

LIMERICK

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2014 €1

LEADER

KING OF THE WORLD

Brilliant Andy Lee is the pride of Limerick as he wins world title

MAJOR homecoming celebrations are anticipated for Andy Lee, Limerick's world champion middleweight boxer, after his momentous and electrifying win in Las Vegas on Saturday night. The 30 year-old Castleconnell man beat the previously undefeated Matt Korobov in the biggest

fight of his career at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, and claimed the title in the sixth round. "I am a champion and I want to defend my belt in Ireland and I will fight the best in the world," he said. His victory was greeted with huge joy in his native Limerick. For full coverage, see LeaderSport pullout

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Full Time



MUNSTER GRAB BONUS POINT TO KEEP HOPES ALIVE: P12-13



Lee lands knockout blow

Limerick's new champion vows to defend world title in Ireland

BOXING

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ANDY Lee has vowed to defend his WBO world title in Ireland.

While all on Shannonside will hope for Thomond Park or even the Gaelic Grounds, the Three Arena in Dublin

would appear best positioned to host Lee's next fight.

"It's gotta be in Ireland - that's the biggest sell and the biggest possible arena for it," said the newly crowned world champion.

The 30-year-old Castleconnell man returns to Limerick inside the next 24 hours and wants to reward his loyal fan base with a world title fight.

"I am the champ and I am not going outside of Ireland," he vowed.

"I am a champion and I want to defend my belt in Ireland and I will fight the best in the world," he added.

The former St Francis Boxing Club Olympian added: "I am very proud to be a champion from Ireland."

The mandatory challenge for the WBO belt is England's

Billy Joe Saunders.

"I will fight anybody - I fear no one. If he wants to fight me, he can come to me," said Lee of Saunders.

"If he wants to come to Ireland he is welcome to - my first defence will be in Ireland and I am looking forward to it."

Another option is a unifying bout against Gennady Golovkin - the reigning WBA

and IBO middleweight champion.

"I have no fear of him - he is the best middleweight in the world and rightly so but how would he hold up if he got hit with that right hook, we don't know!"

"He will have to respect my power," said Lee with a broad smile.

"It was always my dream to step off the plane in Shan-

non Airport with the belt - this championship is for me, for my family second and for my country third," said Lee, who dedicated it to the late Emanuel Steward and Adam Booth.

"I am looking forward to seeing all the family - my brothers, my dad, my mam and all the Lee's will be happy. I can't wait to get home - it's going to be a good Christmas."

FULL TIME

BOXING - WBO WORLD TITLE FIGHT

Lethal Lee lives out his childhood dream

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ANDY Lee departed Limerick for Detroit almost nine years ago with one dream - to be champion of the world.

An amateur star on the back of the 2004 Olympic Games, Lee was enticed to turn professional by famed boxing coach Emanuel Steward.

The promise was to be world champion.

At 4.29am in the early hours of Sunday morning a 30-year old Andy Lee was crowned WBO middleweight champion of the world.

It came by way of knock-out in the sixth round against Matt Korobov in Las Vegas' Cosmopolitan Hotel.

It was a fight that had Lee as a 4/1 outsider at best.

But he remained ultra confident.

"This is my time and my destiny," said Lee ahead of the title fight against the undefeated Russian.

In the early rounds the Limerick man looked both tentative but yet confident.

The maturity of 35 pro-

fighters was evident in a refusal to panic as the rounds progressed.

But the judges scoreboard told that Lee was certainly behind as the fight entered the sixth round.

Then all changed for as a new sporting Limerick hero was cemented.

In front of such watching boxing figures as Miguel Cotta, Oscar de la Hoya, Terence Crawford, Lee produced what is now his trade-mark right hook.

The rest is history.

The KO success makes Lee the first Irishman to win a world title bout in the US since 1934.

Boxing from the blue corner and wearing black trunks with a tricolour on the back, Lee did the damage with a crashing right hook and then a flurry of almost 20 punches forced referee Kenny Bayless to stop the fight in a packed Chelsea arena.

Lee was behind with all three judges before his decisive punch but that will matter little to the history books.

It's a world championship belt which saw foundation laid in March 2006 with

a routine debut win over Anthony Cannon in the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit.

February 2008 saw a home-coming bout for Lee in the UL Arena with Alejandro Gustavo Falliga the latest to fall at the feet of Lee.

Then all came crashing down for the Castleconnell man when Brian Vera ended his unbeaten run in March of that year.

Returns to Limerick to cast aside Willie Gibbs, Afif Belghecham and Mamadou Thiam helped rebuild his career.

When he gained revenge on Vera in October 2011, Lee was ready to rule the world.

Alas in June 2012 he lost to Julio Cesar Chavez Jr in Texas in the WBC World middleweight title.

Then came the move to London to Adam Booth and the untimely death of his former mentor Steward.

Six fights later, Lee is world champion.

