

2006



BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Joe Calzaghe
Unbeaten Jeff Lacy was seen as a major threat but the Welshman made him look like a novice



WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Manny Pacquiao
Two big knockout wins over Erik Morales bookended a unanimous decision over tough Oscar Larios



OVERSEAS FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Israel Vazquez TKO10 Jhonny Gonzalez (16 September, Las Vegas)

Down twice, behind on points, the tenacious Israel Vazquez just kept driving forward and finally he broke through the resistance of challenger Jhonny Gonzalez to retain his WBC super bantam title by 10th-round KO.

It was "a classic war between Mexican fighters on Mexican independence day," I reported for *BM*.

Gonzalez boxed with skill and poise, and he punched with power, dropping Vazquez with left hooks in the fourth and sixth rounds. Vazquez was the stronger man, though, and the fight turned in the seventh, when two successive right hands dropped Gonzalez, and when he was floored again in the 10th it was all over.



BRITISH FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Jamie Moore KO10 Matthew Macklin (29 September, Manchester)

For round after round, Jamie Moore and Matthew Macklin hammered away at each other in an epic fight for the British light-middleweight title. One of them had to give way, and it was an exhausted Macklin who crumpled, going down twice in the 10th round. He was taken from the ring on a stretcher with an oxygen mask over his face and detained overnight in hospital for observation.

Despite the back-and-forth action, two judges had Moore clearly winning while the third judge had the fight even.

Moore, the defending champion and the more experienced of the two men, had to weather some tremendous assaults but he showed a good defence, bobbing and rolling under punches, and he kept drilling in accurate blows from his southpaw stance.

While Macklin was trying to make every shot a winner, Moore's better-placed punches were slowly but surely winning the war. Macklin, meanwhile, fought until he had no more to give.

"In the end it was the challenger's body, rather than his will, that finally broke," as Mick Gill reported for *BM*.



2007



BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

David Haye
Down in the fourth, the Hayemaker rallied to batter Jean-Marc Morneck in a great British win in Paris



WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Beating Oscar De La Hoya at light-middle and knocking out Ricky Hatton at welterweight — it doesn't get much better



2008



BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Joe Calzaghe
Announced his retirement, undefeated after wins over veteran legends Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones Jr



WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Manny Pacquiao
From super featherweight to welter, three great wins that included destroying Oscar De La Hoya



BRITISH FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Ezra Sellers KO4 Carl Thompson
(26 November, Manchester)

Not much skill, plenty of slam-bang action when American southpaw Ezra Sellers stopped local favourite Carl Thompson, 37, in four wild rounds of cruiserweight clubbing.

This was one of those you-hit-me, I-hit-you, fights. Sellers, a fighter known to have a suspect chin, but a dangerous puncher, was floored twice but he dropped Thompson four times. Both were down in rounds one and two.

Thompson just couldn't land the one, decisive punch, but he was still trying to do so when Sellers flattened him with a huge right hook in the fourth.



Ayala eked out a narrow, split decision win, and his margin of victory was a big second round, in which he hurt Adams and had him under a lot of pressure. It was the biggest round for either boxer, and all three judges gave it to Ayala by a 10-8 margin even though he had not managed to knock Adams down. That big round proved to



OVERSEAS FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Paulie Ayala W12 Clarence 'Bones' Adams
(4 August, Las Vegas)

Bantamweight rivals Paulie Ayala and Clarence "Bones" Adams put on 12 classic rounds of boxing in what could be called a purist's delight yet disappointingly there were rows of empty seats at the Mandalay Bay casino resort. The sturdy southpaw

be the difference between a win for Ayala and a draw. After 12 rounds, one judge had Adams winning by a score of 114-113 while the other two judges saw Ayala ahead, 115-112 and 114-113.

"Boxing does not get much better than this: two well-matched fighters giving their all," I reported from ringside. "There was an ebb and flow to the fight, absolutely riveting fare as the ascendancy shifted from one to the other." It really was a fight that could have gone either way.



