

Irish Open champion Shane Lowry finds the going tough in his professional debut at the European Open....P46



SPORTS shorts



Handball

Handball players switch from the small court to the big court at this time of year as the handball championships bounce into action,

writes Tony McGee.

It is not for the faint-hearted. Most players don two pairs of gloves for protection during this term, some three pairs, as the sliothar-like ball is propelled through the air at a dangerous speed.

Already, senior doubles champions Eoin Kennedy and Egin Jensen suffered a shock defeat in their semi-final on Wednesday in Mullingar, when they lost out, over three games, to Meath aces Tom Sheridan and Brian Carroll. The Dubliners, who were bidding for a fourth consecutive title this year, won the first game on a convincing scoreline of 3-21, but, despite a battling display from Kennedy and Jensen, the Meath men then hit their stride and took the second game 21-16, 21-16. They then sealed victory in the shootout with a 21-14 result.

In the second semi-final at Williamstown, Mayo kingpins Dessie Keegan and Joe McCann (pictured above) overcame fellow Ballaghasderreen club-men Vinny Moran and Campbell Brennan over two games, 21-6, 21-18.

GAA

Edendork St Malachy's GAC's *Strictly Come Dancing* will be launched in The Gables tomorrow at 8pm. This will be a chance to be introduced to the competitors for the first time and see who is paired with whom. There will be a quiz before the launch from 8-10pm and music after the launch.

■ TONIGHT'S Down ACFL Division 1 match between Loughinisland and Kilcoo will now take place in Kilcoo, throw-in 7.30pm.

Soccer

Manchester United's Craig Cathcart has been forced to withdraw from the Northern Ireland squad for the international challenge match against Italy due to injury.

SPORT ON TV

HOLF: European Open – Sky Sports 1 1000; Sky Sports 2 1500.

BOXING: British and Commonwealth flyweight title, Chris Edwards v Usman Ahmed – Sky Sports 1 2200.

CRICKET: Twenty20 Cup, Yorkshire Carnegie v Lancashire Lightning – Sky Sports 1 1730.

SOCCER: International friendlies, Wales v Estonia – Sky Sports 2 1930; Republic of Ireland v Nigeria – Setanta Sports 1 1930.

RUGBY LEAGUE: Australian Rugby League, St George Illawarra Dragons v Penrith Panthers – Setanta Sports 1 1030.

RUGBY UNION: Italo-Celtic European Cup play-off – Sky Sports 3 2000.

TENNIS: French Open – Eurosport 1000.

TONIGHT'S SOCCER

(7.45pm unless stated)

International friendlies

Belgium v Chile (11pm)

China PR v Germany (1pm)

Rep of Ireland v Nigeria (8pm)

Wales v Estonia (7.30pm)

League of Ireland Premier Division

Dundalk v Sligo Rovers

St Patrick's Athletic v Bray

League of Ireland First Division

Wexford United v Limerick 37

Shelbourne v Monaghan Utd (8pm)

Boxing

An exhibition you'd give your right arm to look at

BY
EAMONN
O'HARA



UNTIL the 1950s, the famous Belfast publican and bookmaker Hugh 'Texas' McAlevey had on display in his pub, the Duncairn Arms, one of the most unique items of memorabilia celebrating the history of Ireland's prizefighting breed.

It is arguably the oldest, rarest artefact of any of the world's sporting disciplines. Encased in glass and heavily insured, the mummified right arm of Dan Donnelly, the first heavyweight boxing champion born in this island, is but one remarkable item forming *The Fighting Irishmen* exhibition, which opened yesterday at the Ulster American Folk Park.

After his death in 1820, Donnelly's body was stolen by grave robbers. A public outcry resulted in the corpse being returned and reburied, but minus the once mighty right arm that helped him claim the heavyweight title at The Curragh in 1815 against England's George Cooper.

