

BOXING NEWS

**USYK:
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GENIUS**

Fury vs Usyk Collectors' Cover 1/2

UNDISPUTED

*Fury: One man
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BOXING NEWS Contents

May 16, 2024

24

FURY OR USYK?

Weighing up the heavyweight fight of the century

4 WONDERLAND

The magical rollercoaster heavyweight ride

7 GUEST: FABIO WARDLEY

Champ analyses main men Fury and Usyk

8 WIN SOME, LOSE SOME

Great and weird fights that got away

10 JUST WAIT

The world according to Ryan Garcia

14 ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE USYK MIND

Ukrainian thinker senses destiny



18 FISTS OF FURY

The Gypsy King is the real deal

22 MAJOR FIGHT SCHEDULE

Countdown to the fights that matter

28 YESTERDAY'S KING

Last undisputed champ Lewis on his career and Fury-Usyk

30 THE ENTERTAINER

Bruce Carrington is 'him'

34 LAUREN'S WORLD

New Welsh star is born

36 MAESTRO LOMACHENKO

Loma back to glorious best

42 BN WORLD AND BRITISH RATINGS

Top fighters ranked by *Boxing News*

48 KING COWDELL

Midland boxing legend's story retold

49 CONTEH LIGHTS UP LEBA

Ex-WBC king brings the stardust

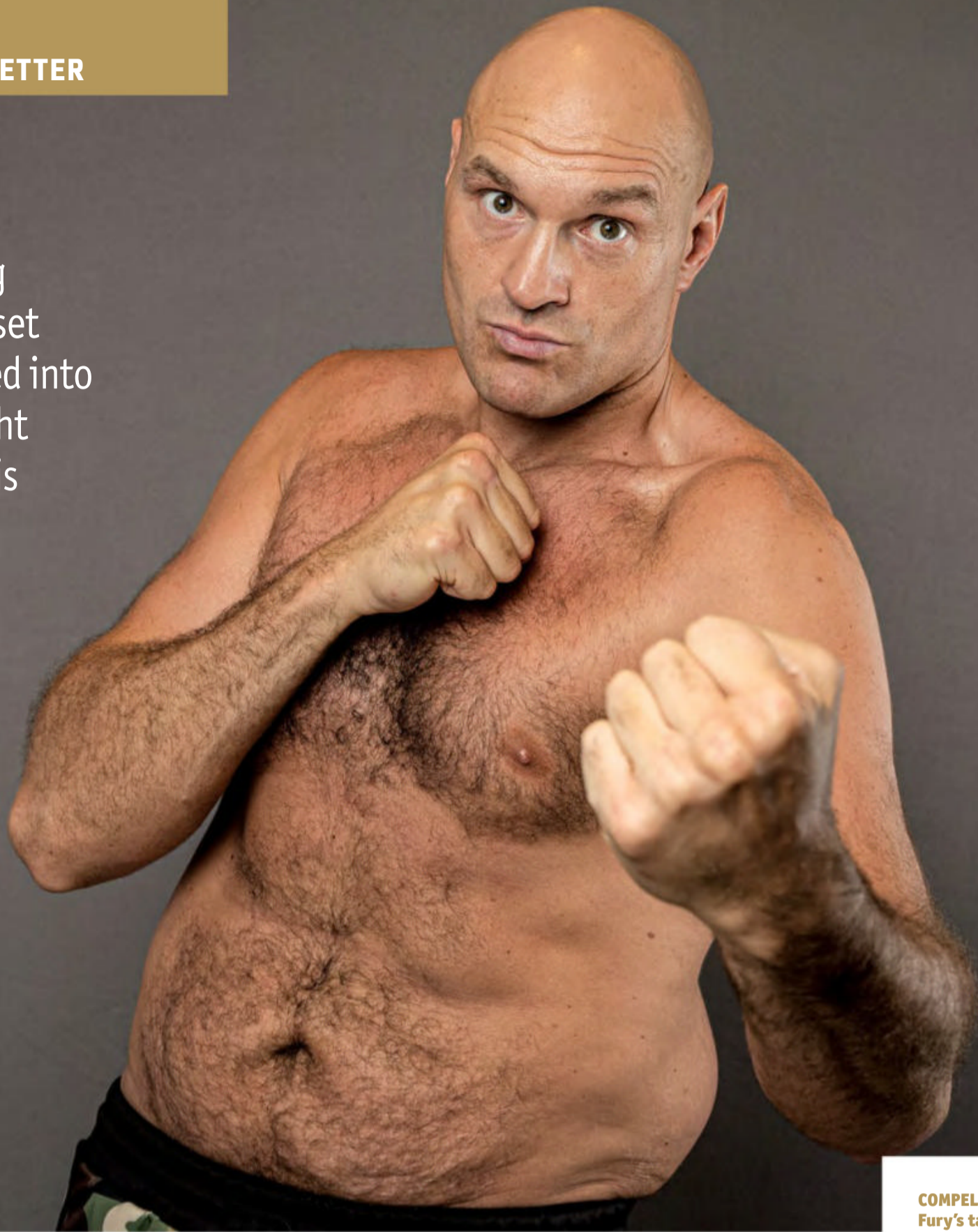
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BOXING NEWS



Another enthralling chapter is set to be carved into heavyweight folklore this weekend



COMPELLING: Fury's talent and life story have enlivened the sport's glamour division

Photos: RICHARD PELHAM/GETTY IMAGES



Cover photography RICHARD PELHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Wonderland



Mark Butcher
@KOwriting

Editor

No weight class captures the imagination more than the heavyweight division and no fight carries greater significance than an undisputed title clash between its leading lights.

Being undisputed heavyweight champion gains you membership to boxing's most prestigious club – the list of their iconic names

echoes throughout history; we recall them with wonder, squinting at those stern posed portraits and grainy black-

and-white camera footage, all the way to the digital reality of today – James J Jeffries, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Sonny Liston, Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Lennox Lewis and beyond. The footprints of the legends do not fade with time.

But beyond the roll call of those great names, there are also those moments of sheer, unbridled bedlam where only the heavyweights can magnetise us, due to being the only division without a weight limit and the usual standards of discipline. Off the rails on the Monday, on the scales on the Friday – no problem at heavyweight.

The madness truly peaked in heavyweight title fights during the mid-1990s when it felt like we had been cast into a parallel universe of lunacy. Between November 1993 and July 1997, any outcome, however mad, felt

possible; a paraglider descended into the ring halfway through Riddick Bowe-Evander Holyfield II; a blubbing Oliver McCall suffered a mental breakdown in his rematch with Lennox Lewis; a raging Mike Tyson bit a chunk out of Holyfield's ear in their return and Henry Akinwande was disqualified for hugging Lewis and not letting go. Many people spend an entire lifetime looking for someone who will hold them the way Akinwande grabbed Lewis that night.

Back in the 1980s, the previous incarnation of heavyweights also spiralled wildly out of control, lost to what Don King adroitly termed "extra-curricular peccadilloes", dramatically falling from grace due to the irresistible pull of a burger or coke.

There are a few lines from Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* that always makes me think of the heavyweights,

and of those eras in particular.

"We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad," said the Cheshire Cat.

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

Another cat, not that far from Cheshire, Tyson Fury, will seek to emulate the last undisputed heavyweight boss, Lewis, when he meets brilliant rival titleholder Oleksandr Usyk this weekend. The exotic locale of Riyadh evokes 1970s vibes of Kinshasa, Manila and Caracas and other heavyweight title bouts past in far flung lands. It's certainly a world away from the Robin Park Centre in Wigan where Fury fought in his second pro bout, 15 years ago.

Fury is that classic Marmite character (love or hate, for our international readers), but the division and boxing owes him a great deal. As much as purists admired the Klitschko brothers, their twin reign saw attention drift far away from the heavyweights and interest fade fast in boxing. Fury's coronation as heavyweight king, dethroning a listless Wladimir, brought fresh eyes to the division. His unpredictable mouth and wayward, often compelling, life story brought

welcome column inches to the sport and, allied with the star quality of Anthony Joshua, new life was breathed into the rasping heavyweight class.

Fury conjures that same madcap genius of heavyweights past, yet he has largely negotiated his demons; a flawed gem, but also a king of diamonds. A 6ft 9ins, freakishly skilled, behemoth, with unnaturally fast hands and feet, Fury elicits curiosity and fascination among ordinary folk.

Recency bias, the bane of social media, has seen 'The Gypsy King' proclaimed as the greatest heavyweight in history by his idolators - that's a stretch too far, but there is little doubt you can drop Fury anywhere in heavyweight history and he causes mayhem for anyone. The game will miss him when he's gone.

And for this weekend, for 12 rounds or less, troubles will be forgotten, cast to one side, eyes laser-focused upon who will be the man to rule them all, the baddest man on the planet, the maestro, the one true king. The bookies can't split them at 10/11 either way, and no-one can possibly predict with absolute, stonewall faith what will transpire at the Kingdom Arena - and

that, there, is the true magic of boxing and its rollercoaster. That's our wonderland.



THIS TRULY IS THE HARDEST GAME OF ALL

Rest in peace, Sherif Lawal

AS this magazine went to press, we were hit by the sombre news that St Pancras middleweight Sherif Lawal had passed away after making his debut at Harrow Leisure Centre.

Sherif was a quality amateur, starting his pro journey, when he suffered a cardiac arrest on his debut. Despite the efforts of the medical teams, he passed away at Northwick Park Hospital. A truly terrible and tragic loss.

On a week where we have been looking ahead to everything that is great about boxing, with Fury vs Usyk just days away, this is the other, awful, side of the same coin; the one we hope to never see.

Every person who steps through those ropes possesses a rare courage, beyond your average mortal. The risks involved are evident, and yet still they do it, hoping to provide a better life for their families, following a code of discipline and chasing glories at all levels. Most of us watch on from the safe side of the ropes, sometimes forgetting exactly what is at stake and the price that can be paid.

Times like these are heartbreaking and a harsh reminder that safety in boxing is paramount, and that this sport is so aptly named the hardest game.

Our deepest sympathies go to Sherif's family and friends. Rest in peace, Sherif.



AMBASSADOR:
Usyk is a thoroughly likeable man and a tremendous boxer

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● **THE** next issue will be in shops on May 23 and available to download on May 22.

The Boxing Show...

● **BN's** flagship podcast, *The Boxing Show*, features host Rob Tebbutt, former WBO 130lbs champion Barry Jones and Sky Sports Boxing's Andy Clarke and won the Best Combat Sports Podcast Gold Award in the 2024 Sports Podcast Awards. New episodes and other great boxing content from *Boxing News* are available at youtube.com/@boxingnews__

TOP 10 ENGLISH FIGHTERS

 YOUR recent feature on the Top 10 Mexican fighters of all-time was an interesting read. It made me wonder who are the Top 10 English – rather than UK – fighters of all-time?

The likes of Joe Calzaghe, Jimmy Wilde and Ken Buchanan are Welsh and Scottish, so it made me wonder more and more about the English Top 10.

But the search made me even more confused! BoxRec told me that Digger Stanley was the best English boxer of all-time and now I am baffled how they worked that one out. Surely, it's Lennox Lewis or Bob Fitzsimmons or Ted 'Kid' Lewis? I'd like to see a Top 10 English fighters piece in *Boxing News*. Would Chris Eubank, Nigel Benn or Naseem Hamed even get on that list?

Mick Wood, Leeds.

INOUE IS THE MAN

NAOYA INOUE is the best fighter on this planet on recent form. The Luis Nery, Marlon Tapales and Stephen Fulton stoppage wins came within 10 months – that's mad. He definitely is the Monster!

I think the best fighter has to be gauged on current form and activity, rather than past history. Terence Crawford was brilliant dismissing Errol Spence, but is not active enough for the accolade of top dog. Inoue is the man for me.

Oleksandr Usyk will probably be No.2 if he beats Tyson Fury. But definitely Inoue, Crawford and Usyk are the top three out there at the moment.

Simon Cannon.

LOMA THE THROWBACK

IT was a genuine pleasure to see the super-skilled Vasily Lomachenko roll back the years against George Kambosos. He was written off too early by all of you. The Ukrainian is a throwback to the great fighters of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. He is a boxing genius.

I believe he beat Devin Haney and can still give fits to the likes of Gervonta Davis and Shakur Stevenson. He's a master of the trade and will be appreciated more as the years go by. Lomachenko is the best fighter since Floyd Mayweather.

Dr Hercule Perruche, Marylebone.

ITAUMA HOPE

I WONDER about the future of the heavyweight division after Tyson Fury, Anthony Joshua and Oleksandr Usyk have moved on. There is no obvious star on the horizon.

I know the Americans like Jared Anderson, but I am not so sure about him. If he's not rushed, Moses Itauma might be the guy to take over. Time will tell.

Nick Smith, Coventry.

GREAT PRICE

LOVELY to see Lauren Price win a world title against such a good champion in Jessica McCaskill, who has fought the best in women's boxing. I hope all the Welsh fans back Lauren now and we get to see more glory nights over here.

The Joe Calzaghe era feels too long ago, but Lauren can be the new face of Welsh boxing. She's an inspiration.

Great to also see Rhys Edwards live up to his potential on the same card, too. He's a quality prospect and can fight. I've always rated him.

Ivan Jones, Pontypool.

IMPRESSIVE RUN:
Inoue has stopped three top-flight foes in 10 months



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INTELLIGENCE:
I spent eight weeks in Ukraine working with Usyk, who proved a master at mind games

SO MANY QUESTIONS

A fight has never been as hard to pick as Fury vs Usyk – even though I've shared a sparring ring with both of them



Fabio Wardley

British and Commonwealth heavyweight champion

IT'S the most flip-floppy I have ever been with a fight. I've always been quite certain in my fight predictions, even if they've been wrong. But with Fury vs Usyk, you just don't know. There are question marks on both sides.

There were, for Usyk, question marks

during the Daniel Dubois fight, which he ultimately came through, and it was the same with Fury against Francis Ngannou. It was then followed by Anthony Joshua cleaning out Ngannou in a couple of rounds, which made Fury's performance look twice as bad.

Everybody is allowed a lapse

in concentration. Maybe Fury took him lightly. Or was that fight evidence of where Fury is at now? It is hard to define, and we will only start getting answers as the fight with Usyk goes on.

I sparred Usyk in preparation for his Tony Bellew fight, as well as his first heavyweight fight, against Chazz Witherspoon. I also sparred Fury when he was preparing to fight Francesco Pianeta on his comeback. I only sparred Fury twice, whereas with Usyk I spent eight weeks in Ukraine sparring him two or three times a week.

I think, with Usyk, what is so impressive is the mix of his ring IQ and ability to subtly but intensely keep you under pressure without you even realising. Because you know he is so mentally switched on, and because you know he has many tricks up his sleeve and anything can come at any moment, you are always on edge. It mentally drains you. There's no point where you're able to switch off or relax or just have a little moment to yourself, which forces

you to drain energy and overthink each situation. It causes you to double-think and then be slow with your next move. You're hesitating, because you're wondering what he will do next.

The mental games Usyk is able to play with you in the ring is probably one of his biggest attributes, aside from all the other stuff we know: his combinations, his great footwork, his in-and-out ability.

With Fury, it's a funny one. When considering his best attributes, it depends on what Fury turns up. We have seen him change over time and the clearest reference point for that would be the Deontay Wilder fights. We saw in those fights a clear progression and saw how he has adjusted and changed his style slightly. We always knew him as a very fleet-footed guy who would bounce around for 12 rounds and ping your head off your shoulders, whereas now he is sitting down on his shots more.

I'm not so sure that's the approach he will take with Usyk,

however. I don't know if it will be that effective. But then the question is: Has Fury become heavier on his legs and with his punches because the fleet-footedness is harder to pull off now because his legs aren't there and they can't carry him through the 12 rounds like before?

Ultimately, his best attributes are still his God-given ones: his range; his size; the force he can impose on the fight if he is able to grab hold of Usyk. I think he will sit back and play the long game in terms of the range, and maybe for two or three rounds just have a look at Usyk and see what he can find before trying to add pressure around the fourth or fifth round. You'll then see his gameplan formulate.

With Usyk, on the other hand, I think from the start he'll have a set plan in terms of what he wants to do and how he wants to work. I don't think he will deviate from that too much, even if Fury changes. The only way I see Usyk making a large adjustment is if Fury chooses to use the southpaw stance, which, given it's Fury, is always possible.



WE WIN SOME, WE LOSE SOME

A look back at the weird and wonderful fights that got away



Steve Bunce

@BigDaddyBunce

Voice of boxing

IN 1998, Donald Trump was just Donald Trump, but he had plans for a fight to change boxing. Well, that was his spiel at the time.

Actually, Trump had two fights in mind; the trilogy between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield and a fight between Tyson and George Foreman.

Tyson and Holyfield had met outside his office at some point in the early summer of 1998. It was a shock to both, but clearly

a move by Trump. However, his real aim was to get Foreman, who had last fought in late 1997, in the ring with Tyson.

At that time, Tyson had some problems – he had clashed with Don King in a kicking encounter outside a hotel in Los Angeles, a lawsuit for \$100million was doing the rounds and he had to try and get his boxing licence back. He had, remember, in his last fight taken a lump or two out of Holyfield's ear. Tyson was suspended; Trump had a plan.

At the July hearing in New Jersey, Tyson was doing fine until he swore. It was all over after that outburst. Trump was furious, Foreman stayed retired, and we all missed out on possibly one of the most wonderful and ridiculous fights in boxing history.

This Saturday, we will get the type of fight that has so often been lost. Tyson-

Foreman was extreme, but there are so many other entertaining, ridiculous and great fights we have lost over the years. Fights that were made, often officially, and then something went wrong, and they never took place. They were lost forever; a lot of people thought Fury-Usyk was gone for good.

Some fights were agreed in principle – there had been a handshake and perhaps a few quid had been paid to make it possible. There are others that were rumours, but good rumours and not the modern version where one champion calls another a bitch and instantly they think they can sell every seat in the Garden. They would often struggle to sell a deckchair in their own garden.

How about the Tim Witherspoon saga with the Klitschko brothers? It seemed to last for a decade.

"They wanted too much of me," Tim always said.

"It's just business," the brothers always said.

I would have loved to have seen the last of the best of 'Spoon in with a Klitschko.

Naseem Hamed vs Azumah Nelson was another that was a distant idea; 'Zoom Zoom' was the WBC super-featherweight

champion when Hamed was the WBO feather champion. And what about Hamed and Arturo Gatti? I love that one. At the end of Hamed's wildly entertaining win over Kevin Kelley in New York in December 1997, I spoke with Pat Lynch, Gatti's man, and he confirmed

it had been mentioned. Gatti was 4lbs heavier and the IBF super-featherweight title holder. Lynch also dismissed it: "Gatti would massacre him," he said at the Garden late that night.

There was also the great British showdown that was agreed one night at the Empire Pool in Wembley and then fell apart when one of the boxers passed

away in the ring. In June of 1980, Johnny Owen and Charlie Magri fought on the same bill at the Empire Pool; Owen was the British bantamweight champion and Magri had never lost, nor defended, his British flyweight title. They sat and talked in the dressing room. They were separated by a few pounds and there was no super-flyweight division. They had also met as schoolboys and Magri had won.

That night in June, they agreed to a fight. First, Owen had to travel to Los Angeles and fight Lupe Pintor for the bantamweight world title in September. Johnny never came back.

One of my favourites is John L Gardner against Muhammad Ali in Hawaii in 1981.

Mickey Duff had a massive payment in cash after his meeting with a man called Harold Smith in Los Angeles. Duff spoke to Big John, Big John agreed, and dates were being discussed when Smith's empire crumbled - he was nicked. Duff kept the money but did tell the authorities in America; Big John never got a penny and never got to fight

Muhammad Ali. This is a true story. We lost that one forever.

