



**Boxing
Ireland**

**2008 Olympic Games
Beijing, China**

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Twenty Quick Facts

1. Bantamweight John John Nevin qualified for the 2008 Olympics in Pescara, Italy on a day that only exists once every four years, February 29th (2008).
2. Irish captain Ken Egan has yet to be beaten in Irish competition this century having won eight senior titles in a row.
3. Paddy Barnes is the fifth boxer from the Holy Family club in Belfast to qualify for the Olympics.
4. John Joe Joyce is the first ever boxer from the St Michael's Athy to qualify for the Olympics.
5. Darren Sutherland claimed his third Irish senior title in a row after coming from behind to beat his great rival Darren O'Neill in a thrilling middleweight final at the National Stadium last January.
6. Michael Carruth won Ireland's only gold in the boxing ring at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Wayne McCullough claimed silver the same day.
7. Belfast bantamweight John McNally won Ireland's first Olympic boxing medal (silver) at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. Finland's Pennti Hamalainen beat McNally on a majority 2-1 decision.
8. McNally's silver was the first medal Ireland had won in any sport since Pat Callaghan and Bob Tisdall won track & field gold at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles.
9. The late Fred Tiedt won Ireland's second silver medal at Olympic level after Nicolae Linca from Romania controversially beat him in the 1956 welterweight final in Melbourne.
10. The editor of Ring magazine, Nat Fleischer said the decision to award Linca gold at the expense of Dublin born Tiedt was the most disgraceful decision he had ever witnessed. Linca passed away this summer.
11. Irish head coach Billy Walsh was born in Manchester and is a loyal United supporter. Walsh has won seven Irish senior titles.
12. Zuar Antia, one of Ireland's boxing coaches at the 2008 Olympics, won three senior titles in his native Georgia.
13. Paddy Barnes club coach Gerry Storey, was awarded an MBE for his services to boxing in Belfast. Storey is a former coach of Barry McGuigan.
14. Barnes qualified for the Olympics at the World Championships at the University of Illinois in Chicago last October.
15. The Championships attracted a record entry of 623 boxers from 114 nations.

16. Founded in 1911, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association will bid to host the 2011 World Championships – which will act as a qualifier for the 2012 Olympics – on the Associations 100th birthday.
17. Irish team manager Jim Walsh, a Limerick man, won the Philips manager of the month award – the second Munster man in a row to claim the award after Sunderland boss Roy Keane – for June 2007, after Ken Egan, Darren Sutherland and Roy Sheahan won three gold medals at the 2007 EU Championships at the National Stadium in Dublin.
18. Boxing was introduced as a modern Olympic sport for the first time at the 1904 Games in St Louis Missouri but the USA was the only nation to enter a team.
19. Two boxers of Irish extraction, George Finnegan and Miles Burke, contested one of the first boxing finals at the 1904 Games – Finnegan winning the flyweight decider.
20. Boxing is Ireland's most successful Olympic sport as boxers have won nine out of twenty medals won by Irish athletes.

Profiles of Ireland's Olympic Boxers

Ken Egan (Captain)

Age: 26

Club: Neilstown Dublin

Weight Category: 81Kg (Light Heavyweight)

Major Titles: Irish Senior Champion 2000/01/02/03/04/05/06/07/08

European Union Gold Medallist 2005/2007/08

European Championships Bronze Medallist

World Ranking: 4th

European Ranking: 2nd

Stance: Southpaw

Irish captain Ken Egan, remarkably, has yet to be beaten in Irish competition this century as he has won Irish senior titles for the last eight years in a row. The 26 year old, from Neilstown in Dublin, is one of Ireland's most decorated athletes having won medals in almost every tournament he has entered internationally and domestically over nearly a decade.

Ken claimed a bronze medal at the 2006 European Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria after he was beaten by Russian light heavyweight Arthur Beterbiev, who is currently ranked number two in the World and number one in Europe. The Russians, who many believe will top the medal table in the boxing event in Beijing, advanced eleven boxers into the eleven finals at the European Championships, winning a phenomenal nine gold and two silver medals. Ken has also finished on top of the podium at the European Union Championships three times, winning gold in 2008, 2007 (National Stadium Dublin) and in 2005.

Ken qualified for the 2008 Olympics at the final Olympic qualifier for European boxers in Athens in April 2008, after reaching the 81Kg semi final, where he beat Germany's Gottlieb Wess (boxers reaching their finals in Athens qualified automatically for Beijing) en route to capping an impressive tournament with a gold medal win over Sweden's, Kennedy Katende.

Securing Olympic qualification was the realisation of a lifetime's ambition for Ken who missed out on booking his ticket for the 2004 Games in Athens where his close friend Andy Lee was Ireland's sole representative.

Ken admitted that being named Irish captain was a very proud moment for him and he has hailed the performances of the entire Irish squad who have been through a long and arduous qualifying campaign throughout the World and Europe over the last year.

The Irish skipper acknowledged that the competition will be fierce in Beijing - not least in his own weight division - which incidentally is the only category Cuba did not manage to qualify a boxer. However, Ken is not reading too much into the Cubans absence as he reckons that whoever qualified in Cuba's place must be better.

