

DANIEL  
HERBERT  
RINGSIDE



WIDNES  
March 13

**B** RITISH light-welterweight champion Paul McCloskey brushed aside the challenge of Dean Harrison at Kingsway Leisure Centre, winning in four one-sided rounds.

The Dungiven southpaw dropped Harrison heavily in the first then bided his time before producing the finish.

A series of lefts jolted the challenger before a particularly heavy one stopped him in his tracks. One more McCloskey left-hander convinced referee Marcus McDonnell to intervene at 1-50 of the fourth with the challenger thoroughly beaten.

This scheduled 12-rounder went much as expected. Wolverhampton's Harrison replaced virus victim Barry Morrison at a week-and-a-half's notice and had lost (albeit debatably) to Scott Haywood, who last month was walloped by Ajoose Olusegun.

It was asking a lot of Dean to deny McCloskey, whose brand of hands-low, fast counter-punching had last time out lifted the crown from Colin Lynes, his 18th win (eight early) in as many fights.

Paul turned pro late but as he put it, "I may be 29 but I'm a young 29."

He certainly had too much energy and speed for 25-year-old Harrison, now 14-2 (4). Dean advanced steadily with his gloves high but McCloskey (9st 13lbs) used his faster hands to connect with the left or the right hook. Suddenly one superb counter left nailed Harrison (10st) on the point of the chin and sent him crashing down.

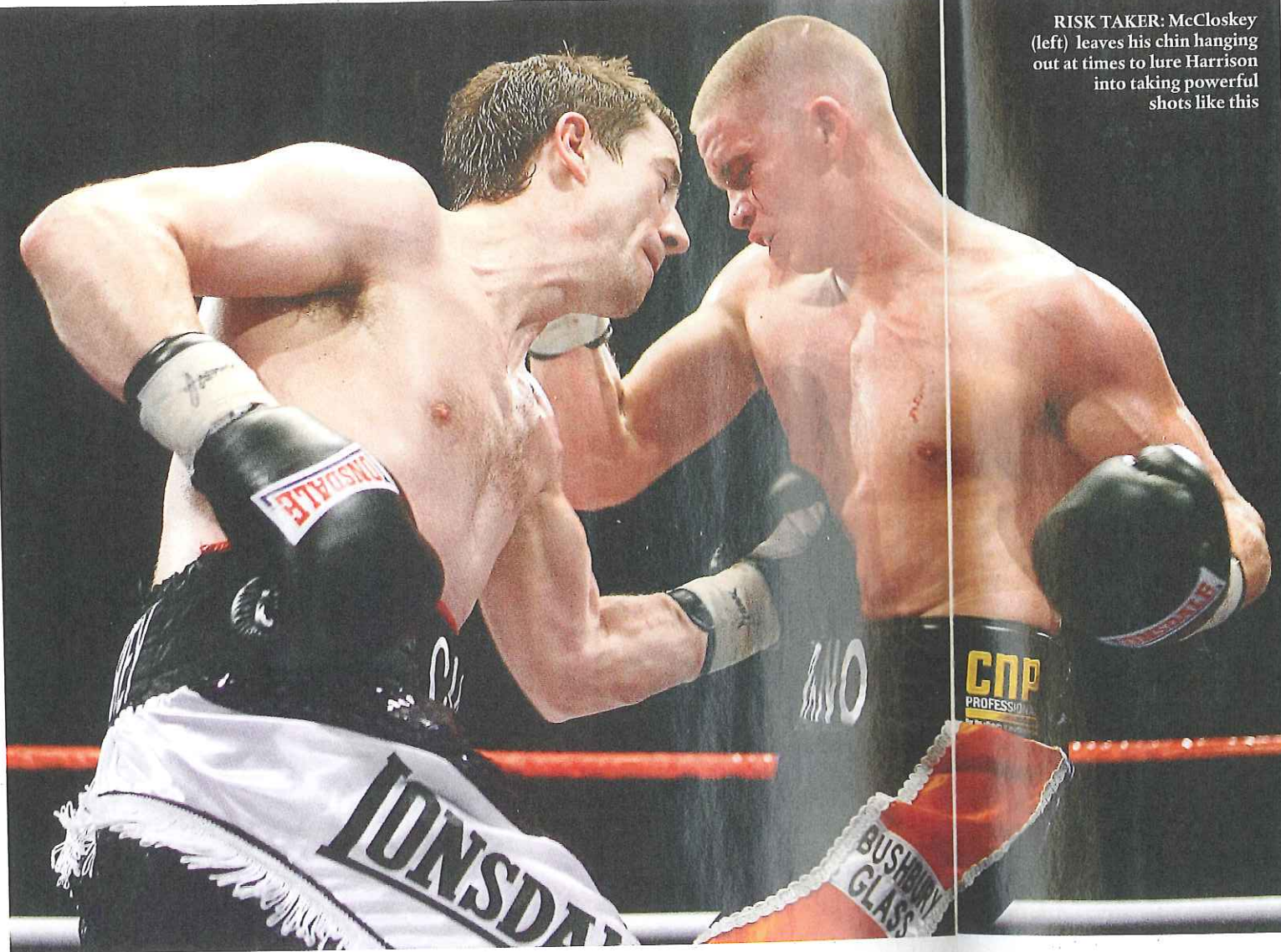
The challenger got onto his haunches at "three" and was on his feet at "six". At the completion of the mandatory eight-count McCloskey really went for it but Harrison showed grit to ride out the storm. Not even a hard right hook just before the bell could finish him.

