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## That winning feeling

Dunne is enjoying his moment in the sun, writes Tris Dixon

Photo: Aidan Walsh



**HUMBLE HERO:**  
Dunne is now enjoying  
some family time

FROM the comfort of his home, and with the WBA super-bantamweight championship facing him, it is still sinking in to Irish hero **Bernard Dunne** exactly what he has achieved.

His inspirational win on Saturday over Ricardo Cordoba saw him gate-crash the world rankings and open doors that were slammed shut following his one-round loss to Kiko Martinez in 2007.

"I'm in great form," he said on Monday. "I haven't had the chance to see the fight yet. It was repeated on RTE last night [Sunday] but I didn't watch it. I was in bed."

The five-knockdown war is an early candidate for Fight of the Year and Dunne wholeheartedly enjoyed the battle.

"It had everything," he said. "He was knocked down, then I was knocked down, there was the cut, non-stop brawling and the place was absolutely nuts."

He won the hard way. It is how he has done most things that makes victory all the sweeter.

So much has happened since he was headlining ESPN shows in the US, training under Freddie Roach in the Wild Card Gym and being promoted by Sugar Ray Leonard.

He was tipped for success then but went in a heavy underdog against Cordoba, who holds a win over WBA "Super" champ Celestino Caballero.

"I believed in myself. The week of the fight I talked to the press and I said, 'Believe in me', Dunne explained. "I trained hard, I worked hard. Myself and [trainer] Harry [Hawkins] knew what condition I was in. I wanted to make sure I left no stone unturned. We knew the task was hard and I can't blame people for doubting me."

Dunne seemed almost finished in the fifth but has vivid recollections of being dropped a second time.

"I remember being face-down on the canvas and I saw my mum. She buried her head in my dad's chest and I heard Harry shouting, 'Get up!'."

Inevitably, future opponent are already being mentioned.

Dunne was not ruling anyone in or out. A unification fight with Caballero has been mentioned – as has WBC champion emeritus Israel Vazquez,

whom Dunne used to spar at the Wild Card – but the Irishman says Rendall Munroe's European title could not be further from his mind.

"Talk of me avoiding him was very far-fetched," he said. "I didn't run from him and I didn't run from Cordoba."

Nor did he give the green light for an all-Irish showdown with

Wayne McCullough, who wants Dunne.

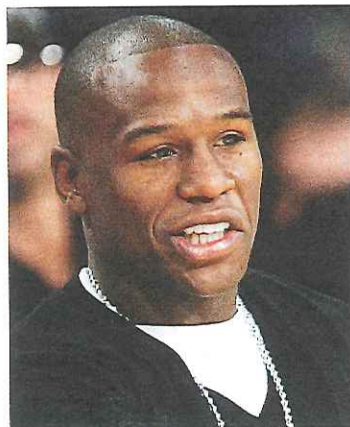
"I've been so tired and exhausted."

We had a press conference on Sunday morning but since then I've just spent time with my family."

He took his children to see a play of *LazyTown* on Sunday but was in bed by 8.30pm. On Monday, after he dropped his two-and-a-half year-old daughter at playschool, he dragged his battered and bruised body 150 yards to his mother's house. It took ages.

Yet now is the time for the rewards and plaudits to come his way.

"I'm a world champion. It's a dream come true," he continued. "It's everything I ever wanted to be. It's been a long journey and although I've enjoyed it, winning the WBA world title makes it all worthwhile. The belt is on the couch looking at me as we speak. It hasn't sunk in that I've beaten a guy of Cordoba's calibre."



**COMING BACK?** Mayweather

## BIG PLANS FOR 'PRETTY BOY'

IF Floyd Mayweather Jr [left] returns to the ring, it could be on July 11. The former pound-for-pound king hopes to return on a non-PPV bill but is facing stiff competition as Bernard Hopkins could get the date, to try and become a three-weight world champ, in a proposed clash with cruiserweight king Tomasz Adamek.

Word is Mayweather is hoping for a tune-up fight before taking on Juan Manuel Marquez in mid-September and ultimately fighting the winner of Ricky Hatton-Manny Pacquiao.

## BN In brief

### Casamayor injured

**GOLDEN BOY'S** April 4 lightweight tournament has been hit by another withdrawal.

Former champ Joel Casamayor has pulled out because of a back injury, so California's **ROLANDO REYES**, 30-4-2 (19), steps in to fight **JULIO DIAZ**.

Casamayor was hoping to bounce back from his 11th-round stoppage defeat to Juan Manuel Marquez but the Cuban veteran suffered a lumbar spine sprain. It happened after Jorge Barrios broke his jaw in training.

Barrios has been replaced for the show at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin, Texas, by **VICENTE ESCOBEDO** – who meets **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**.

The other fights see exciting Aussie **MICHAEL KATSIDIS** go in with **JESUS CHAVEZ** while Venezuelan puncher **EDWIN VALERO** meets **ANTONIO PITALLA**.

### Dangerman avoided

**YASSINE EL-MAACHI** boxes tonight (Friday March 27) on Spencer Fearon's Kensington Town Hall bill, but generally the slippery and tough Dutchman struggles to find opponents.

That's according to Ben Doughty, who co-trains El Maachi in London (along with Kevin Maree in Manchester).

"It's been very frustrating trying to get him matched," said Doughty, who used to coach at Repton but has taken out a pro licence.

"Yassine will box anybody at welter or light-middle, over six rounds or eight."

### Haye on the cusp

IT looks like the challenge of David Haye [below] to heavyweight champ Wladimir Klitschko will go ahead on June 20. An agreement between the camps was expected to be finalised later this week and the fight appears headed to Berlin.