The Irish captain played some tennis a few years back, but admitted that Wimbledon champion Rafael Nadal would probably have no cause to worry about his on court abilities. "I played a bit of tennis and Gaelic football, but boxing was always my number one sport. I am very proud to be travelling to Beijing as captain of the Irish squad. The entire squad has put an enormous amount of effort in trying to secure as many Olympics places as possible. We have

all shed blood, sweat and tears to get to Beijing and some of the lads were very unlucky not to make it and I know exactly how that feels. The squad has been through an awful lot to get where we are and the important thing is that we have stuck together and shared our triumphs and disappointments. There is a great spirit in this squad and we are all eagerly looking forward to the start of the Olympics."

* Ukrainian light heavyweight Ismail Sillakh was disqualified from the 2008 Games after a doping violation as confirmed by World amateur boxing chiefs, AIBA. Sillakh, who was ranked 4th in the World, has been replaced by Anastasios Berdesis of Greece, who has since been replaced by

Top Five World Amateur Boxers (Light Heavyweight)

1. Abbas Atoyev (Uzbekistan) World Champion
2. Arthur Beterbiev (Russia) European Champion
3. Eleider Alvarez (Columbia)
4. Ken Egan (Ireland) European Union Champion
5. Daugirdas Semiotas (Lithuania)

Darren Sutherland

Age: 26

Club: St Saviours Olympic Boxing Academy Dublin

Weight Category: 75Kg (Middleweight)

Major Titles: Irish Senior Champion 2006/07/08

European Union Gold Medallists 2007/08

World Ranking: 8th

European Ranking: 3rd

Stance: Orthodox

Darren, nicknamed Daz, became the second Irish middleweight to qualify for the Olympics in four years (Andy Lee, Athens 2004) after he booked his ticket for Beijing at the Olympic qualifiers in Athens last April. The fact that he won a gold medal into the bargain was the icing on the cake of what has been a remarkable two years of highs and lows for the reigning Irish senior 75Kg champion who has shown remarkable strength of character to bounce back from a career threatening injury.

Born to an Irish mother and Caribbean father (Tony Sutherland) from the island of St. Vincent, the DCU Sports Science student suffered a serious eye injury in a senior international with Russia at the National Stadium in Dublin in May 2006. The Irish middleweight had to retire in the second round after the thumb of the glove by Russian Danil Shved caught his eye. There were real fears for the career of the St Saviours man following the injury and he admitted that he had to do a lot of soul searching in the five months spent out of the ring.

"It was a very desperate time for me, not being able to train or compete and Darren O'Neill was performing very well with the Irish squad and I had to do a lot of soul searching at the time. However, I decided to stop feeling sorry for myself after a few weeks and I went back to non-contact training in order to stay in shape until the injury healed up, which thankfully it did, although it was touch and go at one point. Knowing I had qualified for the 2008 Olympics was a fantastic feeling. All the years of training and competition had finally paid off and now I am looking forward to getting in the ring and representing my country."

Darren has won the Irish middleweight title for the last three years. The 75Kg decider with his great rival Darren O'Neill at the National Stadium in Dublin last January was one of the bouts of the decade, a pulsating four-round affair which required the Dubliner to come from behind before his hand was raised in victory at the expense of the Paulstown, Kilkenny man.

That win ultimately secured Darren's place on the Irish team for the second last Olympic qualifier for European boxers in Pescara, Italy in February/March 2008, where he agonisingly lost out by just one point to England's James DeGale, an opponent he had previously beaten three times. However, the 26-year-old made no mistake in Athens, stopping Moldova's, Victor Cotiuanschii in round three in the semi finals before winning gold with a round three stoppage of Jean-Michael Raymond of France.

Top Five World Amateur Boxers (Middleweight)

1. Bakhtiar Artayev (Kazakhstan) Olympic Champion
2. Matvei Korobov (Russia) World & European Champion
3. Emilio Corraera (Cuba)
4. Alfonso Blanco (Venezuela)
5. Elshod Rasulov (Uzbekistan)

John Joe Joyce

Age: 20

Club: St Michael's Athy

Weight Category: 64Kg: (Light welterweight)

Major Titles: Irish Senior Champion: 2006/07/08

A winner of 14 Irish titles in total

World Ranking: 16th (April 2008)

European Ranking: 12th

Stance: Orthodox

Twenty years old and already the winner of three Irish senior titles - John Joe Joyce, nicknamed "Triple J", was wearing a Limerick hurling jersey around the Irish camp at the Olympic qualifiers in Athens where he punched his ticket for the Beijing Olympiad in style, beating Germany light welterweight Siphai Harun 27-12 in the semi finals before getting Ireland's gold rush underway after stopping Egidijus Kavaliauskas of Lithuania in round two.

One of the more enduring images from those qualifiers was the picture of Joyce, who boxes out of the St Michael's Athy club, being congratulated by the President of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, Dominic O'Rourke, who is also the President and head coach at the St Michael's Athy club, after he beat Harun to cement his place on the Irish squad for Beijing.

Limerick born Joyce, who also wears a Kildare GAA jersey, burst on the scene at the 2006 National Senior championships after beating John Paul Campbell to win his first senior title. He followed that up with wins over Ciaran Bates and Jamie Kavanagh to complete his hat-trick at the 2007 and 2008 Senior Championships.