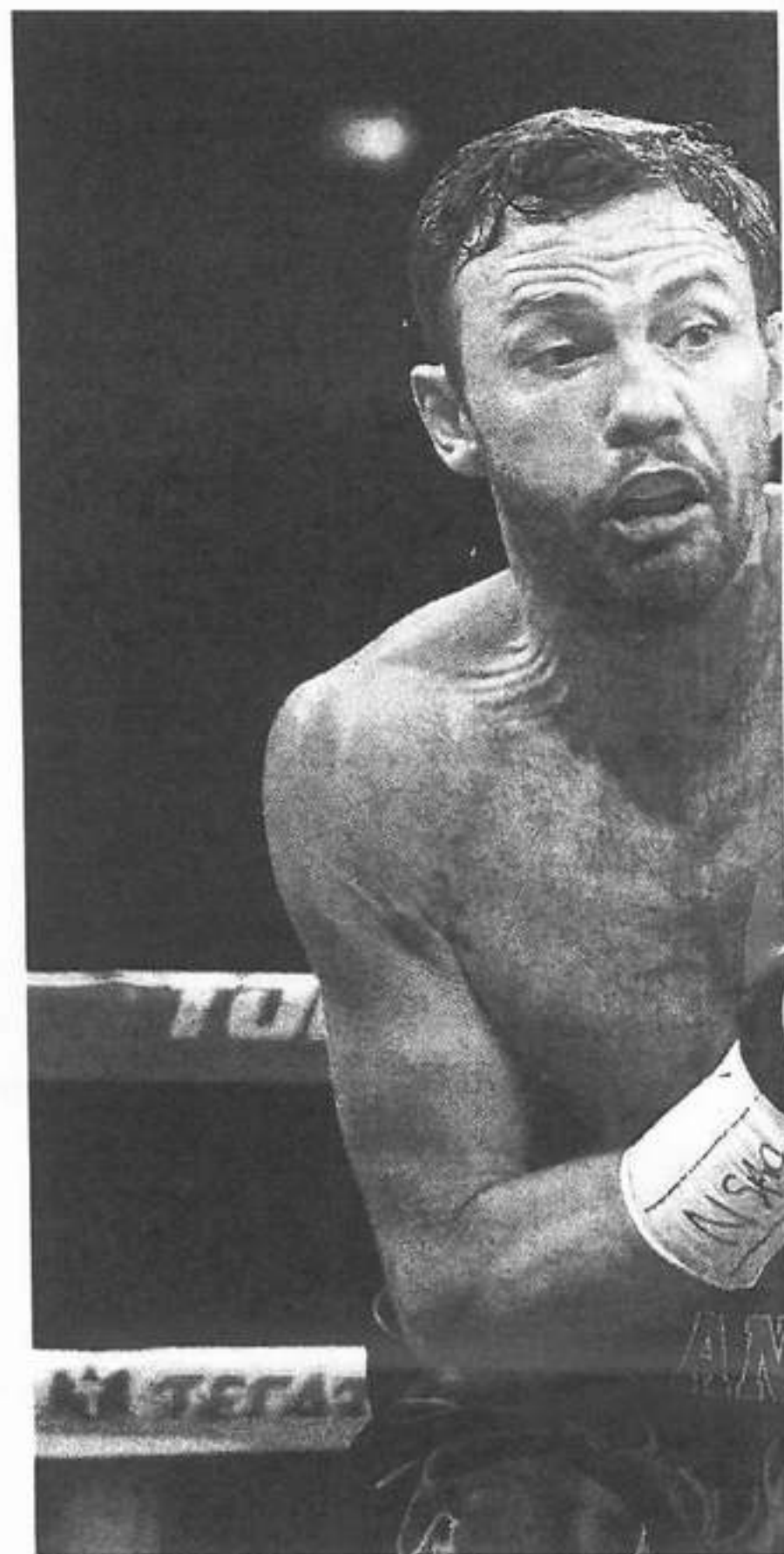
But clearly he has lost none of the affable character that has endeared him to the Limerick and wider public from his amateur days.

Just seconds after being held aloft in the ring, Lee's thoughts turned to the departed Emanuel Steward.

"I have to say a thank you to this man, my coach Adam Booth, who has done so much for me in the last couple of years - this title is for him before also for the man who made me Emanuel Steward. I lived with him for 7-8 years and learned so much from him. He said I would win a world title and tonight I made him true," said an emotional Lee.

Lee paid tribute to his fans for the support during the opening five rounds when Korobov was bossing from the inside and throwing the majority of the punches.

"Matt Korobov was giving me a nightmare - I was getting hit pretty hard in there but I could hear the cheers from my friends in Detroit, from my friends in New York and from Limerick," said Lee as he was carried aloft by his corner of Booth, David Caldwell, Richard Towers and Jonathan Hill as the new WBO World Champion.



BIG FIGHT IN BRIEF ..

