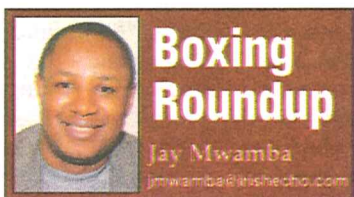


Duddy heads into toughest fight yet

It looked like another risky bet in Las Vegas when trainer Emmanuel Stewart decided on a last minute switch in opponents for his 3-0 Irish charge Andy Lee last Thursday, discarding journeyman Danny Stanisavljevic for 27-fight veteran Carl Cockerham.

Six rounds later at the Orleans Hotel & Casino Arena, Lee's masterful dominance of Cockerham in his Vegas debut had earned the Limerick middleweight kudos from the boxing media in town for last Saturday's world heavyweight title fight.

Lee had his way with Cockerham from the first round and only the 32-year-old Vegas resident's experience and excellent conditioning enabled him



to withstand the steady barrage of jabs and power shots.

"I beat him every minute of every round - it wasn't an easy fight but I beat him easily," said Lee on his return to his Detroit base on Sunday.

He won all the rounds on all three judges' cards to pitch a 60-54 shutout, and although there were no knockdowns, the big southpaw opened a cut over Cockerham's left eye with a straight left in the fourth stanza.

"He was experienced and

used every trick to survive," Lee said.

Cockerham, who turned pro in 1998 when Lee was 14, saw his record fall to 12-13-3, while the victor improved to 4-0 (2 KOs).

Explaining Stewart's reason for accepting Cockerham as an opponent after they'd prepared for the 7-7-2 Stanisavljevic, Lee said:

"We watched tapes of the other guy (Stanisavljevic) and he was nothing. You get no credit for beating a nobody. Cockerham was a better fighter."

At any rate, Stanisavljevic still got to fight in Vegas, against Lee's Kronk stablemate Aaron Pryor Jr., who scored a knockdown in the third stanza to eke out a six round split



John Duddy.

decision on the Hasim Rahman-Oleg Maskaev undercard at the Thomas & Mack Center Saturday night.

The Lee-Cockerham match was the first of a two-fight deal with Vegas-based Top Rank

Promotions who are pursuing the Irish prospect. The second Top Rank bout is scheduled for next month.

"I'm ready to go. I came out without any marks," Lee declared.

McCULLOUGH BACK

Keeping true to the title of his 2005 autobiography, "Don't Quit!", Wayne McCullough is set to resume his career 14 months after his last fight.

"We're looking at September in California," McCullough's promoter, Dan Goossen, said in New York.

Now 36, the "Pocket Rocket" has not fought since being halted by Oscar Larios in a WBC super bantamweight title match in July 2005. It was the first stoppage of McCullough's illustrious career.

A silver medalist at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, McCullough was WBC bantamweight titlist from 1995 to 1997.

Sports Week

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the fact he still hasn't presided over a competitive fixture. When he finally does, the knives are already sharpened. Thin ice, and he's barely started skating.

Dubs will be too much for Mayom

Would you believe it's been 21 years? Honestly. Over two decades since Dublin and Kerry last lined out together in an All Ireland final. Those holding their breath for a once-traditional September showpiece can exhale. Dublin haven't qualified, but trust us, on Sunday they will. For once the hype around the capital is justified.

Ever-confident, to a painful degree, this year there's a reason. They are good and quite frankly few others are. Take Mayo and Laois in the quarter-final last weekend. It was challenge match intensity and while Mayo qualified with a 0-14 to 0-11 victory, they can be thankful that of all teams it was Laois they were against.

Time and time again in recent seasons, Mick O'Dwyer's sides have hobbled from the championship in spineless and gutless fashion. This time it was no different and Laois are left wondering how a team that was the best in Leinster between 2003 and 2005, walk away with just one provincial title. Mayo, meanwhile, are left wondering just how exactly they are going to beat Dublin. They have positives in the energy and commitment of Ciaran McDonald and Conor Mortimer, the midfield presence of Ronan McGarrity and the tireless efforts of Alan Dillon and Keith Higgins. But that isn't enough.

The team that thrilled in the early league have slowed through championship intensity and the likes of Ger Brady and Billy Joe Padden have not been able to adapt their game to make a

noticeable impact. The words of manager Mickey Moran didn't inspire confidence ahead of Sunday's showdown either. "We're proud and delighted to be in the semi-final," he said after the disposal of Laois. "We said at half-time we'd stay ahead no matter what it took. We knew Laois would come back at us and in fairness they did but we got through it." And of Dublin? "It's going to be a tough task. As far as I know it's already a Dublin-Kerry final. But we'll show up next week and be glad to be there."

"Dublin have to be joint favorites to win this thing though, along with Kerry. But we've got 30 lads who've trained hard all year. And there's a real honesty to them. I promised the people of Mayo at the beginning of the year one thing: I didn't promise an All Ireland, I promised them a family of a team."