Joyce didn't win a medal at the 2007 European Union Championships in Dublin, but produced some fine performances in the preliminary rounds before going out to Hungarian, Gyula Kate in the quarter finals. Joyce was ahead after the first two rounds, but Kate turned it around to earn a 21-18 verdict. The Hungarian also beat Joyce in this year's European Union Championships.

The St Michael's Athy man confidently predicted - before the Athens qualifiers - that he would make it to the Olympics. He said: "I knew I would qualify for the Olympics. I had come so close in Pescara and I was devastated not to have made it there to tell the truth. But when I got home I got tremendous support from my family and friends and my club and coach Dominic O'Rourke as well as from the High Performance Unit. Their encouragement gave me a tremendous boost and I was determined to secure qualification in Athens. In fact, I knew I was going to do it and I couldn't wait for the qualifiers to come around. It was a fantastic feeling knowing that I would be representing my country at the Olympics Games. It is hard to describe, but it was a very proud moment for me."

Top Five World Amateur Boxers (Light Welterweight)

1. Manus Boonjumong (Thailand) Olympic Champion
2. Serik Sapiyev (Kazakhstan) World Champion
3. Boris Georgiev (Bulgaria) European Champion
4. Ionut Gheorghe (Romania)
5. Gennadi Kovalev (Russia)

John Joe Nevin

Age: 18

Club: Cavan BC

Weight Category: 54Kg (Bantamweight)

Major Titles: National Senior Champion 2008

Irish U/19 Champion 2007

World Ranking: N/A

European Ranking 13th

Stance: Orthodox

John Joe Nevin can only celebrate his Olympic qualification once every four years because the talented young Cavan man has the unique distinction of having qualified for Beijing on a day that only exists once every four years, February 29th. John Joe produced a leap year special oozing with class and potential at the Olympic qualifiers in Pescara, Italy in February 2008 and High Performance Director Gary Keegan admitted that he was amazed by his performance.

Keegan said: "To see a young Irish boxer perform to that standard against world class opposition at a major qualification tournament was magnificent. At one point he was smiling at his opponent in the ring, more or less letting him know who was on top, amazing."

Nevin won his first Irish senior title earlier this year, thus, virtually ensuring himself a place on the Irish team for Pescara. John Joe's arrival on the scene had been well heralded as he had won a raft of underage titles en route to the National Stadium senior class deciders.

His performance in Pescara, however, was confirmation that a major new talent had arrived as Detelin Dalakiev would probably testify. The Bulgarian, ranked seventh in the World and fifth in Europe had been hot favourite to advance from his quarter final meeting with Nevin, but the Cavan teenager produced arguably his best ever performance to win a nail biting contest, 16-15, leaving him one win short of qualifying for Beijing.

Next up was Maksym Tretyak from the Ukraine and a place at the 2008 Olympics and Nevin didn't let his country down after recording an impressive 32-16 win en route to winning gold versus Veaceslav Gojan of Moldova. It was a stunning performance from Nevin, who only a few months previously had been helping the Irish Junior team to a Round Robin win over England, France and Germany at the Jackson's Hotel in Donegal.

Top Five World Amateur Boxers (Bantamweight)

1. Sergey Vodopyanov (Russia) World Champion
2. Worapoj Petchkoon (Thailand)
3. Jerome Thomas (France)
4. Samir Mammadov (Azerbaijan)
5. Enkhbat Badar-Uugan (Mongolia)

Paddy Barnes

Age: 20

Club: Holy Family Belfast

Weight Category: 48Kg: (Light flyweight)

Major Titles: National Senior Champion 2007/08

World Ranking: 11th

European Ranking: 6th

Stance: Orthodox

Paddy Barnes became the third Irish boxer to qualify for the Olympics this century after he secured his Beijing berth at the World Championships at the University of Illinois in Chicago. The Championships, which took place in October/November 2007, attracted a record entry and Barnes stepped up to the plate in the Windy City and took his opportunity quite literally with both hands to become the third Irish boxer this century after Andy Lee and Michael Roche - and the fifth boxer from the Holy Family club in Belfast - to qualify for the Olympics Games, after doing an Asian treble and beating North Korea's Choi Jon Chuk, Iran's, Sadegh Faraj Zade and Japan's Kenji Ohkubo to secure his ticket for Beijing. The bout with Ohkubo was a last sixteen clash (boxers reaching the last eight qualified for the Olympics) and the Belfast man won convincingly 24-6. Next up was the bronze medal bout, but it wasn't meant to be for the newly crowned Irish 2008 Olympian as he was beaten by reigning World champion, Shiming Zou from China, who went on to retain his title.

The Ulster light flyweight admitted immediately after the Chicago tournament that it would probably take a few weeks for it all to sink in that he was actually on his way to Beijing. Barnes won his first senior title after dethroning Jimmy Moore of the St Francis club in Limerick at the 2007 Senior Championships. On year before that clash Moore had beaten Barnes and so it was 1-1 on aggregate as the two went into the 2008 final, which Barnes won to edge into a 2-1 lead in the series over his great Shannonside rival.

Barnes club coach Gerry Storey was ecstatic after the Holy Family man had followed in the proud tradition of the Belfast club. Storey, who received a MBE for his services to boxing in Northern Ireland, believes the Irish senior champion can impress in Beijing. "Paddy is a character, but he works extremely hard on all aspects of the sport and I believe he can do well in Beijing, and who knows maybe he can bring home a medal. He's seen what's out there after competing at the World Championships and that experience will stand to him."