Sixth Round Knockout

Lee brought a record of 33 wins from 25 fights into the world title fight. Twenty-three of those wins had come by way of KO. None more so than his last fight of June, 2014 when a big right hook rescued him when trailing John Jackson

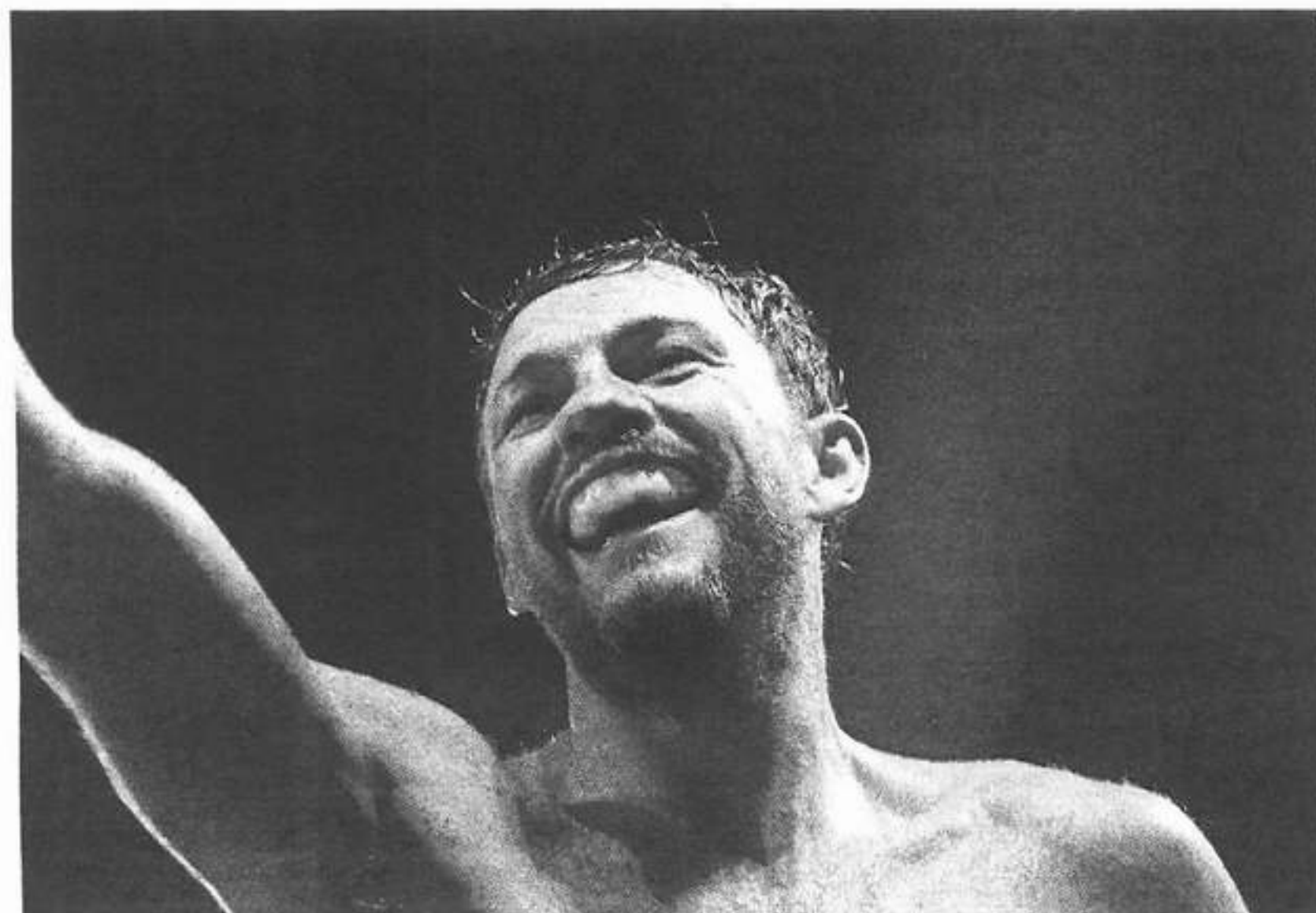
in Madison Square Garden. This time round Lee was again behind when he caught Korobov with his right midway through the sixth round. 17/18 punches followed before the referee jumped in to stop.

Limerick Boy

Not only did Lee bring world wide a claim upon himself but he sold Limerick in the best possible light to millions of watching fans on HBO television. Indeed the commentators even spoke of the Limerick/Clare hurling rivalry during the title fight.

What Now?

Lee returns to Limerick in the next 24-hours but it will be early New Year before his next plans are known. What a pity that most annual Sports Awards are selected for 2014 because Lee has catapulted himself right up there as a national sporting hero.



FULL TIME

How Twitter reacted to Andy Lee's greatest day

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TWITTER came alive on Sunday morning as Castleconnell's Andy Lee recorded a stunning world title success in Las Vegas.

We've picked out some of the best tweets from around the world - and from Limerick - as the sporting community took the chance to salute a worth world champion.

ADAM BOOTH

What happens in Vegas...Gets taken back to Ireland. Andy Lee... WBO WORLD MIDDLE-WEIGHT CHAMPION! My proudest moment!

