott Williams; David Thompson v Kevin McCauley; Jonathan Walsh v Chris Adayaw; Jack McKinlay v s/o. (Promoter: Black Flash Promotions).

Paramount Theatre, Huntington, New York

Carlos Takam [pictured] v Fabio Maldonado; Cletus Seldin v Humberto Martinez. (Promoter: Star Boxing).

Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada (Showtime)

Keith Hunter v Sanjarbek Rakhmanov; Richardson Hitchins v Nick DeLomba; Kevin Newman II v Calvin Henderson. (Promoter: Mayweather Promotions).

Osceola Heritage Park, Kissimmee, Florida (Telemundo)

Yomar Alamo v Kendo Castaneda. (Promoter: All Star Boxing).

Palladium, Worcester, Massachusetts (UFC Fight Pass)

Jamaine Ortiz v Luis Ronaldo Castillo. (Promoter: CES Boxing).

Polideportivo Comunal, Desvio Arijon, Argentina

Daniela Bermudez (holder) v Alys Sanchez (WBO female bantamweight title).

SATURDAY 29

Eagles Community Arena, Newcastle (iFL TV TBA)

Ellis Corrie (holder) v Chad Ellis (Northern Area welterweight title); Jeff Saunders v Edvinas Puplauskas; Joe Maphosa v Moises Mojica; Tom Hill v Serge Ambomo; Joe Laws v Jan Prokes; Lawrence Osueke v s/o; Lee Reeves v Artur Davydenko; Troy Williamson v Daniel Urbanski; Matt McCallum v Gianni Antoh; Adam Gair v Jiri Svachna; Steve Robinson v Phil Williams; Alex Farrell v Zygimantas Butkevicius; Michael Webster v Andrius Ruzas; Anthony Ornsby v Qasim Hussain. (Promoter: MTK Global).

Action Indoor Sports, Bristol

Pawel August v Jordan Joseph (vacant Southern Area light-heavyweight title); Dan Sarkozi v Nathan Hardy; Ryan

Photo: ACTION IMAGES/PETER CZIBORRA



Wheeler v Stu Greener; Aaron Sutton v Chris Jenkinson; Jake Tinklin v Naheem Chaudhry; Anton Haskins v Daniel Alder; Lloyd Germain v Paul Cummings; Tyler Davies v Jamie Speight; Faheem Khan v Dan Sabastonelli; Ben Demmery v Paul Ducie. (Promoter: Sanigar Events).

Bonus Arena, Hull

Zeeshan Khan v Brian Phillips (vacant Central Area featherweight title); Jack Daniel v s/o; Lewis Sylvester v s/o; Sonny Taylor v s/o; Connor Coghill v s/o. (Promoter: VIP Promotions).

Maidstone Leisure Centre

Lenny Fuller v Berman Sanchez; Jimmy Peckham v Carl Turney; Brooklyn Tilley v Luke Middleton; Martin Hillman v Nabil Ahmed; Charlie Shane v Darryl Sharp; Grant Dennis v Jordan Grannum; Paul Brown v s/o; Jack Budge v s/o; Chris Davies v s/o; Kieran Spice v s/o. (Promoter: Boxing Connected).

02 Academy, Bournemouth

Jimmy Cooper v s/o; Harry Limburn v s/o; Joseph Butler v s/o; Jacob Gabriel v s/o; Jack Simpson v s/o; Bryce Goodridge v s/o; Mace Ruegg v s/o. (Promoter: Bendall's Boxing Promotions).

The Ford Center, The Star, Frisco, Texas (Sky Sports Arena 1am & DAZN)

Mikey Garcia v Jessie Vargas; Kal Yafai (holder) v Roman Gonzalez (WBA super-flyweight title); Julio Cesar Martinez (holder) v Jay Harris (WBC flyweight title); Joseph Parker v Shawndell Winters; Murat Gassiev v Jerry Forrest; Israil Madrimov v Charlie Navarro; Jesse Rodriguez v Marco Sustaita; Diego Pacheco v Oscar Riojas; Alexis Espino v Delvecchio Savage; Leo Ruiz Acevedo v Dennis Knifechief. (Promoter: Matchroom Boxing).

Arena de Lutas, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Esquiva Falcao v Jorge Miranda; Adriana Dos Santos Araujo v Estheliz Hernandez; Rose Volante v Claudia Lopez. (Promoter: BSM Group).

MARCH

TUESDAY 3

Nakhon Sawan Municipality Ground, Thailand

Knockout CP Freshmart (holder) v Norihito Tanaka (WBA strawweight title).

FRIDAY 6

Leeds United FC Banqueting Suite, Elland Road

Justin Newell v Jordan Ellison; Darren

Tetley v s/o; Mick Learmonth v s/o; Cory O'Regan v Lee Hallett; Kyle Scully v s/o; Luke Kelly v s/o; Michael Faera v Ben Thomas; Ismail Khan v Edward Harrison; Harry Fryer v s/o. (Promoter: Bateson Promotions).

