

## Geale Latest Aussie To Seek Greater Fame, Fortune In The U.S.

Written by Bernard Fernandez  
Thursday, 15 August 2013 13:23

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It shouldn't surprise anyone that IBF middleweight champion Daniel Geale is the about to become the latest Australian celebrity to attempt to increase his American visibility – and, by extension, his worldwide fame and fortune – by coming to the United States to do his thing.

Hey, it's a tactic that worked pretty well for actors Errol Flynn, Mel Gibson, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman and Paul Hogan, singers Olivia Newton John and Keith Urban, golfer Greg Norman and tennis superstars Rod Laver, John Newcombe, Ken Rosewall, Margaret Court and Evonne Goolagong Cawley.

"I feel very hungry. It's one thing that I haven't conquered yet, coming to the U.S. to fight," said Geale (29-1, 15 KOs), who will be making his American debut Saturday night when he puts his title on the line for the fifth time against England's Darren Barker (25-1, 16 KOs) at The Revel in Atlantic City, N.J. The fight will be televised live by HBO, as will the taped showing of a defense by WBO light heavyweight champion Nathan Cleverly (26-0, 12 KOs), of Wales, against Russian-born knockout artist Sergey Kovalev (21-0-1, 19 KOs) from Cardiff, Wales.

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If the 32-year-old Geale can win convincingly enough, and excitingly enough, in his HBO-televised introduction to American fight fans to whom he remains mostly a rumor, he could be ticketed for high-paying return engagements on these shores. But if it doesn't work out quite as he and his American promoter, Gary Shaw, are hoping, it wouldn't be the first time an iconic Australian boxer went home disappointed.

Consider the cautionary tale of Jeff Fenech, a three-time world champion who arrived for his own American premiere with considerably more fanfare than is accompanying Geale's first working trip to a place where it once was said the streets were lined with gold.

Fenech, whom many Australian boxing experts believe is the finest fighter that country has ever produced, was a 27-year-old sensation, at least in his homeland, when he was brought to Las Vegas for a June 28, 1991, bout with WBC super featherweight champ Azumah Nelson, of Ghana, at The Mirage. It was the primary undercard attraction of a show headlined by the rematch between heavyweight bombers Mike Tyson and Razor Ruddock.

Promoter Don King had signed Fenech, whose attacking, aggressive style had been likened to that of Tyson and Roberto Duran, to a four-fight, \$5 million contract. The most Fenech ever had been paid for a night's work in Australia, where all of his previous 25 bouts had been staged, was around \$500,000.

"Americans don't really know Jeff Fenech," Fenech said a few days before his ballyhooed showdown with Nelson. "But after this fight, maybe they'll sit up and take notice.

"I kind of feel like I'm the victim of circumstances. I've fought in Australia throughout my career because I wanted to. I would have been perfectly content to have had all the rest of my fights in Australia. But I also recognize that the money's here in the States. I don't think I would be paid as much as I am to fight Azumah Nelson in Australia. I'm not sure Australia could afford this fight in any case. I guess I always knew that until I came here, I'd never get the recognition I deserve."

Unfortunately for Fenech, who went off as a 2-1 favorite, the great Nelson – who, like Fenech, is

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enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame – retained his title on a draw. The Fenech Victory Tour in the U.S. never materialized; he fought only once more in America in his remaining seven bouts until his retirement in 2008, an eighth-round stoppage of Tialano Tover on Nov. 18, 1995, in Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall. Two of those final seven fights were rematches with Nelson, both in Australia, with each winning once to leave their series deadlocked at 1-1-1.

It has been much the same story for most if not all of the best native-born Australian boxers. Lionel Rose, Jimmy Carruthers, Les Darcy, Johnny Famechon, Anthony Mundine and Jeff Harding all held world titles at one point or another, but they fought seldom, if ever, in the U.S. and were known here only by hardcore American fans. What about Kostya Tszyu and Vic Darchinyan, you say? Tszyu was based in Australia throughout his pro career but he came from Russia, and the same can be said of Darchinyan, who was Armenian. Even the sainted Fenech, born in Sydney, had Maltese parents.

At 32, Geale is rightly considered to be one of the best 160-pounders on the planet. But he is less known here, and everywhere, than WBC champion Sergio Martinez, of Argentina, and WBA titlist Gennady Golovkin (27-0, 24 KOs), who is from Kazakhstan but lives in Germany. Martinez also has the advantage of having fought 14 times in the U.S. and Golovkin three times, a good many of Martinez's appearances here and all of Golovkin's getting prime-time television exposure.

Golovkin also has the advantage of being a lights-out puncher whose explosive finishing power presumably puts him in the same must-watch category as Argentina's Lucas Matthysse (34-2, 34 KOs), emerging American heavyweight Deontay Wilder (29-0, 29 KOs) and, yes, Kovalev, whose scrap with Cleverly – which, if he wins, could lead to a subsequent matchup with ageless legend Bernard Hopkins – probably is regarded by most HBO viewers as the more compelling reason to watch Saturday's split-site doubleheader.

