

Chronicle

## SPORT

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## Long road back for battling Casey

Jerome O'Connell

WILLIE 'Big Bang' Casey may have to wait more than a year for the chance to regain the European Super Bantamweight title he relinquished in order to face Guillermo Rigondeaux's in their WBA interim super-bantamweight title bout in Dublin on Saturday night.

Twenty nine-year-old Casey has vowed to bounce back from his heartbreaking first round defeat to the classy Cuban at the City West.

The Limerick boxer is likely to take a break in the immediate future before relaunching his professional boxing career later this year.

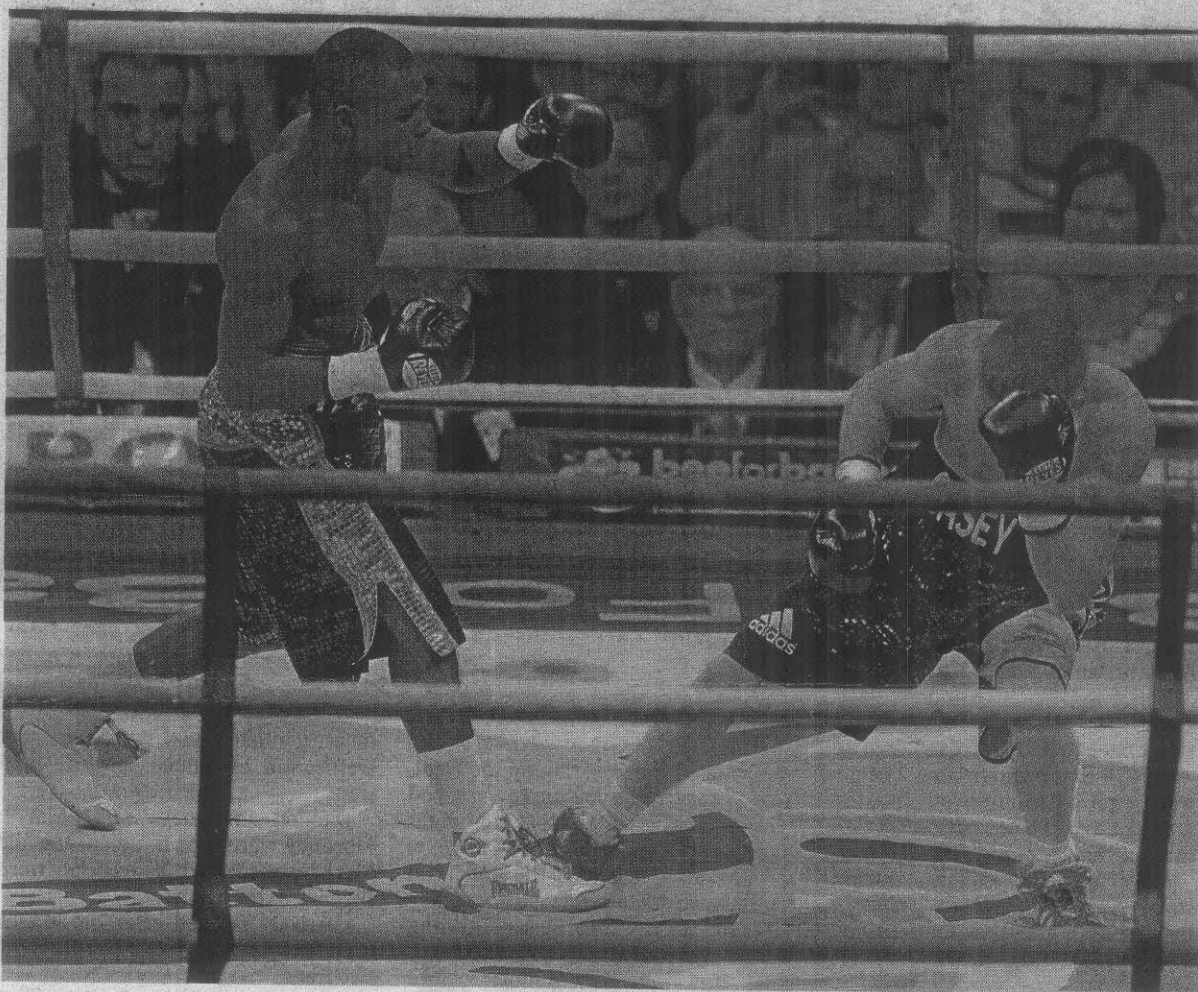
"I'm a little bit disappointing but these things happen in boxing but a true champion gets back up and comes again," Willie Casey after his defeat to the two-time Olympic champion.

There are obvious comparisons for Casey to draw from former world champion, Bernard Dunne. Back in August 2007, Dunne lost in the first round to Kiko Martinez, but less than two years later the Dubliner won the world title.

"He came back and won a world title and its how you pick yourself up and where you take it from here," outlined Casey.

"I am not afraid of being beaten - unfortunately I got knocked out but this happens and you have got to get on with it and this is not the end of me."

"I didn't get into this game without knowing that I was going to lose - the real test for me now is to see when do I get back into the ring and where do we go from here. You are going to see me pretty soon back in the ring again," said Casey.