The Rotunda, Caesars Palace Bluewaters Dubai, UAE (iFL TV & ESPN+)

Aliu Bamidele Lasisi v Norbelto Jimenez; TJ Doheny v Ionut Baluta; Nurtas Azhbenov v JR Magboo; Zhan Kossobutskiy v s/o; Cesar Mateo Tapia v Steve Collins Jnr; Rohan Date v Rivo Kundimang. (Promoter: D4G Promotions & MTK Global).

Auditorio Blackberry, Mexico City, Mexico (Telemundo)

Armando Torres v Juan Alejo. (Promoter: Producciones Deportivas & All Star Boxing).

SATURDAY 7

Manchester Arena (Sky Sports Action & DAZN)

Scott Quigg v Jono Carroll; Callum Johnson v Igor Mikhalkin (vacant European light-heavyweight title); Hughie Fury v Pavel Sour; Anthony Fowler v Jack Flatley. (Promoter: Matchroom Boxing).

VESTED *INTEREST*

Meet the personalities
at the heart of the sport
With JOHN DENNEN

THE STRONG COLLIDE

Powerful boxing nations will be in action at the Asia and Oceania Olympic qualification event



John Dennen

@BoxingNewsJD

Amateur Editor

HE rescheduled Asia and Oceania Olympic qualification event will begin in Amman, Jordan on March 3, finishing on March 11.

This event will be ferociously competitive. The ever excellent Kazakh team has often dominated Asian continental events. Cast your eye over many of the weight classes

and boxers from Kazakhstan are among the best in the world. Their squad has a couple of world class middleweights, in Abilkhan Amankul and Tursynbay Kulakhmet, and in *Boxing News'* estimation Bekzad Nurdauletov is the leader in the light-heavyweight division. Zakir Saffiullin is a hardened warrior, good to watch, who might be refreshed by his division expanding to 63kgs.

Kazakh boxers typically combine speed, strength and ringcraft. But the

Uzbek team, as well being monstrously strong more often than not, are also made up of clever boxers. Look out for Bakhodir Jalolov, an imposing force super-heavyweight. He like, some of his compatriots, have had a handful of professional bouts. While they've dipped into the pro side of the sport, they can return to Olympic style boxing if selected by their national federation.

This was a new rule introduced for the last Olympics but it remains controversial. There is a school of thought that Olympic boxing should be the pinnacle of its sport. Why not bring it into line with other Olympic sports and open it up to any athlete who's good enough to compete? Equally some think it's only fair to keep the traditional system and let the younger generation have the chance at Olympic glory before moving on to turn professional afterwards.

In my view three-round bouts day after day over the course of whole tournament does not equate to a 12 round professional bout. They are different types of event and a seasoned pro would struggle against a specialist Olympic boxer. In fact boxers like the ones who make up the Uzbek team, who

have had a few professional bouts, over a shorter number of rounds and are not yet at championship level, are probably the ones better suited to crossing back over.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are of course not the only show in town when it comes to this event. China have a good squad of boxers, particularly in their women's team with Wang Cong and Yang Liu set to be contenders at 60kgs and 69kgs respectively.

The Philippines have some exciting talents in their ranks. Their Nesthy Petecio is the reigning featherweight World champion, while men's middleweight Eumir Marcial is a powerhouse to be reckoned with.

New Zealand heavyweight David Nyika will also have something to say in the 91kgs category.

The top six boxers at men's 52kgs, 57kgs and 63kgs and women's 51kgs will all win places at Tokyo 2020. The semi-finalists at women's 57kgs, 60kgs, 69kgs and 75kgs and men's 91kgs and 91&kgs will claim their spots at the next Olympic Games. There are five places at Tokyo up for grabs in the men's welter, middle and light-heavyweight categories.

POWERHOUSE:
Marcial is an
exciting prospect
at middleweight

Photo: AIBA





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UNLEASHED:
Tested in the WSB,
McCormack only has
Olympic qualification
left ahead of him

NOW IT'S ALL BUSINESS

Luke McCormack says he'll drink proper tea and win the Olympic qualification event in London

HOW pleased were you to be selected at 63kgs for the Olympic qualifier?

Obviously with the weights splitting up and two weights going into one, I knew I had the upper hand because it was closer to my weight than the other weight. I [feel] for Calum French because he's put the work in. It's just s**t how it ended up for him. Because there could have had been three of us going [from Birtley], instead of just two [Luke and twin brother Pat].

We've never really seen it [as competing]. It was just one of them things. It just happens.

