

An Oddity: An East Coast Super Bantamweight

Written by Robert Mladinich
Monday, 19 November 2007 19:00

While representing the Irish national amateur team several years ago, Paul Hyland looked up to James Moore, the team captain who is now an undefeated professional junior middleweight with a record of 13-0 (9 KOs).

Hyland saw in Moore, who is six years his senior, all of the qualities that he hoped to foster in himself. What impressed him most was Moore's gritty determination, Herculean work ethic, refusal to quit, and ability to rise to the occasion when it mattered most.

To some degree, the now 23-year-old Hyland, who is a professional super bantamweight with a 9-0 (4 KOs) record, is still following his amateur mentor.

The Dublin native relocated to New York, where he and Moore are managed by Brian Burke, an ex-cop who fought as an amateur on the late heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson's highly lauded amateur team.

If matchmaker Bruce Silverglade is able to secure an opponent for Hyland, he will appear in a preliminary bout on the Thanksgiving Eve fight card at the Plattduetsche Park restaurant in Franklin Square, Long Island, New York, on Wednesday, November 21.

Headlining that show will be Moore, who will face his toughest opponent to date in Thomas Davis of Knoxville, Tennessee. Davis's deceptive record of 11-5-2 (7 KOs) includes knockouts of two previously undefeated fighters: future title challenger Kendall Holt, who was 15-0, and Augustin Velez, who was 7-0.

"I traveled the world with James; he was like the daddy of the team," said Hyland in his thick but articulate Irish brogue. "I was the baby of the team, so he was like a mentor to me. When he won a bronze medal at the World Games, he was a hero to us all. We looked up to him, so I most definitely wanted to follow in his footsteps."

When Hyland arrived in New York he immediately began training at the fabled Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn. Never once did he feel out of place there, nor was he intimidated by the level of talent that he worked alongside.

"I was used to training and sparring with many top European fighters and champions, like Nicky Cook," said Hyland. "I was always sparring with top quality opponents."

Cook, who is currently 27-1 (15 KOs), long held the Commonwealth British Empire featherweight title.

Moreover, explained Hyland, he has been fighting for so long at so many levels, there is little he hasn't seen.

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The former standout soccer player began boxing at the tender age of seven, when he accompanied his father and two older brothers, Eddie and Patrick, to a Dublin gym.

Eddie, who is now 26, is currently 7-1 (3 KOs) as a professional lightweight. His nickname is "The Pride of Tallaght."

As a professional featherweight, the 24-year-old Patrick is 8-0 (3 KOs).

"My dad wanted me to stay at soccer, but I got to the gym and I never left," said Hyland. "It had everything I wanted. I loved the competition, and I loved the atmosphere."

Although it is immediately apparent that Hyland is extremely sensible and intelligent, never once did he consider attending college. For as long as he can remember, all he dreamed of was becoming a professional fighter.

Since turning pro in November 2004, he has learned to take nothing for granted. Although he is undefeated, there has been no shortage of disappointments.

Since arriving in the United States, for example, he has incurred a serious shoulder injury, from which he just recovered, and he has seen more than one fight fall apart for a variety of reasons.

"I learned a long time ago, even as an amateur, that until both fighters step on the scales and make weight, you can't be sure that the fight will take place," he explained. "So many things can happen."

Silverglade and Burke concur that finding suitable fights for an East Coast super bantamweight is no easy feat.

"Paul is a solid young fighter, a tough kid, but not a real banger," said Silverglade. "I'd call him a ring general because he really knows his way around the ring, and he is very comfortable in there. I'd come up with a list of possible opponents, but many of them won't take the fight or the commission won't approve them."

With such a dearth of lighter weight East Coast fighters, Burke realizes how logistically challenging it can be to build such a talented kid up.

"Many opponents are resistant to fighting a 9-0 guy who is very tough, even if he's coming off a shoulder injury," said Burke. "To get someone to go six rounds against the kid, you have to fly them in, which is very expensive. There are challenges ahead, but Paul has the goods. He's got a great future ahead of him."

"Paul is a very pleasant guy to be around, and he is very game in the ring," added Silverglade. "From a marketing standpoint, that is a great combination."

Other fighters scheduled to appear at the Plattduetsche are local favorites Eilon Kedem, Joe Rosa, Kamel Alolabi, Karl Desravines, Vanessa Greco, Kimberly Torres, Daniel Sostre, Roman

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Oliveri and Joseph Judah.

The show, which begins at 7:00 P.M., is nearly sold out but some tickets are still available by calling Gleason's Gym at 718-797-2872.

The Plattduetsche is located at 1132 Hempstead Turnpike, which is one mile east of Belmont Racetrack. The phone number is 516-354-3131.

Come early and enjoy some of the finest German food you'll ever have on this side of the Atlantic. The Plattduetsche is one of the oldest restaurants on Long Island and the ethnic fare is nothing short of sensational.