National Indoor Arena, Birmingham, UK: Purists often talk in awe of boxing technique. Zipping jabs, fluid combinations, dazzling footwork and dancing grace are hailed as the ultimate display of boxing prowess. And, in a sense, they are.

But, sometimes, like a long day of cold rain that washes away the end of a dry, hot summer, a brawl between two guys lacking in technical finesses cleanses and revitalizes the landscape.

Matt Skelton and Martin Rogan lack skill but come to fight, and there is little that occurs in a boxing ring that persuades either to turn defensive. And while the heavyweight division has recently been staffed with underachieves, Skelton and Rogan have, for their gloved careers, only been guilty of going further than anyone could have predicted of them.

No fighter, in starting out at the age of 35, should be winning British, Commonwealth and European championships, nor should they be challenging, albeit unsuccessfully, for the WBA title. But Matt Skelton has after a career in K1 and it was in December that he went to Milan and wore down Paolo Vidoz in nine rounds for the European crown.

Skelton's success has been dependent on his lack of style. Where his opponents have at times been more skilled, they found themselves trapped behind the niceties of their jabs while steamrollered by the clubbing, mauling style of a man who backs up his arsenal with not inconsiderable strength.

Rogan, from Belfast in Northern Ireland, has ridden a long seam of luck to get to his present position. He had never boxed, not even as an amateur, before the age of 27 and he was 33 before he turned over to the professional ranks. In the first three-and-a-half years, he fought seven opponents with an average record of 10-17-2. And then, one night in London, he fought three opponents in three consecutive bouts to lift both his career and the 'Prizefighter' trophy. Having beaten a decent amateur and touted professional prospect David Dolan in the final of that tournament, Rogan upset the script by finishing off the remains of Audley Harrison's career in December.

Skelton-Rogan was set as the main event headlining the debuts of Olympians James DeGale, Frankie Gavin and Billy Joe Saunders. While the youngsters were seen as the pick of the night in terms of talent, the match between the big men was seen as what is known in fight circles as a 'trade fight' – a promising match-up that slips below the radar of the casual fan.

From the first bell, neither held back, and the jab became a forgotten weapon as both men threw power-shots at each other, each knowing that their best hope would be to take the other man into the deeper waters and drown him. Skelton seemed to take the first by using his greater size to partly-control Rogan.

The second round was close, tight enough for some to call it a draw. The third seemed to

belong to Skelton that may have put him two, possibly three rounds ahead but anybody who had an opinion was invariably holding a different one to the person sitting next to them.

Anyone trying to score the fight had given up by the fourth round. The action see-sawed from one fighter to the other: Skelton would take Rogan to the ropes, catch him with punches that made his head spin, stun him and then catch a shot in return that would cause his legs to buckle. Rogan, then sensing his chance, would throw everything at Skelton who would then cover, throw back, move and try to take Rogan once more onto the ropes.

It looked over for Skelton in the eighth. Tired and battered, he went to the ropes and the strands, for the first time, had to take his entire weight. Rogan went for broke and strafed his opponent's head with shots. Referee John Keane looked closely at the floundering champion when Skelton came off the ropes and stunned Rogan again. Rogan punched back, the bell went…

The ending was written in the eleventh. Skelton had taken everything thrown at him by Rogan but a limit had been reached. A right hand from the Irishman sent Skelton, face-first, to the canvas. He rose but there was nothing left. Another wave of punches came crashing in after the standing count and, before he could fall again, Skelton felt the referee come between him and Rogan to wave it off. At the age of 42, old in boxing terms, it was the first time he had been stopped in the boxing ring.

The crowd stood on their feet. Rogan paraded around the ring, from corner to corner, basking in their cheers. They cheered as he was presented with his belt. Recognising a good thing, the crowd cheered for Skelton too. And then, in a diminuendo, the cheers began to fade.