I just always remember, it was me four years ago who didn't get to go... I've been there, crying on me bed. I've been in that position too so I know how it feels.

You have had to lose a kilo to make 63kgs. How has that affected you?

Now I'm being a bit more strict with my

diet and that, overall it's going to help.

Mark Ellison [the GB nutritionist] measured my fats. I was top end for the weight. Perfect size for the weight.

The training camp you just had in Kazakhstan, what was that experience like?

It was minus 25 some days so couldn't really go out. Couldn't really go outside. These Kazakhs have got a big advantage over us because they've got no distractions. But then I got home and thought I've got no distractions really, if you don't let them be distractions. We've got distractions, like there's fun things to do, loads of different stuff. But if you don't let them be distractions you're not distracted are you?

Do you find it hard to keep focused?

Proper hard. That's why it's good to get down Sheffield [for training camp]. I've been getting myself to bed at 10 o'clock. I used to be out partying. Now I'm in bed at 10 o'clock, with a glass of milk.

How tough do you think your division will be at the qualifier?

Two weights have gone into one. Loads of good kids at every weight though. I think my weight is probably the toughest weight of all.

It's going to be lovely really because we've boxed all over the world and

no one even comes to watch you. No one's even there to watch. So it's a bit disheartening when everyone's shouting for the other lad. Do you know what I mean? It's going to be nice having the crowd behind us, cheering us on. Even the food, the comforts. Even nowadays you can't beat a good English cup of tea.

Anywhere you go in the world, a cup of tea's not the same.

The European Olympic Qualification Event takes place March 14-24 at the Copper Box in London. Tickets are on sale at <https://see.tickets/boxingroadtotokyo> with prices starting at £5 (£2.50 concessions).

**'FOUR YEARS
AGO IT WAS ME
WHO DIDN'T
GET TO GO. SO
I KNOW HOW
THAT FEELS'**

MISSION
2020

RAYTON OKWIRI

FROM Kenya
STANCE Southpaw
TITLES All Africa
Games bronze

AS Boxing News went to press the first Olympic Qualification Event ahead of Tokyo 2020 was in full swing.

The African Continental event is taking place at the Dakar Arena in Dakar, Senegal. It's a golden opportunity for the first wave of boxers to secure their places at the Olympics later this year. The tournament runs up until February 29 and is closing in on the qualification bouts. Kenyan middleweight Rayton Okwiri, a 2016 Olympian, has taken advantage of the new rule that allows professional boxers to rejoin their amateur set-up.

After a modest run of six pro bouts, he is trying to rekindle his Olympic dream but he fell short of qualification in Senegal. He won his first bout in Dakar but was kept out of the quarter-finals by Ugandan top seed at 75kgs, Kavuma David Ssemujju on a split decision.

There is only when qualifier left for him and at 33 years old realistically that will be his last chance to return to an Olympics.

The tournament is in progress. Check www.bboxingnewsonline.net for the latest news.

AMATEUR SCENE

The very best action, previews and news from Olympic-style boxing

With JOHN DENNEN | @BoxingNewsJD

SEND us your club's news, results or upcoming events to john.dennen@boxingnewsonline.net or 020 7618 3478

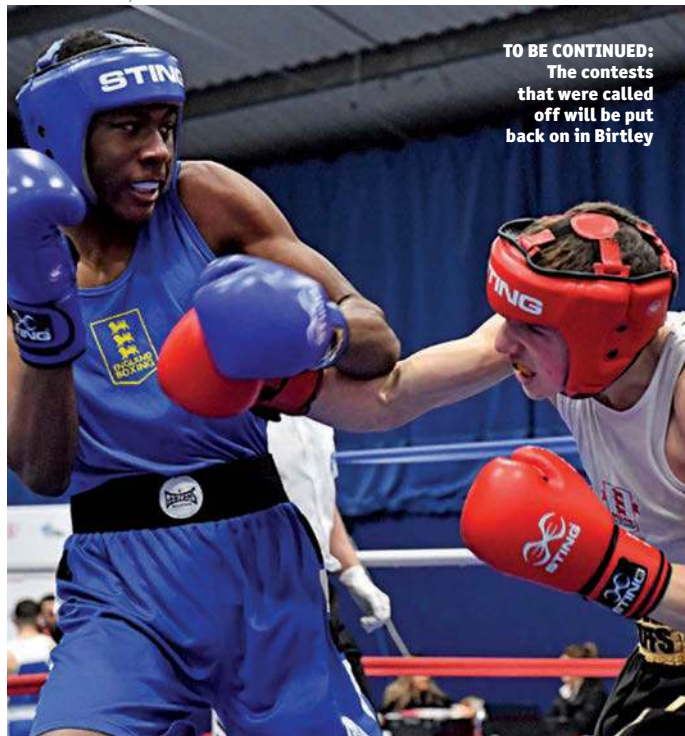
YOUTHS RESCHEDULED

After the shocking scenes in Coventry, the final stages of the England Boxing Youth championships will still be saved, writes **John Dennen**

THE England Boxing Youth championships had to be abandoned on February 15 after an appalling incident of large-scale violent disorder occurred between two groups of men at the Sports Connexion venue in Coventry. Warwickshire Police have since said that a 35-year-old man from London was arrested on suspicion of violent disorder in connection with the incident and has been released on police bail.