Lee's trainer came out with a few gems on Twitter after the fight. This was one of our favourites

DAN RAFAEL

And just like that, Andy Lee stops Korobov in the 6th round with a huge right hand and follow-up onslaught!

The ESPN Commentator condense the fight down to one little sentence. and he does it quite well too

DJULIAN UNSHAVED

Just watched the Andy Lee vs Korobov fight. Somewhere up in the sky, you know Emanuel Steward was smiling.

One Tweeter was quick to remember the late trainer, known affectionately as Mann, after Lee landed the knockout blow

DOKTA VENOM

Definitely, performances like that are what boxing is all about, respect to Andy Lee World Champ!

And this Tweeter knows he has seen something special

BOXING IRELAND

One more watch of #AndyLee and that peach of a right hand to finish #KorobovLee and I'll go to bed happy!!

The person working the Boxing Ireland account couldn't watch enough of it

WEED @WIAT_LFC

Andy Lee is still trending worldwide an hour plus after

his win #Kronk

Winning a world title is one thing but trending on Twitter is a real sign you've made the big time!

KIERAN CUNNINGHAM

Andy Lee the first Irishman to win a world title bout in USA since Jim McLarnin in 1934.

Take a bow.

The Star's journalist had a nice nugget of information to add to the online conversation

LIMERICK_CHICKY

He tweeted back in October it was gonna look good on him. I can say it looks mighty fine on him. #AndyLee #AndTheNew

This Limerick girl was quite impressed at how well the world title belt suited the Castleconnell man

JAMIEMOORE777

Big congratulations to @AndyLeeBoxing! Had a feeling you were gonna do it. Enjoy the moment pal #AndTheNew Jamie Moore offers a bit of advice to Lee to make the most of his special moment

DARREN O'NEILL

#AndTheNew #ChampionoftheWorld @AndyLee-Boxing Congrats pal, what an achievement. Nice guys don't always finish last. Another Irish legend

The Irish Olympic boxer was another to throw in his tuppence worth

KEITH EARLS

That's Limerick City!! Congrats to @AndyLeeBoxing Rugby player Keith Earls was proud of the boxer doing Limerick proud on the world stage

GAVIN O'MAHONY

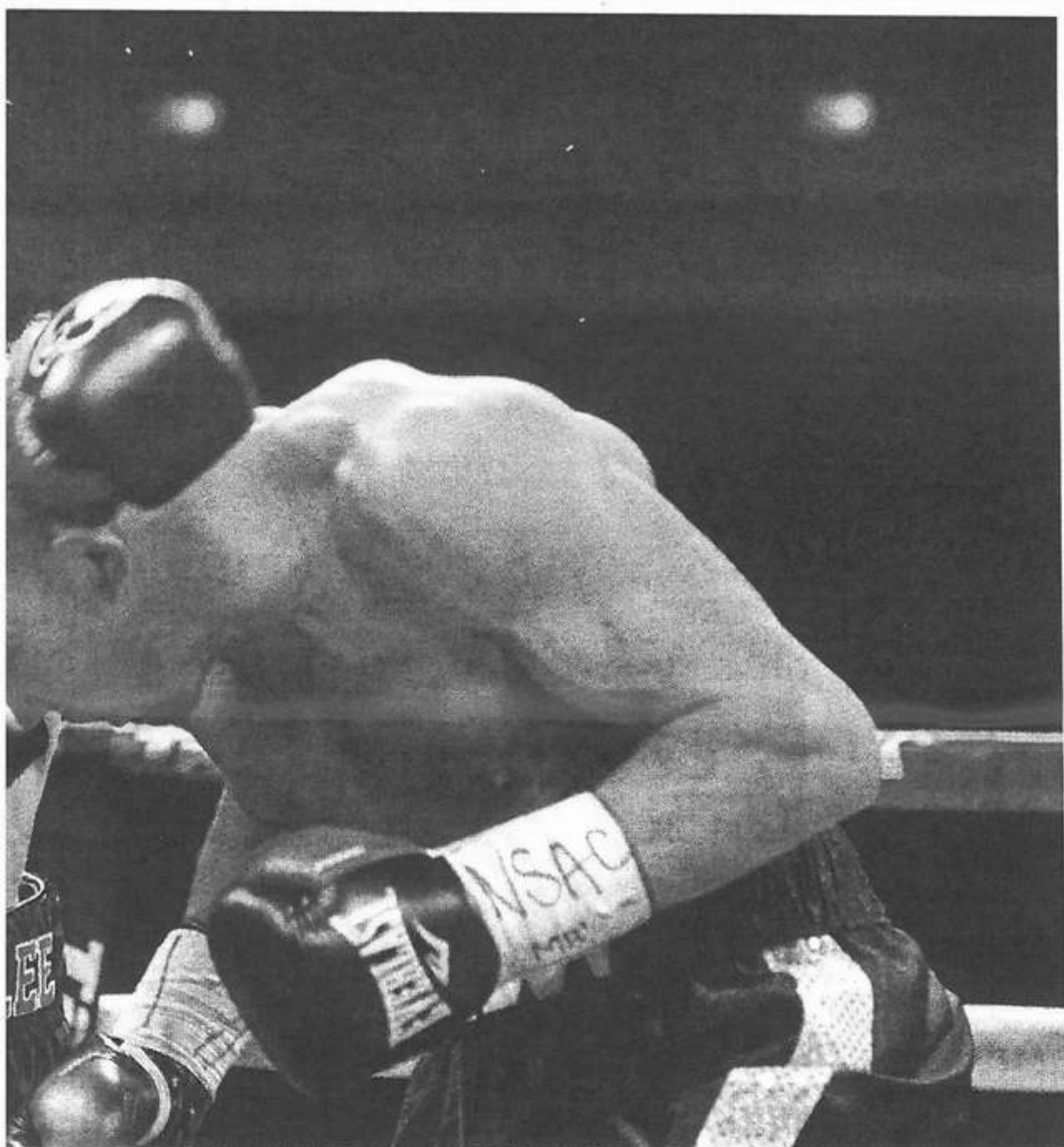
Well done @AndyLeeBoxing #worldchamp Limerick hurler Gavin O'Mahony kept his tweet short and to the point