Top Five World Amateur Boxers (Light Flyweight)

1. Harry Tanamor (Philippines)
2. David Ayrapetyan (Russia) European Champion
3. Nordine Ouabaali (France)
4. Pal Bedak (Hungary)
5. Amnat Ruanroeng (Thailand)

* World champion Shiming Zou (China) is ranked number one in the World at flyweight.*

Profiles of High Performances Coaches

Billy Walsh

Head Coach Billy Walsh was born in Manchester and is the proud holder of seven Irish senior titles at three different weights whilst boxing out of the St Ibars/St Josephs club in Wexford.

A keen GAA fan and Manchester United supporter, Billy won a Leinster hurling medal at the U/14 level for Wexford and also captained the Wexford minor football team. Billy proudly represented Ireland at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul and at two World Championships and was coach at the 2004 Olympics in Athens where Andy Lee was Ireland's only boxer.

According to an "informed source", Billy vowed to get a fairly tight "Number 3" haircut if the Irish squad qualified three boxers for the 2008 Olympics in Athens - Ken Egan, Darren Sutherland and John Joe Joyce ensured that he would be visiting the barber. The same source revealed that if Ireland's five Olympians bring back a medal from Beijing, he will get an even tighter haircut...the barber is sharpening his scissors.

Zuar Antia

Zuar Antia was born in Georgia and is the holder of three Georgian senior titles at light welterweight. Zuar, a former coach with the Georgian national team, has helped a number of his countrymen to qualify for the Olympics in the past. His achievements with the Georgian squad did not go unnoticed and he was appointed coach with the Soviet Union squad.

Zuar is from a town in Georgia called Poti and learned his trade as a coach with the local boxing club, which he helped guide to quite a few national titles. A very patriotic Georgian, Zuar has been working with the Irish Amateur Boxing Association for five years and lives in Bray with his wife and two sons, David and George. David boxes out of the Bray club and is studying for his Leaving Cert this year, while George is a keen soccer player.

2008 Olympic Qualifying Tournaments

The AIBA qualification process for the 2008 Olympics in China concluded after the final bell for the tenth and last Olympic qualifier sounded in Guatemala City on April 30th last.

And the good news for Irish sport is that five of the two hundred and eighty six boxers competing at 2008 Olympic Games at the Workers Indoor Arena in Beijing next August will be Irish.

Ken Egan, Darren Sutherland, John Joe Joyce, John Joe Nevin and Paddy Barnes have all earned the right to wear the five Olympic rings with pride and the squad will carry the hopes of the nation in the Chinese capital.

Egan told the Irish Sun prior to the Olympic qualifiers that he would not hesitate trading in every medal he has won in his glittering career for a seat on the plane for Beijing, it meant that much to him.

However, following his gold medal win at the final Olympic qualifier for Europeans in Athens - reaching the final was enough to book a ticket for Beijing - the good news is that Egan's trophy cabinet will remain very much intact.

Qualifying five boxers is a remarkable achievement considering the relatively small population of the island of Ireland (circa 6.2 million) vis-a-vis the larger populations of the vast majority of nations we were competing against.

The 2007 World Boxing Championships at the University of Illinois in Chicago last November was the first port of call for Irish boxers vying to secure Olympic qualification.

However, Holy Family Belfast light flyweight Paddy Barnes was the only Irish boxer to step over the line and what a performance from the young Irish senior champion.

Barnes stepped up to the plate in the Windy City to become the fifth boxer from the Holy Family club to qualify for Olympics Games over the years, after beating North Korea's Choi Jon Chuk, Iran's, Sadegh Faraj Zade and Japan's Kenji Ohkubo.

The bout with Ohkubo was a last sixteen clash - boxers reaching the last eight qualified for the Olympics - and the Belfast man won convincingly 24-6.

Next, Barnes had a shot to winning at least a bronze medal in Chicago, but unfortunately victory wasn't meant to be for the newly ordained Irish 2008 Olympian as he was beaten by reigning world champion, Shiming Zou from China, who went on to retain his title.

Meanwhile, the Irish squad packed its bags and headed home with chequered memories of the Windy City, one of which transcended age, colour and creed and will live long in the minds of all who witnessed it.

At the opening ceremony for the 2007 Championships, 1960 Olympic gold medal winner Muhammad Ali made a surprise appearance. The most instantly recognised sportsperson of any generation was standing at the balcony in the Sports Arena at the University of Illinois

and memories of his demolition job on George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire in 1974 came flooding back. "Ali", thundered Ali, from the balcony, and in a chorus from Zaire thirty-four years previous, "bombaye" every boxer, trainer and team manager thundered back.

Leaving aside that "bombaye" means "kill him", the him in question being Foreman, it was one of those remarkable moments in sporting history, where according to High Performance Director Gary Keegan not a dry eye was left in the house.

The Irish squad's focus of attention was now beginning to switch toward the first Olympic qualifying tournament for Europeans in Pescara, Italy in February 2008.

First up was the 2008 National Senior Championships at the National Stadium, a tournament that had a double significance, as boxers claiming or retaining their Irish titles would be part of the Irish squad for Pescara.