The police continue to work to identify all those involved and are appealing for information from those in attendance who may not have come forward yet. Anyone with any information is asked to call 101 quoting incident number 304 of 15th February 2020. Alternatively, information can be given to independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via their website.

Photo: ANDY CHUBB/ENGLAND BOXING



TO BE CONTINUED:
The contests that were called off will be put back on in Birtley

The remaining semi-finals and finals however will be saved. The remaining contests will be staged at the Birtley boxing club this weekend Saturday February 29 to

Sunday March 1.

All bouts though will be boxed behind closed doors, with only boxers and their England Boxing-affiliated coaches allowed access

CORRECTIONS

Revisions to our 100 Greatest Amateurs list

A FEW errors crept into our list of the 100 Greatest Amateurs of all-time, published in the January 9 issue of *Boxing News*. Bruce Wells, who was number 47, should have been down as the 1953 European gold medallist and Felix Savon, number 21, was of course, in addition to his five World championship gold medals, a three-time Olympic gold medallist in 1996 and 2000, as well as 1992.

The full list, fully updated, remains available on Boxing News Online as well.

GREAT SCOTT

Jawany outworks Panone for good win, writes **Daniel Herbert**

REPTON staged an open show at the Dagenham Roundhouse on February 15. Topping the bill was an open class lightweight bout between their recent London Intermediate Championships runner-up Jawany Scott and Jordan Panone.

The Surbiton boxer was taller and looked bigger, but Scott took the fight to him throughout the three rounds (three minutes) and was rewarded with a points victory, albeit of the split variety.

Another senior elite bout, between Repton 56 kgs Amo Singh and Nathan Gray (Woking), was listed on the programme but

didn't happen.

In senior development action, muscled Repton middleweight Liam Forrest won a split decision over Guildford City's taller Callum Spence in an entertaining contest that saw both punch away freely.

Forrest had won the London Intermediate title at the same venue two weeks earlier.

The hosts enjoyed a couple of unanimous novice winners: Alexis Sol outscored IQ southpaw Courtney Orr, while Marcus Abraham overcame Guildford's Jack Sutherland, who received a standing eight count in the first but hung in there gamely to reach

the final bell.

Surbiton's Jake Whitesmith handed Repton their only development class loss when he earned a split verdict over Reece Cosgrave.

OTHER RESULTS

(Repton unless stated) Schoolboy: TAYLAN KILNIC outpd Paddy McDonagh (White Hart Lane) unan; DANNY JOE COX outpd Martin Ward (Chalvedon) unan; ADAM MALIK outpd Lee Corcoran (Cricklewood) unan; FRANK JOYCE outpd Olly Wells (Guildford City) split. Junior: JOHNNY FITZHARRIS outpd Leo Wood (Guildford City) split; BOBBY WALLACE (Belvedere) outpd Patrick McDonagh unan. Youth: WIKTOR SZCZAWINSKI outpd Caleb Rebelo (Felbridge & East Grinstead) unan.

to the venue.

The event however will be live streamed on the England Boxing YouTube channel so family and friends will still be able to watch the bouts.

"We were all shocked and saddened by events at Coventry that did not allow the England Boxing National Youth Championships to be boxed through to completion," said England Boxing's Competitions and Events Manager Lynsey Lockey. "We are determined that boxers should still get the opportunity to box for the right to be a national champion after all the sacrifices they, their coaches, their clubs and their families have made to get them to this point."

"Our thanks go to Birtley, which has regularly and successfully hosted key regional events, for stepping in to act as the venue at such short notice and making sure that the continuation of the championships happens."

"We would also thank all those who have offered support to ensure the event can proceed."