ANDY LEE

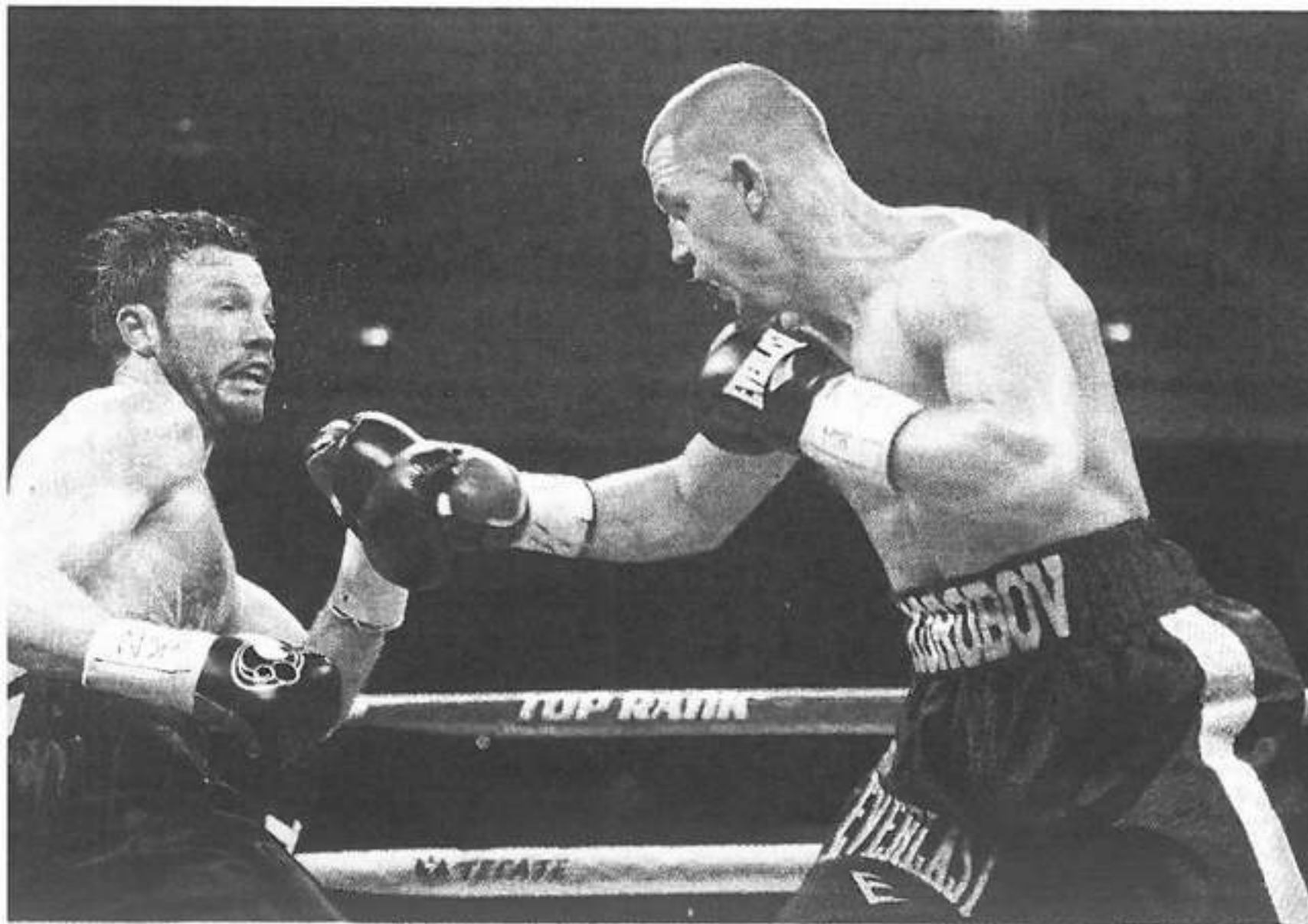
Thank you for all the support. It truly means a lot to me. Bring the belt back to Ireland!!