The award-winning US boxing documentary maker Andrew Gallimore has just finished his latest project, a film entitled *Donnelly's Hollow*, where there is a monument in his honour, marking where he fought Cooper. It will be premiered shortly on TG4.

Gallimore attended yesterday's official opening of an exhibit that includes items from Muhammad Ali's collection – Ali's ancestry has



■ A RICH HISTORY: Clones legend Barry McGuigan charted the evolution of Irish boxing at the opening *The Fighting Irishmen* exhibition in Omagh yesterday

been traced to Clare; the time-worn fighting gloves of Gene Tunney; a blazer commissioned for Jack Dempsey; John L Sullivan's fur coat; newspaper reports and programmes; the gloves and timepiece of Tom Sharkey; Hugh Russell's Lonsdale Belt; as well as pictures, prints, silks, ropes, punchbags and Olympic medals.

The experience is wonderfully enhanced by myriad documents relating to some of the country's finest boxers and film footage, ranging from 1930s two-weight champion Jimmy McLarnin, Ali, Gerry Cooney, Rinty Monaghan's world title win of the late '40s, Jerry Quarry, Charlie Nash and the night the 'Clones Cyclone' took Loftus

Road by storm.

Barry McGuigan strolled down memory lane yesterday before cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony. It was a packed event, attended by Nash, Russell, the first Irish Olympic medallist John McNally, Tokyo Olympic star Jim McCourt, Laureus Sports Award winning coach Gerry Storey and current British champion Paul McCloskey, among many others.

"When you look around the wonderful exhibition and watch the footage of old fights, it is absolutely phenomenal to think about what we have achieved," McGuigan said.

"Presidents of America used to sit and watch the likes of Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney and

John L Sullivan.

"It was an unscrupulous sport back in the 1850s. It became a sport of great dignity, great respect and it gave the Irish pride and it gave them respectability at a time when we had very low self esteem and it has done for the Irish what no other sport has done."

McGuigan continued: "We have had tremendous success down through the years, in the Olympics going back to John McNally, who was here today and looking as sharp as a tack, Jim McCourt, Freddie Gilroy and John Caldwell."

The Fighting Irishmen: Celebrating Celtic Prizefighters 1820-Present will be exhibited at the Ulster American Folk Park until November this year.

Athletics

Turnbull faces yet another lay-off

By Malcolm McCausland

GARETH Turnbull's running future looks in doubt after his latest setback.

The Belfast athlete was treated in London last week for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) after arriving off a transatlantic flight.

Turnbull has suffered reverse after reverse since representing Ireland at the World Athletics Championships in Paris almost six-years-ago and has yet to complete a full

track season since then.

Apart from injuries which this year alone have included a broken foot and admission to hospital for removal of a lump from his neck, he was also the centre of a controversy in 2005 after he was found in a drug test to have an excessive level of testosterone.

However, after a protracted battle and with the help of expert testimony, Turnbull was able to clear his name. He resumed his athletics career, although, to date, he

has failed to regain the form which saw him taking medals at European and World University Games level.

On his most recent appearance on the local stage last month, he was hard pressed to beat Downpatrick schoolboy James O'Hare in the Queens 5K Road Race, which he won in a modest time.

Four days later, he was only 13th in the BUPA Great Ireland Run in Dublin's Phoenix Park.

Although he has been

advised not to start training for three months and to rest and recuperate in the interim, the 30-year-old still has ambitions of competing in next year's Commonwealth Games and European Championships.

"This summer is very, very unlikely," Turnbull said.

"DVT is just something that you cannot take risks with and there will be no question of rushing back to action."

"Next year's Europeans and Commonwealths are achievable targets for me

where I can make an impact if I get it right on the day.

"But it will be another year of trying to stretch out my financial resources because I haven't been getting any funding for a number of years, so that doesn't make the task any easier."

The Balmoral man first came to prominence as a pupil at St Malachy's College, winning Irish Schools' titles at 1,500m.

As a junior, he won European bronze medals over both 1,500m and cross country.