

# EchoSports

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## GALWAY WIN BIG VS. DONEGAL

Dubs lose, Kerry make progress in Div. 1 - See Page 38



Peter Stringer makes the break that leads to a try by teammate Jamie Heaslip in Ireland's victory over Scotland in Edinburgh. **SPORTSFILE**

### RUGBY IN EUROPE

## Title is close, but it's Slam or bust for Ireland

By Mark Jones  
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AND so, Ireland's rugby bandwagon rolls on to Cardiff. Last weekend's 22-15 win over Scotland might not have been a thing of beauty, but the Irish are one step away from only a second Grand Slam in their history.

For some of the game's so-called golden generation, this just might be a last shot at glory. The likes of Brian O'Driscoll, Ronan O'Gara, Paul O'Connell, Peter Stringer and David Wallace stand on the cusp of an achievement they began dreaming about nearly 10 years ago.

Following Wales's desperately unconvincing 20-15 win over Italy in Rome, Warren Gatland's side only have a points difference of plus 21 as against unbeaten Ireland's plus 46, so a defeat for coach Declan Kidney and his side on Saturday by a margin of 12 points or less would mean that the championship would still be won.

A first title since 1985 would be a lot better than nothing, but now the talk is of the Slam or bust.

Ireland should have an edge up front, but no matter who Gatland selects behind the scrum, the

threat will be superior to anything O'Driscoll and company have faced so far this season. Scotland's Evans brothers flattered to deceive at times in Edinburgh - they are not in Shane Williams class, and never will be.

With Williams, Jamie Roberts, Stephen Jones, Mike Phillips and perhaps, Lee Byrne who was injured at the Stadio Flaminio, aiming at retaining the title they won last year, at Lions' recognition, and of course, at spoiling Ireland's party, the confrontation of the two back divisions is positively mouthwatering.

Not to diminish the achievements of Karl Mullen and his warriors of 1948, but the Grand Slam wasn't a factor in those days. Back then, what Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales set their sights on at the start of the championship was the Triple Crown.

Still, there might just be some lingering karma from the success of '48 as the Irish played their games in the same sequence as this season. And if the score is unlikely to be the 6-3 that did the job for Mullen and his players against Wales in Ravenhill, 6-3 would undoubtedly do Kidney just fine.

See RUGBY, Page 38

### BOXING IN AMERICA

## Hyland takes IBF title in Massachusetts

By Jay Mwamba  
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Irish featherweight champ Patrick "Pajo" Hyland climbed up a division and scored a deserved ten-round unanimous decision over Nicaraguan Carlos Guevara to capture the vacant IBF International 135-pound title at the Dorchester Armory in Massachusetts last Saturday.

On the same Celtic Pride boxing show to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, upcoming Irish-American welterweight prospect Danny O'Connor stashed Charles Wade in one round to improve to 5-0 [2 KOs], while former Irish amateur champion Gary O'Sullivan [7-0, 5 KOs] defeated local junior middleweight Jimmy Leblanc via fourth round disqualification.

### HYLAND TEST

The banger of the three Dublin-reared Hyland brothers who all hold Irish titles, Patrick [16-0, 8 KOs] withstood a bruising test from fellow punch Guevara [12-9-1] to claim the vacant IBF super featherweight belt once held by the legendary Roberto "Hands of Stone" Duran.

"I'm magic about him winning it; it's a fantastic achievement," gushed Patrick Hyland, Sr., who trains all three of his sons.

Guevara, nine of whose 12 wins have come via stoppage, came out looking to add the younger Hyland to his list of KO victims.

"The first three-four rounds he threw everything to knock Patrick out but Pat weathered the storm," said Hyland, Sr.

Not only that, but Hyland was also the better boxer and ac-



Patrick "Pajo" Hyland.

cording to his dad, used his ring experience garnered from over 140 amateur bouts to outbox his man.

Hyland added a punishing left hook to his repertoire in the eighth round, attacking Guevara to the body, none to the Nicaraguan's pleasure. They went toe-to-toe in the tenth and final stanza with the 25 year-old Dubliner getting the nod, 98-92 [twice] and 99-91, when the score cards were read.

"Great performance," summed up Brian Burk, the upstate New York-based advisor to the Hyland brothers [super featherweight Eddie and super bantamweight Paul are the others].

### QUICK KO

Danny O'Connor's second fight in two weeks lasted less than three minutes. The highly touted 23 year-old out of Framingham, Mass., had Philly jour-

See BOXING, Page 35