Guillermo Rigondeaux knocks Willie Casey for the second time during the WBA Super Bantamweight World Title Fight in City West hotel last Saturday

PICTURE: SPORTSFILE

"I go into every fight confident. I was 110 per cent positive going into that fight that I was going to win and nothing would stop me but when you get caught with the big bangs, you

get caught and there is nothing you can do. Look at what's going on in the world at the moment with Japan, nuclear stations and earthquakes, so I am just really looking forward to

going home to my wife and kids."

The Southill man dismissed claims that the world title fight came too soon.

"Was it too soon for me? I don't

think so, I trained very hard for this fight - it wasn't just about one round, I spent the last 10-weeks killing myself to be ready for this fight and it was just unfortunate that I got caught at the wrong time."

He continued: "I am fighting for the world title after just 11 fights. Was it too soon for me? I don't think so, I think it was the right time for me, it was just unfortunate I got caught. Boxing is boxing, it was either him or me and tonight it was me."

"If another big fight like this came along next week I would jump back on the bike again and take it - without a doubt, without even hesitating."

"I am in this game to try and box and do the best I can and here I am boxing the best and I was just unlucky tonight."

"I know this was a bad loss and I got knocked out but I am happy that I still get to go home and see my wife and kids and spend some time with them."

Former European champion, Casey has no answer to the early onslaught from the two time Olympic champion.

"It was the body shot that I got caught with first and and it took me a minute to recover again and I didn't think I was going to recover but I did and just as I recovered I got caught with another hook over the top. With the body shot, your whole body just tenses up, you can't breathe."

"I have seen people take those shots and go down and not get back up, but I ran and went on the back foot and tried to catch my breath, but he knew he caught me and tried to finish me and he didn't finish me and I got over that one and I got back on the bike, but he caught me again with a couple of hooks."

## No go in Thomond but Crescent fancied to double up

Colm Kinsella

## Crescent v Ardscoil Ris

Date: Wednesday, March 23

Venue: Tom Clifford Park

Kick-off: 3pm

HOLDERS Crescent College Comprehensive and Limerick's most successful side in the competition over the past decade, Ardscoil Ris go head-to-head in an intriguing Avonmore Milk Munster Schools' Junior Cup final at Tom Clifford Park this Wednesday.

While Clifford Park is a fine venue to host Wednesday's game, what a pity the showpiece occasion is not taking place at Thomond Park, especially as it's an all-Limerick final with massive local interest.

Both sides come into the province's premier schools' U-16 final unbeaten and are thoroughly deserving

finalists.

To date, holders Crescent College Comprehensive have seen off 2008 winners Castletroy College 9-8, before getting the better of PBC 20-10 in their quarter-final round two tie.

Last time out the Dooradoyle side proved too strong for competition surprise packets, Glenstal Abbey and prevailed on a 22-6 scoreline at Clanwilliam.

Crescent bridged a 19-year gap when recording a dramatic 17-13 victory over CBC at Musgrave Park in last year's thrilling final.

Ardscoil Ris have been Limerick's most consistent performers in the Junior Cup over the past decade. The North Circular Road school claimed the Cup in both 2003 and 2005.

Ardscoil's hat-trick of wins on route to Wednesday's final has seen the North Circular Road outfit get the better traditional Cup heavyweights, PBC, 15-5, in their first outing, before

overcoming local rivals St Munchin's College 17-10 at Wednesday's final venue Tom Clifford Park.

While Clifford Park is a fine venue to host Wednesday's game, what a pity the showpiece occasion is not taking place at Thomond Park.

Ardscoil Ris had to survive a strong late rally from Castletroy College before securing their final berth on a 6-3 scoreline last time out.

The relief was obvious when Ardscoil coach Mossie Lawler summed the game up after the final whistle.

"We made hard work of it, there is no doubt about that. With good wins over PBC and St Munchin's this has been a great campaign for us and the lads have given us a terrific season," former Munster star Mossie Lawler said.

"We appeared to be nervous (against Castletroy) and to be honest, we got out of jail. This performance will not be good enough if we are to

win the trophy but full marks to our forwards coach Anton Meaney who has done a great job with the pack."

"Crescent will be hot favourites for the final but we have a lot of very good players and we'll be ready for the challenge."

The Ardscoil side is captained by Robbie Deegan, who along with impressive number eight Paul Obande boasts Junior Cup experience from 2010.

Obande excelled in his side's semi-final win, while Frank Bradshaw-Ryan and Daniel Wixted and dependable goal-kicker Stephen Fitzgerald are other key members of a talented squad.

Highly promising full-back Greg O'Shea, son of former Shannon star Niall, who bagged two tries in last year's final, is one of four survivors from the 2010 winning side.

The three other players with Junior Cup medals are talented flanker

James Green, powerful number eight Cormac Blake and exciting out-half Gearoid Lyons, who captains the side.

Crescent College outscored Glenstal by three tries to nil in their semi-final with, with wingers Jack Hogan and James Beary and lock Mike O'Donnell crossing the whitewash.

Afterwards Len Dinneen Jnr, a member of the Crescent backroom team said: "We knew our Cup semi-final with Glenstal would be a full-blooded affair. Full credit to them. We are delighted to be back in the final."

"It is huge for us to be able to draw on the experience of last year's win, both from a playing and coaching point of view."

"Cup rugby is special and schools cup rugby is very special. It has been a long year for us and we are delighted to be back in another final."

**Prediction:** Crescent College