I'm on top of the world!

And we'll leave the last word to the man himself. Because there's no way we'd have done it better ourselves. Two short tweets sum up a great day



There: Andy Lee in action against Russian Matt Korobov in Las Vegas in the early hours of Sunday morning



FULL TIME

BOXING - WBO WORLD TITLE FIGHT

Lee: 'My right hook is a killer'

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ANDY Lee always carries a smile but never was it as broad as when referee Kenny Bayless strapped the WBO world title belt around his waist.

"My right hook is a killer punch - I thought he was gone down but I made sure and wasn't taking any chances and I just threw hell for leather and got him out of there. God blessed me with a right hook - I can't take too much credit!" said an elated Lee in the ring after he was crowned champion of the world.

Later he faced the boxing media of the world.

"It's been a long journey - but I don't want to romanticise it," he started.

"I never lost faith in myself or the vision to be world champion - I knew in my heart I would be world champion. In fights when I was behind I always knew and had faith in myself that I would win," recalled Lee of his eight year long pro-career.

He was quick to remember the hard knocks that brought ultimate success.

"Boxing is full of disappointments and fights he think you can get and don't and fights that get cancelled but in boxing you have to preserve and work hard every day and not lose sight of your goal. The motivation was always to do something in this life that was bigger than me and this can never be taken away from me - I am champion and always will be world champion," he said with the broadest of smiles.

"That fight was dedicated to Emanuel Steward - it was an honour after everything he did for me over the years," declared Lee.

"I would also like to thank Adam Booth - we have worked very closely for the last two years and grown stronger as friends and as coach and boxer."

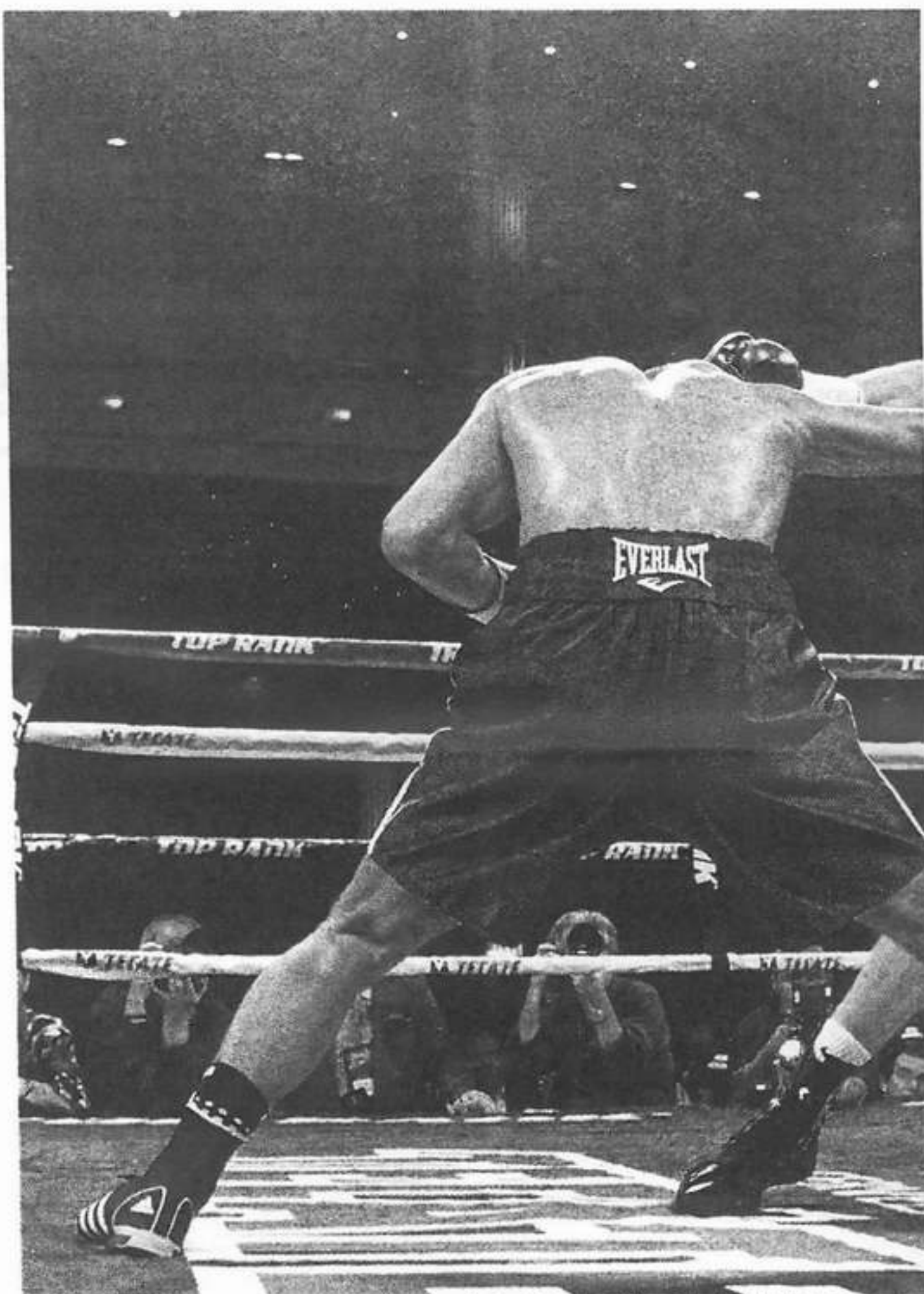
"Anybody that knows me knows that I lived with Emanuel in his house for nearly eight years and was trained by him and travelled the world with him - we were very close, more than a trainer and manager and boxer relationship. He said I would be world champion and it meant a lot to me to do that and make his words come through," said an emotional Lee.

