

# SPORT

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## Casey seeks place in history books

Jerome O'Connell

SOUTHILL'S Willie Casey bids to become Limerick's first ever world boxing champion this Saturday.

The 29 year old is this week finalising his preparations in Crumlin Boxing Club in Dublin with coach Phil Sutcliffe.

On Saturday, Limerick's newest sporting hero faces champion Guillermo Rigondeaux in the WBA Super Bantamweight title fight in Dublin's CityWest Convention Centre.

A limited number of tickets, priced at €50, €70 and €130, are available from [www.ticketgroup.ie](http://www.ticketgroup.ie), [irish-boxing.com](http://irish-boxing.com), [irishbokers.ie](http://irishbokers.ie) and Xtravision outlets around the country.

Finally after weeks of debate, RTE confirmed over the weekend that they will televise the fight live. The coverage commences on RTE Two at 10pm on Saturday night.

Casey bids to follow in the footsteps of only a select group of Irish world champions. It's a list that dates back to Jack McCaulliffe's world lightweight title in 1886 and includes the likes of Johnny Caldwell, Barry McGuigan, Steve Collins, Wayne McCullough and most recently, Bernard Dunne.

Indeed Casey fights for the very belt that Dunne previously held. Daniel Halpin, Marketing Executive of Dolphil Promotions welcomed the RTE decision to televise the world title fight.

"We are delighted that an agreement has been met and the Irish public will be able to watch this historic occasion in the comfort of their homes. One of the greatest amateur fighters of all time, Guillermo Rigondeaux, takes on our very own Cinderella man, Willie Casey, and we are very proud that a



Guillermo Rigondeaux during a press conference alongside Willie Casey ahead of their WBA Super Bantamweight World Title Fight next Saturday night

PICTURE: SPORTSFILE

television deal with RTE has come to fruition," said Halpin.

For weeks RTE had maintained that the fight would not be covered live, but Ryle Nugent, Group Head RTE Sport confirmed the u-turn.

"This has been made possible by Dolphil Promotions having secured independent finance to cover the associated television production costs. It builds on our strong support of

Willie's boxing talent which includes our broadcast of his European Super Bantamweight title win last November," explained Nugent.

Ahead of the fight, Willie has spoken in glowing terms about his opponents, but still remains hugely confident in his own ability.

"Hopefully, I can put one over on Guillermo Rigondeaux and become the next Irish world champion," said

the affable Limerick man.

"You have to respect Rigondeaux and take your hat off to him. He has achieved so much in life in the amateur ranks. He has had seven fights and is World Champion. I am over here and being applauded for winning European title with only 11 fights," said Casey.

"We know how technical he is, good and skilful he is. But the way I look at

things, you can take the boxer out of the amateurs, but you can't take the amateur out of the boxer," said Casey with a broad smile.

"I know he will do everything on the night to try and keep that belt. I know I have a good team behind me with Dolphil Promotions and my coach Phil Sutcliffe. We are going to do everything we can to keep that belt in Ireland."

The world title shot means that Casey relinquishes his European title. "Some people would assume that I would hold onto the European title and defend it and get another couple of fights under my belt and get more experience. There is nothing to say that I could get beaten defending the European title."

He added: "When would the next world title fight come along. These chances, you have just got to take them and make the most of them while it lasts," explained Casey.

"I can always come back to fight for the European belt again, but I am not thinking like that. I am thinking of winning the world title and then holding onto it and get a couple of defences of that, rather than the European. There are great opportunities out there. I am lucky to be offered these chances and I will take them all."

Casey's fight comes just one week after fellow Limerick pro-boxer Andy Lee scored a sensational final round knockout for his 25th professional victory. The Castleconnell man recovered from a sluggish start to knock out Craig McEwan in the tenth round at the MGM Grand Arena at the Foxwoods Resort Casino in the US.

Lee's 10th successive victory came as chief support fight on the undercard of Sergio Martinez's defence of his world middleweight title.

## Foley insists on 'seamless' changing of the Munster guard

Colm Kinsella

NEW Munster forwards coach, Anthony Foley says he hopes the ambition and desire he holds for the Munster side will come through in his new role with the province.

Munster Rugby announced this week that Foley will succeed Laurie Fisher as the province's forwards coach from July 1. The former Shannon, Munster and Ireland number eight has been handed a two-year contract.

Foley said he was looking forward to taking over responsibility for the province's pack into the future.

"Obviously coming from where I did as a player and working for the last three years as Munster 'A' team coach and senior assistant coach, it is definitely a step for me," Foley pointed out at UL this week.

"I'm looking forward to it and I



New Munster forwards coach Anthony Foley with captain Paul O'Connell

PICTURE: SPORTSFILE

want to really enjoy the role. I'm born and bred on Munster rugby and what is expected as a forward. To have a handle on that for the next couple of seasons is something I'm looking forward to.

"Obviously, I'm not here off my own bat. I didn't run here myself. I got a lot of help along the way. My father brought rugby into the house.

"We lived and bred it all through our lives, through Shannon, through St Munchin's College, through the Munster under age, through Ireland under age, through the academies.

"I've had great people working with me and I've always willing to learn, and you never stop learning. Once I can show that the capability to keep learning I'd imagine that I will keep progressing.

"I have an ambition and desire for a Munster team, and hopefully that will come through in the work that I do."

Foley said that the changing of the guard within the Munster pack over the coming season should be seamless.

"You have to have a plan in place, but you don't look at players and say 'well he's 35 years of age, I'm not going to play him this week'. You look at what he has done and how he's going," Foley insisted.

"I have had three years working within the Munster 'A' structure, and there are a group of guys coming through there who if afforded the experience could turn into long term Munster forwards. But you don't know until you get the exposure. There is a good experienced crop there. "You've got a couple of Heineken Cups, a Grand Slam and Lions tourists. You don't want to be getting rid of that experience too quickly.

"It's just about marrying everything in together and making sure it's

seamless."

Since retiring from playing in 2008, Foley, who played 201 games for Munster, has been involved in the province's senior squad, initially as a technical advisor, then as assistant coach (defence) before details of this latest appointment was announced.

Foley is also head coach to the Munster U-20 side and the 'A' team which he led to a British and Irish Cup final appearance in 2010. The former Shannon star also serves as forwards coach to the Irish Wolfhounds.

Munster Rugby chief executive officer, Garrett Fitzgerald said: "Laurie (Fisher's) experience has been hugely beneficial to Munster's squad and management. It's now time for Anthony (Foley) to take on this responsibility and to impart his experience and great knowledge to the Munster players. We wish him well in his new role."