OLYMPIC BOXING RATINGS

As at February 21. Compiled by Malcolm Meredith, Santiago Nieve and Daniel Herbert

SUPER-HEAVYWEIGHT 91& kgs

- 1 BAKHODIR JALOLOV (Uzbekistan)
- 2 KAMSHYBEK KUNKABAYEV (Kazakhstan)
- 3 FRAZER CLARKE (England)
- 4 MAKSIM BABANIN (Russia)
- 5 JUSTIN HUNI (Australia)
- 6 DANIER PERO (Cuba)
- 7 MOURAD ALIEV (France)
- 8 MAHAMMAD ABDULLAYEV (Azerbaijan)
- 9 RICHARD TORREZ (USA)
- 10 YOANDI TOIRAC (Cuba)

HEAVYWEIGHT 91 kgs

- 1 MUSLIM GADZHIMAGOMEDOV (Russia)
- 2 JULIO CASTILLO (Ecuador)
- 3 VASSILY LEVIT (Kazakhstan)
- 4 RADOSLAV PANTALEEV (Bulgaria)
- 5 ERISLANDY SAVON (Cuba)
- 6 JULIO LA CRUZ (Cuba)
- 7 CHEAVON CLARKE (England)
- 8 KIM HYEONG-KYU (South Korea)
- 9 HUSSEIN ISHAISH (Jordan)
- 10 SANJEET SANJEET (India)

LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT 81 kgs

- 1 BEKZAD NURDAULETOV (Kazakhstan)
- 2 DILSHODBEK RUZMETOV (Uzbekistan)
- 3 BEN WHITTAKER (England)
- 4 IMAM KHATAYEV (Russia)
- 5 GEORGII KUSHITASHVILI (Russia)
- 6 BAYRAM MALKAN (Turkey)
- 7 ARLEN LOPEZ (Cuba)
- 8 JEROME JOSEPH-PAMPELLONE (New Zealand)
- 9 KENO MACHADO (Brazil)
- 10 LOREN DOMINGUEZ (Azerbaijan)

MIDDLEWEIGHT 75 kgs

- 1 GLEB BAKSHI (Russia)

2 EUMIR MARCIAL (Philippines)

- 3 OLEKSANDR KHYZNIK (Ukraine)
- 4 ABILKHAN AMANKUL (Kazakhstan)
- 5 TURSUNBAY KULAKHMET (Kazakhstan)
- 6 HEBERT CONCEICAO (Brazil)
- 7 SEYEDSHAHIN MOUSAVI (Iran)
- 8 ARMAN DARCHINYAN (Armenia)
- 9 MICHAEL NEVIN (Ireland)
- 10 MARK DICKINSON (England)

WELTERWEIGHT 69 kgs

- 1 ANDREI ZAMKOV (Russia)
- 2 PAT McCORMACK (England)
- 3 ABILA KHAN ZHUSSUPOV (Kazakhstan)
- 4 SEWONRETS OKAZAWA (Japan)
- 5 KEVIN BROWN (Cuba)
- 6 RONIEL IGLESIAS (Cuba)
- 7 BOBO-USMON BATUROV (Uzbekistan)
- 8 ROHAN POLANCO (Dominican Republic)
- 9 ZEYAD EASHASH (Jordan)
- 10 WAHID HAMBALI (France)

LIGHTWEIGHT 63 kgs

- 1 ANDY CRUZ (Cuba)
- 2 KEYSAWN DAVIS (USA)
- 3 HOVHANNES BACHKOV (Armenia)
- 4 MANISH KAUSHIK (India)
- 5 SOFIANE OUMIHA (France)
- 6 ILIA POPOV (Russia)
- 7 WANDERSON DE OLIVEIRA (Brazil)
- 8 LEONEL DEL LOS SANTOS (Dominican Republic)
- 9 LUKE McCORMACK (England)
- 10 ZAKIR SAFIULLIN (Kazakhstan)

FEATHERWEIGHT 57 kgs

- 1 MIRAZIZBEK MIRZAKHALIKOV (Uzbekistan)
- 2 LAZARO ALVAREZ (Cuba)
- 3 TSENBAAATAR ERDENEBAAT (Mongolia)

4 PETER McGRILL (England)

- 5 KAIRAT YERALIYEV (Kazakhstan)
- 6 KURT WALKER (Ireland)
- 7 OSVEL CABALLERO (Cuba)
- 8 ALBERT BATYRGAZIEV (Russia)
- 9 YOEL FINOL (Venezuela)
- 10 KAVINDER BISHT (India)

FLYWEIGHT 52 kgs

- 1 SHAKHOBIDIN ZOIROV (Uzbekistan)
- 2 AMIT PANGHAL (India)
- 3 SAKEN BIBBOSINOV (Kazakhstan)
- 4 BILLAL BENNAMA (France)
- 5 DANIEL ASEN OV (Bulgaria)
- 6 GALAL YAFI (England)
- 7 RODRIGO MARTE (Dominican Republic)
- 8 YOSVANY VEITIA (Cuba)
- 9 RASUL SALIYEV (Russia)
- 10 CARLO PAALAM (Philippines)