In the summer of 1990, Barry Hearn had Mike McCallum ready for a fight outdoors in Brighton against Chris Eubank. I think there was talk, initially, of it taking place at Old Trafford. It never happened, but it was more than a rumour.

One or two have vanished because one of the men went to prison and not training camp. Perhaps the most infamous example was in December 1982 when Davey Moore signed to defend his WBA light-middleweight title against Tony Ayala Jr. At the time, Ayala was unbeaten in 22 fights, with 19 finishing early. Nobody doubted he would be a superstar. He was guaranteed \$700,000 for Moore and the Garden for the proposed fight in May 1983 would sell out. Then, two weeks later, Ayala lost his mind. He sexually assaulted a woman and was arrested shadowboxing semi-naked in the street at 3am. The fight was gone for good; he served every day of his minimum sentence of 15 years. Moore fought Roberto Duran instead in June and lost. Ayala never became the fifth king.

The fights we lost along the way have a bit of everything. It's just a pity that so many have got away. Still, we have got Saturday in Riyadh - and that once looked like it was lost.

DAVEY MOORE SIGNED TO DEFEND AGAINST TONY AYALA JR, THEN JUST TWO WEEKS LATER AYALA LOST HIS MIND

NOT A TERRIBLE IDEA: Witherspoon rolling back the years against a Klitschko was a compelling prospect





ALTERNATIVE FACTS:
Garcia's B sample being free of one drug does nothing to explain the presence in his system of another

Photos: CRIS ESQUEDA/GOLDEN BOY



Just wait

Ryan Garcia is the latest boxer to tell the world he is cleared of cheating



Elliot Worsell

@ElliotWorsell

Senior Writer

Of all the bizarre and shocking things Ryan Garcia did before, during and after his fight against Devin Haney last month, perhaps the least bizarre and shocking was the meet-up he arranged with former US President Donald Trump during his post-fight victory lap.

A natural meeting of minds, this union arrived before news broke that

Garcia had failed a pre-fight drug test for ostarine and was, on some level, supposed to highlight just how famous Garcia, the latest so-called face of boxing, had become. Little did we know, however, there were yet more twists in the Ryan Garcia story.

Now, a couple of weeks on, we look upon that Trump meeting as not only a uniting of egotists but also rather telling in terms of what the two men represent. Chronic tweeters, the pair of them, both have at various points utilised social media as a storytelling tool presumably in the hope their version of a particular story would stick and not be trumped by something as inconvenient as either facts, truth, or proof. For Trump, the embracing of a post-truth world was conducted on the biggest stage of all, whereas in the case of Garcia, his attempt to control a narrative has been on a much smaller scale, yet has been no less concerning or fascinating to witness.

It all started with the old conspiracy approach. Meaning: Garcia, a cocooned 25-year-old, rounded up numerous like-minded individuals with a predilection for distrusting authority, an urge to stick it to the man, and a tendency to say, at every turn, "Makes you think, doesn't it?" By aligning with this sycophantic motley crew, Garcia managed to cultivate a ready-made army of online followers, disciples, people who would stay with him through thick and thin and challenge the powers that be should the powers that be ever try to mess with him.

When this then inevitably happened following the Haney fight, Garcia, as planned, had his army ready to defend his right to a fair trial. More than that, Garcia, due to how open he had been on social media, and how open he continues to be on social media, was already primed to fight his own corner, shout louder than anyone else, and proclaim his innocence in his inimitable and somewhat jarring style.

He was aided, too, by the constant desire of those reporting his failed tests – one on April 19, and the other on April 20 – to update people on social media and therefore engage with both Garcia's supporters and, on occasion, Garcia himself. This, in truth, does nobody any good, particularly when a process is involved. Nor did it benefit anyone to speculate that Garcia had, in addition to being flagged for ostarine, also been found with traces of 19-norandrosterone, a banned steroid, in one of his tests, for which further testing was required.

After all, when, on May 8, it was then reported that there was in fact no presence of this second drug, inevitably the story was rewritten as a "victory" for Garcia. Like any boxer in trouble, the Californian had been ready to jump on an error or technicality like a housewife on a stain. Therefore, when given one, he was quick to inform all his followers that he had been "cleared" of any wrongdoing.

That was not, of course, strictly true. Yes, it was true that he had been reportedly cleared of using 19-norandrosterone, but that still doesn't account for the presence of ostarine in Garcia's system (at 6 ng/ml, some 60 times over the New York State Athletic Commission's allowable limit), nor do anything to remove the sizeable cloud still hanging over him.

Ideally, this would have all been handled better, both by testers and the media, and we would have been spared

the blow-by-blow, tweet-by-tweet account of proceedings. But alas, this is where we find ourselves in 2024, with everything open to interpretation and someone always trying to spin a yarn or simply bend the narrative to suit their own point of view. In the context of PEDs in boxing, we have recently seen a prevalence of this kind of behaviour, most notably with Conor Benn and Alycia Baumgardner, both of whom used social media to try to convince either themselves or others of their innocence, often with no real supporting basis whatsoever. Scared, it seemed, of silence, or of the belief

that going quiet was a sign of guilt, both Benn and Baumgardner got active, more active than ever, and thought it was enough to tell you they were innocent rather than wait for official processes to play out.

For some, this was indeed enough. If you liked the boxer, for example, or

needed them to fight, a declaration of innocence, combined with a poorly written statement and a base motivational quote, was sufficient for cheeks to be turned and nothing more to be said. Yet, by giving boxers this degree of power, one can't help but wonder what the future holds when it comes to PEDs in the sport.

If you ask me, the B sample is to blame. Not Ryan Garcia's B sample. Not Conor Benn's B sample. Not even the B sample of any boxer in particular. I just mean the B sample as a concept; the B sample as an open door and a talking point and an opportunity for these matters to be sensationalised and dragged out by busy journalists and others who profit from boxing being in the news.

For the B sample, in the end, is just a MacGuffin. It sounds important but ultimately means very little. It is but a distraction, a diversion, a nuisance. It offers boxers, the ones caught, the opportunity to buy time, gather support, distort the narrative, and claim something underhand, and in turn it makes a complete mockery of strict liability. Moreover, the B sample culture, a soap opera now played out in public, has made boxers "innocent" unless it is proven beyond doubt that they knowingly took a performance-enhancing drug or, in what would be a vanishingly rare exception, they actually hold up their hands and confess to their misdemeanour.

That, for a sport already too unruly, ambiguous and dangerous, can never be a good thing.

USING THE CONSPIRACY APPROACH, GARCIA ROUNDED UP HIS DISCIPLES

SHOCKER: The Haney win was excellent, but the events before and after it threaten to overshadow the achievement





THE WEEK

What's been going on in the boxing world over the last seven days

BROUGHT TO YOU BY DECLAN TAYLOR

Photo: DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES



ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: Charlo has been stripped of his belt after being hit with a sizeable rap sheet

Drunk and disorderly

AS Wednesdays go, this was about as busy as it gets. Firstly, Jermall Charlo was stripped of his WBC middleweight title after he was arrested on Tuesday for 'fleeing a police officer', 'driving while intoxicated' and 'leaving the scene of a crash'.

The WBC said they will "work closely with [Charlo's promoters] PBC in securing the best course of action to attend to Jermall's needs at this moment".

Meanwhile, Don King released a fight poster for the ages ahead of his show at the Hard Rock Casino in Florida on June 7.

In the bottom right-hand corner, adjacent to a large picture of King were Adrien Broner and Blair Cobbs. "Broner v Cobbs", it reads, with the addition of: "If Broner shows up".

Quite.

One man who will be showing up despite the cancellation of the biggest fight of his life is Dmitry Bivol, who, it was announced on Wednesday, will instead fight undefeated Malik Zinad in Saudi Arabia on June 1 following Artur Beterbiev's injury.

Libya-born Malta resident Zinad, 30, is 22-0, with 16 quick.

MAY

8

Get the guitar

AT the launch press conference for Jesse 'Bam' Rodriguez against Juan Francisco Estrada, who clash on June 29 in one of the fights of the year, Eddie Hearn was instead talking up the chances of Bam facing Naoya Inoue.

"Everybody likes fantasy fights," he said. "And people are looking for Inoue to go up and fight Gervonta Davis, but I like Bam fighting Inoue at 118 or 122lbs."

In Australia, meanwhile, fight week was in full swing for Vasily Lomachenko vs George Kambosos and the pair engaged in a face-off which lasted longer than three minutes. It was down

to a beaming Lucas 'Big Daddy' Browne to separate them.

Following Wednesday's Bivol news, there was also news from the WBO, who, with Beterbiev injured, ordered British duo Anthony Yarde and Joshua Buatsi to fight for their 'interim' light-heavyweight title. Let's hope they can seal a deal.

Special Thursday mention to Joseph Parker, the undisputed king of social media content, for his version of the famous 'Team building' episode from *The Office*, with him cast as David Brent. Go get the guitar.

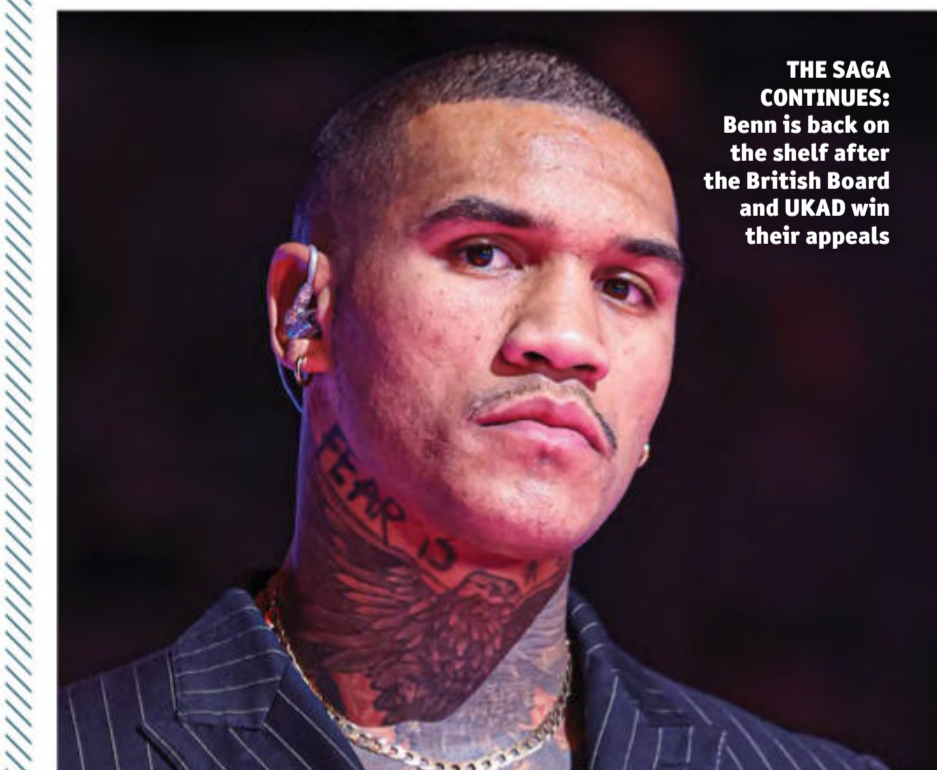
MAY

9

Photo: ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM



FIRST THINGS FIRST: Bam [right] has Estrada to contend with before Hearn's fantasies can be fulfilled



THE SAGA CONTINUES: Benn is back on the shelf after the British Board and UKAD win their appeals

Benn suspended

FRIDAY brought a big development in the Conor Benn saga as the 27-year-old was again provisionally suspended following appeals by UKAD and the British Boxing Board of Control.

Benn had already been suspended for twice testing positive for the banned substance clomifene, but the National Anti-Doping Panel lifted that ruling in July. The Board and UKAD then successfully appealed and the suspension has been reinstated.

Board General Secretary Robert Smith said: "The BBBoFC can confirm Conor Benn is subject

to a provisional suspension prohibiting him from participating in any capacity (or assisting another athlete in any capacity) in a competition, event or activity

that is organised, convened, authorised or recognised by the BBBoFC or any other World Anti-Doping Code-compliant sport. UKAD and the BBBoFC were successful in their appeals of a decision handed down by a tribunal of the independent National Anti-Doping Panel in July, and Mr Benn's provisional suspension was reimposed by the appeal tribunal following those successful appeals."

MAY

10

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

'It's not possible to destabilise my team. I don't just have professional coaches, I have professional soldiers'

OLEKSANDR USYK is characteristically unflustered by John Fury headbutting one of his team members.

Nightmare Down Under

MAY 11 ON a packed weekend, the maddest moment took place Down Under on Saturday night [UK time] on the Lomachenko-Kambosos undercard – and it didn't even involve any punching. Once Nina Hughes and Cherneka Johnson had finished their 10-twos, they were brought together by referee Bill Seth to hear the decision. Ring announcer Dan Hennessey initially read out the scores, declaring Hughes the winner via majority decision, sparking celebrations by Team Hughes. However, within 30 seconds, Hennessey told Seth to get the boxers back together and simply reread the scores, without any explanation, declaring Johnson the winner instead. Both boxers were flummoxed by the decisions, as were the commentators on ESPN. "Get this dude up out of here, man," Tim Bradley said.

Elsewhere, both Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk were busy on social media with fight week about to kick off in Riyadh. Usyk was seen shadowboxing on his private jet over to Saudi, while Fury uploaded a picture of him looking mean and lean. Usyk's promoter, Alex Krassyuk, even had time for a little Saturday dig by commenting: "Happy to see you finally fit."

Photo: MIKEY WILLIAMS/ TOP RANK



Mum's the word

MAY 12 THIS was the day The Week and Boxing News super-reporter Andi Purewal boarded our flight from London to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, ahead of the first undisputed heavyweight fight for 25 years. Already in Saudi, Usyk conducted an interview with YouTube channel *Boxing King Media* and revealed that Fury is in trouble with his mum for pushing him in the face at one of their previous head-to-heads.

"My mum was angry," Usyk said. "She said 'why did that man push you?' But I said, 'Mum it's just show, please relax' but then she said 'If this man pushes you, I kill him!'" It is important to note Mama Usyk is not currently rated by any of the sanctioning bodies.

Also touching down in Saudi was Anthony Joshua, who will be ringside at the Kingdom Arena and likely in action in September at the first Riyadh Season event on UK soil.

Over in Australia, only a few hours after his defeat to Lomachenko, Kambosos was on X talking his way into another fight, as he targeted Ryan Garcia.

"Won more belts than you'll ever win, princess, the clean way," he tweeted, presumably ferociously.



There will be blood

MAY 13 FIGHT week proper got off to an inauspicious start at a hotel in Riyadh as John Fury, the father of Tyson, ended up with a nasty cut on the face after appearing to headbutt a member of Team Usyk.

As the two main event fighters conducted all manner of interviews, the two teams came head-to-head, literally, at the Hilton. Fury Sr and a man in a flat cap were rutting like stags before they were eventually separated. However, a smaller member of the Ukrainian's entourage, later named as Stanislav Stepchuk, got one on the face. However, as Fury was pulled away, it was him who was left dripping with blood.

Fury Jr, who was not even present at the time, said: "I didn't see anything, I was in the room doing interviews for Sky Sports, but I'm not here for all that, I'm here to get the job done and go home and rest."

John Fury, by now cleaned up, apologised: "Sincere apologies to everybody involved. It's just the way we are. Emotions and tensions are running high... What matters to me is respect for my son and he wasn't showing any of it."

Vicious rematch

MAY 14 IT was silly season in Riyadh on Monday but it was all going a bit weird in Mexico too as, on Tuesday, it emerged that Floyd Mayweather is set to have a rerun of his 2011 victory over 'Vicious' Victor Ortiz this summer.

In what was one of the most controversial moments of his career, Mayweather knocked out Ortiz with a two-piece when the southpaw was attempting to apologise to him for a blatant headbutt.

Now, according to reports in the area, the two of them are going to go again, exhibition style, in Mexico with a date to be confirmed this week.

Over in Saudi, Usyk gave his opinion on John Fury headbuttgate – and he did it with his usual grin.

"If they want to destabilise my team, it's not possible," he said. "Because I don't just have professional coaches and trainers, I have professional soldiers."

"My friend did not bleed, because he is a powerful guy. He is a street guy. Did you see the video? He was like a pitbull, woof! I said 'stop!' and they said okay."

Woof indeed.



OVERTIME:
Usyk has had an extra three months to prepare for Fury after the latter suffered a cut in sparring that postponed their original February date

Photo: ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

NEWTON'S

A philosophical Oleksandr Usyk has been waiting for this moment for 20 years and is ready to embrace his boxing destiny against Tyson Fury this Saturday night



IN THE living quarters of Oleksandr Usyk's Spanish training camp is a brown wall peppered with sheets of white and yellow paper.

Written on them are English phrases, but this is not about the Ukrainian's quest to master the language. Rather, it is a provision of some small, impromptu motivation when he is not inside the gym doing the hard yards.

A few of the phrases might seem obvious but, as is always expected with a man like Usyk, some of them require a moment to think about.

"This one is really my English message

for Tyson Fury," he says, pointing to a sheet of A4. "Let your hands talk in the ring."

A clear reference to the Englishman's front-foot approach in their opening press conference, when Usyk was labelled a sausage, a rabbit, an ugly man, and just about everything in between, while the Ukrainian's team sat mostly in cold silence.

"I prepared for this fight for 20 years," Usyk says, reading out the message on a second piece of white paper.

It is actually 22 years since Usyk first pulled on the gloves, following a decision to try boxing despite a burgeoning career as a footballer. Within a few years, he was competing at the sharp end of amateur boxing, but it was not until 2011, aged

24, that he won the World Amateur Championships. Within a year, he was Olympic champion too. He may not draw directly on those experiences on Saturday night at the Kingdom Arena, but the message written on the wall reminds him that this undisputed world heavyweight title fight is the culmination of a life's work.

"There's a big difference," he says, pointing to his head. "A big difference here. Amateur boxing is amateur boxing - Olympics, Worlds, Europeans. Then, with professional boxing, it is a sport, but it's business."

Another sheet of paper merely states: "I am excited", while two notes, separated by around six inches of wall, read 'GIVE' and 'TAKE'. But it is one in the middle,

CRADLE

BY DECLAN TAYLOR

scrawled not just in capitals, which gives the most profound glimpse into the way Usyk approaches his life and the fights that punctuate it.

"Newton's Cradle already started," it says.

The message references the device, made up of hanging spheres, which demonstrates the conservation of momentum and energy. When one ball swings into the rest, it transfers its energy across the remaining spheres, forcing the one on the end to move in identical fashion. That Usyk would find encouragement from such a phrase ahead of the biggest fight of his life speaks volumes about his approach.

Saturday's encounter will be as much about his own conservation of momentum and energy, as he uses his fleet-of-foot and mastery of distance to attempt to get closer to a man who holds significant height and reach advantages. But, perhaps more than that, the phrase on Usyk's wall just reminds him that the spheres are already swinging and there's little he can do to stop them.

It has been a tumultuous few years for

Usyk since he won the WBA, IBF and WBO heavyweight titles from Anthony Joshua outdoors in Tottenham in September 2021. In the catacombs of the stadium that night, he had spoken of wanting to plant an apple tree in celebration. Instead, within months, he was on the front line following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in the February of 2022. He would move his young family out of their family home which was later infamously ransacked by Russian soldiers.

His two sons have spent time with him in training camp this time around, even giving him water and words of encouragement at times. He also broke camp to visit the family after his wife, Yekaterina, gave birth to their daughter while he trained for the initial February date with Fury, which was postponed due to a cut. The fact he had missed her birth in order to train for a fight that did not happen clearly upset the undefeated three-belt heavyweight champion.

"I was not with my wife when she gave

birth, even though I should have been there, in the corridors," he had said. "I should have been in the corridor, where I could hear my new baby daughter crying."

This time around, he felt a trip to see her and support his wife was necessary despite the requisite departure from his Spanish training base.