Geale is a good offensive fighter and an effective counter-puncher, but his knockout ratio is not so high that it suggests he is some sort of absurdly destructive Thunder from Down Under. And Barker, who gave Martinez a problem or two before he was TKO'ed in the 11th round on Oct. 1, 2011, in Boardwalk Hall, is capable in his own right and hardly disposed to help make Geale's initial turn in the U.S. spotlight a smashing success.

Unlike Fenech, however, Geale has one thing to his advantage as he unveils himself to

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hard-to-sway American spectators who do not give their hearts readily to some other country's hero. He has fought outside of Australia twice, both in Germany, defeating Sebastian Sylvester and avenging his only loss, to 38-year-old countryman and former world champ Anthony Mundine.

"People forget that Daniel went overseas and fought two different fighters and came out on top," Shaw pointed out. "Daniel Geale doesn't fight scared. "

It remains to be seen whether Geale is what he claims to be – the No. 1 middleweight in the world – or merely well back in third place, behind Martinez and Golovkin, each of whom has already established his U.S. bona fides.

And if Geale reveals himself to not be at that level, hey, Aussies can always content themselves with watching the DVD of "Cinderella Man," in which Russell Crowe portrays James J. Braddock as he wrests the heavyweight title from the hugely favored Max Baer. Except, of course, that Crowe is playing the role of an American.

Picture: Tim Carrafa *Source:* The Sunday Mail (Qld)

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### **stormcentre says:**

Geale is quite a complete fighter in most senses with the exception being big-time power.

He is capable of being underestimated by opponents and their teams mostly due to (aside from his core skill/experience set and how he trains) how effectively he has retained many useful amateur boxing moves and traits - traits, like are basically multi-faceted defence mechanisms that also perform as opening creators. These skills are sadly forgotten in the professional ranks - particularly those ranks/gyms obsessed with knockout wins.

This is because many boxing gyms and trainers these days have an overreliance on offence. Few teach and prioritize defence to the same extent as offence. The Mayweather family, particularly when Floyd junior was a lad; did though. So does Brendan Ingle.

See the difference? Basically it's just basics that are often forgotten, that are not forgotten.

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The fact that Geale has retained many useful amateur traits, and made sure that they are ones that – for his style - neatly and effectively crossover into the pros; means he can befuddle the average professional fighter that has become stale and perhaps developed an over-reliance on power at the expense of the more intricate movements.

For an example of the kinds of amateur "tricks" I am talking about, check Kostya Tszyu's amateur fight with Vernon Forrest around about the time the commentator said; "this kid is just a little bit brilliant". It was Kostya Tszyu's ability to integrate and retain his amateur "tricks" without sacrificing power that, aside from his experience, enabled him to explode onto the scene so effectively. Much like Gamboa and Rigondeaux.

And Kostya Tszyu was a significant influence on Geale's fighting career.

For Geale this extra quality often presents (for his opponent) as another complex tangible (set) for opponents to surmount, particularly those opponents that can't effectively hurt and/or slow him down. And this is even more so for them in the latter rounds when most fighters tire and simply expect a reasonably predictable grind and pace - one that doesn't require any special effect or athleticism. And this is particularly so if no power, stamina or other advantage has presented itself in the fight by then.

As then, Geale's opponents – particularly opponents with teams quick to assess and draw conclusions - often find themselves realizing that Geale's amateurish style - the same style that seemed, on first inspection, to reek of a fighter that hadn't yet completely shed his amateur skin - actually is a part of the sweet science that Geale has not forgotten to ensure he doesn't forget.

It's the same reason that veteran fighters don't like to fight fast, young and dynamic fighters. And it's the same reason Rigondeaux can't get a decent fight right now.

Everybody knows that a hot professional prospect that can effectively transcend into the pros and bring along with him many amateur tricks and moves (moves that professional fighters don't always worry about for many reasons, including the fact that the additional length of a professional fight often presents as an opportunity - to fighters that may have not had Olympic qualities - to deliver power in a manner that can overcome a technique deficit) is a force to be reckoned with.

And Geale's ability to spin off in different arcs, twist, turn and create offensive opportunities through, and out of, an effective defence (which is always the best offence); is in itself as effective as it a forgotten part of boxing. It is also one of the main reasons why Mayweather is in a different league. Not in the least as it (a sophisticated defence) performs the role of a defence that can, at will, seamlessly transition into offence - whilst also performing the function of economizing motion, injecting false confidence into opponents, and avoiding unnecessary stamina expenditures.

For this Geale can mostly thank Bodo Andreas.

**stormcentre says:**

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Oh Bernard, it was Russel Crowe that played Braddock in Cindarella Man; not Mel Gibson.

Also, Fenech was more dominant in the lower weights, once he was at the weight he fought Nelson at; his hands and confidence were not the same – it happens!

Otherwise, good write up about Geale.

### **fightscorecollector says:**

He beats Barker quite easily on Saturday night and thats coming from a BRIT. For me its a 9-3, 8-4 type of fight.