McCloskey fought rounds two and three like a man who believed he could win any time he chose. He wound up big hooks and uppercuts, fight-ending punches, and left his chin out to dry as if trying to encourage Harrison to exchange. Dean had gone back to jabbing from behind a high guard, although his lack of speed meant he was rarely able to land.

The quality came from the champion, who briefly had Harrison rocking in the second and then banged in a series of lefts in the next. Ironically, though, it was a head clash that cut Harrison over the left eye later in round three.

It was a question only of when – and the answer came in the fourth. McCloskey lured Harrison into trading and landed that stream of power-laden lefts that brought a crushing victory.

Judges were Phil Edwards, John



RISK TAKER: McCloskey (left) leaves his chin hanging out at times to lure Harrison into taking powerful shots like this

# MCCLOSKEY IS A CLASS APART

The Dungiven champion has a bit too much of everything for brave Harrison, dominating and stopping the challenger in the fourth

Keane and Mark Green.

Liverpool's Steve Williams was only a pound heavier than Graeme "Dezzi" Higginson in the eight-round chief support, at 10st 2lbs to 10st 1lb, but he was so much stronger. Williams, now 7-0 (3), steadily ground the resistance out of the Blackburn man before stopping him in the fourth.

Higginson boxed neatly behind his jab but just didn't have the dig to keep his opponent off. Williams landed rights and worked the body, shoving "Dezzi" around when he got inside.

In the fourth, a right made Higginson grab and Steve kept to press his

advantage, threw him off. Referee Steve Gray admonished Williams then noticed that Higginson was wobbling around his corner, still feeling the effects of the punch. Mr Gray looked closely and waved it off with 52 seconds on the clock.

With this fight ending at 9.15pm, it left a 45-minute gap before Sky TV went live at 10pm. Not much fun for the smallish crowd.

It seems strange for a reigning British champion to box a six-rounder, but South Queensferry feather Paul Appleby was having a warm-up before defending against Martin Lindsay on

April 25. In the end, the distance didn't matter as Appleby stopped Spain's Juan Garcia Martin in just one round.

Nearly four years ago Garcia Martin fought Esham Pickering for the European super-bantam title, but he scaled just 8st 12lbs here, so hasn't grown. In contrast, Appleby weighed 9st 3 1/2lbs and was much taller.

Action was even for about a minute-and-a-half. The Tenerife man rushed in to take away Appleby's height and reach advantages. Things were messy and referee Phil Edwards had to order them to tidy things up.

But class told and soon a right to the

head-left to the body had Garcia Martin looking unhappy. Once he had made the breakthrough, Paul was ruthless. A hard right rocked Juan and the Scot forced him to the ropes, where two more shots slammed home. Garcia Martin could only cover under the onslaught as Mr Edwards stepped in at the 2-25 mark.

The Spaniard fell to 15-7 (8) while Appleby won for the 14th time (nine early) in as many outings.

After 10 national amateur titles and two pro fights, Nick MacDonald now has an extra "a" in the first part of his surname.

But the performance was still the same as the Moreton man who trains at the Shamrock gym in Liverpool under Shea Neary and George Schofield proved too good for Ian Bailey.

Both scaled 8st 12lbs but MacDonald (25) was much stronger, and had a lot more skill too. He dished out a beating until the exhausted Slough boxer withdrew after three rounds.

**MCCLOSKEY FOUGHT ROUNDS TWO AND THREE LIKE A MAN WHO BELIEVED HE COULD WIN ANY TIME HE CHOSE**

Riyaz (9st 6lbs 6oz) didn't fall, and began to hit back, Troy wasn't nearly so comfortable.

He was always landing enough to win rounds – apart from the second, which I thought Riyaz shared – and finished with a flourish, having the Reading man, now 0-4, under pressure in the last.

Poland's Grzegorz Proksa may not be too far off a challenge to European light-middleweight champion Jamie Moore. Southpaw Proksa is now 17-0

MacDonald, now 2-1 (2), punched sharply from the off, controlling with his jab and following up with solid hooks. At times he got too close, which is where Bailey wanted the fight, but by the third Nick was slamming in left-right combinations and single rights.