The Italian Olympic qualifiers began on a negative note with the bombshell that Roy Sheahan broke his left hand in a sparring session with a Latvian opponent at the Irish squad's training camp outside Rome.

It was a devastating blow for the St Michael's Athy man and for Irish boxing to lose one of Europe's top welterweights on the eve of such a crucial tournament.

The talented John Joe McDonagh was drafted into the squad to replace Sheahan for a tournament, which was to prove to be an enormous success for one of the youngest members of the squad, John Joe Nevin.

The Cavan bantamweight was quite simply magnificent in Pescara, beating the highly rated Detelin Dalakiev of Bulgaria en route to booking his ticket for Beijing after posting a classy semi final win over Maksym Tretyak from the Ukraine.

While Nevin was celebrating, there was disappointment for the rest of the Irish squad who were now looking to Athens as their final chance of realising their Olympic dreams.

The Greek capital was the scene of Andy Lee's exit from the 2004 Olympics after he was devastatingly beaten on a count-back by Ndam Njikam from the Cameroon in the last sixteen.

But fast forward four years and the memory of the 2004 Olympic disappointment was erased by the performances of Irish captain Ken Egan, Darren Sutherland and John Joe Joyce.

All three booked their flights for Beijing and won a hat trick of gold medals into the bargain on an incredible day for Irish amateur boxing.

Light welterweight Joyce, of the Michael's Athy club, won gold after his opponent, Egidijus Kavaliauskas of Lithuania, retired injured in the first round with the scores tied at 2-2.

And St Saviours Dublin middleweight Sutherland claimed gold after his opponent, Jean-Michael Raymond of France, retired in the second round. Sutherland was 8-2 up.

Swedish light heavyweight Kennedy Katende went the distance with Egan, but the Dubliner ensured the hat-trick after earning a 15-10 win.

The three gold medal wins insured that Ireland finished in second spot in a league table of 39 nations based on points achieved in Athens.

The journey to Beijing was now completed and with five boxers over the line, amateur boxing, Ireland's most successful Olympic sport, was back on the map with a bang.

Qualifying five boxers is a 400% improvement from the 2004 Olympics, where Andy Lee, from the St Francis club in Limerick, was Ireland's only representative, and a 400% improvement from the 2000 Games where Michael Roche, of the Sunnyside club in Cork, was Ireland's sole boxer.

But let's not forget the performances of the rest of the Irish squad who were all over the World in various training camps and tournaments and shed blood, sweat and tears for their country in their quest to reach Beijing.

In particular, David Oliver Joyce, one of Europe's most talented featherweights, was denied the realisation of a lifetime's ambition after being beaten under controversial circumstances in the Athens qualifiers.

Roy Sheehan's injury was also a devastating blow and Tipperary heavyweight Con Sheehan impressed in the qualifiers and definitely looks a great prospect for the future.

Meantime, IABA President Dominic O'Rourke, High Performance Director Gary Keegan, Irish coaches Billy Walsh, Zuar Antia and Jim Moore, the numerous clubs up and down the country and everyone associated with Irish amateur boxing deserve enormous credit for what has been a very successful Olympic qualifying campaign.

Classified Results of 2008 Olympic Qualifying Campaign

Athens, Greece Olympic Qualifying Tournament 7-12 April 2008

April 12th (Final Results):

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Egidijus Kavaliauskas (Lithuania) RET2

(Joyce wins Gold Medal)

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Jean-Michael Raymond (France) RET3

(Sutherland wins Gold Medal)

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Anastasias Berdesis (Greece) 15-10

(Ken Egan wins Gold Medal)

April 11th (Semi Final Results):

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Sipahi Harun (Germany) 27-12

(Joyce qualifies for Beijing Olympics)

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Victor Cotujanschii (Moldova) RET3

(Sutherland qualifies for Beijing Olympics)

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Gottlieb Weiss (Germany) 21-11

(Egan qualifies for Beijing Olympics)

April 9th Results (Quarter Final Results):

51Kg: Conor Ahern (Ireland) lost to Bato-Munko Vankeyeu (Belarus) 12-20

57Kg: David Oliver Joyce (Ireland) lost to Bashir Hassan (Sweden) 17-19

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Gkevorgk Gkalstian (Greece) 18-18 C/B 41-37

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Zoran Mitrovic (Serbia) 38-17

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Daniel Kool (Holland) 13-4

April 8th (Last 16 Results):

57Kg: David Oliver Joyce (Ireland) beat Theodoros Papazov (Greece) 30-10

60Kg: Ross Hickey (Ireland) lost to Romal Amanov (Azerbaijan) 6-23

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Zdenek Chladek (Czech Republic) 18-8

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Eneste Glodi (Norway) 27-7

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Allessandro Sinacore (Italy) 23-14

91Kg: Tom Sheahan (Ireland) lost to Tsohak Ananikyan (Armenia) RSC1

91+Kg: Cathal McMonagle (Ireland) lost to Yosef Abed Elghani (Israel) 4-12

April 7th (Preliminary Results):

51Kg: Conor Ahern (Ireland) beat Salomo N'Tune (Sweden) 14-8

69Kg: Willie McLoughlin (Ireland) lost to Velibor Vidic (Bosnia) 11-13

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Niko Jokinen (Finland) 5-0

Pescara, Italy Olympic Qualifying Tournament 25 February-1 March 2008

March 1st (Final Results):

