

British Welterweight Title Clash: To be or not to be?

Written by David Payne
Monday, 20 September 2004 18:00

Confusion surrounds the highly anticipated British Welterweight title clash between world-class contender James Hare and young champion David Barnes. It appears the fight has been postponed and will no longer feature on the Ricky Hatton v Mike Stewart undercard on October 1st, but Sports Network deny the fight was ever signed for that date.

All may not be lost, however. According to Hare the fight has proven too hot for the undercard (was it ever on it?) and will be rescheduled as a main event in November, but whatever the semantics, what matters is British fight fans get a chance to see Hare and Barnes square off.

And with leading contenders Harry Dhami and Jimmy Vincent facing off in an eliminator later this autumn too, the domestic welterweight division is heating up, particularly with Neil Sinclair back in the mix.

Speaking last Friday, James Hare was typically affable and generous with his time:

DP: Is the Barnes fight off then James?

JH: Well, hard to say, nothing is actually official yet but the posters have been up and the fight isn't on them so that's a bit of a giveaway.

DP: So as we stand the fight's on?

JH: Officially, yes but I've been up training in Scotland and returned to a phone call on Monday saying the fight was postponed.

DP: Clearly then the fight isn't happening on October 1st?

JH: Looks that way, I've no doubt in my mind that Barnes wants the fight, he's young and has it all to play for, there is no reason for him not to want the fight. I think to be fair it has come down to the fact Sports Network (Barnes' promoters) feel the fight stands up as a bill topper.

DP: It's a shame the fight's not on the undercard though, it would have been good to have had a strong undercard for a Hatton fight?

JH: Yep, that's right and I still have friends, about a hundred of them, going over there (Manchester) for the Hatton fight.

DP: But the fight isn't dead?

JH: No, I'm hearing that November 12th is the proposed new date, perhaps up here,

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somewhere like Halifax. And I'm fine with that and feel more optimistic that the fight will happen now than I was before.

DP: Great fight, it has boxing fans talking?

JH: Totally, and whilst I respect Barnes, Chris (Aston) and I are quietly confident.

Speaking Monday 20th James added:

DP: There seems some confusion over whether the fight was ever signed to appear on the Hatton undercard, Sports Network claim it never was, but that a venue and date is to be announced shortly?

JH: As far as we're concerned, I was preparing for the 1st October but since the phone call last week I have lightened up the training, taken a week off and will return to it next week in preparation for the November date. At the end of the day, I have nothing but respect for Barnes and whilst putting a show together across promotional companies is always difficult - often people don't know what's happening - what matters is my preparation is good and that I'm ready for November 12th. And if any problems arise then, we'll address them as they come up.

DP: So you'll be well prepared for the fight?

JH: Definitely, I've been training up in Scotland, sparring with some good kids up there, like Kevin McIntyre, and to be honest the change may be a blessing, I'm already in good shape, fitness wise - so the extra time will allow me to build on that and I think Sports Network are right, this is a stand-up bill topping fight.

DP: Agreed, it's just a shame the public that spend a lot of money supporting Ricky aren't getting this as a tremendous undercard fight, a genuine 50-50 contest. And it seems Michael Gomez is no longer on the bill either, he didn't feature on the Sports Network undercard announcement on frankwarren.tv today.

JH: Well, I don't know about Gomez, maybe they'll save that up and make another card up with me and Barnes as the support to that, Gomez shifts a lot of tickets after all.

DP: I suppose if they got a decent name opponent that the Manchester public recognise for Gomez, it could be a genuine double-header?

JH: Yes, why not, sounds like a good card to me!

DP: Thanks for talking again James and shedding some light on the situation.

JH: No problem, take care.

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So a disappointment for fans hoping for to see the pair face off as a prelude to the Hatton v Stewart 'slug-fest,' but encouragingly the fight WILL happen and when it does, thankfully it's unlikely to short-change them for action.

My thanks to Chris Aston for helping arrange this interview