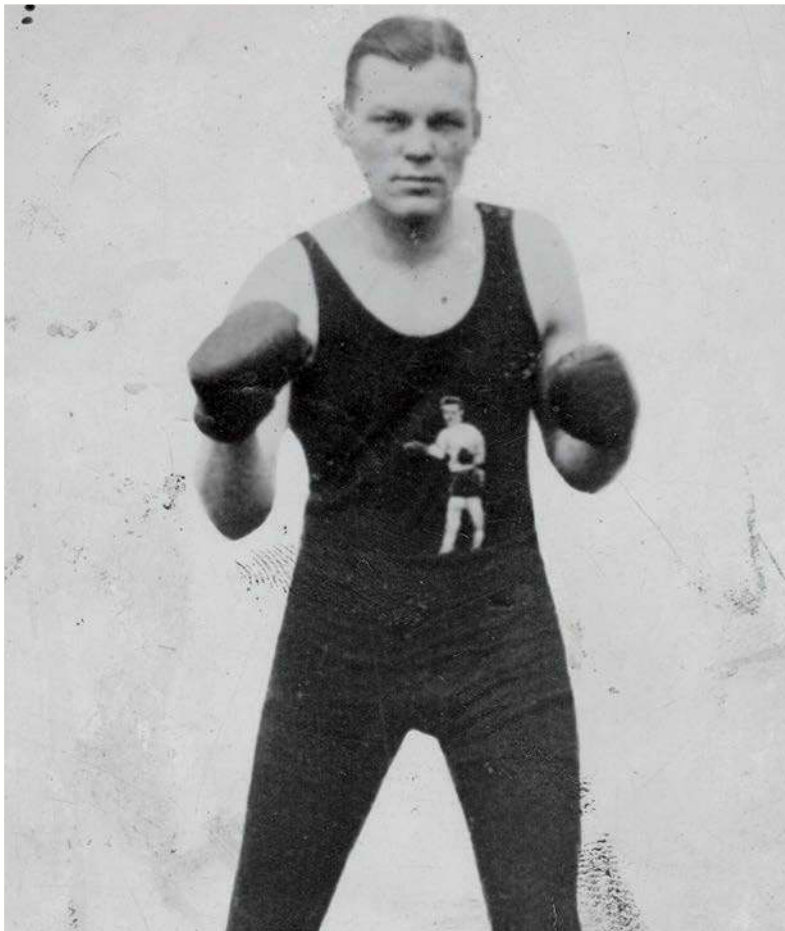
NOTE

COMPILING amateur ratings is always complicated, particularly so with reference to Olympic boxing now. There are new weight classes and national federations are allowed to select professional boxers for their teams of qualification hopefuls. That explains the smattering of athletes appearing in these rankings that also have a few professional bouts to their name. Given that these boxers have also competed in recent AIBA championships we feel that makes them eligible for these ratings. Other professional boxers may still appear at the upcoming qualifiers too.

DON'T MISS

IN next week's issue of *Boxing News* we'll run rankings for the new women's Olympic boxing weight classes. Out on March 3 (digital) and March 5 (print).

THE LEAGUE OF BOXERS



Looking back on a novel concept from the early 1920s

REGULAR readers will know that I do like to unearth some of the more obscure aspects of British boxing history when writing these articles. Back in 1922 an attempt was made to form a boxing league, where teams of boxers from individual towns and villages within the South Wales coalfield would compete against each other, and after all of the bouts had been completed a judge would award the points, not to the boxers, but to the town. This idea sounds crazy now, of course, but 98 years ago South Wales was a very active boxing centre, with hundreds of boxers, and the formation of this league was an attempt to innovate and to perhaps replicate the traditional rivalry that naturally existed between these places on the rugby field.



Miles Templeton

Boxing historian

The man behind the scheme was Teddy Lewis of Pontypridd. Lewis had a good name in Welsh boxing and, prior to the establishment of the Welsh Area Council later in the 1920s, he also seems to have been responsible for selecting the challengers for the Welsh title. He had an ally in the boxing correspondent for the *South Wales Echo*. This correspondent had a great job, for the *Echo* dedicated a large

A GREAT SUCCESS

The LEBA's Annual Awards Luncheon goes down a treat



Simon Euan-Smith
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EBA correspondent

THE London EBA's Annual Awards Luncheon, held on February 16 at the Connaught Rooms, Holborn, was another great success. MC Bob Williams, Chairman of the Home Counties EBA, did a fine job, introducing all the many celebrities present – including representatives from Croydon, Essex, Hastings, Home Counties, Central (Midlands), Brighton, Scottish and Welsh Associations. I had the pleasure of sitting next to Paul (PJ) Rowson, Vice-Chairman and original founder member of the Central (Midlands) EBA, who told me it's a relatively small but very enthusiastic Association, and there's always a good atmosphere at the monthly meetings. Similar to the set-up at Croydon. The Central (Midlands) EBA put out a glossy newsletter, with plenty to read.