54Kg: John Joe Nevin (Ireland) beat Veaceslav Gojan (Moldovia) 17-10
(Nevin wins Gold Medal)

February 29th (Semi Final Results):

54Kg: John Joe Nevin (Ireland) beat Maksym Tretyak (Ukraine) 32-16
(Nevin qualifies for Beijing Olympics)

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) lost to Ionut Gheorghe (Romania) 20-25

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) lost to Ramazan Magamedau (Belarus) 13-17

February 27th (Quarter Final Results):

54Kg: John Joe Nevin (Ireland) beat Detelin Dalakliev (Bulgaria) 16-15

60Kg: Ross Hickey (Ireland) lost to Miklos Varga (Hungary) 22-39

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Milan Piperski (Serbia) RET3

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) lost to James DeGale (England) 22-23

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Emil Krastev (Bulgaria) 29-8

91+Kg: Cathal McMonagle (Ireland) lost to Jaroslav Jaksto (Lithuania) 3-23

February 26th (Preliminary Results):

51Kg: Conor Ahern (Ireland) lost to Martin Parlagi (Slovakia) 16-26

54Kg: John Joe Nevin (Ireland) beat Mirsad Ahmeti (Croatia) 23-8

60Kg: Ross Hickey (Ireland) beat Krsysztof Szot (Poland) 21-12

57Kg: David Oliver Joyce (Ireland) lost to Stephen Smith (England) 19-27

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (Ireland) beat Vasilii Belous (Moldovia) 20-12

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat Ramis Baylarov (Azerbaijan) 25-16

81Kg: Ken Egan (Ireland) beat Myasnik Sargsyan (Armenia) RSCO3 (23-3)

91+Kg: Cathal McMonagle (Ireland) beat Renato Kovac (Slovakia) KO1

February 25th (Preliminary Results):

69Kg: John Joe McDonagh (Ireland) lost to Dmitrijs Sostaks (Latvia) 4-14

57Kg: David Oliver Joyce (Ireland) beat Azat Hobhannisyan (Armenia) 37-21

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (Ireland) beat James Quigley (Scotland) RSCO3 (23-3)

91Kg: Con Sheehan (Ireland) lost to Ilias Pavlidis (Greece) 9-15

Chicago, USA World Senior Boxing Championships

23 October-3 November 2007

(Championships acted as an Olympic Qualifier)

November 1st (Quarter Final Results):

48Kg: Paddy Barnes (Holy Family GG) lost to Shiming Zou (China) 8-22

October 31st (Last 16 Results):

48Kg: Paddy Barnes (Holy Family GG) beat Kenji Ohkubo (Japan) 24-6

(Barnes qualifies for Beijing Olympics)

60Kg: Eric Donovan (St. Michael Athy) lost to Dominico Valentino (Italy) 12-29

81Kg: Ken Egan (Neilstown) lost to Marijo Sivolija (Croatia) 17-9

October 30th (Last 16 Results):

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (St. Saviours OBA) lost to Alfonso Blanco (Venezuela) 13-20

91Kg: John Sweeney (Dungloe) lost to Rakhim Chakhkeiv (Russia) 5-28

October 28th (Last 32 Results):

48Kg: Paddy Barnes (Holy Family GG) beat Sadegh Faraj Zade (Iran) RSCO 3 (30-10)

60Kg: Eric Donovan (St. Michaels Athy) beat Jonathan Batista (Dominican Republic) 21-4

69Kg: Roy Sheahen (St. Michaels Athy) Llost to Ruslan Khairov (Azerbaijan) 20-3

81Kg: Ken Egan (Neilstown) beat Julio Castillo Torres (Ecuador) 16-10

October 27th (Last 32 Results):

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (St. Saviours OBA) Beat Andranik Hakobyan (Armenia) 22-20

91+ Kg: Cathal McMonagle (Holy Trinity) Lost to Islam Timurzиеv (Russia) RET 1

October 26th 9 (Preliminary Results):

54Kg: Ryan Lindberg (Immaculata) lost Arroyo McJoe (Puerto Rico) RSCO 3 (27-7)

91Kg: John Sweeney (Dungloe) beat Branco Srdic (Serbia) RSC 4

October 25th (Preliminary Results):

48Kg: Paddy Barnes (Holy Family GG) beat Choi Jon Chuk (Peoples Rep. of Korea) 33-19

51Kg: Conor Ahern (Baldoyle) lost to Bato-Munko Vankeyeu (Belarus) 15-28

60Kg: Eric Donovan (St. Michaels Athy) beat Mikios Varga (Hungary) 39-22

69Kg: Roy Sheahen (St. Michaels Athy) beat Sang In Han (Korea) 22-7

81Kg: Ken Egan (Neilstown) beat Julius Jackson (Virgin Islands) RSCO 2 (21-1)

October 24th (Preliminary Results):

57Kg: David Oliver Joyce (St. Michaels Athy) lost to Davi Souza (Brazil) 21-10

75Kg: Darren Sutherland (St. Saviours OBA) beat Roy Albert Cook (Dominica) W/O

October 23rd (Preliminary Results):

64Kg: John Joe Joyce (St. Michaels Athy) lost to Gyula Kate (Hungary) 17-32

Ireland's Olympic Boxing History

Irish 2008 Olympians, Ken Egan, Darren Sutherland, John Joe Joyce, John Joe Nevin and Paddy Barnes travel to Beijing representing Ireland's most successful Olympic sport.