"In the week when I was home, I was just training and I was at home with my baby and my wife," he explains. "I have little time to do it, but I'm happy and my wife is too. Most of the time I was home, I would do my work, but then I'd go back home and spend a lot of time with my family.

"I've been FaceTiming them back home, every 20 minutes I call my wife to see my kids swimming and things like that. Both of my sons are now here with me in Spain so everything is okay. My preparation has been good, my condition is good and with my team everything is okay."

Many fighters might find having their children around them in such an important camp a distraction or worse, a signal of

“

I THINK MY SPEED AND MY BOXING SKILLS WILL BE MY BIGGEST STRENGTHS IN THIS FIGHT. I DON'T THINK ABOUT TYSON FURY AT ALL. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE WILL DO. FOR ME, IT DOESN'T MATTER. I JUST DO MY OWN WORK”

CONUNDRUM:
The engaging Usyk is as multi-faceted a character outside the ring as he is a fighter within it

Photos: DANIEL LEAL/GETTY IMAGES

softening for a fighter who has achieved everything already. Usyk, as ever, is swift to counter.

"This is not the first time they've been with me in camp," he says. "Sometimes they come to visit me and I told my friend that, when I was 23 or 24, I thought when I go to professional boxing and go to training camp, I would like my two sons to help give me water and wipe my face and everything.

"But now, it's actually possible. Yesterday I was sparring and my son gave me water and asked if I'm good. I said, 'yeah, I'm good' and my coach said 'hey, shut up, because we're working'. My son was like 'okay, okay!'"

Most of the work had already been done by Usyk when news of Fury's cut, sustained in a sparring session with Agron Smakici, meant their February 17 date was delayed. It will be 13 weeks between that date and this Saturday, meaning both men have been training for each other for far longer than initially planned.

"It's not easy to prepare for him," Usyk says. "It's different sparring partners – you need big

guys. It's different work, because Tyson Fury is a tall man. But my coach has done his work, so we've worked hard for this fight.

"I feel good. I don't know if I'm strong or I'm not strong – I just like boxing, you know? But for me, now is the best time for me.

"I think my speed and my boxing skills will be my biggest strengths in this fight. I don't think about Tyson Fury at all. I don't know what he will do. For me, it doesn't matter. I just do my own work. My sparring work, my conditioning. I don't think about my opponent, because for me it doesn't matter. I will be thinking about my opponent when I go to the ring on May 18.

"When I step into the ring, I'll think 'Okay, Alex. Switch on'... 'work'"

Should things go to plan at the weekend, Usyk will leave Riyadh as the undisputed heavyweight champion, repeating the feat he achieved at cruiserweight and marking him out as one of the finest fighters in history.

He is a wealthy man who has ticked every box and, one would assume, could now

happily slip away from boxing and into family life. Usyk grins at the suggestion.

"No retirement for Oleksandr Usyk," he declares. "No way.

"Listen, I am a young man. My age is only a number – I feel like I'm 21. You know why 21? Because I can go to the USA, in a restaurant or a disco. Because if you're underage you can't do any of that. At 21, it's great – red wine, beer, blah blah blah. No way, I just work, work, work.

"Okay, after this fight, then there is a rematch. Then maybe I go down in weight to cruiserweight and continue boxing and collect the undisputed cruiserweight title for a second time."

It is not clear whether or not Usyk is joking. He still resides within a couple of stone of the cruiserweight limit, so a second run at the weight he dominated would seem unusual, but not out of the question.

You sense he will do whatever he wants anyway. For Usyk, the spheres are already in motion – and nobody is going to stop them. **BN**



“
**NO RETIREMENT FOR
OLEKSANDR USYK.
NO WAY. I AM A YOUNG
MAN. MY AGE IS ONLY
A NUMBER. I FEEL 21”**

WHEELER

Master of more trades than one, Tyson Fury remembers his first deal ahead of his most lucrative one yet, against Oleksandr Usyk this weekend

BY DECLAN TAYLOR

Photo: STEPHEN DUNKLEY/QUEENSBERRY

IT HAS been suggested that Tyson Fury will bank close to £100million for his part in the two-fight deal with Oleksandr Usyk in Saudi Arabia, which starts on Saturday night in Riyadh.

But his face lights up and he speaks with far more excitement when he explains how his entrepreneurial spirit was first stoked when he was 10 years old with a 50-quid turnaround in just a few hours.

You never can tell exactly where things will go when Fury sits down with the media. He has been known to flat-bat every question during roundtables or even literally tape his mouth shut.

This time, Fury is in Fury mode. No doubt buoyed by his imminent date with Usyk, where he has the opportunity to prove

he is peerless in this generation, Fury is disarmingly philosophical when he sits down to field questions on this occasion.

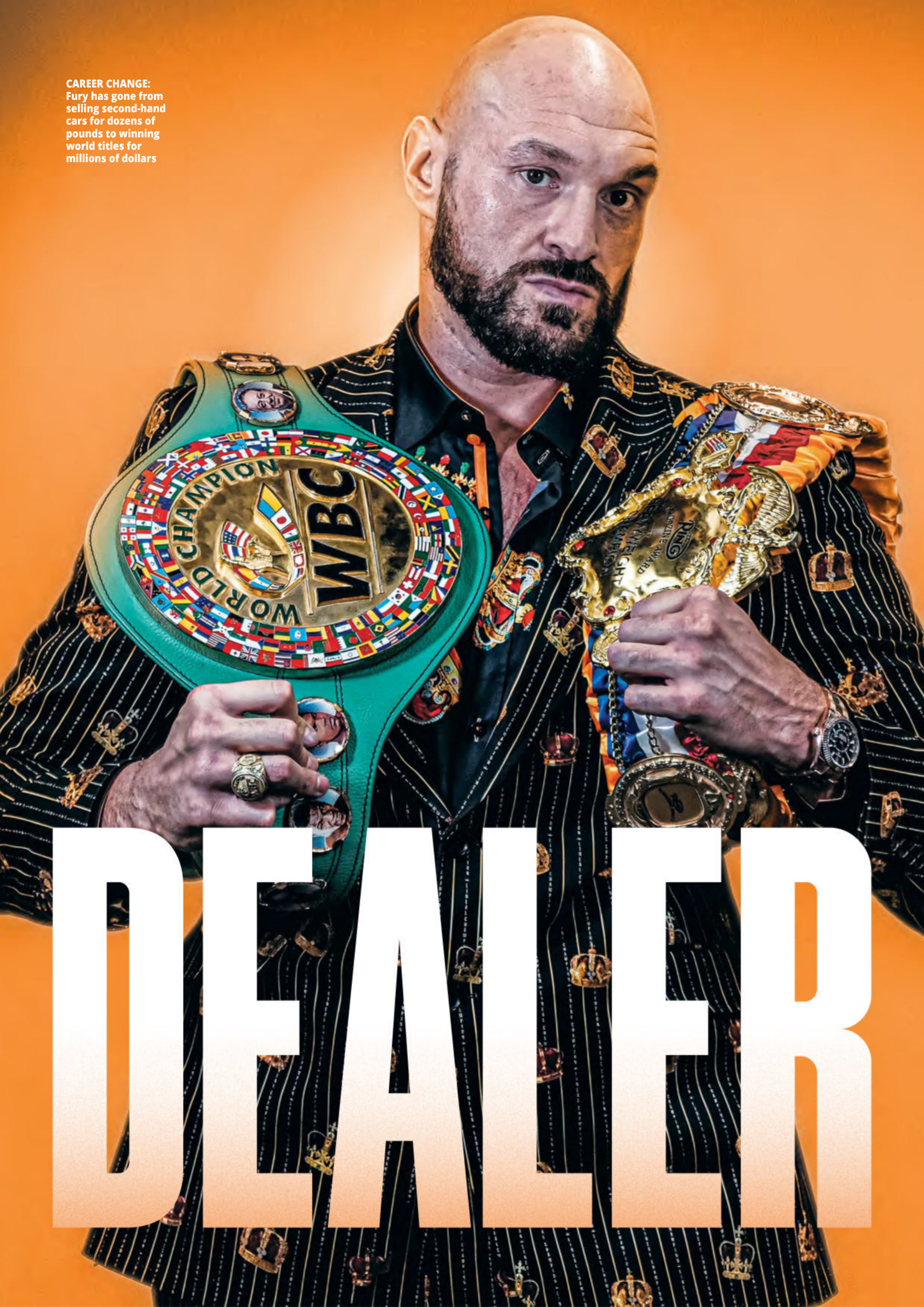
It is not pushing it to suggest that Fury is currently the most recognisable boxer in Britain, if not the world, given his rise to world heavyweight champion and his role in the immensely popular reality TV show about his life, *At Home With The Furys*.

In the series, although there are super cars on the drive and impromptu holidays to the South of France, he is keen to show that there is still a normal bloke in there. He drives a Volkswagen Passat around Morecambe and makes numerous trips to the dump every week.


He and his wife, Paris, have seven kids and Fury is adamant that they will not be swept away by the fame and fortune he has punched into their lives.

"Something I like to do is in the summertime, we always wash the cars

CAREER CHANGE:
Fury has gone from
selling second-hand
cars for dozens of
pounds to winning
world titles for
millions of dollars



DEALER



BIG ASK:
At 6ft 9ins and 270lbs,
Fury, while respectful of
Usyk's achievements, says
the size difference between
them is insurmountable

“

**I'VE STUDIED EVERY HEAVYWEIGHT
AND EVERY CRUISERWEIGHT THAT'S
EVER LIVED, AND WHEN THE CRUISERS
STEP UP TO THE BIG BOYS, THEY ARE
USUALLY FOUND WANTING”**

down,” he says, suddenly excited. “Maybe every other day. I ask the kids why we do it and my little boy will say ‘we wash these because things are hard to earn, Dad, and we’ve got to look after our things, haven’t we?’ And I say ‘yep, we have, well done, Son.’”

Which brings us to that £50 deal. “My first car was a 1997 Fiat Fiorino,” he says. “I paid £360 for it. That was my first car I was driving about in, but I actually bought my first car when I was 10 years old. It was a Renault Clio and I bought it from three doors down and I sold it for a profit. I bought it for £60 and sold it for £110 on the same day. So, I’ve been buying and selling my whole life.

“Before I was boxing, I was a car trader. While I’ve been boxing, I’ve been messing around with cars. It’s my pastime, my hobby. I love a deal, whether it’s for 10p or 10 grand or 10 million, whatever. I love having a deal.”

It should come as little surprise, therefore, that Fury has emerged as one of boxing’s most significant powerbrokers. Before his lucrative business with Saudi Arabia, he had already completed a five-fight deal with ESPN which guaranteed him £80m, which was staggering at the time. It was enough to make him one of the richest fighters of the post-Floyd Mayweather era.

He has earned enough money to alter the direction of his family’s life for generations to come. Certainly, enough to ensure none of his children will ever have to earn their crust from fighting. Even so, his sons are often in the gym with him.

“I believe it’s very important for kids to learn to fight and learn respect,” he explains. “I think it’s important when they’re young to go to the boxing gym and learn respect. Even if they don’t use it as a sport or a profession, it’s still very useful to be in that environment with other kids, giving them goals and achieving them.”

At Home With The Furys shows a varying level of interest in boxing among his sons, but the 35-year-old says one of them seems to have the bug already.

“My little one is seven, Tyson Jr,” he says. “He’s going to the boxing gym and is fanatical with it all. He keeps winning awards every week – boxer of the week or hardest worker of the week. I say ‘what did you win it for this week?’ and he said ‘press-ups, push-ups, sit-ups, padwork and sparring – I outdid everyone’. I say ‘well done, Son!’”

It is around this point during the interview that Usyk, also in the building conducting media obligations, strolls past. “Here he is,”

Fury shouts after him. “The main man... the cory... the sausage.” Usyk grins back at him.

The exchange opens the door for Fury to assess the challenge of the 21-0, two-weight world champion. In the past, Fury has suggested that the Ukrainian is simply too small for him and that he does not have the requisite dimensions to handle his 6ft 9ins, circa-270lbs frame.

“We have weight divisions for a reason,” he said. “And me being an encyclopaedia on boxing and having studied every heavyweight and cruiserweight that’s ever lived, I know that when the cruiserweights step up to the big boys, usually they get found wanting.

“Even the greatest cruiserweight who ever lived, Evander Holyfield, when he stepped up to the big boys, Riddick Bowe and Lennox Lewis, he was found wanting. You can beat the average big ones, but you can’t beat the elite big ones. Size really matters and he’s going to be found wanting when he fights me on May 18.

“It’s facts, I’m not slagging anybody off... these are facts. And if anybody wants to go and check my boxing history, go and do it. I’ve studied this game all my life.”

But despite such a frank assessment of his

“
IT’S VERY
IMPORTANT FOR
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RESEPECT, EVEN IF
THEY DON’T USE IT
AS A PROFESSION”



AT HOME:
Fury’s family life, as the
subject of a TV show, has
brought him almost as much
mainstream fame as his
exploits in the ring



opponent’s chances – plus the plethora of insults towards Usyk over the course of this whole promotion – on this occasion it is all about respect for Fury.

“As a fighter, he’s done everything that can be done, so you have to respect him,” he says. “He’s come from Ukraine; I don’t from what sort of background, but probably a poor one.

“He’s done fantastic, just like Deontay Wilder, Anthony Joshua, Joseph Parker, myself. We’ve all done fantastic; we are all multimillionaires who have changed our stars for the better.

“He’s probably been boxing longer than me; he’s had 315 amateur wins against 15 losses, so he’s had a lot of fights, and 20 as a pro.

“I don’t think he’ll be bothered what people think of him when he’s getting a fortune on the world’s biggest stage.

“I can 100 per cent sit here and say, me or Usyk, when we sit back and we’re finished, we’re not going to be thinking about some idiot who said it was a good, bad or indifferent fight. We give our lives to this game.”

It was either that or selling cars. It seems both would have earned him a few quid. **BN**

MAJOR FIGHT SCHEDULE

May 17 **KAREN CHUKHADZHIAN vs HARRY SCARFF**
Grand Elysee Hotel, Hamburg.
(*IBF welterweight title final eliminator*)

May 18 **OLEKSANDR USYK vs TYSON FURY**
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
DAZN/TNT/SKY PPV
(*WBC/WBA Super/IBF/WBO heavyweight titles*)
Jai Opetaia vs Mairis Briedis II
(*vacant IBF cruiserweight title*)
Joe Cordina vs Anthony Cacace
(*IBF super-featherweight title*)
Agit Kabayel vs Frank Sanchez

EMANUEL NAVARRETE vs DENYS BERINCHYK
Pechanga Arena, San Diego
SKY SPORTS/ESPN
(*vacant WBO lightweight title*)

May 24 **LUKASZ ROZANSKI vs LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
Rzeszow, Poland
SKY SPORTS
(*WBC bridgerweight title*)

May 25 **DINA THORSLUND vs SEREN CETIN**
Royal Arena, Copenhagen
(*WBC/WBO bantamweight title*)

JOSH TAYLOR vs JACK CATTERALL II
First Direct Arena, Leeds
DAZN
Cheavon Clarke vs Ellis Zorro
(*vacant British cruiserweight title*)
Paddy Donovan vs Lewis Ritson

CHRISTIAN MBILLI vs MARK HEFFRON
Shawinigan, Canada
ESPN

Jun 01 **DMITRY BIVOL vs MALIK ZINAD**
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
DAZN
(*WBA Super light-heavyweight title*)
Daniel Dubois vs Filip Hrgovic
Zhilei Zhang vs Deontay Wilder
Ray Ford vs Nick Ball
(*WBA featherweight title*)
Hamzah Sheeraz vs Austin Williams
Willie Hutchinson vs Craig Richards

Jun 07 **CALLUM WALSH vs CARLOS ORTIZ**
Chumash Casino, Santa Ynez

ADRIEN BRONER vs BLAIR COBBS
Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Ft Lauderdale
Cassius Chaney vs Michael Hunter

OSCAR COLLAZO vs GERALDO ZAPATA
Turning Stone Casino, Verona, New York
(*WBO strawweight title*)

Jun 08 **XANDER ZAYAS vs PATRICK TEIXEIRA**
The Theater, Madison Square Garden, New York
SKY SPORTS/ESPN
Bruce Carrington vs Jose Enrique Vivas

Jun 15 **CHRIS BILLAM-SMITH vs RICHARD RIAKPORHE II**
Selhurst Park, London
SKY SPORTS
(*WBO cruiserweight title*)
Michael Cieslak vs Isaac Chamberlain
(*European cruiserweight title*)
Ben Whittaker vs Eworitse Ezra Arenyeka

SUBRIEL MATIAS vs LIAM PARO
Manati, Puerto Rico
DAZN
(*IBF super-lightweight title*)

GERVONTA DAVIS vs FRANK MARTIN
MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas
AMAZON
David Benavidez vs Oleksandr Gvozdyk

Jun 21 **RAFAEL ESPINOZA vs SERGIO CHIRINO**
Fontainebleau, Las Vegas
SKY SPORTS/ESPN
(*WBO featherweight title*)

Jun 22 **TYLER DENNY vs FELIX CASH**
Resorts World Arena, Birmingham
DAZN
(*European middleweight title*)
Shannon Ryan vs Emma Dolan
(*British and Commonwealth super-flyweight titles*)
Lewis Crocker vs Conah Walker

Jun 29 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA vs JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
Footspring Center, Phoenix
DAZN
(*WBC super-flyweight title*)
Sunny Edwards vs Adrian Curiel

Jul 06 **SHAKUR STEVENSON vs ARTEM HARUTYUNYAN**
Prudential Center, Newark
SKY SPORTS/ESPN
(*WBC lightweight title*)
O'Shaquie Foster vs Robson Conceição
(*WBC super-featherweight title*)
Keyshawn Davis vs Miguel Madueño

Jul 07 **KAZUTO IOKA vs FERNANDO MARTINEZ**
Ryogoku Kokugikan, Tokyo
(*WBA/IBF super-flyweight titles*)

Jul 13 **JARON ENNIS vs CODY CRAWLEY**
Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia
DAZN
(*IBF welterweight title*)

Aug 03 **ISRAIL MADRIMOV vs TERENCE CRAWFORD**
BMO Stadium, Los Angeles
DAZN
(*WBA/WBO Interim super-welterweight titles*)
Tim Tszyu vs Vergil Ortiz
Andy Ruiz vs Jarrell Miller
Isaac Cruz vs Jose Valenzuela
(*WBA super-lightweight title*)
David Morrell vs Radivoje Kalajdzic
Andy Cruz vs Antonio Moran

DE LA HOYA



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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

Photo: STEPHEN DUNKLEY/QUEENSBERRY



HEAD TO HEAD:
Fury vs Usyk is the biggest and most important heavyweight contest in a generation

Fantasy fight

After considerable hype and delay, Fury vs Usyk is finally upon us. **Elliot Worsell** sets the scene for the first undisputed world heavyweight title clash in a quarter of a century

★★★★★ MAIN EVENT

R

ARELY do you worry about a preview tempting fate, or somehow cursing what is set to happen, yet the fight between **Tyson**

Fury and **Oleksandr Usyk** is not your typical fight. Indeed, in what is a mark of its importance and magnitude and, also, the difficulty we have had getting to this stage, to write a preview about Fury vs Usyk is to admit, at last, that we are finally here; that is, admit it is about to happen.

Or, at least, that's the hope. Such is the nature of boxing, of course, one can never be sure a fight will actually take place until the two boxers are in the ring and the timekeeper is ready to strike the bell to signal the start of round one. But the truth is, we are closer to this fight happening than ever before. Before now it has just been talk, goading, flexing, foreplay. It has never seemed close, not really, and even when it has seemed close, the excitement of forward motion has quickly been followed by the disappointment of an injury and a postponement.