Bailey soaked them all up, but by now he was struggling to land a blow with his nimbler opponent. Ian looked dog-tired as he regained his corner, where trainer Johnny Eames called over referee Phil Edwards. It was announced that Bailey, now 3-1 (0), had "sustained and injury and has retired".

Well-supported Coventry hope Troy James (9st 5 1/2lbs) had to work hard for his second pro win in as many outings when he outscored Reading's Ibrar Riyaz in a four-rounder.

Referee Steve Gray marked 40-37, suggesting James won three rounds and

shared another. But after Troy clearly won the opener, slamming in big hooks to head and body, the action became much more even and the Midlander's inexperience was exposed. The chunky James, who started boxing only at 20 (now 25), looked good when going forward and unloading. But when

(10) after stopping Lee Noble in the third round of a scheduled six, and while the Barnsley man was lacklustre, that doesn't mean Grzegorz isn't worth following.

He never allowed Noble into the fight – not that Lee seemed desperate to compete. The Yorkshireman covered up tight, plodding in as Proksa teed off with body shots and uppercuts from either hand. The Pole's fast hands and accuracy enabled him to score, his nimble footwork to scoot away before Noble could even think of retaliating.

By round two Lee appeared disheartened. His nose bled and his flanks were reddened from Proksa's attentions. He just couldn't get any punches off. In the interval before round three Brendan Ingle in his corner shouted, "You're standing there and letting him beat you up!"

It was more of the same in the third, with Proksa unloading and Noble catching until the towel came in from Noble's corner. Proksa celebrated and Lee walked to his corner, where Ingle gave him a few home truths. It was announced that referee Phil Edwards had stopped the fight at 0-55.

Noble fell to 10-9 (2) and both weighed 11st 4lbs.

Last season's ABA featherweight quarter-finalist Martin Ward made a winning pro debut when he outpointed Birmingham centurion Anthony Hanna in the four-round show-opener. Referee Steve Gray scored 40-36.

Southpaw Ward (9st 2lbs) boxed amateur with the Birtley club in Gateshead, but is actually from West Rainton in County Durham. Now trained by Neil Fannan, he started slowly but from round two upped his pace to jar Hanna with hooks and uppercuts, having the Brummie under pressure.

By the third Hanna bled from the nose and at the bell he walked to his corner a bit unsteadily. Action had become so one-sided it seemed Mr Gray might be on the point of intervening, but in the last Hanna came out of his defensive shell and deserved to go the distance.

Hanna had taken the fight (replacing Jason Thomas) only on the afternoon of the show, which explains his 9st 13lbs weight – and makes his performance all the more praiseworthy.

POWERHOUSE: Williams (left) is simply too strong for Higginson who boxes well but cannot keep the Scouser off



DEMOLITION JOB: Appleby (right) destroys Garcia Martin in a round

Photos: Chris Royale/TGS Photo



**SMART MOVE:**  
Macklin lands the jab to Elcock's body, a clever way to set up the right over the top

# MATT-URITY

It's the same talent but Macklin adds composure and discipline to stop city rival Elcock in the third round for the British title

**DANNY FLEXEN**  
**RINGSIDE**



**BIRMINGHAM**  
**March 14**

**I**RONICALLY, as the Frank Warren stars selected to appear on a big pay-per-view show were dropping like flies, Sports Network-promoted **Matthew Macklin**, forced to box as the 'away' fighter on a Hennessy Sports bill in his hometown, was producing the best performance of his career. Macklin, from Solihull (parents from Tipperary in Ireland) patiently picked apart British middleweight champion, and cross-city (Shard End) rival, **Wayne Elcock** for the best part of two-and-a-bit rounds at the Aston Events Centre before ruthlessly finishing the job at 59 seconds of the third. In doing so, Macklin belatedly fulfilled some of the potential he showed as a former ABA champion (2001) who twice beat Darren Sutherland in the unpaid game. Finally

Manchester gym, Macklin showed composure, stuck to his gameplan and, when the opportunity to finish matters came, Matthew was clinical. In truth, he's never looked better.

In the recent past Macklin has become known for making fights more difficult than they needed to be – and having far too many unnecessary wars for a 26-year-old who can actually box pretty well when he wants to.

The Macklin who got into the trenches with Jamie Moore and Yory Boy Campas – among others – was absent tonight but Matt was no less entertaining for it. It would have been interesting to see if Macklin could have kept to his tactics for the whole 12 rounds but he does not get paid overtime and will get other chances to prove his stamina and concentration over the longer term.