Boxers have earned nine of the twenty medals won by Irish athletes since Ireland first competed at the Olympic games as an independent nation at the 1924 Olympiad in Paris.

Belfast's John McNally was the first Irish boxer to win an Olympic medal after claiming silver at the 1952 Olympiad in Helsinki following a controversial split decision reversal to Finnish bantamweight Pennti Hamalainen.

Not only was McNally's silver a first for Irish amateur boxing, it was also the first Olympic medal that Ireland had won since 1932 when Pat Callaghan and Bob Tisdall landed track and field gold in Los Angeles. McNally beat Alejandro Ortuosto of the Philippines in the Helsinki preliminaries to set up a quarter final with Italian Vincenzo Dall'osso which the Ulster ace won on a unanimous decision.

Next up was a semi final with Korea's Joon-Ho Kang, who was left occupying a large area of floor space in the second after being dropped by McNally, who went on to face Finland's Hamalainen in the final. But it was not to be for McNally after the British judge gave him the thumbs up but the American and Austrian judges gave Hamalainen the verdict.

McNally, as quoted in Barry Flynn's, "Legends of Irish Boxing", admitted that the decision was hard to take. "The Finn had been cautioned at least eight times during the bout for hitting with the inside of the glove and for using his head to open my eye, which in today's rules would have lost him points. It came down to the three judges and the British judge gave it to me, while the American and Austrian gave it to Hamalainen. It was the last day of the Games and the host nation had not yet won a gold medal so there was a lot of weight on the Finn's shoulders to deliver. I could not believe it when his hand was raised; it was like a nightmare come true. I was devastated and in floods of tears because I was convinced that I had won the gold medal."

McNally learned his trade with the Immaculata and the St Mary's club in Belfast. Andrew Reddy, Thomas Reddy, Terry Milligan, Peter Crotty, William Duggan, John Lyttle and Kevin Martin made up the eight man strong Irish boxing squad in Helsinki.

McNally's success proved to be the boost that Irish boxing needed at Olympic level as four years later a record four medals were claimed at the 1956 Games in Melbourne. However, an Irishman was once again denied gold by a controversial decision.

Irish boxing was in mourning in June 1999 when the great Fred Tiedt passed away aged sixty-three. Dublin born Tiedt claimed Ireland's second Olympic silver medal on the trot in Melbourne - but many felt it should have been gold after he lost out on a majority 3-2 decision to Romanian welterweight Nicolae Linca, who finished on top of the podium despite the fact that when the scores were added up it was found that Tiedt had won the majority of points.

In the official dispatches from the International Olympic Committee the 1956 welterweight decider was specifically mentioned. "Probably the most unlucky boxer was Tiedt (Ireland) who lost a close final to Linca (Romania) after he had come through three very hard fights in his division against Tadeusz Walasek (Poland) Pearce Lane (USA) and Kevin Hogarth (Australia).

While the IOC dispatch used diplomatic language, there was no ambiguity about what the editor of Ring magazine, Nat Fleischer thought about the verdict - "it was the most disgraceful decision I have ever witnessed", he said.

Tiedt was born in Dublin in 1935 and boxed out of the South City Boxing club along with his three brothers. Linca, from Transylvania, sadly passed away this summer.

But despite the disappointment of not winning gold it proved to be an enormously successful Olympics for Irish boxers with lightweight Tony Byrne, bantamweight Fred Gilroy, and flyweight John Caldwell all winning bronze in addition to Tiedts silver medal.

The Melbourne Games were held against the backdrop of the old USSR's invasion of Hungary, which exacerbated an East versus West ideological cold war, which spilled over from the political arena into the sports field. Amid the political tensions of the day, Gilroy became a hero in the West after a sensational preliminary round KO of Boris Stepanov.

The Russian had been tipped as a favourite to win gold but went down like a dynamited chimney stack after being caught by a third round left hook forged in the St John Bosco club in Belfast. Gilroy went on to beat Mario Sitrì from Italy in the quarterfinals but had to accept second best against eventual gold medallist Wolfgang Behrendt of East Germany in the last four.

Meanwhile, another Belfast man, the classy Caldwell, then only eighteen years of age, took home a bronze medal from the Melbourne Games. Caldwell, like 2008 Olympian John Joe Nevin, was considered the "baby" of the Irish Olympic squad, but the immaculate teenager, a superb technical fighter who knew when to bang when he had to, finished in a podium position.

Caldwell received a bye in the preliminary rounds and took the quick route to victory courtesy of a third round KO of Burma's Yai Shew before breaking Australian hearts with a convincing quarter final win over Warren Batchelor in the quarter finals before losing his semi final to Mircea Dobrescu of Romania, who lost to Britain's Terry Spinks in the final.

Byrne was the Irish captain in 1956 and had the honour of carrying the Irish Tricolour in the Olympic Stadium. Byrne learned the ropes in the Tredagh club in County Louth and honed his boxing skills in the Irish army before being chosen to represent his country Down Under after winning an Irish senior title at the expense of Steven Coffey in 1956 - Byrne also won the boxer of the tournament award at the 1956 Irish Senior Championships.

