

Duddy Takes Spanish Challenge

By Declan O'Kelly

MIDDLEWEIGHT John Duddy will fight Pablo Navascues of Spain on October 20 at the National Stadium in Dublin. Navascues, from Madrid, has a record of 23-1 (16KOs) but has fought most of his career at light-middleweight, where he is the ninth-ranked boxer in Europe.

The 31-year-old's last outing was on March 27, when he won a split decision and defended his Spanish light-middleweight title against Miguel Angel Pena.

"I want to fight prestigious boxers like Duddy because I don't have time to waste in my career. I would like to fight for a major title early next year and this fight can help to get me there," said Navascues ahead of his biggest challenge in the squared circle.

The Spaniard has 16 knockouts on his resume, so clan Duddy will be fully aware that he has some power in his hands. Not that his level of opponent has been what one could call world-class — the first time he fought an opponent with a winning record was his 18th bout against Jaume Pons in 2004. That was for the Spanish light middleweight title, a fight he won by technical deci-



sion on the scorecards after five rounds because of an accidental clash of heads.

"Duddy is a good boxer with a lot of power in both hands. I admire what he has achieved in his career in the U.S., but Europe is different," said Navascues.

"Our records are similar and I'm sure that both of us will be at our best. I also think that our styles are quite similar and it will be an honor to beat him!"

Navascues has only fought outside his country once, but is relishing the thought of fighting in Ireland.

"My only fight abroad was in Russia a long time ago and I won that by a second round knockout. I actually enjoy fighting away because I don't have the pressure of fighting in front of my own supporters," he said.

On that night in 2000, Navascues TKO'ed Andrei Larionov in the

Russian's professional debut in St. Petersburg. The Russian fought and lost once more and has not been in the ring since. One thing Navascues will undoubtedly be aware of — Duddy isn't Andrei Larionov.

A fully focused Duddy should win this fight and continue his quest to challenge for the European middleweight title. Two other words with Spanish origin should quell any complacency on the part of

the Derryman and flash warning signs as to what can happen when one underestimates an opponent: Kiko Martinez — the Spaniard who recently derailed the Bernard Dunne express.

Meanwhile, Alo Kelly is back in action on Friday night at the Melville sports resort in Long Island. For light heavyweight Kelly from Co. Westmeath, this will be his third fight in less than two months.

Standing between him and his third victory will be Reggie laCrete, a highly-fancied 4-0 fighter. The six-round contest will be a stern test for Kelly as the caliber of opponent is a big step up from his first two outings.

"The bar has moved up on this one. The guy is 4-0 and he is managed by Jackie Kallen, who used to manage James Toney, and she has very high expectations of him," said Eddie McLoughlin of Irish Ropes.

Light-middleweight Henry Coyle was to take the first step on his comeback after his defeat to Omar Bell, but no opponent has been confirmed as we go to press. The Western Warrior may have to wait a little longer to get back to winning ways and erase the painful memories of that defeat in June.

Polish-born Brooklyn-based middleweight Pawel Wolak (16-0) will headline the card again. Dan Wallace, and tickets are still available by calling 516-313-2304.

Also in action this weekend is Oklahoma-based Dubliner Oisín Fagan. The light welterweight will fight on three-man Oklahoma team that will slug against Arkansas' best in the "International Redneck Slugout." The schoolteacher has a record of 19-4-1 and will be hoping to make it 20 wins this Saturday in Fort Smith.

Maureen Shea clocked up her 12th win against Jessica Mohs at Cipriani on Wall Street last Wednesday night. Outclassed, outgunned and out of her depth, Mohs succumbed after 1:40 of round two.

Shea can next be seen as one of the panelists on the Pugilists and Popcorn Forum on boxing cinema, presented by Fighting Irishmen Celebrating Celtic Pride, fighters 1820-Present in association with the South Street Seaport on September 18.

She will be alongside boxing legend Mick Ward, promoter Lou Dibella and actor Tony LoBianco to discuss the sweet science. Tickets are available by calling 212-748-8776.

New York to Host Hurling All-Stars

By Eugene Kyne

THE news from GAA headquarters in Dublin last week was a fantastic shot in the arm for the New York GAA with the announcement that the 2006 and 2007 hurling all-stars will travel to the Big Apple in December.

The all-star squad is selected each year since its inception in 1971, and the names of players that have graced its team in both codes are a who's who of the premier players in history. From Jimmy Keaveney, Pat Spillane, Jack O'Shea, John Connolly, Eddie Keher, and Ray Cummins, the players of the first two decades all played in Gaelic Park

as the teams were time and again rewarded with trips to New York.

Since the last trip to New York in 1990, the all-star squads have started to look further afield for destinations, and with Vodafone sponsorship such exotic destinations such as Buenos Aires, Dubai, Hong Kong and San Diego have been used in the years since 2001.

With the all-weather field now available at Gaelic Park, an announcement came from GAA President Nicky Brennan last week. "The New York Board has carried out a great deal of work on their facilities at Gaelic Park in the last 12 months. The new all-

weather pitch and the provision of flood lights have had a positive impact on the games in New York, and I know that the GAA organization in the city are very excited by the upcoming visit of the all-stars," he said.

The game will be played on Saturday, December 1 under the lights with the possibility of a curtain raiser involving a New York team.

The 2006 all-star team is well known with players of the caliber of Donal Og Cusack, J.J. Delaney, Ronan Curran, Dan Shanahan and Henry Shefflin in the lineout. The 2007 team will be selected from a roster of 45, and

announced on October 17.

The New York GAA stated its delight with the news of the trip and feel it is a response to the hard work that has been done behind the scenes in the development of Gaelic Park over the last 12 months.

It is, however, not the only fixture of note that will be played in the off season at the Mecca. The FBD champions this year are Sligo Institute of Technology, and they are to be rewarded for their endeavors with a trip to New York to face the local footballers in the away final.

This game will be played in early October with New York under the watchful eye of man-

ager Louis Holland hoping to annex the title they won when captain Bingo O'Driscoll led them to victory over Sligo four years ago.

The ladies of New York will also be in action in the coming months with manager Frank Brady and selectors Dessie O'Reilly, Aidan Power and Marie Melly getting their squad ready for a battle with the Underdogs.

The Underdogs are a team that is coming together in Ireland as part of a TV program that consists of players that, for whatever reason, slipped through the cracks and never played inter-county football at any level, underage to senior. They are

currently training in the Curragh, Co. Kildare at the Army headquarters as they prepare for what will be a monumental task on Thanksgiving weekend at Gaelic Park.

The New York team will face off against their Irish network RTÉ on hand to beam the game back across the foam. Names and players of the caliber of Linda McKeon, Imelda Mullarkey, Sue Bennett and Kelly McArdle will grace the New York squad, with bragging rights and honor to be defended.

While the club scene is winding down, the inter-county teams are heating up. It will make for great television and a fascinating off season