Also on our table were three other

writers – Colin Hart, Len Whaley and Ken Sellek. Colin was the first recipient of LEBA's Reg Gutteridge Award, for services to Boxing Media – and Ken was this year's winner. In an era where, sadly, few local papers take reports from freelancers, Ken regularly covers fights for four East London papers, as well as occasionally for *BN*. Like the other award winners, Ken said he felt honoured.

The Pat Floyd Cup, for the best London amateur, went to Kheron Gilpin, who made just about the best – and funniest – acceptance speech I've heard at this event. But he made plenty of serious points too. Described as a "dedicated athlete who helps his community," and a "motivational speaker," Kheron said: "Boxing has taught me a lot – it's great for character development and discipline. Where I grew up, in Brixton, there was

knife crime, drink and drugs – that's why I came back to the gym. Without boxing many of us would be in prison, or dead."

The Mancini Award, for Services to Boxing, went to promoter Mo Prior. "To be recognised by your peers is fantastic," Mo said. "Let's make 50-50 fights – give fans what they want."

The Johnny Kent Trophy, for the best London Prospect – presented as always by Johnny's brother, Peter, LEBA Vice-President and still going strong at 95 – went to Sunny Edwards, currently on 14 straight wins, who in 2019 picked up the British super-flyweight title. Another London world champion in 2020? His brother, Charlie, held the WBC flyweight title – two world champions in the family would really be something.

The Jack Powell Award, named after LEBA's first Secretary, is for services

amount of space to boxing, and he had virtually an entire page to fill on most days of the week.

With a fanfare of publicity, the first fixtures were announced in September 1922. The rules were simple, six bouts were to take place between boxers from the two towns, each over four two-minute rounds. The contests would not be scored individually, and a boxer could not therefore win the bout unless by stoppage or disqualification, and a judge would attend to watch the contests and then divvy up the six points to the two towns depending on how he thought the bouts had gone. It was also stipulated that the maximum weight of all six boxers should not exceed 50 stone. All the contests would therefore have been at flyweight or bantamweight and this says a lot about the age and experience of the competitors – they would all have been young lads at the start of their careers.

There were 14 towns and villages in the league and included among the first fixtures were Treallaw v Pontypridd, Treorchy v Treharris and Ynyshir v Mountain Ash. At first things went quite well, with the matches taking place quite regularly. Very soon the established promoters started to complain about the league, arguing that because the admission prices were quite low, they could not compete. A

top-of-the-bill 15-rounder at the time would have cost a promoter around £15, and this was the staple fare on the regular events held every week across South Wales. Paying 12 lads to box four rounds would have cost a great deal less, and so the promoters had a point.

They need not have worried, for very soon cracks began to open with the arrangements that the league had established. When the Pontypridd boxers missed their train for one of their matches, they arrived late to find that the judge had gone home, and the boxing was cancelled. Other teams fell behind with their fixtures and within a few months, when the first league table was published, it showed that, although Treallaw, Treorchy and Ferndale topped the league, other places further down in the table had not completed most of their fixtures. By early 1923 little mention of the league could be found in the *Echo*, and I suspect that the correspondent had started to see that the idea was not a good one, and he was withdrawing his interest.

Despite its failure the league did spawn some decent talent and some of the boxers who competed went on to have excellent professional careers. Two of them, Tommy John [right] of Pentre, and Ernie "Red" Pullen [left] of Mountain Ash, would go on to have nearly 500 pro contests between them.