Now, though, we have something real. Something tangible. Something we can both see and smell. That's good news not only for Fury and Usyk, two boxers we are led to believe have wanted this fight for some time, but also for the heavyweight division as a whole. After all, now, thanks to Fury and Usyk doing the right thing, no longer will the division and those who follow it have to argue about the identity of the best heavyweight on the planet. All being well, come Saturday night we will know at last. Save for a draw, we will have a winner, a number one, a man blessed with all the belts and bragging rights to boot. In many ways, such an outcome seems too good to be true.

Even just imagining this fight, which is something we have all been doing for some time, becomes almost an exercise in suspension of disbelief. That is to say there is a fantasy feel to it all, not unlike Ali vs Marciano, Dempsey vs Tyson, or Louis vs Lewis. So long in the making, it has always risked falling into that kind of territory; becoming something only imagined, or something that should have happened but never did; a failure of the fighters and the promoters and managers.

To listen to both boxers, you would be hard pressed to decide which of the two sounds the more confident or certain of victory in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. With

the pair having had a lot of time to think about it, they have said everything they can possibly think to say, both in terms of what they plan to do on the night and their so-called right to be called number one, and they have also blamed the other at every turn for this fight not happening until now. Fury, the louder of the two, has accused Usyk of not wanting the fight, while Usyk, someone who expresses himself wonderfully with just a look, has suggested similar things about Fury. Moreover, Usyk, now 37, knows that, whatever the he-said, she-said, he cannot wait around much longer.

That's not to say the Ukrainian is in danger of growing old overnight, but certainly he will be aware of the sound of clocks ticking and the need to capitalise on momentum. His one fight last year, for instance, a ninth-round stoppage of Daniel Dubois, was not really good enough for a man who considers himself the best heavyweight on the planet. Equally, though, the same could be said for Fury, whose only appearance since beating fellow Englishman Derek Chisora for a third time in December 2022 came against Francis Ngannou, a mixed martial artist making his professional boxing debut, in October.

If ever proof was needed that these two must meet, it can be found right there. It can be found in Usyk going through the motions against Dubois, a man several levels below him, and it can be found in Fury underestimating a novice and so nearly coming unstuck in what would have arguably been the most humiliating defeat suffered by a world heavyweight champion in history.

It is with relief, then, that they now meet on Saturday night, Fury and Usyk. Despite so many obstacles, some of which were self-applied, they both got there in the end and now, having imagined it for years, we, the peanut gallery, have an actual fight. We have Fury, blessed with a 6ins advantage in height, a 7ins advantage in reach, and a weight advantage in the region of 50lbs, going up against Usyk, someone whose southpaw style, amateur pedigree, and all-round brilliance has so far been too much for every heavyweight he has faced since ascending from cruiserweight.

Neither man has lost a pro fight to date, remember, and so good and dominant have they been along the way that a lot of forecasts and predictions for this fight will be not so much evidence-based but more a flight of fantasy. It is



SIZE MATTERS: Usyk is slightly older and considerably smaller, but appears the more talented of the two

hard, for example, to picture either Fury or Usyk coming off second best because that is an image we have never seen. Even in moments of struggle, we have always assumed, because of their excellence, both Fury and Usyk would find a way to win and ultimately prevail.

This, however, will not be the case on Saturday. One of them, for the first time as a professional boxer, will encounter a problem they cannot solve and a man they cannot overcome. For Usyk (21-0, 14 KOs), the issue could very well be size, and he may soon discover he has at last bitten off more than he can chew at heavyweight, whereas for Fury (34-0-1, 24 KOs) the issue could be more of a technical one, something akin to a riddle or equation he is unable to figure out.

Both of those scenarios could easily unfold when the pair meet this weekend, yet in a battle of fine margins, and with so many unknown elements, the hunch is that Usyk, the great thinker and problem-solver, will try to use his smaller size to his advantage, attacking Fury from angles designed to create discomfort. The question then is whether Fury, 35, can regain control, or just remain composed. The question then is whether he can rediscover some of the confidence Ngannou appeared to take from him last year. If he can, the onus will suddenly be on Usyk to find something else and something special, which, given his form and talent, is not beyond the realm of possibility, either. In fact, it's this ability to always find an answer which has me inclined to back the smaller man to fight, fiddle and finesse his way to a close decision win.

THE VERDICT Whatever happens and whoever wins, having one true world heavyweight champion will be worth the wait.



Keys to the kingdom

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM

BACK INTO THE BREACH:
Opetaia had to go through hell to beat Briedis last time they fought. He might experience more of the same in their rematch



★★★★☆ UNDERCARD

I

N recent times, your typical pay-per-view undercard has been weaker than clock radio speakers. House fighters have generally made

'appearances', rather than engaged in meaningful fights. A touted hope has been routinely wheeled out against someone with a long name and a padded record to boost their stats and highlight reel. You could quite confidently tick the names on the left hand side of the bill with victory all but assured, as the fighters in the opposite corners toppled like dominoes as planned.

That was before the boxing revolution led by Turki Alalshikh. Now, 'stacked' undercards aren't mere promoter hyperbole - soundbites at press conferences for the gullible and weary - they are an almost unnatural reality and the supporting cast to the titanic clash between Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk does not disappoint.

In the pick of the fights, **Jai Opetai** battles old rival **Mairis Briedis** for the needlessly vacant IBF cruiserweight title in a replay of their classic encounter in July 2022. That night, the unheralded Opetai upset the Latvian, then regarded as the premier cruiserweight on the planet, with a fast start before Briedis turned the fight into a gruelling, gates of hell slog down the stretch. Opetai (24-0, 19 KOs) finished the fight with the IBF crown but his jaw broken in two places. That belt was stripped from Opetai when he chose to fight Ellis Zorro in Saudi Arabia last year, even though mandatory contender Briedis was amenable to standing aside, so now they meet again for the vacant belt

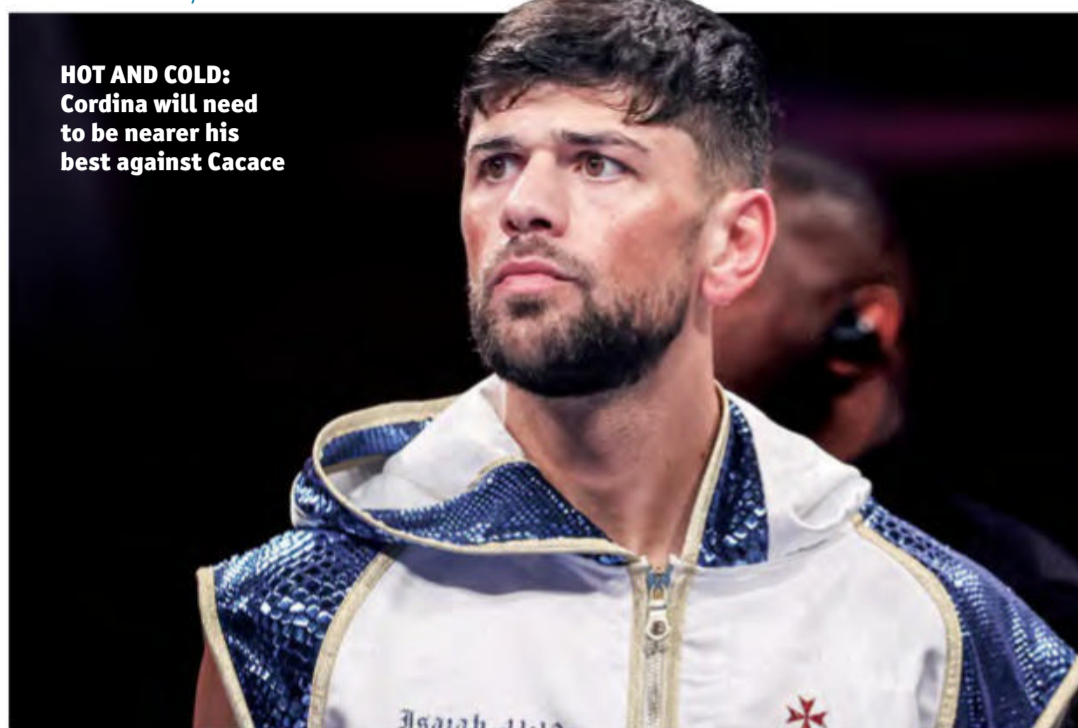
Briedis (28-2, 20 KOs) hasn't fought since their first meeting and, at 39, conventional boxing wisdom has played down his chances and placed his fortunes on the slide. That may be a disservice, though, as Opetai's stock has risen a little disproportionately, due to impressive knockovers of unbeaten but unproven fighters Jordan Thompson and Zorro. Briedis, meanwhile, is cut from elite granite and, of course, pushed Oleksandr Usyk to the wire in 2018.

The bookies are sold on Opetai at 1/6, but if former WBC, WBO and IBF king Briedis is even at 75% of his old self, then another tough night is in store for the Aussie.

Southpaw Opetai is sharp and skilful

Mark Butcher casts his eye over a high-calibre Riyadh undercard where the supporting cast enjoy lucrative outings at the Kingdom Arena

Photo: JAMES CHANCE/GETTY IMAGES



HOT AND COLD: Cordina will need to be nearer his best against Cacace

with fast feet, but Briedis is tough, well schooled, boasts bludgeoning power and is far better than his 4-1 outsider odds suggest in this fight. Opetai is the pick on points in another war of attrition, but Briedis is worth a peek at those odds.

Also on the bill, IBF super-featherweight champion **Joe Cordina** (17-0, 9 KOs) is cast in a potentially intriguing fight against the under-the-radar **Anthony Cacace** (21-1, 7 KOs).

The gifted Cordina is a two-time IBF king who impressed in both title-winning efforts, starching the capable Kenichi Ogawa in two rounds in 2022 and outslicking a spirited Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov on points 13 months ago. But he was seriously off the boil in his last contest, labouring to a majority decision over Texan hustler Edward Vazquez. A bit of a hot and cold fighter, you can't be entirely sure which Cordina turns up. Too comfortable, the Cardiff talent can coast a bit at times, despite his speedy hands and proven skillset.

A deceptive puncher, Belfast's Cacace is a clever southpaw, a former British champion, and capable of taking advantage if the Welshman is looking past him. Cordina is a typical 1/6 pick with the bookies, but they are not discounting the Northern Irishman, who is 7/2 on some books. Cordina on points is the safest pick, but Cacace is a decent underdog here.

A fascinating bout pits unbeaten, highly ranked heavyweight contenders **Agit Kabayel** and **Frank Sanchez** in a 50-50 clash which will elevate one man higher in the pecking order.

The Miami-based Cuban (24-0, 17 KOs) is the favoured hand here at 4/11 with a number of bookmakers. Sanchez, trained by Eddy Reynoso, is in the skilled, safety-first Cuban mould,

but Kabayel (24-0, 16 KOs) has produced the more destructive form, administering an absolute beatdown to the hulking, previously unbeaten Arslanbek Makhmudov in December, bouncing the dazed Russian behemoth off the canvas three times.

The German looked a top-tier heavyweight that night and I'd be tempted by his 7/4 odds, with Sanchez a little wary and vulnerable at times. The busy Kabayel has deceptive pop and I quite like him here on the cards or via late stoppage.

Waterlooville box-fighter **Mark Chamberlain** (15-0, 11 KOs), a favourite of His Excellency Alalshikh, looked razor-sharp in his last performance in Riyadh, breezing past the usually hardy Gavin Gwynne in four rounds. Invited back, lightweight Chamberlain faces decent Nigerian **Joshua Wahab** (23-1, 16 KOs), who previously posed problems for Chingford's Liam Dillon early on but faded down the stretch at 130lbs.

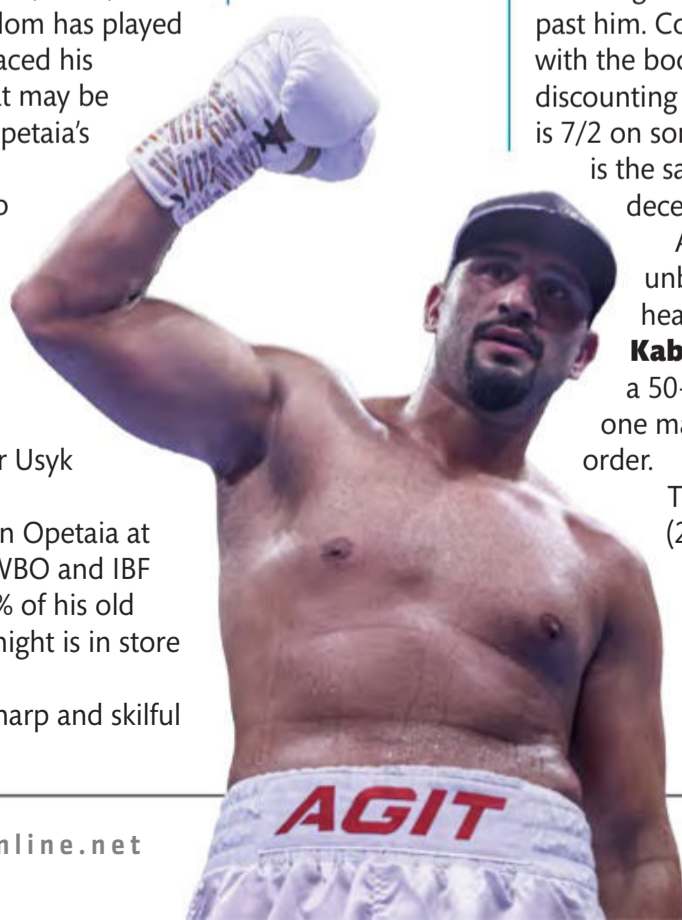
Southpaw Chamberlain, at least a 1/10 favourite with all bookies, can earn a stoppage in the later rounds against the 8-1 shot from West Africa. A bout between Chamberlain and Queensberry promotional stable-mate Sam Noakes, the British, Commonwealth and European 135lbs champion, is one of the best all-British clashes to make in boxing.

Heavyweight hot prospect **Moses Itauma** (8-0, 6 KOs) should earn his ninth straight win against German **Ilja Mezencev** (25-3, 21 KOs) while former light-heavyweight king **Sergey Kovalev** (35-4-1, 29 KOs) returns after a two-year absence against cruiser **Robin Sirwan Safar** (16-0, 12 KOs). At 41, it remains to be seen how much Kovalev has left in the tank after so many years at top level.

THE VERDICT Fury-Usyk would be a commercial hit even with a dud undercard. Credit, then, to the organisers for putting on such an

CONTENDERS READY: Kabayel meets Sanchez in a battle of unbeaten, world-ranked heavyweights

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/MATCHROOM



Yesterday's king

Lennox Lewis recalls his all-time great career as boxing prepares to crown its first undisputed heavyweight champion since his victory over Evander Holyfield 25 years ago

By DECLAN TAYLOR

Photo: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



LENNOX LEWIS holds court for longer than 30 minutes, reliving the night he made history against Evander Holyfield, recalling the feelings when Mike Tyson said he wanted to eat his children, and discussing how Tyson Fury might beat Oleksandr Usyk.

But he uses just one word when asked whether he would have become undisputed champion in today's era: "Absolutely."

Asked to elaborate on the answer, he adds: "No, no. That says it all."

It is difficult to structure an argument against that, given Lewis' incredible 44-fight career, which marked him out as one of the greatest ever heavyweights. And, for a few more days at least, Lewis remains the last undisputed heavyweight champion, as a result of his 1999 victory over Holyfield.

Barring a draw in Riyadh, however, either Fury or Usyk will claim that title from him and Lewis will be there in the ring to hand over the belts on Saturday night.

"I will be delighted that there's another undisputed champion, because I believe records are there to be broken," he says. "I'm going to be happy that I held it for this length of time. Now I'll challenge the next one to hold it for as long."

"Being undisputed champion is so difficult, because by the time you sit down and you're enjoying it, there are three people saying 'I can beat you', or there are three sanctioning bodies saying you have to box this guy. There's a whole bunch of confusion."

That night in Vegas, Lewis added Holyfield's WBA and IBF titles to his WBC crown. Back then, the WBO was only 11 years old and was lightly regarded, particularly at heavyweight.

"Even now, I'm listening to promoters and

boxers say 'oh, there was an undisputed champion 25 years ago,'" he says. "They forgot my name. It was me, Lennox Lewis. I was the world champion, and I've been the undisputed champion for 25 years."

Lewis, in fact, needed two bites at the cherry in order to breathe that rarefied air after he was denied victory over Holyfield in their first contest, which ended in a controversial draw in the Big Apple.

"It was one of these trips where you're being taken up the hill and you realise that it's not a straight road," he says of that night at Madison Square Garden.

"There will be a lot of bumps and twists to reach the top. For me reaching the top, they didn't believe me when I did it the first time, so I had to do it again. It wasn't an easy road, but I made it."

His unanimous decision victory over Holyfield came in November 1999, just eight months after their initial clash. He would later despatch the previously undefeated Michael Grant, nullify the dangerous David Tua and avenge a shock defeat to Hasim Rahman with a chilling knockout of his own.

Then, seven months later, Lewis would finally get his hands on Mike Tyson, after the former world heavyweight champion had sensationally called him out in one of the most infamous post-fight interviews of all time. "Lennox, I'm coming for you," Tyson said, following a 38-second blitz of Lou Savarese in Glasgow,

"I'm gonna rip his heart out. I'm the best ever. I'm the most brutal and vicious and most ruthless champion there has ever been... My style is impetuous, my defence is impregnable and I'm just ferocious. I want your heart, I want to eat his children."

Lewis raises his eyebrows at the mention of Tyson. Although the fight came when both men were past their ferocious peaks, it was

Lewis' long-awaited chance to rubber-stamp his position as the very best of the era.

"Once I became undisputed champion, I could rest," he says. "But I waited for Tyson so there will be no argument about who will be the best in this era. I didn't want anyone to be sitting in the barbers having an argument saying 'who was the best, Tyson, Holyfield or Lewis? I ended my career showing them who.'"

And what about children-eating?

"That motivated me," he adds. "I was like 'yo, what do you mean eat my kids?' I didn't even have any kids! To me it was just disrespect. It's like somebody saying they're going to slap me and I say, 'come and slap me then'. I dare them to do that. When he said he wanted to eat my kids, it really put my back up."

Now Lewis foresees a similar situation for Fury, the man named after 'Iron' Mike, who can win all the belts on Saturday night but will still have one more box to check before he can safely say he is the best of his generation.

"That's Anthony Joshua," Lewis says. "I think he does need to fight him, because it is a British thing."

"Throughout history, that has always been the plan. There's always a big British fight between two enormous heavyweights. I'm sure there are a lot of people saying, especially after the Ngannou fight, 'what about Anthony's right hand? It's back! And he looked great' but, you know, the kind of boxer Ngannou is is not the same boxer Fury is."

"When you look at the one-two, is that gonna hit Tyson Fury? Maybe not in the first couple of rounds, maybe in the last couple of rounds – you never know how the fight will go. You've got two different styles that are going to clash and everybody is wondering what is going to happen, and the only way to find out is if they fight."

First, however, Fury has business to attend to in Riyadh.

● Watch Fury vs Usyk, 'Ring Of Fire', live from Riyadh on TNT Sports Box Office on Saturday, 18 May. For more info, visit www.tntsports.co.uk/boxoffice



The Entertainer

Charismatic Brownsville featherweight Bruce Carrington believes he is the best and the boxing world is about to find out

By SHAUN BROWN

Photo: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Y

OU might have heard of Brownsville, Brooklyn.

Somewhere north of 120,000 people live in the area covering just over a square mile.

The relationship between Brownsville and boxing has proven mutually beneficial, with Mike Tyson, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, Riddick Bowe, Shannon Briggs, Zab Judah and Daniel Jacobs all hailing from the neighbourhood in East Brooklyn – seven fighters and seven contrasting personalities who all survived the violent streets of Brownsville to make a name for themselves in the sport.

