Written by Michael Woods
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He might be looked back upon as fighter of who never quite measured up, more sizzle than steak, the product of a skilled hype-a-thon and his pale skin. But middleweight John Duddy, the 31-year-old Irishman who came to the US and generated a considerable following in New York City, has decided that what he has accomplished in the ring since he turned pro in 2003 will simply have to do.

The Derry Destroyer, who boasts a 29-2 record, with 18 KOs, released a statement announcing that he is quitting the sport, despite the fact that he was set up for a showdown with fellow Emerald Islander Andy Lee on March 12th.

After a great deal of soul-searching, I have decided to retire from boxing.

In many ways, continuing to fight would be the easy course of action. I have been offered the opportunity to fight Andy Lee on HBO for a purse in excess of $100,000. A win would put me in position to fight for a world championship. This is not an opportunity that I cast aside lightly.

I started watching my father train in the gym when I was five years old. I began fighting competitively at age ten. For more than twenty years, I loved being a boxer. I still feel that it's an enormous honor to be a boxer. But I don't love it anymore.

I no longer have the enthusiasm and willingness to make the sacrifices that are necessary to honor the craft of prizefighting. I used to love going to the gym. Now it's a chore. I wish I still had the hunger, but I don't. The fire has burned out. And I know myself well enough to know that it won't return.

It would be unfair to my fans, my trainer and manager, and everyone else involved in the promotion of my fights for me to continue boxing when I know that my heart isn't in it. I've always given one hundred percent in the gym and in my fights. I have too much respect for boxing and the people around me to continue fighting when I know that I can't do that anymore.

I haven't accomplished everything that I wanted to achieve in boxing. But I've had a rewarding career. I've enjoyed the satisfaction of winning twenty-nine professional fights and learned lessons from my two losses. I've experienced the thrill of fighting in Madison Square Garden, Cowboys Stadium, and, also, my beloved Ireland with crowds cheering for me. I look forward to finding future challenges that bring as much passion and joy into my life as boxing has over the past twenty years.

Barry McGuigan was one of my childhood heroes. His photograph was one of the first things that visitors saw when entering our home in Derry. He had great influence on me when I was a boy.

Barry McGuigan once said, "Fighters are the first people to know when they should retire and the last to admit it."

I know that it's time for me to retire from boxing, and I'm admitting it.

I'm fortunate to have had the support of many good people throughout my career. To my fans; to the people in the boxing business who have been part of my team over the years; and most of all, to my wife Grainne and the rest of my family; thank you for your love and support.

I give you my word; I will not come back.

We confess, we were floored by the release, and by Duddy's choice. We wonder—will he look back in a year, or two, or ten, and wonder why he exited? That final sentence, though, that leaves us believing that the guy has said what he means, and he means what he says.

Mostly, we are happy for him, and applaud his move. He won't be going through the motions just for money, or to fulfill others' expectations. He is following his heart, and in this day and age, there sometimes seems like there's a dearth of those willing to do that. Too many people chase money and fame like those are the keys to everlasting happiness and serenity. Good luck John Duddy, and thanks for giving us keyboard tappers a good bit to work with.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

This is probably a great move for ole Johnny Boy. He's never had boxing cojones. And this game always catches up with da phonies. You cannot fool "Mother Nature," and you jive AND perpretrate a fraud for long in dat squared jungle. Enough said! Holla!

brownsugar says:

Wise decision,.. I was picking the far far superior Lee to make an example of Duddy in a show case fight and target Chavez Jr next. No shame on Duddy because it's better to bow out of the game,.. than to have to be carried out.

FighterforJC says:

I sense foul play, maybe a serious death threat for whatever reason. It's not unheard of. What is unheard of is for a relatively young fighter at the threshold of a major career breakthrough retiring with such commitment and sincerity.

teaser says:

kudos to mr duddy for for knowing when to hang it up ...even when there was money to be made ...no doubt there was pressure to keep fighting and squeeze that last payday out of him .....he didn't look good in his last fight ....not so much fire so it was time ...good luck !!

Joe says:

Duddy had a nice following in NYC and the public in general but he was turning into a stepping stone - an opponent. The mumbles aren't too far off in the distance. Hope he stays retired. Thanks for some great action fights. Duddy vs. Yuri Boy Campos comes to mind.