

## Dunne Loses In First Title Defense

Written by George Kimball  
Friday, 25 September 2009 19:00

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**DUBLIN, Ireland** --- Six months after it had begun, the short, happy reign of Bernard Dunne ended on Saturday night, though the former WBA junior featherweight champion won't remember much about the passing of the torch.

Knocked down for the third time in the round, Dunne lay collapsed and on the brink of unconsciousness in the middle of the ring, where ringside physicians were joined by stretcher-and-oxygen bearing EMT. The sellout crowd which had provided the backdrop of a deafening, nonstop roar for not quite nine minutes of fighting had now grown eerily silent in its concern. Poonsawat Kraetingdaenggym, the author of the damage that had put the Irishman in this condition, was not celebrating his newly won championship. Rather, he was on his hands and knees, crawling through the huddle of doctors to check on Dunne's condition.

It didn't take Dunne long to recover from the damage. Waving off the stretcher, the oxygen, and the offer of a free lift to the hospital in the back of an ambulance, he got to his feet and, after spending several minutes on a corner stool, asked to borrow ring announcer Mike Goodall's microphone, and delivered a heartfelt apology to his loyal fans.

A couple of things should be pointed out here. Not one of the 15,000 Dunne fans at the O2 Arena had left at this point. And, their allegiance notwithstanding, once they had assured themselves of his safety, the Irish audience stood and applauded the new champion. Name me another country in the world where such a scene might have unfolded.

Everyone, including Dunne, knew that Poonsawat loomed a dangerous opponent coming in; but for his mandatory status, he's probably the last 122-pounder in the world Dunne and promoter Brian Peters would have chosen for a first defense, and he proved to be every bit as good as advertised.

The Thai's only loss had come in his only previous fight outside his homeland, to Ukrainian Wldimir Sidorenko, in Hamburg three years ago. There had been speculation that Poonsawat might be intimidated by the boisterous pro-Dunne atmosphere, but if anyone was adversely affected by the crowd, it was probably Dunne, who once again got too brave for his own good.

Dunne had expected Poonsawat to be the early aggressor. What he had not anticipated was a relentless, two fisted fighting machine who never stopped throwing punches and never stopped moving forward. In the face of the naked aggression, Dunne fought almost entirely in retreat. Although he occasionally stood his ground long enough to mete out some punishment of his own, in three rounds of boxing Dunne never once took a forward step, nor did Poonsawat take a backward one.

Which is not to say that this one immediately evinced the trappings of a rout. After two rounds The Sweet Science had the fight dead even, and at least one of the judges had scored each of the first two for Dunne.

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Poonsawat is 29, but given his boyish looks he'd be ID'd in almost any saloon in America. His fighting style is quite atypical for a Thai boxer, and in electing to lead the dance from the outset, he not only dictated the pace of the bout, but the quarters at which it would be waged. Dunne has in the past evinced a proclivity for cutting, but several clashes of heads left him unmarked. (Somewhat to his own surprise; a couple of times following these collisions he paused and wiped his glove against his brow to check for blood.)

Which is not to say there was not blood. By the third round Dunne was bleeding from his right ear, courtesy one Poonsawat punch, and he would shortly be bleeding from a nasty gash along his left eyebrow from another, but even then he was firing back. A few seconds before the roof caved in, in fact, Dunne had stopped running long enough to land his best punch of the night. (If he misses it, maybe they're still fighting.) This emboldened him just enough to be right there when Poonsawat landed a series of hard left hooks, the last of which sent him crashing to the floor.

Dunne arose and took an eight-count from the French referee, Jean-Louis Legland, but there was a minute and a half yet to go in a bout in which the three-knockdown rule was in effect, and Dunne was so disoriented that he tried to fight his way out of trouble -- on legs that might not have supported him even if there hadn't been another guy throwing punches at him.

Officially there were two more knockdowns before Legland stopped the fight at 2:57 of the third, but the truth of the matter is Dunne was so far gone he might have gone down on both occasions even if he hadn't been hit.

It was a while before Poonsawat, who had delayed the opening bell for a few seconds because he was still praying in his corner, could bring himself to celebrate, but he will be taking Dunne's belt back to Bangkok and will have plenty of time to reflect on his good fortune.

Bernard Dunne will be doing some reflecting of his own. This result, coupled with the devastating nature of his first-round KO loss to Kiko Martinez in a European title fight three years ago, would lead some to counsel retirement, but as he tearfully addressed the audience afterward, Dunne didn't sound like a guy who was ready to pack it in yet.

"It'll take a long time to get over this," he said. "But I will get over it."

With his come-from behind stoppage of Ricardo Cordova last March Dunne had become the first Irishman to win a world title in Dublin in almost ninety years. Now he had become the first Irish champion in history to lose one in his first defense.

Tyson Fury, Mick Hennessy's lumbering, 6'7" giant who won the British heavyweight title from John McDermott last month under somewhat controversial circumstances, fought for the first time in Ireland, in the co-feature of Peters' card at the O2, and paid homage to the land of his ancestors by trotting himself and his cornermen out in bright green. He was ushered into the ring for his six-rounder against Czech Tomas Mrazek with a live rendition of "The Rocky Road to Dublin" by the High Kings.