Both men were in great shape and looked serious during the introductions, Macklin a slight favourite with the lively – though refreshingly free of trouble – crowd in an almost-full venue. Both were cautious in a cagey opener, moving their heads well and using plenty of

the cleaner blows – classy left hooks and right uppercuts mainly – but Elcock (11st 5lbs 3oz) had some success doubling up the jab and landed a solid straight right near the end of the session.

Macklin started to use the jab to the body in the second, following up with the right over the top. Matt maintained the perfect distance to hit and rarely get hit. He was rolling his shoulders nicely. He was so relaxed and his variety impressed. Elcock, while not being dominated, was already fighting an uphill battle.

Elcock came out for the third marked around the right eye and Macklin seemed content to continue chipping away at the champion. Then, suddenly, a right over the top wobbled Elcock's legs. Wayne's eyes seemed vacant and he rocked back to the ropes.

Macklin was like a sniper – all controlled aggression. He unloaded with left hooks and rights over the top – not flailing, nothing wasted – and

tried to grab. Elcock eventually went down under pressure. He was up around "five" and took his time walking towards referee John Keane, but Macklin refused to let Elcock off the hook. He forced Wayne to the ropes and landed plenty more flush left hooks plus a big chopping right for Mr Keane to dive in and cradle Elcock in his arms. We had a new champion.

Two classy moments following the finish saw Jamie Moore embrace his former victim Macklin in celebration and Matthew himself lift the fallen Elcock onto his shoulders.

"It was a pretty spectacular performance," said Macklin, now 24-2 (17). "I'm very proud to be the British champion but this is a stepping stone for me. I'm destined for world titles. I'm happy now – Joe [Gallagher]'s not taught me anything new but he's polished me and tightened up my defence."

Gallagher, who also deserves a lot of credit (as does manager Brian Peters) after a long list of coaches have failed to get the best out of Macklin, added, "He was punch perfect. I couldn't ask for

**'I'M VERY PROUD. THIS IS A STEPPING STONE. I'M DESTINED FOR WORLD TITLES.'**

**MATTHEW MACKLIN**



**CONCLUSIVE:**  
Elcock is down and almost out (above) and (left) Macklin celebrates his best win

if the Essex man's shot at Amar is not rescheduled.

Glover's aggression and harder hitting battled Symonds' faster hands and better movement. Styles meshed pleasingly.

Symonds (10st 10lbs 3oz) took two of the first three (second round even) for me, doubling up the left hook (one to the body, one the head) and landing one-twins.

I gave Glover (10st 10lbs 7oz) the next three after he found, in the fourth, the shot that would turn things his way: the right over the top. Tom made the tiring Symonds blink with a heavy one in that round and, after that, rarely missed with it. Glover also began to cut the ring off better and even managed to ignore a cut over his left eye (five stitches) sustained from a head-clash in the fifth.

Symonds found his second wind in the seventh, evening things up on my card. It was all on the last and that went to Glover, who walked Symonds down, landing rights and left hooks. Symonds is now 14-3 (5), Glover 7-5-3 (0).

Giant Manchester heavyweight hope **Tyson Fury** answered a few questions with his four-round retirement victory – it was scheduled for six – over Lincoln southpaw **Lee Swaby**. Former ABA champion Fury proved he can take shots of decent power – Swaby can crack though is a former cruiserweight – and that he can remain composed when an opponent doesn't fold early.

On the flip side, Swaby took a lot of clean shots without going down, suggesting Fury does not yet punch his considerable weight. Tyson is just 20, so this could still develop.

Game Swaby (16st 5lbs 9oz in his street clothes) came forward in the first but was often kept at bay by Fury's sharp jab, follow-up rights and hooks to the body. Swaby took some heart from the ease with which he would turn Fury (17st 12lbs 6oz) on the ropes.

A straight left caught Fury off balance in the second but he took it, and his punishing straight rights started to get through. His dominance increased in the third as Swaby's attacks →



**FULL-BLOODED:** Glover (left) and Symonds leave it all in the ring in their gripping scrap

Paddy Lynch-trained Elcock, who falls to 19-4 (9), struggled to explain his performance. "My camp went well but I just wasn't in the zone," said the 35-year-old. "I wasn't doing what I was told and I jumped on the back foot instead of what we'd worked on. If I was 100 per cent and he'd done a number on me like that, I'd retire. But there are still fights out there for me. Fair play though, he boxed a great fight."

While Macklin nailed down the performance of the night honours, best fight was an enjoyable eight-rounder between Southern Area welterweight champion **Tom Glover** from Maldon and Croydon's **Chas Symonds**, a seven-hour sub for English boss Adnan Amar (see Notes).

In the end, Symonds' valiant effort was in vain as referee Keane had Glover a 77-76 winner, as did I. Some felt Chas had done enough – Symonds (pronounced "sigh-monds", he tells us) was appalled by the verdict – and this