"I know he is looking down now and is happy that I finally done it - I couldn't win the fight against Chavaz and I know that hurt him, that was a big disappointment for both of us but when he passed away I said I was going to win a world championship and it made my resolve even more determined."

Of the KO win over Korobov, Lee said that dropping his head was not an option.

"I know I was behind on the scorecards but I knew I was patient and that I would get a chance at him. I knew I would get a chance, Adam was telling me in the corner that I would get a chance and to be patient - I knew if I could catch him that I would hurt him."

He continued: "I thought I was maybe a round or two down in the fight but I could see that he was slowing down and I knew he was danger and at his best in the first half of all his fights. I could see his feet weren't as crisp and he was breathing a little heavy so I picked up my activity. I knew it was only a matter of time before we traded and I had hurt him in the third round with a left hand and I knew he felt it and it was only a matter of time."



Andy Lee, right, exchanges punches with Matt Korobov during their WBO middleweight title fight in The Cosmopolitan.

Attention turns to 2015 as draws made for Limerick GAA club

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GAA CLUB DRAWS

THE draws for the 2015 Limerick GAA club championships were made this Sunday evening at the end of Annual Convention in Ballylanders GAA clubhouse.

In the flagship Limerick SHC, champions Kilmallock are currently focused on their February All-Ireland club SHC semi-final against Portaferry but they now know their opponents for their county title defence.

Also over the weekend the All-Ireland club SHC was

whittled down to four clubs after the delayed Galway final saw Gort dethrone All-Ireland champions Portumna. That means that Gort now play Kilkenny's Ballyhale Shamrocks in the opposite semi-final to Kilmallock's.

Back in Limerick, 2014 county finalists Kilmallock and Na Piarsaigh were seeded and therefore are in opposing groups for next year's championship.

Kilmallock are in Group One, along with east Limerick trio Ahane, South Liberties and Murroe-Boher. Completing the group are Kilmallock's neighbours and Patrickswell.

The Well unveiled Ciaran Carey as their new manager last week and will be bidding

to end a run of two seasons without reaching the knockout stages of the championship. Carey has confirmed that his former inter-county colleague Mark Foley will join his management team as coach.

In Group Two Na Piarsaigh were the seeded team.

They will face stiff opposition from Doon and Adare.

Also in the group are the two sides promoted from the Premier intermediate championship this season - Bruff and Croom.

Completing the group are Ballybrown.

Ahead of Sunday's draw Na Piarsaigh confirmed that Shane O'Neill is again to manage their side in 2015 with Alan Cunningham as coach.

Ballybrown have also confirmed their status with former Tipperary and Toomevara hurler Eoin Brislane now at the helm.

The top team in each group after the five round robin games will advance directly to the semi-final with teams finishing second and third into the quarter-finals.

The bottom team in each group is automatically relegated to the Premier IHC.

In the senior football championship Group One is exactly the same as this season and contains three of the teams that reached the championship semi-finals this Autumn.

Champions Ballylanders will once again face defeated county finalists St Patrick's

and former champions Dromcollogher-Broadford and Monaleen, as well as Pallasgreen and Rathkeale's St Marys Sean Finns.

In Group Two are senior newcomers Na Piarsaigh and fellow dual senior club, Adare. They will play westerners Newcastle West, Fr Caseys, St Kierans and Ballysteen.

The format for the championship is the same as that for the Limerick SHC.

Meanwhile the draws were also made for the intermediate club championships.

In Group One of the Limerick IHC are Mungret, Cappamore, Feenagh-Kilmeedy, Knockaderry, Caherline and St Kierans.

Group Two contains Glen-

roe, Kildimo-Pallaskenry, Hospital-Herbertstown, Newcastle West, Cloughaun and junior champions Feohanagh-Castlemahon.

This is now the third tier of Limerick club hurling with the eight team Premier IHC the second tier.

No draw was necessary for this champions but the teams were drawn in an order for ease of fixture making. The resulting sequence of teams was Bruree, Monaleen, Blackrock, Dromin-Athlaca, Pallasgreen, Garryspillane, Knockainey and Granagh-Ballingarry.

