

## EXPOSED! And TSS Readers Called It Years Ago

Written by Ron Borges  
Monday, 18 May 2009 19:00

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It has been nearly a month since John Duddy's boxing life changed decidedly for the worst, enough time to step back and try to put into perspective what seems likely to be the end of something that never really started.

Duddy became one of those rare phenomenons that appear from time to time in boxing – a fighter whose appeal far outstripped his abilities. Duddy was handsome, Irish and in possession of the gift of gab. He could sell anything, best of all himself, a charming man with a warm smile. He could do everything you needed to be successful in boxing but one – box.

This was kept successfully hidden from all but the well-informed eye for quite some time by the McLoughlin brothers, Eddie and Tony, and their matchmaker, Jim Borzell. This was no easy task, but the grand difficulty of it all only came fully to light to the public after Duddy was beaten for the first time last month by a journeyman from Youngstown, Ohio named Billy Lyell.

Several months before that loss, when Duddy was in the midst of what now appears to be an ill-advised legal battle with the promotional company that created him, Duddy told a New York newspaper, "I had little control of my career. I was shocked what they did to me."

What his new advisors, Craig Hamilton and Gary Friedman, did to him after wresting control of Duddy's future away from the McLoughlins was get him beat in his first fight fully under their management, beaten not by some big name or some world champion (which these days is not always the same thing) but by a guy with a 18-7 record who had been stopped by every top-shelf opponent he ever faced.

After losing a split decision that by most accounts should have been a lopsided victory for the 24-year-old Lyell on all cards, Duddy should now have a better idea of why he was given no control over his career. It wasn't hard to protect John Duddy inside a boxing ring. It was damn near impossible.

Somehow the McLoughlin brothers, who run a promotional company called Irish Ropes, came out of this as the bad guys. Allegations of vast under payments and of the McLoughlins refusing a potential title fight against Verno Phillips worth \$150,000 because Phillips' promoter demanded options on Duddy, are troubling and will be sorted out in time. If true, they do not speak well for what Irish Ropes was about. But short shrift was given to the free apartment and car Duddy was given or the fights bankrolled by the McLoughlins that made little or the training expenses they ate or the fact they labored to keep unbeaten a very beatable fighter.

Most of all the advocates for Duddy forgot the most important thing – his promoter, Eddie McLoughlin, and his manager, Tony McLoughlin, may have been guilty of being brothers (which may or may not be a violation of the Muhammad Ali Reform Act) but they were also guilty of finding creative ways to keep him undefeated despite the fact doing it was a tight-rope walking act worthy of The Great Wallendas.

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The Wallendas, like prize fighters, worked without a net. Eventually they paid for it. They fell to earth. Once Duddy left the McLoughlins he did as well and it didn't take long for the crash to come.

Whether that was skill, luck or some combination of both, the McLoughlins and Borzell put Duddy in a position where he was one win over Walid Smichet, who was recently knocked out by "Contender" graduate Peter Manfredo, Jr., away from a \$1.4 million pay day to fight middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik. The Hamilton-Freidman brain trust got him beat by a journeyman for chump change less than a year after they came on the scene.

Duddy failed himself and the McLoughlins the night he faced Smichet, barely escaping with a decision and sustaining a deep gash over his eye that was a crimson reminder of how porous his defense was. It cost him an HBO date with Pavlik and a month later they failed to agree to a Phillips fight worth a tenth of that purse. They would argue they believed they could resurrect the Pavlik fight but not if he got beaten by Phillips.

Maybe that's true or maybe not but soon after Hamilton and Friedman appeared and a legal battle for Duddy's future began. It ended with Irish Ropes losing control over the fighter while money was put into escrow for them in case they prevailed in court.

The McLoughlin's may well have taken more than their fair share from Duddy's purses and if so should face the consequences. I have no knowledge of that one way or the other but they certainly wouldn't be the first (and sadly not likely to be the last). What I do know is Hamilton was quoted at the time of the legal pyrotechnics that freed Duddy from Irish Ropes as saying, "Their treatment of him was horrendous."

Time and legal proceedings will decide that but it wasn't the case when came to making his matches. On that level he was more protected by Irish Ropes than President Obama's children are by the Secret Service. Duddy was 26-0 with 17 knockouts under their direction. Under Hamilton and Freidman he was beaten by a guy whose own trainer said of him AFTER he'd beaten Duddy, "He (Duddy) lost to a B level fighter."

That loss exposed just how carefully Duddy had been managed, so carefully he was world rated by everyone but the World Boxing Association. That may be one of the few things the WBA has gotten right in many years of ranking fighters.

Regardless, Duddy's many defensive liabilities and his overrated punching power have now been exposed under new management. Lyell hit him with so many overhand rights it looked like there was a waterfall of boxing gloves coming down at him and he had no answers.

"If Duddy had been in there with Kelly he would have gotten killed," Jack Loew, trainer of both Pavlik and Lyell, told the Newark Star-Ledger after the fight. "This proves what I had been saying all along. Duddy is an overrated fighter. He's too easy to hit."

The now besmirched management team of Eddie and Tony McLoughlin were well aware of that but somehow for all their alleged finagling kept that critical fact hidden well enough to maneuver

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Duddy into world title contention and an undefeated record.

It didn't take long for the guys who came on board to "save" him from their diabolical misdeeds. It also didn't take them long to get him beat, setting him so far back at the age of 29 that undeserved title shots are now out of the question. Wonder if John Duddy is shocked about what they did to him too.