Bruce 'Shu Shu' Carrington (11-0, 7 KOs) hails from the same neck of the woods and is part of a conveyor belt of up-and-coming talent at Top Rank that could bring 92-year-old Bob Arum another wave of world champions.

"I truly believe I am the best. It's just for

everybody else to find out," Carrington tells *Boxing News*.

The featherweight spoke to *BN* a day after his 27th birthday. His confidence isn't laced with arrogance – it's good, old-fashioned self-belief that he says will bring him world titles at 126lbs and 130lbs.

"At this point, everybody is late to the party – but, hey, at least you're in the party," he smiles.

"I feel like people are starting to find out who I am, what I bring to the table and the entertainment factor I bring. I really pride myself on being an entertainer. It's nothing that I really try to do, I just know my style is entertaining. And my attitude to the ring is vicious. I'm a nice guy outside of the ring, but when I'm in the ring I really have a lot of rage when I'm in there. It's something that I feel a lot of fighters don't have.

"A lot of fighters fight to win too much; they just fight to win. I don't like that, because you're in a fight. This is a freaking fight. I'm there to hurt you. I don't wanna

to timer



just beat you, I want to break your will, I want to beat you down, make you quit. As a man, for another man to be able to do that to you, that's the ultimate way to win. That's what I love; I get a thrill off that.

"I don't feel like a lot of people have that edge, and that's why I'm different. That's why I'm gonna be known as one of those guys who is talked about more than these top guys are talked about right now.

"I'm different. That's just it. I know I bring something different to the table. I look at myself in the mirror and I know, and I tell myself: 'You're a badass, you really are badass, you are the best'."

Carrington fights with a sharpness, like a man who could box with his eyes closed and still hit the target. Repetition brings reward from the years and years of perfecting every shot. Particularly, from his right hand. In his last fight, Carrington faced Bernard Angelo Torres and, during the final seconds of round four, the American landed a short right hook which sent the Filipino-born Norwegian face first to the canvas. That was February and it's already a Knockout of the Year contender. 'Shu' (named after the Egyptian god of the air) is showing a potential which could take him far beyond world championship status.

Reflecting on his career to date, he says: "I'd say I've proven myself to the fans, that they know whenever they tune in, it's

going to be a crowd-pleasing performance.

"In my last two fights, especially, they were step-ups. Jason Sanchez, never been stopped. He fought Zelfa Barrett, Oscar Valdez, Christopher Diaz and [Adam] Benito Lopez. He fought top guys and for me to get him out of there in two rounds lets me know I'm on a different level from all the guys he's faced.

"Then, with Bernard Torres, very good record and a good style as well, too. Never been stopped, and then I did it in four [rounds]. I just know that I'm different. Everybody else is just finding this out, but the guys in the gym that drill me day to day they know just watching the fights. [But] I knew this was gonna happen."

"Everybody else gets that surprise factor, that's cool," he adds. "I like the surprise factor because it gives that 'wow'. I try to stay out of the 'oh, we expected that' type of feeling for as long as I can, because, after a while, it feels watered down.

When you're so used to seeing something all the time, it can kinda get ordinary. I want to continue to give that wow factor and I'm going to continue to shoot for the stars."

Carrington was gazing at the stars from an early age as depicted in *Brownsville Born*, a documentary, directed by Tom Gould which tells the story of a then 19-year-old Carrington and his boxing journey. It opens with old footage; a much younger Bruce, shaven-headed, telling viewers, "I'm really dangerous, I've been working hard. I've been sparring with a lot of kids that's no joke." The kid then demonstrates rapid-fire combinations that a pro would be proud to show off, if they had the ability.

In the next scene, sirens can be heard and Brownsville is shown from above. "You have to grow up tough around here," the older Carrington narrates. It is a story of boxing, ambition, family and tragedy. "So far, I think I've seen three people die right in front of my face."

“**I'm there to hurt you. I don't want to just beat you, I want to break your will, I want to beat you down, make you quit. That's the ultimate way to win**”

RISEING TALENT:
Carrington knocks out Yhuri Andujar in his third pro fight, in March 2022

Photos: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



EYECATCHING: Bernard Torres is sent crashing in Carrington's last fight, a Knockout of the Year contender in February



The tragedy element centres around the death of Carrington's brother Michael Hayden, who was shot dead in 2014 after returning home from buying a video game.

BN moves on to discussing fears and phobias with the calm and controlled Carrington.

First up is snakes. "I don't mess with snakes," he says. "I would take a picture with one, but I'm afraid of what they're able to do."

Then comes heights and rollercoasters. "That's not my thing. I wanna attack that height thing. I want to jump from a plane and skydive so badly.

"My wife don't want me to do that," he whispers while laughing.

Top Rank heard him, though, and agreed with Mrs Carrington. Their Director of Communications and Fighter Development, Evan Korn, interjects during our Zoom interview to tell Carrington that it isn't happening.

It is tongue-in-cheek and everyone laughs, more so when it is revealed that Top Rank heavyweight prospect Richard Torres Jr has done a skydive.

"Richard did it - why can't I do it?" Carrington asks Korn.

"He's got a better moustache," Korn replies, quick-wittedly.

Carrington admits he might save his big jump for when he's retired, but believes

those phobias to be normal. Having any type of phobia is something most can relate to. What others cannot relate to is living with the fear of losing another loved one to murder.

"I never want to go through the experience again," Carrington says. "I unfortunately lost my brother to gun violence. That's something I'm really scared of, because that brought me to a dark place; a place I never want to revisit again. It was awful.

I've done a lot of work mentally to be able to get out of that and never want to revisit that place again."

Another fear is one typical of an athlete who is developing into someone who could reach the pinnacle of their sport.

"Failure," Carrington chooses. "I don't know what failure looks like as of right now, as to what I identify as failure."

"Let's say hypothetically I lose a fight," he continues. "I definitely don't want to do that and that short-term would seem like failure to me, but I know I can redeem myself; I can come back and be a great champion and still have a great career.

"So, I come to ask myself, 'what is failure,

then?' That right there, I really don't know how to identify. That might be the scary part. Whatever that failure is, I don't wanna see it. I don't want to let down my people, my fans, or my family."

Carrington not only wants to become a world champion, unify the featherweight division and move up in weight, he wants to show the people of Brownsville and people from any poverty-stricken neighbourhood around the world

that you can make something of yourself.

"And use that pain as fuel to be able to strive for the things you want in life," he says.

"It's all mental. If you tell yourself you're gonna do it, you're gonna be able to do it. You tell yourself you're not, you're not

gonna be able to do it. It's as simple as that. Things might be simple, but it doesn't mean it's easy. And that's one thing I want to show.

"My journey wasn't easy. For me, now, it's simple to make that stride every day to where I want to get to in life. You're gonna have your ups and downs, but that's what comes with the game. Once you embrace that, things are gonna be easy." **BN**

“**I lost my brother to gun violence. I went to a dark place I never want to revisit”**”

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

Price claims world crown, living up to her childhood ambition, writes Gareth Jones at ringside

CARDIFF
MAY 11

★★★★☆ MAIN EVENT
★★★★☆ UNDERCARD
★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE



SOMETIMES dreams come with a certain inevitability. For **Lauren Price**, they are not fantasies to be indulged before brutal reality takes over, they are steps on a path she is destined to tread.

When she was eight, she told her



teachers of her intention to win a world title in kickboxing, play football for Wales and compete in the Olympics. All those were duly achieved, with the bonus of a gold medal to crown her trip to the Tokyo Games.

Now, after just seven professional fights, the girl from Ystrad Mynach is the WBA, IBO and lineal welterweight champion – as well as the first female world champion from Wales (and 14th overall) – having clinically removed the belts from ringwise American **Jessica McCaskill** on an unforgettable night at the Utilita Arena.

Amazingly, the 29-year-old has reached this pedestal without losing a single paid round.

If there was anything anticlimactic

Destiny fulfilled

Photos: LAWRENCE LUSTIG/BOXXER

PRICE'S RIGHT: Lauren swats the defending champion en route to a mathematically perfect win





MOMENTUM: That Edwards appears to be making good on his potential is evident in an impressive unanimous win over Ward

about the ending, when the ringside doctor ruled that 'CasKilla', grotesquely swollen over the left eye, should not continue into round nine, it was lost on Price's supporters, who broke into rapturous cheers.

They were, however, premature. The damage [pictured inset] had been caused by a clash of heads in the fifth of the scheduled 10-twos, which meant the judges would decide.

Not that there was any danger of the fans' bubble being burst. Yorkshireman Howard Foster, American Dave de Jonge and Dane Jan Christensen all scored 90-82 in favour of the local heroine. (That, bizarrely, includes 10-10 for the ninth, in which no punches were thrown.)

Some thought Price's opportunity might have come too soon, given McCaskill's past 10 contests had involved global honours. They need not have worried. It took the challenger a couple of rounds to find her range, but from then on her footwork and fast hands left no room for the 39-year-old from Chicago to get into the fight.

Exchanges were messy at times – referee Michael Alexander issued several lectures – but there was only one winner. Lauren was able to land solid blows and then vanish, the more cumbersome titleholder flailing wildly in her attempts to catch her tormentor.



The eye injury clearly affected the visitor and ultimately brought the early conclusion, but the pattern was already set. Price was dominant and Jessica should perhaps consider her future.

Rhondda boy **Rhys Edwards** has long been a prospect tipped for great things, but his progress had been steady rather than spectacular. Victory over Brad Foster last November suggested that the 24-year-old from Penygraig was beginning to take the job seriously, and a surprisingly wide points win over former British super-bantam boss **Thomas Patrick Ward** here underlined his renewed dedication.

It was never easy, however, with West Rainton's Ward recovering from an early deficit to step up the pace in the fifth. Edwards allowed himself to be trapped in a neutral corner for several seconds and looked weary as he returned to his stool.

Trainer Gary Lockett told him his second wind would come, and by the late rounds his pupil was back on top, spearing out his left lead and finishing the eighth with a hurtful uppercut. Ward was now the one flagging and was cut by a coming-together of heads in the last as Edwards romped home.

The scorecards – 99-91 from Mr Christensen and 98-92 from Messrs Alexander and de Jonge – seemed too

harsh on the combative Ward, but Edwards was undoubtedly a clear winner.

English super-middleweight ruler **Mark Jeffers**, from Chorley, demolished his Scottish counterpart **Darren Johnstone** with an explosive right, referee Hugh Russell immediately calling a halt at 1-02 of the fifth of a scheduled 10-rounder.

Wishaw's Johnstone received oxygen as he lay on the canvas, but was eventually able to stand and congratulate his impressive conqueror.

Hughie Fury continued his comeback with a stoppage of outgunned German **Patrick Korte**, Reece Carter ending matters at 2-06 of round two of a scheduled eight.

The Bridgend official was also in charge when Cardiffian **Kane Shepherd** floored Brummie **Ishmael Ellis** in the second before Ellis's corner retired him after the third of a planned six.

Tiryberth southpaw **Kyran Jones** won a battle of Welsh unbeaten, decking Newport's **Lewis Howells** in the opener before settling for Chris Jones's 59-54 vote.

Southampton's **Lewis Edmondson** strolled to an 80-72 decision over former spar-mate **Joel McIntyre**, from Portsmouth, while colourful Swansea heavyweight **Moses Jolly** earned a 60-54 tally against Belgian trier **Amine Boucetta**. Mr Jones handled both.

THE VERDICT Could be the first of many such nights for the new champion. But credit to McCaskill, who proved to be a class act

FULL RESULTS

Lauren Price (145½lbs), (7-0, 1 KO), w td 9 **Jessica McCaskill** (145lbs), (12-4-1, 5 KOs); **Rhys Edwards** (125lbs), (16-0, 4 KOs), w pts 10 **Thomas Patrick Ward** (125lbs), (34-2-1, 5 KOs); **Mark Jeffers** (166½lbs), (18-0, 5 KOs), w ko 5 **Darren Johnstone** (165½lbs), (8-1, 2 KOs); **Hughie Fury** (243lbs), (28-3, 16 KOs), w tko 2 **Patrick Korte** (232lbs), (21-4-1, 18 KOs); **Lewis Edmondson** (182lbs), (9-0, 3 KOs), w pts 8 **Joel McIntyre** (178½lbs), (20-9, 5 KOs); **Kyran Jones** (160lbs), (10-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Lewis Howells** (162½lbs), (3-1); **Moses Jolly** (242lbs), (9-0, 6 KOs), w pts 6 **Amine Boucetta** (234lbs), (8-13); **Kane Shepherd** (131lbs), (5-0, 2 KOs), w rtd 3 **Ishmael Ellis** (136 1/2lbs), (14-9).

Masterclass

Lomachenko turns back the clock with a vintage display
Down Under, writes Shaun Brown

FULL RESULTS

Vasily Lomachenko (135lbs), (18-3, 12 KOs), w tko 11 **George Kambosos** (134¼lbs), (21-3, 10 KOs); **Pedro Guevara** (115lbs), (42-4 -1, 22 KOs), w pts 12 **Andrew Moloney** (114½lbs), (26-4, 16 KOs); **Cherneka Johnson** (116¾lbs), (16-2, 6 KOs), w pts 10 **Nina Hughes** (117½lbs), (6-1, 2 KOs); **Imam Khataev** (177¼lbs), (7-0, 7 KOs), w tko 6 **Ricards Bolotniks** (177 ¼lbs) (20-8-1, 8 KOs); **Joseph Goodall** (240¾lbs), (11-2-1, 10 KOs), w tko 10 **Faiga Opele** (236½lbs), (16-5-2, 12 KOs); **Hemi Ahio** (238¾lbs), (22-1, 17 KOs), w tko 1 **Lucas Browne** (272¾lbs), (31-6, 27 KOs).

PICKED OFF:
A bloodied Kambosos is brave but always a step behind

Photos: MIKEY WILLIAMS/
TOP RANK

PERTH, AUSTRALIA

MAY 12

★★★☆☆ MAIN EVENT

★★★☆☆ UNDERCARD



VASILY LOMACHENKO gave the boxing world and **George Kambosos** a lesson inside the RAC Arena on May 12.

It is a date worth remembering, because that could be the final time we watch the Ukrainian master perform in a boxing ring, with talk of retirement flying around. And winning the vacant IBF lightweight title by 11th-round stoppage would be a perfect way to say goodbye.

Even at 36, Lomachenko taught the younger Kambosos everything that is great about the Sweet Science. The Aussie battler tried his best, just as he did against Devin Haney on two occasions, but landed little, other than some respectable body shots.

Those were mere interruptions to what Lomachenko was offering. Gliding in and out as if he was on a dancefloor, with combinations filled with speed and brilliance, you wondered if there was an error on Lomachenko's birth certificate and that he had, in fact, been born later than 1988.

From rounds one to 11, the three-weight champion taught fans not to write him off again, despite the controversial loss to Haney. Lomachenko was distraught in the dressing room after that defeat and his career could well have

been over. Like many of the greats, he may not be fully appreciated until after he bids farewell.

In this contest, however, Lomachenko wanted to make a statement, and he gave a masterclass. The events of 12 months ago against Haney were fuelling a desire to get rid of Kambosos quicker than the American could on two occasions in 2022.

To his credit, Kambosos never stopped trying. But his home support couldn't seem to find the noise levels to roar their man on because, in truth, this was a fight which was effectively over after the first couple of rounds. The former three-belt 135lbs champion has carved out a career which looked impossible after beating Lee Selby in a split decision in 2020. The wild night against Teofimo Lopez, when Kambosos shocked the world, is his to keep and one the sport and Teo will never forget. Against Haney and Lomachenko, he has been found wanting, but in these three years he will have made the type of money he and his family can enjoy for the rest of their life. Good on him.

Down twice in round 11, Kambosos carried the expression of a man who obviously didn't want to quit but knew that, if he had got back to his feet once more, he would have been put down again. Referee Katsuhiko Nakamura made the decision for him and packed

the bravery of Kambosos away for another day.

Lomachenko, like all the great entertainers, gave us that that final album, that final concert, which should be remembered along with the early years. Post-fight, Lomachenko told the media he had carried on fighting out of respect and love for his father. The title was won by Vasily but belonged to Anatoly Lomachenko.

'Papachenko' wants his son to continue and, if he does, the other

leading lights at 135lbs - Shakur Stevenson and Gervonta

Davis - would do well

to study Lomachenko closely, otherwise they, too, might find themselves being educated by one of boxing's all-time greats.

On the undercard, there was drama after the bell in two of the supporting bouts.

Andrew Moloney told in-ring interviewer Ben Damon

and the crowd that he was done with the sport after feeling robbed of a win against Mexican **Pedro Guevara**. The split-decision victory for the visitor - 115-113 twice, overruling a 113-116 nod - left Jason's twin brother seething and he quickly left the ring, and supposedly the sport.

Essex's **Nina Hughes** thought she had done enough to retain her WBA bantamweight title against Aussie **Cherneka Johnson**. Ring announcer Dan Hennessey originally stated Hughes had won but corrected himself and then declared Johnson the winner amid bemusing scenes. Scores were 98-92, 96-94 and 95-95. Both women are keen on the rematch.

The fearsome-looking Russian **Imam Khataev** continues to move upwards after stopping former Joshua Buatsi opponent **Ricards Bolotniks** in six rounds. **Joseph Goodall** bounced back from his loss to Efe Ajagba to halt **Faiga Opele** in the 10th and final round, while heavyweight veteran **Lucas Browne** announced his retirement, aged 45, the day after he lasted less than one round against **Hemi Ahio**.

THE VERDICT Even Father Time appears to have met his match in the evergreen Lomachenko.

TALKING POINT

THIS was a perfect example of how, in boxing, form lines are never straightforward. Teofimo Lopez famously beat Lomachenko in 2020, and Kambosos beat Lopez a year later. But despite his superior result against a common opponent, Kambosos was far short of Lomachenko's level.



RIDDLE ME THIS:
Kambosos is the latest in a long
line of fighters to find himself
utterly perplexed by the
Lomachenko conundrum



BITTER AFTERTASTE:
Moloney feels so
hard done-by in
being adjudged a
loser to Guevara
[right] that he
announces his
retirement
immediately
afterwards, while
Hughes is put
through an
emotional wringer
by having her
announced victory
over Johnson
[below] reversed
within moments
following a howler
by the MC



BACK IN BUSINESS

Banger Bentley rebounds from disappointment with quickfire stoppage of Dignum, writes Matt Bozeat from ringside

EMPHATIC: Devastating attacks to both body and head force Dignum to the floor three times in round two

Photo: STEPHEN DUNKLEY/QUEENSBERRY



FULL RESULTS

Denzel Bentley (158¼lbs), (19-3-1, 16 KOs), w tko 2 **Danny Dignum** (159¼lbs), (16-2-1, 9 KOs); **Ryan Garner** (129¼ lbs), (14-0, 8 KOs), w pts 10 **Liam Dillon** (129½lbs), (13-2-1, 3 KOs); **Nathaniel Collins** (125½lbs), (15-0, 7 KOs) w pts 12 **Francesco Grandelli** (125½lbs), (18-3-2, 4 KOs); **Archie Sharp** (134lbs), (25-0, 9 KOs), w pts 8 **Facundo Arce** (133lbs), (17-15-2, 7 KOs); **Royston Barney-Smith** (132lbs), (10-0, 5 KOs), w pts 8 **Jonatas de Oliveira** (133lbs), (6-9, 5 KOs); **Tommy Fletcher** (204lbs), (8-0, 6 KOs), w pts 6 **Viktar Chvarkou** (204lbs), (5-13, 3 KOs); **Ben Fail** (157lbs), (6-0, 5 KOs), w tko 1 **Ioan Alexandru Lutic** (157lbs), (3-8, 3 KOs); **Khalid Ali** (154lbs), (8-0, 3 KOs), w pts 6 **John Henry Mosquera** (151lbs) (5-12, 1 KO); **Oronzo Birardi** (198lbs) (8-0, 6 KOs) w pts 8 **Milans Volkovs** (199lbs) (10-3-2, 6 KOs).