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Almost as ungainly as he is large, Fury belted the smaller man all night long, but didn't knock Mrazek down until the last half minute of the fight which he won easily, more by virtue of his overwhelming size advantage than anything else.

Now 9-0, Fury is descended from Irish traveler stock, and claims a distant kinship with Limerick's Andy Lee. This would presumably make him related as well to Ireland's Prince of Pipers, Finbar Furey, and his son Martin. (Of the High Kings, who in addition to providing the big man's entrance music, performed the Irish national anthem prior to the main event.)

"His side of the family never could spell," said Finbar Furey of Tyson Fury.

Mrazek who won high praise for not only lasting the duration, but for fighting back to the end, is now 4-23-5

Although they were of the same age and weight, Mayo's Michael Sweeney and Limerick's Jamie Power went through their entire amateur careers without ever meeting in the ring, and came to the O2 undefeated as professionals. The highly anticipated scrap got off to a rousing start when Sweeney decked Power with a big right hand in the first round.

Sweeney, who is trained by former world title challenger Sean Mannion, was pressing in the third, and appeared to have floored Power again, but referee Mickey Vann ruled that he had pushed Power down and then hit him on the top of the head, and after warning Sweeney, disallowed the knockdown. Before the round was out, Sweeney made it academic, hurting Power with a left hook and then driving him to the canvas with two right hands punctuated by a left.

Power made it to his feet, but was bleeding from a cut, probably the result of the initial hook. Vann led him back to his corner, where the ringside physician, Dr. Joe McKeever, ruled Power unfit to continue.

Sweeney remained unbeaten at 8-0-1 with the victory, while Power (whose first six wins had all come against Eastern European opposition) fell to 6-1.

Patrick Hyland, who won IBF "international" featherweight title back in July, improved to 18-0 with a sixth-round TKO of Manuel (Zorro) Sequera.

One of three fighting brothers, Hyland was originally to have faced Kenyan David Killu, who encountered passport difficulties and was replaced a few days before the fight by Manuel (Zorro) Sequera.

A 32 year-old Venezuelan, Sequera was 6-2 when he left his homeland. For the past half-dozen years he has lived in Barcelona and earned an honest living as a Professional Opponent. Including the latest setback he is 3-14-1 in Europe, which probably ought to qualify him for a Latvian passport.

Sequera put up a game showing for as long as he needed to before going down following a

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fusillade of body shots late in the fifth. When Hyland dropped him again at the beginning of the next round, referee Emile Teidt jumped in to say "That's enough." This met with some displeasure from Zorro, who now won't be able to lose anywhere for the next thirty days.

Portmarnock's Oisin Fagan, who had dropped down to 130 when he lost to Hyland's brother Eddie in July, was a full-fledged welterweight for his scheduled six-round prelim against Latvian Juris Ivanovis. Always exciting, Fagan inadvertently made it more so in this one, and two minutes into the bout had taken so much unanswered punishment that he was the recipient of a standing 8-count from Vann.

Having dug himself into an early hole, Fagan quickly dug his way out, mounting a furious body attack that put Ivanovis on the floor a few seconds before the round ended. Having turned the first from an 8-10 deficit to 10-9 in his favor, he belted the Latvian all over the ring for the minute more it lasted. A right hand put Ivanovis on his backside in a neutral corner, dazed and bleeding from about the mouth. He struggled up -- barely -- by the count of nine, by which time Vann had stopped it anyway. Fagan is now 24-7, Ivanovis 5-20.

Irish welterweight champion Stephen Haughian had his hands full with his Estonian foe Albert Starikov, but managed to pull out a draw in their 6-round prelim when referee David Irving, the lone scorer, returned a 57-57 verdict. Starkov (13-10-1) scored the bout's only knockdown when he put Haughian on the deck in the fourth. Haughian is now 18-1-1, with his only loss a since-avenged split decision to Italian Giammario Grassellini on the Duddy-Eastman card in Belfast two years ago.

Dublin's Anthony Fitzgerald outpointed Lithuanian Tadas Jonkus in their 4-round super middleweight prelim, with Irving scoring it 39-37 for the Irishman. Fitzgerald is now 4-2, Jonkus 4-4.

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02 Arena

Dublin, Ireland

September 26, 2009

**JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS:** Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym, 122, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand TKO'd Bernard Dunne, 121 1/2, Nielstown, Ireland (3) (WBA title)

**HEAVYWEIGHTS:** Tyson Fury, 261 1/2, Wilmslow, England dec. Tomas Mrazek, 222 1/2, Prague, Czech Republic (6)

**CRUISERWEIGHTS:** Michael Sweeney, 178, Ballinrobe, Ireland TKO'd Jamie Power, 177 1/2, Limerick, Ireland (3)

**SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS:** Anthony Fitzgerald, 164 1/2, Dublin dec. Tadas Jonkus, 166 1/4,

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Klaipeda, Lithuania (4)

**JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS:** Stephen Haughian, 149 1/4, Craigavon, Northern Ireland drew wit Albert Starikov, 151, Talinn, Estonia (6)

**WELTERWEIGHTS:** Oisin Fagan, 144, Dublin KO'd Juris Ivanovs, 144, Tukums, Latvia (2)

**JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS:** Patrick Hyland, 127, Dublin TKO'd Manuel Sequera, 130, Valencia, Venezuela (6)