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DUBLIN, Ireland - John Duddy's 'Homecoming' parade successfully passed through the spirited challenge of Alessio Furlan in the form of a tenth round knockout at the National Stadium in Dublin, Ireland on Saturday.

Duddy's venture to his homeland was supposed to help him escape the hot summer temperatures of New York, but the heat in the small Dublin arena reached stifling levels thanks to a non-existent air conditioning system.

Fighting at the old venue for the first time since his last amateur fight five years ago, Duddy displayed the qualities that have made him such a big attraction across the Atlantic.

Despite flooring the Italian in the opening round, Duddy was given a hard time, absorbing some flush head shots and suffering a nasty looking cut above his right eye. But the Irishman produced a stunning rally in the final frame, sending the game Furlan to the canvas twice before referee Emile Tiedt stopped the contest with 20 seconds remaining in the fight.

A win over Furlan, 19-9-5 (8 KOs) won't do much for Duddy's standing as a middleweight contender, but the exercise proved that the Derryman's popularity has traveled across the Atlantic. A raucous crowd of over 1,000 packed the intimate venue and roared their approval throughout the grueling bout.

Duddy, 21-0 (16 KOs), began the fight in typically aggressive fashion, utilizing his potent left hook to Furlan's body and head. A flush left staggered the Italian and the follow-up assault sent him to the canvas. Still, Furlan seemed unfazed by Duddy's attack and quickly got to his feet. Duddy moved in close to press his advantage, but Furlan's tricky defensive maneuvers resulted in a clash of heads that opened a cut near Duddy's eye.

It wasn't the first time Duddy, 28, suffered a bad cut in a fight and the deep nature of the gash seemed to convince him to keep the fight at a distance.

The subsequent rounds fell into a pattern with Duddy moving forward in a flat-footed manner behind the jab, while Furlan remained behind a tight guard, occasionally throwing long lefts and looping right hands.

Duddy's defensive technique did not show much signs of improvement under new trainer Don Turner, but he demonstrated boxing skills reminiscent of his amateur days, working off the jab and picking his shots against the stubborn Furlan.

The tempo of the contest slowed dramatically from the fifth round on, with Duddy scoring with occasional flurries, while Furlan remained in a defensive posture without ever appearing to be hurt.

But an apparently reenergized Duddy emerged for the final round, perhaps safe in the knowledge that his cut would not be a factor in the bout's outcome. The Irishman leapt from his stool and soon launched a blistering series of left hooks that felled the visibly rattled Italian.

He beat the count, but Duddy quickly unleashed a devastating right uppercut that crashed onto Furlan's chin, sending him to the floor and prompting the referee to end the contest.

"This is the beginning of hopefully something special in Ireland," Duddy told his noisy fans. "Irish boxing is thriving at the moment, with [122lb European champion] Bernard Dunne leading the way.

"This was a big transitional period for me, coming over to Ireland and working with Don Turner for the first time. [Turner] has unbelievable experience, he is the man who's going to take me there [to the top].

"Don told me to throw right uppercuts and you see what happened when I did. There was a clash of heads in the first round with [Furlan]; we both have a tendency to lean in with our heads, but I'm fed up with being told I don't look like a boxer so I'm trying to look like one now."

Duddy is now expected to fight at the King's Hall in Belfast, possibly in August, and will likely try to secure a European title bout against Sebastian Sylvester before year-end.

Said Turner, "I think he's about four or five fights away from the world title. He's still thinking too much in there. Next time he won't wait so long to knock the guy out."

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It was announced that Bernard Dunne, 24-0 (14 KOs), will make the third defence of his European title in an eagerly awaited clash with 21-year-old mandatory challenger Kiko Martinez, 16-0 (13 KOs), on August 25th in Dublin.