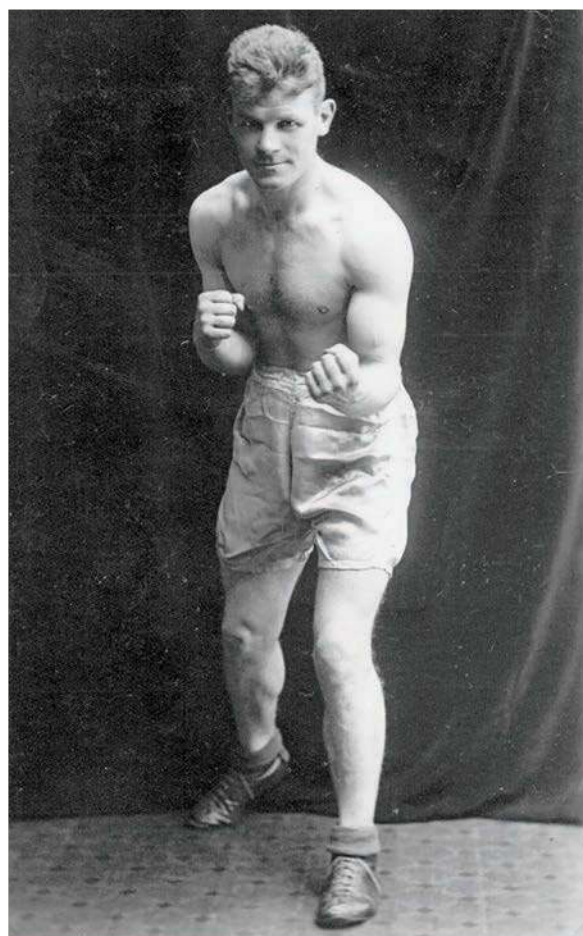


Photo: PHILIP SHARKEY



HONOURED: Mo Prior is flanked by Gina Mancini and Billy Schwer

to LEBA over many years. This year's recipient was Scott Ewing, described as a "great LEBA supporter and benefactor, who has raised a lot for deserving charities and helped lots of members with legal problems." Accepting the award, Scott praised boxing's "honesty, camaraderie and transparency."

The Alf Paolozzi Award, in honour of LEBA's first Chairman, is also given for services to LEBA – and this year it went to Patsy Barrett, described as another "supporter and benefactor – one of those who really makes it 'nice to belong.'"

Guest of Honour was former WBC light-heavyweight champion John Conteh. LEBA President Stephen Powell (Jack's son) recalled going to Wembley with his father in October 1974, to see John win the vacant title against Argentina's Jorge Ahumada.

I was ringside that night, and Conteh's performance, clearly outscoring the big-punching Ahumada over 15 rounds, was breathtaking. Stephen said John had been a great ambassador for LEBA for over 30 years, attending our fundraising events whenever he could. He had always carried out his role as LEBA Vice-President with great dignity and humour, and helped so many good causes, raising millions over the years. John said he felt honoured, and described LEBA as a "fantastic outfit."

Several members turning 80 during the coming year received Certificates of Life Membership – including recently married Vic Moore, who won a Jack Solomons Open Heavyweight tournament in 1966.

EMAIL simonoldtimers@googlemail.com
with your ex-boxer association news.

ISRAIL MADRIMOV

Paul Wheeler talks to a man who likes to eat and dance

Photo: STEVEN RYAN/GETTY IMAGES

When and why you started boxing:

I started boxing once or twice a week when I was seven years old. When I was 11, I began to train twice a day, every day.

Favourite all-time fighter:

My favourite all-time fighter is Muhammad Ali, both inside and outside of the ring, because of his history, religion and position in the world.

Best fight you've seen:

The best fight I've seen live is Gennady Golovkin against Sergiy Derevyanchenko.

Personal career highlight:

Winning gold at the Asian Games in 2018.

Toughest opponent:

All world-class opponents are tough, but Eumir Marcial was probably the toughest. [Madrinov outpointed Marcial in the semi-final of the 2018 Asian Games.]

Best and worst attributes as a boxer:

My physique and explosiveness are my strongest weapons. I've only had four professional fights, so I need to gain more experience.

Training tip:

Stay patient.

Favourite meal/restaurant:

I am an Uzbek – we like to eat! Uzbek restaurants are my favourite, and my favourite meal is plov – the signature dish of Uzbekistan.

Best friends in boxing:

My best friends in boxing are also my best friends in life – [fellow unbeaten Uzbek pros] Murodjon Akhmadaliev, Bakhodir Jalolov and Bektemir Melikuziev.

Other sportsman you would like to be:

I've always loved to play soccer, so I'd be a soccer player.



'I CRIED AFTER MY LAST AMATEUR BOUT. I DIDN'T GET THE DECISION'

Last film/TV show you saw:

I'm not a big movie guy. The last thing I watched was a Turkish TV show.

Who would play you in a film of your life:

That's an interesting question! Hmm, maybe Jackie Chan.

Have you ever been starstruck:

I'm a big fan of Gennady Golovkin. It was amazing to meet him and fight on his show as the chief support. [When Golovkin fought Steve Rolls, Madrimov was the main undercard attraction.]

Last time you cried:

I cried after my last amateur bout at the 2019 Asian Championships [versus Tursynbay Kulakhmet in the quarter-final]. I thought I won the fight, but I didn't get the decision.

Best advice received:

My father always told me to tell the truth, no matter how hard it is.

Worst rumour about yourself:

That I'm selfish and unreachable even for my friends and family.

Something not many people know about you:

I like to dance.

FAST FACTS

Age: 25 **Twitter:** @IsrailMadrinov **Nickname:** 'The Dream' **Height:**

5ft 8 1/2ins **Nationality:** Uzbek **From:** Indio, CA **Stance:** Orthodox

Record: 4-0 (4) **Division:** Super-welterweight **Titles:** WBA Inter-Continental

Next fight: Madrimov goes for win number five when he takes on Charlie Navarro over 10 rounds in Frisco, Texas this Saturday (February 29).

[NEXT ISSUE ON SALE MARCH 3, 2020 (DIGITAL) AND MARCH 5, 2020 (PRINT)]

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