⊕ BETHNAL GREEN

MAY 11

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

BATTERSEA middleweight **Denzel Bentley** brought an early end to a memorable night at the York Hall by stopping **Danny Dignum** in the second of a scheduled 10 rounder.

Referee John Latham waved it off after Dignum got up from a third knockdown with blood dripping from a wound under his left eyebrow. Time was 2-53.

After a cagey opener, Bentley, in his first fight since his second reign as British champion was ended by Nathan Heaney last November, stepped in behind his punches after a straight right to Dignum's body hurt the Essex southpaw.

Bentley found the same spot with a similar punch to send Dignum down for nine with his face screwed up in pain.

He had him over in a heap with another body attack and, with Dignum's defences lowered, Bentley whipped a right to his jaw to put him over again.

The 12-rounder between southpaw **Nathaniel Collins**, the British and Commonwealth featherweight champion from Bearsden, and **Francesco Grandelli** was more competitive.

Collins had to work hard in the second half to win 117-111 (Daniel Van de Wiele) and 116-112 (Ilhan Homovic and Jean-Robert Laine).

For five rounds, Collins outboxed Grandelli from the centre of the ring. The Scot picked up nose damage in the third from a stray elbow and the Italian's corner got excited in the sixth after Grandelli forced exchanges. Collins gave himself more room in the seventh and walked Grandelli on to an uppercut that rocked him. He couldn't force the finish and took a few shots towards the end of the round as Grandelli rallied. The Scot had more left in the closing rounds and was able to pick off Grandelli and outwork him on the inside.

In the fight of the night, **Ryan Garner** outpointed former British super-featherweight champion **Liam Dillon** over 10 rounds.

Scores of 98-93 (John Latham), 98-92

(Bob Williams) and 99-92 (Lee Every) don't tell the story of a domestic Fight of the Year contender. Garner ended the fight with cuts under and over his left eye and bruising under his right. Chingford's Dillon was cut on his left eyebrow in the fifth.

For four rounds, Southampton's Garner teed off on the slow-footed Dillon with quality combinations. But Dillon was unmoved and started to land his right in the fifth, knocking out Garner's gumshield and cutting him under his left eye.

Garner picked up more damage in the sixth and, though Dillon was always dangerous at the start of rounds and kept having success with rights, the Hampshire man produced the better work, connecting with eye-catching combinations in the ninth before a gruelling last round.

The returning **Archie Sharp** survived two knockdowns in the first to outpoint Argentine **Facundo Arce** over eight, referee Bob Williams scoring 77-73.

Arce came out throwing left hooks. He grazed Sharp's chin in the opening seconds and then dropped him on the seat of his trunks. Welling's Sharp was dazed and Arce threw himself at him and bundled him over again. Sharp was able to steer clear of danger after the fight resumed and get his boxing together. He switched southpaw to make Arce touch down with a left uppercut in the third and bloody his nose.

Southampton southpaw **Royston Barney-Smith** banked eight rounds, outpointing willing Brazilian **Jonatas de Oliveira**. Referee Lee Every had it 79-73 after a more competitive second half.

Thetford cruiserweight **Tommy Fletcher** also got rounds under his belt, winning all six against Poland's stubborn **Viktar Chvarkou** for Mr Williams, who scored from outside the ring, while Amy Pu took charge.

Ms Pu had to tell Fletcher off for low blows, and made a well-timed intervention in the scheduled six threes between Northampton southpaw **Ben Fail** and Spain's **Ioan Alexandru Lutic**. She stepped in at 2-05 with Lutic heading to his knees as Fail overpowered him.

Mr Every had Germany's **Oronzo Birardi** beating Latvian **Milans Volkovs** 77-75 after a competitive eight threes, and Brick Lane southpaw **Khalid Ali** won all six against Italy's **John Henry Mosquera**, which Mr Williams scored and Ms Pu refereed.

THE VERDICT With Bentley back to his destructive best, it will be interesting to see if the Heaney upset was just a blip.



IN GOOD COMPANY:
Dalton [left] with
stablemate Troy
Williamson

BOBBY DAZZLER

Scorecard does not tell the full story of a cracking contest, writes **Roy Kelly**

⊕ HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

MAY 11

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

REDCAR super-welterweight **Bobby Dalton** extended his winning run to eight fights after coming through by far the toughest test yet.

Dalton, a stablemate of ex-British champion Troy Williamson, outpointed Newark fighter **Connor 'Pitbull' Meanwell** in the climax to Jobes Boxing's second event of 2024. But referee Neil Close's 60-53 scorecard barely tells the whole gripping story at Rainton Arena.

Dalton began emphatically, firing off fast combinations to head and body. Midway through the third round, it looked like his pace might be starting to take its toll as Meanwell started to have success of his own, landing a right flush to the chin.

Bobby responded in the fourth by sinking a super left hand shot into Connor's body, forcing a count. Dalton went looking for the finish, but again Meanwell fired back.

Both boxers looked to be tiring in the last but would not be moved. They received a standing ovation upon the final bell.

Debutant **Eduard Georgiev**, fighting out of Sunderland via Bulgaria, impressed in spurts and took all six rounds of a competitive affair against **Jayro Fernando Duran**.

The Spanish-based Honduran kept coming

forward, regularly switching from southpaw to orthodox. It was scored 60-54 by referee Peter McCormack, who was also third man for promising **Josh Babb's** second pro appearance, with the Darlington super-bantamweight improving as the bout went on against Nicaragua's **Marvin Solano**. It ended 59-53.

Newcastle's **Lawrence Osueke** made a triumphant return, having last fought in December 2019. Here, he was a 60-53 winner on Mr Close's scorecard against **Edgars Sniedze**, with Danny McFarlane the referee. A body punch in the first round had the Latvian on the canvas.

Nicaragua's **Eliecer Quezada** soaked up the best efforts of **Robbie Colman**, with the Jarrow man the aggressor throughout, landing with left-right combinations while displaying impressive movement off the ropes. Quezada looked to be showing signs of distress in the fifth but made it through to the final bell. Dean Wilson refereed with McCormack scoring.

Mr McCormack scored unbeaten South Shields man **Sam Menzies** a 60-54 winner against Batley's **Nabil Ahmed**. There was a second paid victory for Consett's **Dan English**, over **Jake Pollard**, Mr McCormack marking it 59-55 with Mr Wilson in charge inside the ropes. Newton Aycliffe's **Billy Wade** overcame Latvian **Genadij Krajevskij** 40-36 (Mr Close), while the same official scored Seaham's **Joe Miller** a 39-37 winner over Brentwood's **Jack England**, with Mr McFarlane as referee.

FULL RESULTS

Bobby Dalton (157lbs), (8-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Connor Meanwell** (157lbs), (2-7); **Lawrence Osueke** (186lbs), (10-1-1, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Edgars Sniedze** (185lbs), (6-48-1, 6 KOs); **Sam Menzies** (123lbs), (10-0), w pts 6 **Nabil Ahmed** (123lbs), (2-31-3); **Robbie Colman** (134lbs), (5-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Eliecer Quezada** (135lbs), (24-25-3, 9 KOs); **Dan English** (123lbs), (2-0), w pts 6 **Jake Pollard** (124lbs), (1-67); **Josh Babb** (124lbs), (2-0), w pts 6 **Marvin Solano** (126lbs), (24-16, 8 KOs); **Billy Wade** (172lbs), (2-0), w pts 6 **Genadij Krajevskij** (172lbs), (1-72); **Joe Miller** (129lbs), (2-0), w pts 4 **Jack England** (131lbs) (1-8); **Eduard Georgiev** (132lbs) (1-0), w pts 6 **Jayro Fernando Duran** (132lbs), (15-25, 14 KOs).

Short and suite

Jones quickly overcomes Ghanaian's bright start. By ringsider **Andy Whittle**

⊕ BIRMINGHAM

MAY 10

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

BIRMINGHAM light-heavyweight **Troy Jones** ensured it was an early night at the H Suite, needing a little less than half of the slated six rounds to see off Ghanaian southpaw **Prince Oko Nartey**.

Replying fairly regularly in the opener, the visitor looked like he might just be going to make a fight of it, but by the later stages of the second he was increasingly holding and, when Jones slammed home a trio of unanswered rights in the next, referee Ryan Churchill quite rightly waved a halt with 83 seconds gone.

Having banked the opener with little coming back from York's **Harry Matthews**, Brummie debutant **Liam Vaughan** found himself looking up from the canvas at the top of the second.

He rose quickly enough but had to endure a spell of pressure on the resumption, after which he regained his composure as well as control of the contest.

Settling back into his stride in the next round, Vaughan let loose with a few in the fourth, a right downstairs being among his best work prior to him getting the nod by a margin of 38-37 from scoring referee Kevin Parker.

There was a second-round knockdown, too, in a women's six-rounder when Nuneaton's **Tori-Ellis Willets** tagged already off-balance Ukrainian **Liubov Oksha** with a little left to the body, and down she went.

Oksha hadn't been beaten in two previous outings, but she was bested here by the well-supported home girl who racked up the points courtesy of a busy jab and a smattering of heavy rights. Mr Churchill scored 60-53.

Another six went the distance and saw Birmingham's **Sian O'Toole** register a fifth straight win with a shutout success against increasingly outgunned Spaniard **Yaiza Souto**.

Encouraged from ringside by Frankie Gavin and hurting her Galician opponent to the body, one wondered if Sian might just get a stoppage late on. While it wasn't forthcoming, referee Parker had no need to double-check his card at the finish.

FULL RESULTS

Troy Jones (179lbs 6oz), (10-0, 6 KOs), w tko 3 **Prince Oko Nartey** (178lbs 6oz), (4-13-3, 1 KO); **Levi Vaughan** (177lbs 6oz), (1-0), w pts 4 **Harry Matthews** (184lbs), (17-81-7, 2 KOs); **Sian O'Toole** (129lbs 2oz), (5-0), w pts 6 **Yaiza Souto** (128lbs), (1-7); **Tori-Ellis Willets** (123lbs 2oz), (4-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Liubov Oksha** (124lbs), (1-1-1).



RELIEVED:
The Commonwealth
belt is going home
with Hill after she
picks up a split
decision victory

KENYA BELIEVE IT?

Hill looks fortunate to earn a split decision against former WBC champ Zarika

BLACKPOOL

MAY 11

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

BUSY promoter Steve Wood returned to his favourite Winter Gardens, where the main event saw Grimsby's **Kirsty Hill** make a successful, if somewhat contentious, first defence of the Commonwealth super-featherweight title by way of a split decision over experienced and very game Kenyan **Fatuma Zarika**.

The 39-year-old former WBC champion, cheered on by a good number of flag-waving supporters, was the aggressor for the most part and scored regularly to the body of Hill who, while enjoying successes of her own, more so in the closer latter stages, was never really allowed to get into her stride. That being the case, she appeared somewhat fortunate to get the nod.

Jamie Kirkpatrick had Zarika taking it 97-94, but two scores of 96-94 for the champion from Mark Bates and Mark Lyson put an immediate end to the celebrations of the Kenyan and her followers. Kieran McCann refereed.

Six years after last stepping between the ropes, local favourite **Jack Arnfield** returned and added another notch to the win column. Arnfield took all six rounds on the card of third man Mr Kirkpatrick at the culmination of his bout against 'Camden Caretaker' **Robbie Chapman** who, with other dates in the diary, was less than enthused when a clash of heads late in the fourth left him cut above the left eye.

Also returning from a lengthy spell on the sidelines, Morecambe's **Reece MacMillan**

eased back in against Newark's **Fonz Alexander**. MacMillan bossed the first couple of rounds before upping the pace noticeably in the third and, while Fonz made a better fist of things in the last, it was too late to matter by that stage. Referee Mr Lyson scored 40-37.

Blackpool heavyweight **Luis Wright** was given a decent workout by durable Belarus operator **Yury Bykhautsou** who, in what was his 43rd pro bout, had failed to make it to the final bell on just three occasions. True to form, the visitor lost all four rounds on referee Lyson's card, but he never looked like folding despite being tagged to the body regularly and bested throughout.

Local welter **Jackson Hulme** got a sixth successive victory by outpointing Rochdale's **Richard Helm**, 39-37. Liverpool third man Mr Lyson doubtless awarded the closing stanza to the more experienced visitor who, beaten to the punch early doors, enjoyed a little success of his own towards the finish.

Preston's **Levi Barnes** and Blackpool's **Thomas Varey** both overcame overseas opposition. Southpaw Barnes, up against 20-year-old Czech puncher **Martin Balog**, was counted in the opener by referee Kirkpatrick after touching down momentarily. Unperturbed, he came steaming out for the next and duly floored Balog twice. The second occasion, a left to the body, proved sufficient reason for it to be waved off with 63 seconds of round two still to run.

Varey, meanwhile, overcame Nicaraguan opposition for a third time by seeing off experienced and always game **Brayan Mairena**, Mr Kirkpatrick scoring it 40-36.

FULL RESULTS

Kirsty Hill (128¾lbs), (7-2), w pts 10 **Fatuma Zarika** (128lbs 2oz), (34-14-2, 18 KOs); **Levi Barnes** (152lbs 5oz), (5-0, 1 KO), w rsf 2 **Martin Balog** (147½lbs 10oz), (4-5-1, 4 KOs); **Jack Arnfield** (172½lbs), (26-3, 6 KOs), w pts 6 **Robbie Chapman** (175lbs), (11-37-7, 2 KOs); **Luis Wright** (231½lbs), (5-0, 3 KOs), w pts 4 **Yury Bykhautsou** (220lbs), (10-30-3, 5 KOs); **Thomas Varey** (139lbs 6oz), (5-0, 1 KO), w pts 4 **Brayan Mairena** (136½lbs), (15-45-1, 9 KOs); **Reece MacMillan** (146¾lbs), (16-1, 2 KOs), w pts 4 **Fonz Alexander** (148½lbs), (9-163-1, 5 KOs); **Jackson Hulme** (152lbs), (6-0), w pts 4 **Richard Helm** (147½lbs), (1-32-1, 1 KO).

Beach boys

Sutherland and Coyle win titles

ABERDEEN

MAY 11

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

THERE was an inside-the-distance finish in the main event at the Beach Ballroom when southpaw and home favourite **Dean Sutherland** relieved previously unbeaten Welshman **Sion Yaxley** of his Celtic super-welterweight title, a halt being called with 48 seconds of the ninth and penultimate session remaining.

Backed to the ropes and under heavy fire to both body and head, Ruthin man Yaxley, who'd proved strong early doors, had just replied with a right uppercut and left cross of his own and then followed up with another decent combination, but Dean proved unconcerned.

A grinning Sutherland stepped in to hammer home a right cross which left the champion stunned and seemingly on the verge of toppling forwards, all the reason Barrhead referee Victor Loughlin needed to step in.

The contest also doubled as an eliminator for the British title.

A tussle for the vacant Scottish welterweight title – a cracking one, as it turned out – between Kirkcaldy's **Paul Deas** and unbeaten Stirling six-footer **Taylor Coyle** went the way of the latter, who was adjudged a 97-93 winner at the conclusion of 10 highly enjoyable rounds.

Just a week after securing a four-round shutout win in Elgin, lightweight **Adian Williamson** was back in the ring, this time over six and conceding weight to Carlisle's **Jake Osgood**, who is now just two fights short of his 50th.

For the second time in quick succession, it was the Evanton man's arm that was raised at the finish, a 60-54 points victory accurately reflecting his dominance.

Williamson still hasn't dropped a round in the paid ranks.

Victory came by the same margin, too, for a former conqueror of Osgood, 19-year-old Aberdeen 'Mean Machine' **Gregor McPherson**, who proved too savvy for a game opponent in Bratislava-based **Christian Lopez Flores**, a Mexican having his 27th outing on British soil – all of them ultimately proving fruitless.

FULL RESULTS

Dean Sutherland, (17-1, 6 KOs), w rsf 9 **Sion Yaxley**, (13-1, 2 KOs); **Taylor Coyle**, (5-0-1, 1 KO), w pts 10 **Paul Deas**, (6-3); **Gregor McPherson**, (6-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Christian Lopez Flores**, (14-38-2, 12 KOs); **Adian Williamson**, (8-0, 1 KO), w pts 6 **Jake Osgood**, (1-47).

TRAGEDY IN HARROW

Lawal passes away after debut, writes Philip Sharkey

⊕ HARROW

MAY 12

TRAGEDY struck in the evening's opening contest as St. Pancras debutant **Sherif Lawal** sadly lost his life in his bout with **Malam Valera** at Harrow Leisure Centre.

Despite their best efforts – a paramedic was giving CPR nonstop for at least 10-15 minutes under the heat of the ring lights as the doctor administered aid – Sherif was taken by ambulance to Northwick Park Hospital, where sadly he was pronounced dead.

The 29-year-old Lawal had been a stalwart member of the St. Pancras Amateur Boxing Club, competing at top level in the National Elite championships in 2023.

The MC announced the rest of the show was cancelled and the large crowd respectfully understood the situation and left quietly.

Lawal was in the ascendancy when, just

before the bell to end the third, he took a powerful right hand that caused his knees to dip. A couple more shots landed just after the bell as referee Lee Every dived between them.

In the fourth, Sherif attempted to jab and move, but Valera trapped him on the ropes near the away corner.

With hands high, Lawal made his way left to the ropes over *Boxing News'* position, where a right to the temple connected as he turned with his back to Valera and he collapsed on his haunches in the ring centre.

Referee Every, after sending Malam to a neutral corner, took up the count, but saw Sherif was in distress and immediately waved the contest over, as trainer CJ Hussein tended to his former amateur boxer and was swiftly joined by the British Boxing Board of Control's ringside doctor and paramedics.

Everyone at *Boxing News* passes on their sincere condolences to Sherif's family and friends.

Photo: PHILIP SHARKEY



CONDOLENCES:
Lawal walks to the ring for the first – and, tragically, last – time as a pro



Lift for Lipinets

An unexpected thriller between a Scouser and a Kazakh in Florida

🇺🇸 PLANT CITY

MAY 10

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

SERGEY LIPINETTS and **Robbie Davies Jr** served up a midweek barnburner at the ProBox TV Events Centre.

This super-lightweight contest arrived out of leftfield and pitted two men staring down the bottom of a career barrel – and their stirring efforts in the ring reflected their need and desire to get back on track.

The fight woke up after a quiet six minutes with Lipinets leaving marks on the midsection of Davies, who rocked his Kazakh opponent in the final seconds of the session. The left hooks were working for the Liverpoolian, but he was down in the fifth and twice more in round eight from the blows of the California-based Lipinets.

Davies, with a broken and badly bloodied nose for his troubles, didn't quite have the sturdy chin of Lipinets but bravely kept carrying the fight to the former IBF super-lightweight champion. Lipinets got the nod on all three cards (96-91, 98-89, 95-92) and keeps his dreams of another title shot going.

FULL RESULTS

Sergey Lipinets (141½lbs), (18-3-1, 13 KOs), w pts 10
Robbie Davies Jr (141½lbs), (23-5, 15 KOs); **Fernely Feliz Jr** (204½lbs), (8-0, 6 KOs), w pts 8
Cesar Navarro (216lbs), (11-2, 9 KOs); **Tsendbaatar Erdenebat** (137lbs), (10-0, 5 KOs), w tko 3
Alberto Mercado (137lbs), (17-7-1, 4 KOs); **Robert Meriwether III** (132lbs), (6-0, 2 KOs), w pts 6
Victor Manuel Lopez Gala (131¾lbs), (5-1, 3 KOs); **Terrence Williams** (147lbs), (6-0, 5 KOs), w ko 1
Jonathan Ariel Sosa (147½lbs), (7-17-2, 4 KOs).