BRITISH FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Johnny Armour W12 Francis Ampofo (21 September, Brentwood)

Bantams Johnny Armour and Francis Ampofo fought three times, all of them sizzling battles. Armour won a unanimous decision in the first fight, in 2000. The rematch was a win for Armour under a weird WBU rule — two judges had the fight all-even.

But the third fight was a cracker. Armour, the southpaw from

Chatham, Kent, produced the classier boxing, as usual, but Ampofo, born in Ghana but domiciled in east London, was the swarming aggressor, just as he had been in the first two meetings. A seventh-round knockdown, and a one-point deduction imposed on Ampofo for butting, helped Armour to secure the majority decision win.

OVERSEAS FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Micky Ward W10 Arturo Gatti (18 May, Uncasville)

The excitement was almost unbearable as Micky Ward battled Arturo Gatti for 10 punishing, action-packed rounds in the first of what would become a memorable three-fight series.

Each man hammered the other, with both fighters cut. Gatti's eyes were bruised and swollen and Ward suffered a bloody nose and cut lower lip. Ward won the split decision, but it was very close. Gatti had a point deducted for a low blow in the fourth round, and Ward scored a knockdown in the ninth. Yet it was Gatti who finished the stronger of the two, amazingly staging a two-handed rally in the last round after being on the verge of being

stopped in the preceding round, when his trainer, Buddy McGirt, seemed ready to throw in the towel.

What a fight this was, a throwback to classic wars such as Zale-Graziano and Basilio-DeMarco. "I am humbled by watching these two guys take the punishment they are taking," HBO sage Larry Merchant commented.

The fight was even better than I had anticipated. Gatti was feeling Ward's left hooks to the body by the middle rounds but he kept firing back. First one, then the other, got on top. Gatti, who started out boxing beautifully, was drawn into a war of attrition, but one he almost won.



2000

BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Lennox Lewis
Blowing out Francois Botha and Michael Grant and outclassing David Tua — a great year

WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Shane Mosley
An upset win over Oscar De La Hoya made 2000 sweet for former lightweight champion Sugar Shane

BRITISH FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Micky Ward TKO8 Shea Neary (11 March, London)



winner in the early rounds. Ward was sapping his strength, though, with his noted left hooks to the body. Neary landed the sort of rights that had halted 16 opponents but Ward stayed in there.

"As the fight progressed, it became clear that Neary's resilience, courage and aggression were

Shea Neary hurled everything he had at Micky Ward but it wasn't enough as the tough Irish-American outlasted and outpunched his game opponent for a thrilling eighth-round victory.

The WBU light-welter title fight saw the undefeated Neary looking like a

not going to be enough," Richard Fletcher reported for *BM*. Neary was in front on two judges' cards after seven rounds but he had been worn down, and Liverpool's "Shamrock Express" was dropped twice in the eighth and referee Mickey Vann waved it off.

OVERSEAS FIGHT OF THE YEAR

Felix Trinidad TKO12 Fernando Vargas (2 December, Las Vegas)

Superfights don't always live up to expectations, but one that did was Felix "Tito" Trinidad's six-knockdown sizzler against Fernando Vargas.

"The clash of undefeated light-middleweight champions had everything," I reported from ringside.



Tito landed devastating punches to win in the last round but he had to fight desperately hard. Down twice in the opening round, the younger, less-experienced Vargas fought back, and Trinidad was dabbing at his right eye in the third round after taking a stiff jab. Then, in the fourth, a left hook dumped Trinidad on the seat of his trunks. He came back with a low blow and had a point deducted.

Vargas had a point off for a low blow in the 10th and Trinidad led on points when he ended the fight by flooring his tiring but valiant opponent three times in the 12th.

2001

BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Lennox Lewis
A shocking loss to Hasim Rahman in South Africa was sensationally avenged in the rematch

WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Kostya Tszyu
Three title wins for the Russian-Aussie were capped by the right hand that had Zab Judah doing a crazy dance

2002

BRITISH FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Scott Harrison
Rose to the occasion to take the WBO feather title from Julio Pablo Chacon

WORLD FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Oscar Larios
Outlasting Israel Vazquez in a war and knocking out Willie Jorin in 88 seconds were stellar performances