Not words that will have Dublin quaking and they have no reason to worry. The intensity they have generated this year has seen them steamroll just about anyone who has stood in their way (albeit against limited opponents in the form of Longford, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath). The return of Jason Sherlock and Ray Cosgrove this season to the forward line has left the front six bordering on lethal but it's been in the middle where the real drive has come from. Bryan Cullen at six has been immense and in front of him Shane Ryan has taken his game - as was needed - to another level while Ciaran Whelan is no longer the 10-minute man. Whether Pat Harte and McGarrity can cope is doubtful and it's a similar story as to whether James Nallen can handle the pace of Dublin's game. Too many question marks. Twenty-one years of waiting is surely about to end.

Donaghy is Kerry's answer

Kieran Donaghy. Strange how one man, however tall, can turn a championship season on its head. And there's

no doubting he's done just that. After Jack O'Connor's Kerry lost the Munster final replay to Cork, the county was in turmoil. It was destined to be the end of an era that saw the team struggle in the face of Ulster oppression.

One All Ireland made them a good team, but because this was Kerry they were left to match up unfavorably against the past. O'Connor locked the gates to a Kerry training session - the first time ever the county hadn't let the public enter in its history - and rumors were rampant about discontent within the panel. The end was surely in sight.

Last Sunday they squared up to Cork again, this time in the All Ireland semi-final, and left people wondering just how exactly they lost that Munster final. But there is a simple answer. The placing of 6'6" Donaghy at full forward. Known as "Star," the Tralee Tigers basketball player has already drawn comparisons with the Bomber Liston and it's no wonder. In the three games since that Munster final replay, Donaghy has been the main reason behind the Kerry resurgence that has seen them dispose of Longford (where his hands of glue and superb vision were the catalyst for an early flurry of goals), Armagh (his first start in Croke Park saw him get the better of Francie Bellew, the last full back in the hard-man mould) and last Sunday it was Derek Kavanagh's turn.

The first ball launched towards the pair saw Donaghy rise high and claim and he was only denied a goal after a fine stop by Alan Quirke. The trend continued and although Donaghy kicked just one point he was central to just about everything Kerry did as they ran out 0-16 to 0-10 winners.

An era isn't quite over and it's hard to see how Dublin or Mayo through Barry Cahill or David Heaney will stop him. This Kerry group look set to match up a little more favorably against history, while Donaghy at just 22 is set to cause consternation to full backs for a while yet.

Euro

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will be followed by an early crunch match, also in Belfast, with the Spaniards, on September 6.

TOP DOGS

Denmark, at home to the North in Group F on Oct. 7, blanked Poland 2-0 in Odense, courtesy of Birmingham City teenager Niklas Bendtner (32nd) and Dennis Rommedahl (62nd).

Two of the North's other group opponents both came a cropper in friendlies, with Liechtenstein succumbing 3-0 to Euro 08 co-hosts Switzerland in Bern on goals by Alex Frei (11th, 51st) and Xavier Margairaz (65th); and Latvia falling 1-0 to Pavel Pogrebynak's late strike (90th).

QUALIFYING RESULTS

Amid the clutch of midweek friendlies, Macedonia got the Euro 08 qualifying race off to quiet start with a 1-0 victory away to Estonia in Group E. Goce Sedloski struck in Tallinn.

In Scotland's Group B, Georgia ran riot in Toftir, demolishing the Faroe Islands 6-0 with Shota Arveladze (37th, 62nd, 82nd) reeling in a hat trick. Jaba Kankava (16th), Aleksandr Iashvili (18th) and skipper Levan Kobiasvili (51st) also tallied.

And in Brussels, Kazakhstan held Belgium to a goalless tie in Group A.

Golf

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GREY GOOSE GATEWAY TOUR

Mark Murphy tied for 40th place at Martin Downs Country Club in Palm City, Fla. At 217 (70-73-74) for 54 holes, Murphy was one stroke over par and 12 behind the victorious Del Ponchock. Murphy's check came to \$1,181.

Ladies

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Kerry/Donegal captain got a consolation goal but it was far too little and far too late. Clarke added her fourth goal, piling it

on as the final whistle beckoned, as Cavan secured their 11th New York Ladies Championship.

Player of the Game: Emma Clarke

Cavan: Katie Pennell, Eilish Doherty, Mary Maguire, Nicola Rogan, Aimee Gomez, Allison

Traynor, Karen Kennedy, Justine Clifford, Linda McKeon (1-2), Caitriona Fogarty, Orlaigh Cullen, Rosie O'Reilly (1-2), Nuala Carroll, Emma Clarke (4-6, 1 peno), Aisling Doonan (0-4, 1 sl. 1 fr) Sub: Elizabeth Keogan.

Kerry/Donegal: Tina Dengler,

Loretta Duffy, Kathleen Enright, Aoife Gibson, Shuvaun Neville, Mary Cooney, Nicola White, Una Burke, Paula Fitzgerald, Anita McKenna (0-1. fr), Michelle McVann, Susan O'Sullivan (1-0), Denise Dunnion (1-2), Colette Fox, Bernie Tuohy.