World rankings

HEAVYWEIGHT

No weight limit

1. Oleksandr Usyk
2. Tyson Fury
3. Anthony Joshua
4. Joseph Parker
5. Filip Hrgovic
6. Zhilei Zhang
7. Deontay Wilder
8. Daniel Dubois
9. Frank Sanchez
10. Agit Kabayel

CRUISERWEIGHT

200lbs/14st 4lbs

1. Jai Opetaiia
2. Chris Billam-Smith
3. Mairis Briedis
4. Gilberto Ramirez
5. Lawrence Okolie
6. Noel Mikaelyan
7. Richard Riakporhe
8. Arsen Goulamirian
9. Aleksei Papin
10. Michal Cieslak

LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

175lbs/12st 7lbs

1. Artur Beterbiev
2. Dmitry Bivol
3. Joshua Buatsi
4. Anthony Yarde
5. Callum Smith
6. Oleksandr Gvozdyk
7. Dan Azeez
8. Ali Izmailov
9. Craig Richards
10. Albert Ramirez

SUPER-MIDDLEWEIGHT

168lbs/12st

1. Canelo Alvarez
2. David Benavidez
3. Jaime Munguia
4. Caleb Plant
5. David Morrell
6. Christian Mbilli
7. Diego Pacheco
8. Edgar Berlanga
9. Vladimir Shishkin
10. Osleys Iglesias

MIDDLEWEIGHT

160lbs/11st 6lbs

1. Zhanibek Alimkhanuly
2. Carlos Adames
3. Jermall Charlo
4. Erislandy Lara
5. Chris Eubank Jr
6. Meirim Nursultanov
7. Elijah Garcia
8. Liam Smith
9. Hamzah Sheeraz
10. Austin Williams

SUPER-WELTERWEIGHT

154lbs/11st

1. Jermell Charlo
2. Sebastian Fundora
3. Tim Tszyu
4. Israil Madrimov
5. Serhii Bohachuk
6. Erickson Lubin
7. Vergil Ortiz Jr
8. Jesus Ramos
9. Brian Mendoza
10. Bakhram Murtazaliev

WELTERWEIGHT

147lbs/10st 7lbs

1. Terence Crawford
2. Errol Spence Jr
3. Jaron Ennis
4. Eimantas Stanionis
5. Giovanni Santillan
6. Mario Barrios
7. Shakhram Giyasov
8. Cody Crowley
9. Alexis Rocha
10. Karen Chukhadzhian

SUPER-LIGHTWEIGHT

140lbs/10st

1. Teofimo Lopez
2. Subriel Matias
3. Ryan Garcia
4. Devin Haney
5. Josh Taylor
6. Isaac Cruz
7. Sandor Martin
8. Jack Catterall
9. Jose Carlos Ramirez
10. Jamaine Ortiz

LIGHTWEIGHT

135lbs/9st 9lbs

1. Gervonta Davis
2. Vasily Lomachenko

3. Shakur Stevenson
4. William Zepeda
5. Keyshawn Davis
6. Frank Martin
7. Raymond Muratalla
8. George Kambosos
9. Denys Berinchyk
10. Oscar Duarte

SUPER-FEATHERWEIGHT

130lbs/9st 4lbs

1. Emanuel Navarrete
2. O'Shaquie Foster
3. Joe Cordina
4. Oscar Valdez
5. Lamont Roach
6. Eduardo Hernandez
7. Robson Conceicao
8. Albert Bell
9. Eduardo Nunez
10. Hector Garcia

FEATHERWEIGHT

126lbs/9st

1. Luis Alberto Lopez
2. Leigh Wood
3. Brandon Figueroa
4. Raymond Ford
5. Rey Vargas
6. Rafael Espinoza
7. Nick Ball
8. Robeisy Ramirez
9. Otabek Kholmatov
10. Josh Warrington

SUPER-BANTAMWEIGHT

122lbs/8st 10lbs

1. Naoya Inoue
2. Marlon Tapales
3. Luis Nery
4. Stephen Fulton
5. Murodjon Akhmedaliev
6. John Riel Casimero
7. Sam Goodman
8. Liam Davies
9. David Picasso
10. Ra'eese Aleem

BANTAMWEIGHT

118lbs/8st 6lbs

1. Junto Nakatani
2. Takuma Inoue
3. Ryosuke Nishida
4. Yoshiki Takei
5. Emmanuel Rodriguez
6. Jason Moloney

7. David Cuellar Contreras
8. Vincent Astrolabio
9. Alejandro Santiago
10. Nonito Donaire

SUPER-FLYWEIGHT

115lbs/8st 3lbs

1. Juan Francisco Estrada
2. Kazuto Ioka
3. Kosei Tanaka
4. Fernando Daniel Martinez
5. Pedro Guevara
6. Carlos Cuadras
7. David Jimenez
8. Roman Gonzalez
9. Srisaket Sor Rungvisai
10. Ricardo Maljika

FLYWEIGHT

112lbs/8st

1. Jesse Rodriguez
2. Sunny Edwards
3. Julio Cesar Martinez
4. Seigo Yuri Akui
5. Angel Ayala Lardizabal
6. Artem Dalakian
7. Felix Alvarado
8. Francisco Rodriguez
9. Ricardo Sandoval
10. Galal Yafai

LIGHT-FLYWEIGHT

108lbs/7st 10lbs

1. Kenshiro Teraji
2. Sivenathi Nontshinga
3. Jonathan Gonzalez
4. Adrien Curiel
5. Carlos Canizales
6. Masamichi Yabuki
7. Cristian Araneta
8. Elwin Soto
9. Shokichi Iwatai
10. Regie Sukanob

STRAWWEIGHT

105lbs/7st 7lbs

1. Ginjiro Shigeoka
2. Oscar Collazo
3. Melvin Jerusalem
4. Panya Pradabsri
5. Thammanoon Niyomtrong
6. Hasanboy Dusmatov
7. DianXing Zhu
8. Yudai Shigeoka
9. Pedro Taturan
10. Luis Castillo

British rankings

HEAVYWEIGHT

No weight limit

1. **Tyson Fury**
2. **Anthony Joshua**
3. **Daniel Dubois**
4. **Joe Joyce**
5. **Fabio Wardley**
6. **Frazer Clarke**
7. **Dillian Whyte**
8. **Derek Chisora**
9. **David Adeleye**
10. **Johnny Fisher**

CRUISERWEIGHT

200lbs/14st 4lbs

1. **Chris Billam-Smith**
2. **Lawrence Okolie**
3. **Richard Riakporhe**
4. **Isaac Chamberlain**
5. **Cheavon Clarke**
6. **Jack Massey**
7. **Viddal Riley**
8. **Jordan Thompson**
9. **Ellis Zorro**
10. **Mikael Lawal**

LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

175lbs/12st 7lbs

1. **Joshua Buatsi**
2. **Anthony Yarde**
3. **Callum Smith**
4. **Dan Azeez**
5. **Craig Richards**
6. **Lyndon Arthur**
7. **Willy Hutchinson**
8. **Shakan Pitters**
9. **Ben Whittaker**
10. **Ricky Summers**

SUPER-MIDDLEWEIGHT

168lbs/12st

1. **Zach Parker**
2. **Zak Chelli**
3. **Mark Jeffers**
4. **Callum Simpson**
5. **Lerrone Richards**
6. **Jack Cullen**
7. **Mark Heffron**
8. **Bradley Rea**
9. **Germaine Brown**
10. **Steed Woodall**

MIDDLEWEIGHT

160lbs/11st 6lbs

1. **Chris Eubank Jr**
2. **Liam Smith**
3. **Hamzah Sheeraz**
4. **Tyler Denny**
5. **Nathan Heaney**
6. **Denzel Bentley**
7. **Kieron Conway**
8. **Liam Williams**
9. **Jimmy Kelly**
10. **Felix Cash**

SUPER-WELTERWEIGHT

154lbs/11st

1. **Josh Kelly**
2. **James Metcalf**
3. **Sam Eggington**
4. **Ishmael Davis**
5. **Troy Williamson**
6. **Samuel Antwi**
7. **Sam Gilley**
8. **Louis Greene**
9. **Junaid Bostan**
10. **Dean Sutherland**

WELTERWEIGHT

147lbs/10st 7lbs

1. **Michael McKinson**
2. **Harry Scarff**
3. **Ekow Essuman**
4. **Chris Kongo**
5. **Lewis Crocker**
6. **Conah Walker**
7. **Liam Taylor**
8. **Cyrus Pattinson**
9. **Owen Cooper**
10. **Elliot Whale**

SUPER-LIGHTWEIGHT

140lbs/10st

1. **Josh Taylor**
2. **Jack Catterall**
3. **Dalton Smith**
4. **Adam Azim**
5. **Ohara Davies**
6. **Sean McComb**
7. **Lewis Ritson**
8. **Harlem Eubank**
9. **Robbie Davies Jr**
10. **Henry Turner**

LIGHTWEIGHT

135lbs/9st 9lbs

1. **Maxi Hughes**
2. **Mark Chamberlain**

3. **Sam Noakes**
4. **Gavin Gwynne**
5. **Reece Mould**
6. **Regan Glackin**
7. **Craig Woodruff**
8. **Hamed Ghaz**
9. **Lewis Sylvester**
10. **Josh Padley**

SUPER-FEATHERWEIGHT

130lbs/9st 4lbs

1. **Joe Cordina**
2. **Anthony Cacace**
3. **Zelfa Barrett**
4. **Jordan Gill**
5. **Reece Bellotti**
6. **Archie Sharp**
7. **Ryan Garner**
8. **Liam Dillon**
9. **Michael Gomez Jr**
10. **Danny Quartermaine**

FEATHERWEIGHT

126lbs/9st

1. **Leigh Wood**
2. **Nick Ball**
3. **Josh Warrington**
4. **Isaac Dogboe**
5. **Nathaniel Collins**
6. **Rhys Edwards**
7. **Masood Abdulah**
8. **Hopey Price**
9. **Thomas Patrick Ward**
10. **Zak Miller**

SUPER-BANTAMWEIGHT

122lbs/8st 10lbs

1. **Liam Davies**
2. **Dennis McCann**
3. **Lee McGregor**
4. **Shabaz Masoud**
5. **Peter McGrail**
6. **Andrew Cain**
7. **Marc Leach**
8. **Brad Strand**
9. **Chris Bourke**
10. **Nyall Berry**

BANTAMWEIGHT

118lbs/8st 6lbs

1. **Charlie Edwards**
2. **Paul Butler**
3. **Thomas Essomba**
4. **Ashley Lane**
5. **Sean McGoldrick**
6. **Prince Patel**

7. **Jordan Purkiss**
8. **Lewis Roberts**
9. **Harvey Horn**
10. **Jack Turner**

SUPER-FLYWEIGHT

115lbs/8st 3lbs

1. **Tasif Khan**
2. **Marcel Braithwaite**
3. **Ijaz Ahmed**
4. **Quaise Khademi**
5. **Ryan Farrag**
6. **Brandon Daord**
7. **Sean Bruce**
8. **Scott Allan**
9. **Martin Hillman**
10. **Paul Roberts**

FLYWEIGHT

112lbs/8st

1. **Sunny Edwards**
2. **Galal Yafai**
3. **Jay Harris**
4. **Connor Butler**
5. **Craig Derbyshire**
6. **Conner Kelsall**
7. **Conor Quinn**
8. **Tommy Frank**
9. **Matt Windle**
10. **Alfie Clegg**

Boxing News assesses the best in boxing, taking in results up to May 13, 2024

AMATEUR SCENE

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

SEND us your club's news, results or upcoming events to submissions@boxingnewsonline.net

Photo: ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

DECORATED:
Stubley has already won Commonwealth bronze and two NAC titles



Empire state of mind

Matt Bozeat looks ahead to the Olympic qualifiers in Bangkok, where two graduates from a club in Blyth will chase glory



HERE'S a gym in the northeast that may produce two Olympians this year. **Adam Olaore** has already booked his place, using his Nigerian roots to qualify through the African route, and **Savannah Stubley** aims to join her former gym-mate in Paris this summer.

The 22-year-old heads to the final qualifier in Bangkok, which gets under way next Thursday (May 23) to compete for Great Britain at 50kgs.

Olaore and Stubley grew up together

at Empire School of Boxing in Blyth that was set up in 1992 by Les Welsh.

"I was at a loose end when I had to retire from boxing," said Welsh, who had more than 100 amateur bouts. "I had struggled for a number of years with my hands and I was only 23 when I had to retire. My coach said: 'Why don't you try coaching the kids?'"

"I used to train the juniors and he noticed how they became good boxers in a short period of time. I come from a big family, so I was used to being around kids."

From his experience in boxing, Welsh also knew a fighter when he saw one -

and was convinced a young girl would go on to have a big future.

"Savannah came to the gym when she was seven," said Welsh, who will celebrate his 65th birthday in August. "The coaches came over to me and said: 'Come and have a look at this girl on the bags.'"

"She was tiny, but she was tenacious. She had a great work ethic, and when I saw that, I knew I was halfway there. Everything else, I knew I could put in her."

"I got her into a conversation and she told me her mum and dad were in the car outside. I asked her to fetch them in and I told them: 'If you leave your little girl with me, I will make her a champion.'"

Stubley's parents went along with that and Welsh kept his promise. Stubley won back-to-back NAC titles (2021 and 2022) and 2022 Commonwealth Games bronze.

"I was working for the council," said Welsh, "and didn't finish work until seven o'clock in the evening. But I used to get two breaks during the day, so I would go and train Savannah during my breaks."

Stubley was added to the Great Britain squad in 2022 and later that year she won Commonwealth Games bronze in Birmingham.

Though she now spends much of her time in Sheffield, Stubley remains close to her mentor. Welsh said: "Savannah will come home at weekends and say to me: 'Right, Coach, what are you going to teach me this weekend?'"

"She loves to learn and I love to teach."

Welsh has been teaching for more than four decades and his contribution was recognised last week when he went to a dinner party with the King at Buckingham Palace.

That was recognition for all the good Welsh and his wife Margaret have done for the local community. The club motto is: "We produce good people first, good boxers second."

Empire School of Boxing have produced many good boxers over the years, with Olaore and Stubley the latest success stories. "It was beyond my wildest dreams to have an Olympic rep," said Welsh. "It was beyond the end of the rainbow when we set up the club."

The club was set up at an old school on Cowpen Road.

"It had been derelict for years," said Welsh, "and when the other coaches looked at it, they said: 'It's too much work.'"

"I used to be a coalminer, so I'm not

afraid of hard work. I could just see the space between the walls. But it was a lot of work. We took 48 wagonloads of rubbish to the tip."

Welsh estimates half of the town's 42,000 population have been to the gym, while Olaore made the short journey from Wallsend. He had his first nine bouts with another club and then switched to Empire.

Welsh said: "Adam was 6ft 6ins tall and 75kgs. He was too light."

"They would go out for runs and have to carry him back. He was too weak. He went on to win a national title at 81kgs and won the NACs and Three Nations at 86kgs."

Olaore had to move up to 92kgs to book his Olympic spot, via the African qualifier in Senegal last September.

"It took a few tournaments to settle into the weight," said the 22-year-old, who joined Marden ABC last December. "I have competed in four or five tournaments at 92kgs and last time they didn't feel as big."

That was at the All-Africa Games in Ghana in March where Olaore claimed gold with an emphatic one-punch finish in the final. Olaore placed a lead left hook on the chin of Kevin Kuadjovi (Togo), sending him reeling into the ropes, and the eight count wasn't long enough for him to gather his senses.

Next, Olaore, nicknamed 'Big Future', wants gold in Paris.

"I heard about this boxer who called himself 'Little Future' [Jamir Robertson]," remembered Olaore, "and I said: 'Why would you call yourself 'Little Future'? I want a big future, not a little one!'"

"It started off as a joke, but the nickname stuck. You've got to dream big."



PROMISE KEPT: Coach Welsh told Stubley's parents he'd make her a champion



MUTUAL BENEFIT: Adhondjo helped Clarke prepare for his fight with Wardley in March

Big-name backing for 'the AJ of Togo'

Clarke's sparring partner heads to Bangkok with a vote of confidence from a man who medalled in Tokyo 2020

ENTRIES at super-heavyweight include a Ghanaian from Leicester who has a fan base in Togo!

Mark 'War Chief' Adhondjo has Ghanaian and Togolese parents and heads to Bangkok with a vote of confidence from a bronze medallist in Tokyo. Frazer Clarke used the 25-year-old from Leicester Unity ABC as a sparring partner ahead of his classic British and Commonwealth title battle with Fabio Wardley in March.

Adhondjo said: "Frazer says I can give any heavyweight in the world problems over three, three-minute rounds. I have a skillset that most other heavyweights don't have. I throw punches in bunches and move fast. I know I'm a wildcard, but Frazer thinks I have a chance."

Adhondjo will have supporters cheering him on in Leicester, Ghana and Togo.

"My dad is from Togo and their Sports Minister wanted me to compete in their nationals," said Adhondjo, who's won 13 of 17.

"They use my face in

posters there. They have watched me on live streams and it's a big thing over there. I'm like AJ in Togo, I'm told! But they gave me no financial backing and I would have had to go on my own."

Adhondjo may have to dip into his savings to fund his trip to Bangkok.

"This opportunity will come along only once in my lifetime," he said. "I have to see what I can do. It would have been nice to do something with GB, but I didn't get an assessment when I thought I should have done."

That was after his points loss to Arlo Stephens (York) in the semi-finals of last year's National Amateur Championship.

There have also been narrow points defeats to Tobi Lawal and Jesse Olupitan in the 2022 Development final and 2023 Haringey Box Cup respectively.

"They are three big competitions and I proved what level I can hang with," said Adhondjo. "I believe it was meant to be for me to go this route, go to the Olympics and win."

Phil Starkey reports from an entertaining Finchley ABC event where Samuel Jackson proved unbreakable

🇬🇧 BARNET

APRIL 21



HE morning after the night before highlighted the ups and downs of amateur boxing.

Despite Finchley having only two winners on their afternoon show at the Uitas Barnet Youth Centre, that disappointment was more than compensated for by the presence of a smiling 2024 Senior Elite 75kg champion Patricia Mbata, fresh from her triumph in Derby the night before. She was introduced to great applause by head coach Sean Murphy and she stuck around to hand out the trophies and have photos taken with the winners and her championship belt.

One who could follow in her footsteps after an impressive show of skill and power is Repton's **Samuel Jackson**.

Hefty right hands to the head following rib-bending body shots forced **David Olupitan** to take a standing count in the first and, though not rushing his work, Samuel bombarded the Finchley 82kg rep until the referee stepped in and accepted the corner's retirement in the second round. Olupitan was taking shots trapped on the ropes near his own corner.

White Hart Lane boxer **Taylor Cox** was awarded Best Away Boxer with a unanimous verdict over home fighter **Josh Luther**. Luther played a dangerous game, hands low, as he hoped to catch Cox coming in, with Taylor unexpectedly attacking downstairs in what became a fascinating bout. After both were warned for different infringements, it was Cox who finished the stronger.

Another senior to take a clear win was

Fitzroy Lodge's **Samurai Gayle**. After taking an eight count in the opener, White Hart Lane's **Farouk El-Houari** tried to jab his way back, Gayle took most on his gloves and peppered Farouk with bunches of punches in the second only for El-Houari to make up some ground in the last.

The Lodge had a second winner when well-schooled **Adan Suheyb** saw off Finchley's **Dior Mehmejaj**. Dior attempted to jab with him, but Adan's switch-hitting and shot selection proved the difference.