The Drogheda lightweights first bout in Melbourne saw the Irish skipper advance after Czech puncher Josef Chovanec was disqualified in round three. Byrne then beat American champion Louis Molina but lost out to West German, Harry Kurschat - who Byrne had beaten in an international earlier that year - in the last four.

Scotland's Dick McTaggart, whom Byrne beat in a challenge match in the Royal Albert Hall in 1957, beat Kurschat in the final. Overall, a highly successful Olympic campaign for Irish boxers and Irish sport as the great Ronnie Delaney left the rest of the world in his slipstream to claim gold in the 1500m final.

Irish amateur boxing was on the crest of a wave after the 1956 medal haul and there were high hopes that our pugilists could scale the heights again at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

However, it wasn't to be in the Eternal City, although a man with Irish connections, Cassius Marcellus Clay, later to be known as Muhammad Ali, did win gold for the USA in the light heavyweight section after he beat Poland's Zbigniew Pietrzykowski in the 81Kg final.

According to Thomas Hauser's prize winning book, "Muhammad Ali - His Life and Times", Ali's mother, (Odessa Grady Clay) grandfather was a white Irishman, Abe Grady, *who emigrated to the United States from Ennis County Clare soon after the American Civil War and married a "free coloured woman" whose name is unknown.*

Four years later at the Tokyo Olympics, an Irish boxer was back on the podium after lightweight Jim McCourt won bronze. Belfast born McCourt, known as the "Prince of the Immaculata" beat Suh of Korea, Sarwar of Pakistan and Barrea of Spain (all 4-1 wins) to the semi finals where he lost out 3-2 to Vellikton Barrannikov of the Soviet Union, who lost the 60Kg final to Poland's Jozef Grudzien in the final.

McCourt, who was also a member of the St Agnes club in Anderstown, met Grudzien in a senior international at a packed and vociferous National Stadium in 1965 and beat the reigning Olympic champion convincingly.

However, McCourt's medal was the last piece of silverware that Ireland was to claim in Olympic boxing for sixteen years until yet another Belfast man, Hugh Russell bridged the gap after he travelled to Moscow in 1980 and came home with bronze.

Russell outgunned Samir Kliniab from Iraq, Emmanuel Mlundwa from Tanzania and Korea's Yo-Ryon Sik to end the sixteen-year drought before being beaten in the semi finals by Bulgaria's Peter Lesov who went all the way in the Russian capital.

Philip Sutcliffe, Gerry Hawkins, Sean Doyle, Martin Brereton, Patrick Davitt and Barry McGuigan made up the Irish boxing squad in Moscow.

The 1984 Games yielded no silverware, and despite the formidable skills of present High Performance head coach Billy Walsh, Joe Lawlor, John Lowey, Patrick Fitzgerald, Kieran Joyce and two young men called Michael Carruth and Wayne McCullough, there was no medal return from the 1988 Games in Korea.

However, Carruth and McCullough did bring back something from Seoul, the belief that they could take on and beat the Worlds best, a belief that was to see Ireland finally win gold and a third silver medal at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona which was the first Games to use computerized scoring in boxing.

McCullough out-pointed Uganda's, Fred Mutuweta, (who he had beat in the preliminaries at the Korean Olympics) Ahmad Ghanim of Iran, Nigeria's Mohammed Sabo and Lee Gwang-Sik of Korea on his way to the final versus Cuban Joel Casamayor who never relinquished

the early lead he built up to win 14-8 despite hanging on in the face of a storming finish from the Ulster bantamweight in the final round.

Later that August 8th day, Michael Carruth entered the ring to face Cuban Juan Hernandez in the welterweight final. Hernandez was hot favourite to have his hand raised in victory and Carruths cause wasn't helped when he dropped three points after receiving a harsh public warning for holding in the second round.

But the Drimnagh southpaw rallied to win Ireland's first gold medal since Ronnie Delaney's top of the podium finish in Melbourne in 1956 on a 13-10 verdict. It was a stunning performance from Carruth who just refused to accept second best throughout a tournament, which saw him beat Maselino Tuifao from Samoa, World and European silver medallist Andreas Otto of Germany, and Arkhom Chenglai of Thailand en route to eventual glory against Hernandez.

Back home in Dublin, Fred Tiedt and Billy Walsh were watching the fight on TV as special guests of the Carruths at their family home in Dublin. The gold medal that John McNally and Tiedt and had been denied in 1952 and 1956 was finally on the way to Ireland.

Irish Olympic Medal Winners

John McNally (Bantamweight): 1952 Helsinki (Silver)
Fred Tiedt (Welterweight): 1956 Melbourne (Silver)
Tony Byrne (Lightweight): 1956 Melbourne (Bronze)
Fred Gilroy (Bantamweight): 1956 Melbourne (Bronze)
John Cadwell (Flyweight): 1956 Melbourne (Bronze)
Jim McCourt (Lightweight): 1964 Tokyo (Bronze)
Hugh Russell (Flyweight): 1980 Moscow (Bronze)
Wayne McCullough (Bantamweight): 1992 Barcelona (Silver)
Michael Carruth (Welterweight): 1992 Barcelona (Gold)

World Amateur Boxing Rankings provided by ABA Boxing - www.ababoxing.com
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