

## Scott Harrison Looking To Crash Party

Written by David Payne

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This Friday Scottish featherweight title-holder Scott Harrison seeks to etch his name on the 126 and 130lb VIP party lists by emphatically dispatching veteran Columbian Victor Polo at the Braehead Arena, Glasgow.

The fight, which pits the methodical punch selection and strength of Harrison versus the guile and reach of Polo, follows the well-worn formula for Sports Network contests; it's promoted as the prelude to something bigger.

Harrison's manager, Frank Maloney, has made all the right noises about securing the signature of one of the division's stand out attractions, but with a long history of defining fights proving impossible to make for stable mates Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton and Johnny Nelson, the sceptics continue to flourish.

However, in Victor Polo, Harrison faces a capable and seasoned campaigner in his own right who has challenged and extended three world champions. No stranger to these shores, the Columbian came within a whisker of beating the then WBO champion Juan Pablo Chacon in the fight that preceded Harrison's first challenge for the belt in 2002.

A misplaced corner towel, spotted by everyone but the referee, caused Polo to slip, a slip adjudged a knockdown that ultimately cost Polo the championship in a tightly fought contest. But that was three years ago, and Polo has been inactive and a long way from contesting at world-title level since.

Only one of the four victories he's enjoyed in the interim has been against a fighter with a positive record and it's hard to predict how much the 34 year old, a pro for 14 years, truly has left beyond his name.

Tall and rangy, the Polo of 2002 had the movement and guile to cause walk forward puncher Chacon problems. Chacon, like Harrison, was strong at the weight but lacks Harrison's accuracy and efficiency and now, with Harrison entering his physical peak and becoming more seasoned with every fight, a fading Polo is a calculated risk.

Polo will need all his savvy to prevent a motivated and well-prepared Harrison from walking through his counter-punches to destroy him early. Only once the opening bell sounds will we have an accurate picture of Polo's motivation and how far removed he is from his prime. Despite the problems Harrison encounters with awkward movers like Medina and fleetingly Estrada, expect Harrison to grind down the Columbian and secure an eye-catching late round stoppage.

Maloney has shrewdly embroidered Harrison's career with former champions and contenders ripe for the plucking; Tom Johnson, Tracey Harris-Patterson, Steve Robinson and Manuel Medina all falling to the Scotsman's powers. Polo fits that model, maintaining enough lustre to

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impress the detached and hard to please American public, but providing only moderate resistance. Cute.

So if Polo is a stepping-stone, what's the destination?

Harrison this week reiterated his determination to get a unification fight with Injin Chi or Juan Manuel Marquez, or a super-fight with Manny Pacquiao, Marco Antonio Barrera or Erik Morales. Only Chi looks a realistically winnable fight given the impervious form of the other four, but Harrison craves the opportunity, regardless.

Given his recent ledger, Harrison shouldn't have to prove much more to earn a shot at one of the top names, but match making is far more complicated than that. All the major protagonists are manoeuvring to maximise their own earning potential against each other, and a dangerous fight with Harrison, who weighs around the Light-Welterweight limit come fight night, for low return as a 'marking-time' type fight just doesn't add up.

So the quest for Harrison is to garner enough respect to be viewed in the same revered bracket as his rivals and generate sufficient interest on both sides of the Atlantic for one of those contests to gain super-fight status.

British fight fans will hope beyond hope that it will happen sooner rather than later having surely exhausted their patience waiting for Howard Eastman's middleweight shot, Ricky Hatton's long overdue final exam and the ongoing Joe Calzaghe soap opera.

SKY Sports will televise Harrison-Polo from 2200 GMT