Finchley did have a senior winner, and it was all over in the second. Having already taken two counts in the opener, a left hook to the chin from **Abdul Icar** accounting for the first, Croygas rep **Shilo Sinclair** was smothered on the ropes, prompting the

GREAT APPLAUSE GREETED MBATA, FRESH FROM HER SENIOR ELITE TRIUMPH THE NIGHT BEFORE

Action Jackson

Photos: PHILIP SHARKEY



SKILL AND POWER: Repton's Jackson tears into Olupitan



FIGHT FANS PACK SHOE-BOX SHOW

End-of-season event does not disappoint, writes Matt Bozeat

 NORTHAMPTON

APRIL 26

THE Northampton Town Hotel was filled with 600 fans for Team Shoe-Box ABC's last show of the season.

In the fight of the night, **Charlie Hamilton** captured the East Midlands Regional Challenge Belt by grinding out a points win over **Quinn Raeside** (Trinity). The 18-year-old won a split decision to claim the vacant welterweight belt.

Hamilton came to the Northampton gym with a 2-6 record but has put that sticky start behind him to win Youth Development honours and reach the semi-finals of the NABGCs this season. In the last eight, Hamilton put out Harvey Orriss, who went on to the NAC final.

Coach James Conway decided the NACs were too soon for Hamilton and admitted it was a gamble to accept the match with Raeside in only his third senior bout. Raeside was a seasoned 24-year-old, but Hamilton beat him with his workrate in the opening two rounds. Hamilton started positively behind a strong lead hand and when Raeside landed rights to his chin and hard left hooks to the body, Hamilton walked through them and churned out twos and threes.

The second was also competitive. There were several hard exchanges and Hamilton kept making Raeside give ground and outworked him. The doctor examined a wound around Raeside's eye before the last. Raeside started the round firing out jabs and landed his best punch of the bout, a right uppercut. Hamilton answered instantly with a left hook. Mostly, Hamilton missed with tired punches in the final three minutes, but he connected with a short right to Raeside's jaw in the dying seconds that knocked his gumshield out.

Hamilton was named Best Boxer and he was one of a quartet of 18-year-olds from Shoe-Box who had their hand raised.

Ellis Bamsey unanimously outpointed **Freddie Yates** (SIBA) over three twos at 71kgs. Conway said afterwards he has never seen Bamsey box better. He boxed smoothly and, within seconds of the bout starting, the crowd were applauding after he landed a left hook. That punch stiffened Yates's legs in the second and led to an eight count. Yates stuck to his task and had his best moments in the dying seconds. Bamsey has now won six of his last seven.

Cole Connolly was another 18-year-old to shine, stopping **Rhys Hopkins** (Hartlepool Catholic) in the opening round. Hopkins pinned Connolly on the ropes after shipping a left hook. Connolly kept his guard tight as Hopkins unloaded on him and landed clean shots in between his punches to force a count. Connolly put together another burst that went unanswered and the referee gave another count and waved the bout off.

Mo Jubair showed promise on his debut. He picked his punches smartly off the back foot to outpoint Corby southpaw **Sam McShane** unanimously.

Best punch of the night was thrown by Shoe-Box cruiserweight **Josh Nagy**. There was always likely to be an early ending to his first defence of the East Midlands Regional Challenge Belt. Nagy had back-to-back stoppages – including a 25-second win on the club's last show – and **Oliver Hooper** (One Nation) had won his previous seven early.

Nagy was the last man standing after a one-round shootout. They were soon swapping jabs before Hooper started swinging for Nagy's chin. Nagy kept himself out of danger and, when Hooper took a step back and looked to reload, Nagy pounced.

The 23-year-old jabbed Hooper to the ropes and launched a looping right hand at his jaw. The shot landed perfectly and dropped him heavily. Hooper beat the count and then his legs collapsed underneath him, sending him lurching back into the ropes. The referee waved the bout off instantly.

Shoe-Box middleweight **Kyle Norfolk** pulled off a stunning turnaround to hand **Aaron Hipkiss** (BCB) his first defeat. The 24-year-old had good support behind him and they saw him take punches throughout the opening two minutes. The bout was all over early in the second. Norfolk and Hipkiss landed rights simultaneously and Hipkiss hit the floor. Up quickly, he didn't convince the referee he was fit to continue.

There was late drama in the clash between novice super-heavies **Harry Nicholls** (Team Shoebox) and **Jaydon Slatcher** (Clay Cross). The 6ft 7ins, 135kgs Nicholls won a unanimous verdict after being given a standing count in the dying seconds. The referee stepped in after Slatcher had him dazed and stumbling with several clean head shots. Both had been hurt in an exciting second round.

referee to count and wave the bout over.

Joe Smith notched up another stoppage for Finchley (and won Best Home Boxer), this time in the third, stopping Hockwell Ring rep **Josh O'Keefe**. Josh took a count in the round two and Smith came out guns blazing to win early in the next.

St Pancras coach CJ Hussein, also in Derby the previous evening cornering Senior Elite finalist Jermaine Dhilwayo, had a winner as all-action **Luke Williams** punched often and accurately to have his hand raised over home boxer **Liam Nagle**. Also at Youth, aggressive Kayani Camp's **Zain Zaki** had time to mix his attacks with a fair bit of hands-down showboating on the ropes as he ran out a winner over local **Jones Kamil**.

Croygas did have a winner when stylish **Charlie Taylor** displayed good footwork and a jab to match to see off **Jacob Asghari** (Finchley). White Hart Lane's **Hamed Eshaq** stepped in at the eleventh hour and came away with a win, defeating Islington's **Huey Esteban**. After a feeling-out opener, Eshaq's more positive work claimed the win.

Two split wins went against Finchley. White Hart Lane's **Eddie McDonagh** beat **Paddy Nevin**, and Ilya Kyrych won over unlucky **Hayden Gardiner**. A skills bout between Finchley's **Tommy McDonagh** and Islington lad **Miguel Gonzalez** opened the show.

WINNING AWAY: Adan Suheyb beats home fighter Dior Mehmejaj [top], while Luke Williams does likewise against Liam Nagle



PROUD PAT: [Left] Cowdell looking at his card with trainer Reg Steele, and [below] celebrating beating Jimmy Flint in 1980 with manager Ron Gray



ONE OF THE MIDLANDS' FINEST

Recalling Pat Cowdell's illustrious career

A



Miles Templeton

Boxing historian

COUPLE of years ago, I wrote about the decision given against Pat Cowdell by referee Sid Nathan when he fought Dave Needham for the British featherweight title in 1979. Although this decision was highly controversial, it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on it when remembering Pat and his illustrious career. Cowdell was

one of the finest boxers of the 1970s and I rate him extremely highly when considering the best fighters to have come out of the Midlands since the War.

Pat was an exceptional amateur. The 1974 Commonwealth Games champion and the 1976 Olympic bronze medallist at Montreal, he also won four ABA titles at bantamweight in 1973, lightweight in 1975 and featherweight in 1976 and 1977. When he turned professional in July 1977, great things were expected, but he failed to impress in his debut, beating Birmingham's Albert Coley in a scrappy six-rounder. Pat admitted that, with the sheer weight of expectation, the pressure had got to him.

There were further problems in his sixth contest when a badly gashed eyebrow saw him stopped in two rounds by Newcastle's Alan Robertson. Pat kept

winning after this setback and, in March 1979, he beat Les Pickett of Merthyr in an all-out war at the Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, to qualify for his title shot against Needham.

Nathan's controversial decision against Pat left the diminutive referee needing a police escort to leave the hall. The British Boxing Board of Control ordered a hasty rematch, with Cowdell taking the decision after a wonderful scrap at the Royal Albert Hall. Needham left everything in the ring that night and played his part in a great fight.

Manager Ron Gray had big plans for Pat and the British title was to be just the start. The first challenge was to win the Lonsdale Belt outright, and Cowdell accomplished this in record time, after beating Jimmy Flint and then Needham again, at the start of 1980. He then surprised everybody by accepting a contest with the great Salvador Sanchez for the WBC featherweight title.

Under the headline 'Gambler Cowdell faces supreme test', *BN* reported that "It's a title chance gained without the usual steady conditioning against ranked opposition. Pat, having his first fight abroad, has cut all the corners to reach his goal and starts a huge underdog against a daunting champion".

Coming off the back of an awesome victory over Wilfredo Gomez, Sanchez looked unbeatable, and *BN*

predicted a stoppage victory for him.

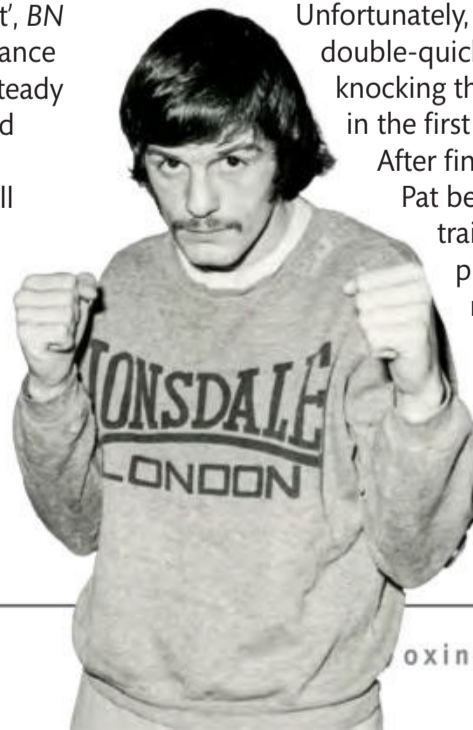
After an epic performance, Sanchez complimented Cowdell by saying: "That man is a credit to boxing, and a credit to himself". The Mexican had to go the full 15 rounds to retain his title on a split decision and editor Harry Mullan admitted that *BN*, along with many other pundits, had been left with a "red face". Cowdell stated after the contest that: "Sanchez is a hell of a fighter, one of the greatest, but I think I deserve another crack". He never got the chance, for within eight months Sanchez was dead after crashing his Porsche on a highway in his native country.

To get back on track, Pat then won not one but two European titles, picking up the featherweight championship in 1982 and then winning at super-featherweight in 1984. With Sanchez winning his last fight, against Azumah Nelson, it was fitting that, when Pat got his second chance to win a world title, that it should be against the wonderful Ghanaian.

Unfortunately, Pat was beaten in double-quick time, with Nelson knocking the Midlander out cold in the first round.

After finishing as a fighter, Pat became a decent trainer and a very active promoter, putting on many shows with his ex-manager, Ron Gray.

He was a superlative boxer and a credit to the game.



CONTEH AND CO LIGHT UP LEBA



Simon Euan-Smith
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EBA
correspondent

LONDON EBA (LEBA) had its first meeting at the new venue – Penderel's Oak in High Holborn – on Sunday, May 5. There was a good turnout and everyone seemed very happy with the new place. "Cosy" was how one member described it, and that's what EBAs look for.

"We've got a place of our own now," Treasurer Ray Caulfield said, "and we've got it from 10am to 3pm." This last point is

important, as the previous venue would be made open to the general public at noon. Here, this particular basement area is reserved solely for LEBA.

"The management want us to make our home here," Ray said. "It's owned by Wetherspoons, who have got 996 pubs around the country – and they want a photo of us for their newsletter." Great publicity for LEBA.

President Stephen Powell gave a eulogy for the late Tony Tricker, whose passing I reported last week, and gave details of his funeral. On a more pleasurable note, we sang Happy Birthday to committee member Dave Hull, who turned 60 that day, and long-time member Doreen Barclay, whose birthday was the following day. And there were special congratulations for member Danny Williams (not the former British heavyweight champion) and his wife, Carol, on their 61st wedding anniversary.

There were many ex-champions there, including former WBC light-heavyweight kingpin John Conteh – and Ray announced that John's Tribute Lunch, set for October 20, is already nearly sold out. Tickets are £95 for LEBA members, £125 for non-members – so, if you're thinking of going, contact Ray at raycaulfield@londonexboxers.org.uk. John has always been a great supporter of the EBA movement, and this lunch is a mark of appreciation for that.

Other former champions present included ex-WBC super-welter titleholder Maurice Hope, who will shortly be holding a special event to launch his autobiography.

Ex-European and British super-middleweight ruler James Cook MBE was also there, and the meeting was reminded that James' pet project, the Pedro Club, hold their annual summer

Former WBC 175lbs king among the stars at latest meeting

boxing show on June 1. This is always a good afternoon, described as "amateur boxing at its best." James has done an enormous amount to help the youth of Hackney.

Former European and British 118lbs champion Ian Napa, who split two verdicts in British title bouts with present LEBA committee member Martin Power, also attended, as did ex-Southern Area ruler David Walker, who hailed from Bermondsey and was a regular on London shows, large and small.

His debut was at Wembley, on the undercard of Rob McCracken vs WBC middleweight champion Keith Holmes. McCracken's challenge ended when he was stopped in the 12th and last round, but David couldn't have had a better start, with a first-round KO of Dave Fallon. Referee was former heavyweight Billy Aird, who's been a staunch LEBA member for years.

The current Leeds EBA newsletter includes a message from Welsh EBA Vice-Chairman Wynford Jones, enclosing two fight programmes.

The first was from Savva's Nightclub, Usk, in November 1987, and it brought back memories for me, as I covered the show for another publication. Top of the bill saw Leeds' Tom Collins win the European light-heavyweight title, sensationally flattening champion Alex Blanchard of the Netherlands in two rounds.

"That was my first night as a Class A referee," Wynford said, "and I handled the contest between Tee Jay and Abner Blackstock, and Floyd Havard vs Cedric Powell of Chicago."

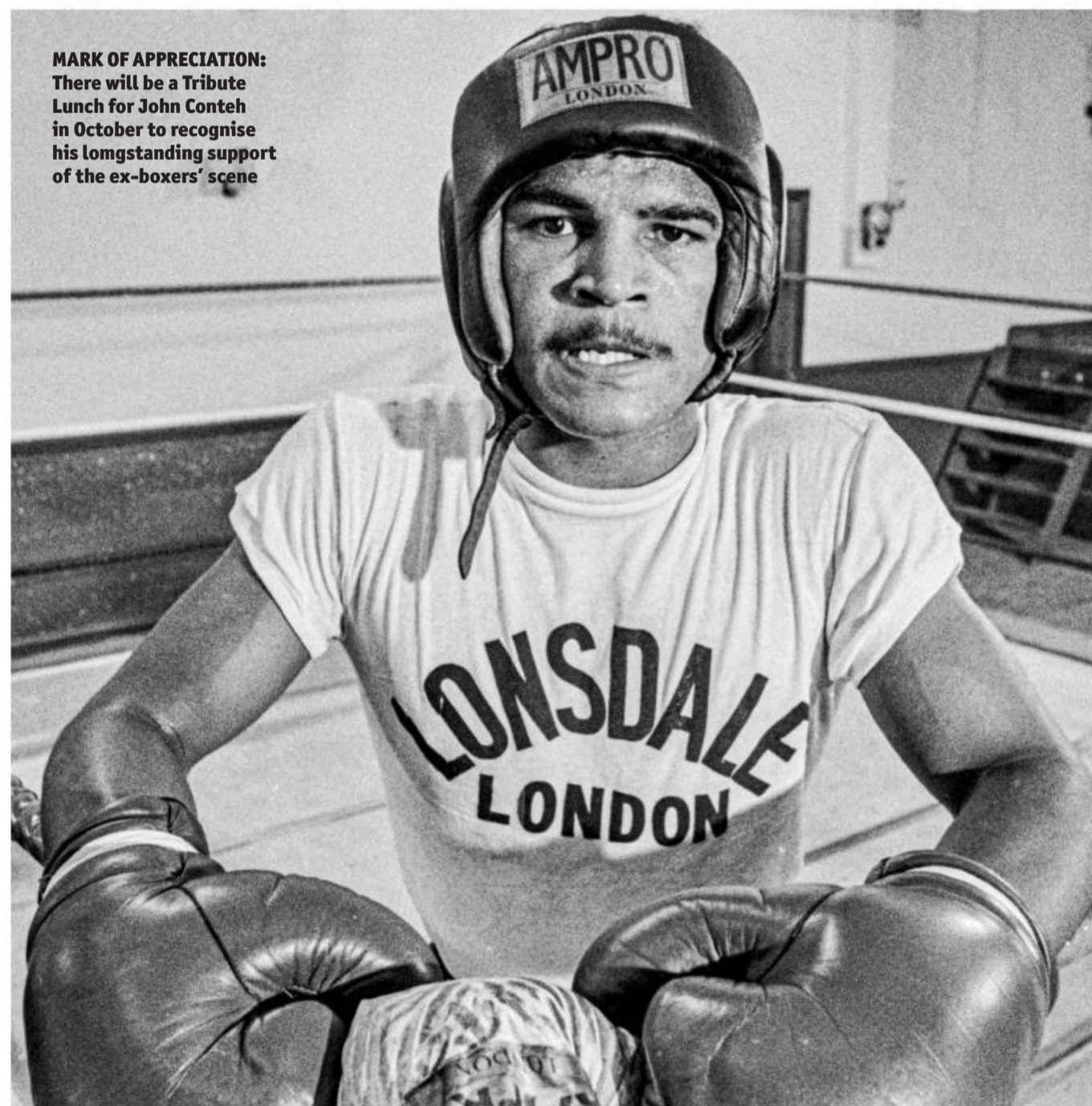
Jay and Havard both won on points over eight rounds – Jay was the reigning British cruiserweight champion and Havard went on to rule at super-feather.

The second programme – from a show at Afon Lido, Port Talbot, in June 1989 – also featured Floyd Havard, but this time he lost. In his first British title defence, an injured hand forced him to retire in the eighth round against John Doherty.

"Where has the time gone!!" Wynford wonders.

Where indeed.

Photo: GETTY IMAGES



MARK OF APPRECIATION:
There will be a Tribute Lunch for John Conteh in October to recognise his longstanding support of the ex-boxers' scene

RYOTA SATO

Japanese hope has a licence in acupuncture and plans to make a similar impression in boxing, writes **Andrew Fairley**

When and why you started boxing:

Originally, I played baseball, but I wanted to try individual sports, so when I saw my younger brother reading a comic book called *The First Step*, I went to a nearby boxing gym.

Favourite all-time fighter:

I like Japanese legends Joichiro Tatsuyoshi and Takanori Hatakeyama. I don't think there's another fighter who is as enthusiastic as them.

Best fight you've seen:

My favourite fight is the match between Akira Yaegashi and Roman Gonzalez. When I saw that, I was very moved and realised the greatness of boxing.

Toughest opponent:

They were all very tough for me. Takuya Ota, who defeated me for the first time, had a very strong punch.

Best and worst attributes as a boxer:

My strong point is my strength of mind, but on the other hand, I am in a hurry, so I have to improve that and be patient.

Training tip:

I think the most important thing is to concentrate and follow your feelings.

Favourite meal/restaurant:

I love yakiniku- Japanese barbecue.

Best friend in boxing:

The boxing buddies I met in Australia are all really nice people. I'm always grateful for their help.

Which other athlete would you like to be:

I used to play baseball, so definitely a baseball player.

Who would play you in a film of your life?

I don't know, but he'd have to be



'I HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN STARSTRUCK, BUT I BELIEVE I WILL BECOME A STAR'

good-looking, of course!

What one thing would you change in boxing?

I think boxing is still not recognised enough. I want everyone to know that boxing is a great sport.

Have you ever been starstruck:

Not really, but I believe I will become a star from now on.

Last time you cried:

I don't remember, but a long time ago.

Best advice received:

Believe in yourself and work hard all the time.

Worst rumour about yourself:

There are no bad rumours, only good rumours!

Something not many people know about you:

I have a Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion [a form of herbal therapy] licence.

FAST FACTS

Age: 28 **Twitter/X:** @Ryotabokuboku **Nickname:** Sugar **Height:** 5ft 7½ins **Nationality:** Japanese **From:** Saga, Japan **Stance:** Orthodox **Record:** 7-4, 2 KOs **Division:** Super-feather to lightweight **Next fight:** Sato moved to Australia in 2022 and is looking to box there again as soon as possible, having last fought in March 2023.

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