The final draw made was for the Limerick IFC.

In Group One are Cloughaun, Feohanagh-Castlemahon, St Senans,



Day morning

Championships

Mountcollins, Hospital-Herbstown and Bruff.

In Group Two are Oola, Mungret, relegated Galbally, Ppamore, Athea and newcomers Glin.

On the field of play over the weekend in Limerick GAA the county U-21 football championship continued.

The way is now clear for the semi-finals next weekend in the Premier U-21 football championship.

Ballybrown will play Athea-Mountcollins and St. Peter's will play Newcastle West.

In the U-21 A football championship, St. Patrick's will play next weekend's re-fixed semi-final between Pallaskeen and Shannon Gaels.

While the U-21 B football

final is to be contested by Mungret and Adare.

All fixtures will be made this Monday night.

In the Munster club JBFC Kerry's Valentia beat Clare champions Cratloe 3-13 to 0-2 to advance to play Kildimo-Pallaskenry in Munster club JBFC final.

A date for this provincial final is also to be confirmed in the next 24-hours.

One game confirmed for next Sunday is the replay of the Limerick premier minor hurling final with the Gaelic Grounds playing host to Ahane and Na Piarsaigh on Sunday (2.00).

They finished 0-15 each over seven days ago in a thrilling Limerick MHC final.



Back for more: Oliver Mann was re-elected as Limerick GAA chairman at Sunday's annual convention in Ballylanders. Mann defeated Pat Heffernan by 207 votes to 95

GAA chairman calls for a 'united front'

JEROME O'CONNELL
GAA Correspondent
In Ballylanders GAA Clubhouse

RETURNING Limerick GAA chairman Oliver Mann has urged a "united front" for 2015.

The comments from the Patrickswell man came minutes after he saw off an election challenge at the Annual Convention of Limerick GAA this Sunday in the new facilities of Ballylanders.

It was the first time since December 1996 that a sitting chairman was challenged but Mann was returned with an emphatic 207-95 success over challenger Pat Heffernan.

"We need to work together in a sense of unity," declared Mann.

"I have always stated that there is strength in unity and the only way forward is on a united front," said Mann, who now enters his third year as County Board chairman.

He said that success for Limerick hurling was getting ever closer.

"Having failed narrowly in 2013 to win league promotion unfortunately 2014 was no different. I have no doubt that 2015 will see a major effort being made to remedy the

situation," he said of TJ Ryan's seniors.

"I have no doubt that a number of these minors will progress to playing adult hurling with Limerick. It was good to see so many of them perform with distinction with their Clubs in the local championship," said the chairman of successive Munster minor crowns for Limerick.

He called on the Munster Council for a change of fixture policy.

"Despite being beaten at the first time of asking our U-21 and Intermediate teams performed well. Going forward I would hope that Munster senior and U-21 games can be scheduled to allow for more than a three day gap between games, ten days would be more appropriate in my view if possible," he outlined.

"Our U-21 and Minor footballers despite the best efforts of all involved, players and managers were shown to be off the pace at inter county level. In my address to last year's convention, I suggested that one of the main aims of the football committee should be the development of football at underage level. I am glad to report that the committee has established an implementation group for football to

mirror the one already in existence for hurling and I have no doubt that this body under the direction of Muiris Gavin and Paul Kinnerk supported by John Cregan and his officers will in time provide a conveyor belt of young footballers for this county," said the chairman of the new football development strategy.

He also urged continued work at underage level.

"Limerick GAA is fortunate to have so many teachers in our various schools both Primary and Secondary who promote our games. This year saw West Limerick Colleges compete for Harty Cup and Corn Ui Mhuiri which they did with a great deal of credit. A word of caution however the Munster colleges council are opposed to amalgamated teams and it will be a battle to have them allowed in the future but it is imperative that this board gives all the support it can to have them retained."

He paid tribute to Rory Kiely, who departed the County Board after 44 years service.

"Rory is known and respected all over Ireland. He is also a great man for geography. Having travelled in the same car as him on a number of occasions one could only

marvel at his knowledge of roads, byroads and passages you certainly would have no need for sat nav when Rory is on board. On behalf of Limerick GAA I would like to take this opportunity to wish Rory well on his retirement and thank him for his many years of sterling service to Limerick GAA."

Elsewhere at the convention there was one more election with Liam Lenihan and Frank Reidy getting the two Munster Council delegate roles at the expense of out-going delegate Mickey O'Sullivan.

Sunday's Annual Convention brought an end to the five year term of three officers - Rory Kiely (Central Council), Denis Holmes (Munster Council) and Liam O'Sullivan (Development Officer).

However, only Kiely departed. Former Limerick GAA chairman Denis Holmes moves to become the new Central Council delegate to replace Rory Kiely.

Cloughaun's Liam O'Sullivan becomes the new vice-chairman as Pat Heffernan didn't stand for the role he held. O'Sullivan's former role as Development Officer is to be filled by Croom's Seamus Twomey.