

The Best Of

THIS MONTH: IRELAND

1. Jimmy McLarnin
2. Barry McGuigan
3. Nonpareil Jack Dempsey
4. Jack McAuliffe
5. Mike McTigue
6. Dave McAuley
7. Rinty Monaghan
8. Tom Sharkey
9. George Gardner
10. Jim Coffey

By Patrick Myler



Jimmy McLarnin trades with Tony Canzoneri in a battle of future hall of famers. In an unforgettable career, McLarnin fought 14 different world champions.

Jimmy McLarnin was a gifted boxer who carried a payoff punch in both hands. Born in Hillsborough, County Down, he emigrated to Canada as a child and did his fighting in the USA. At first glance, his record of 63-11-3 (20) is not overly impressive. The key to his greatness was the quality of his opponents; no fewer than 16 were world champions, and he beat 14 of them. His three welterweight title fights with Barney Ross were ring classics. Now in his mid-80s, he lives in California.

● **Barry McGuigan** augmented sustained aggression with real punching power, a long reach, and good lateral movement, and topped it off with 100 percent dedication. His reign as WBA featherweight titleholder (June 1985 to June 1986) was disappointingly short, but he was brilliant in toppling Eusebio Pedroza, who had thwarted 19 previous challengers. What a pity he never faced WBC champion Azumah Nelson to prove who was top gun.

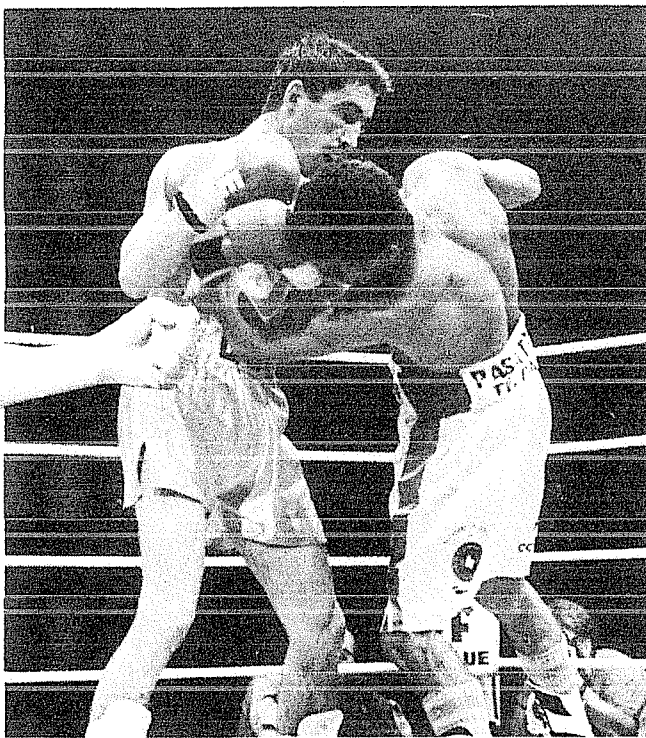
● **Nonpareil Jack Dempsey**, whose real name was John Kelly, was the first holder of the world middleweight title. He was noted for the accuracy and clever timing of his blows. His courage was proved when he refused to quit against Bob Fitzsimmons. Even Fitz took pity on him before applying the finisher. Dempsey, who inspired heavyweight William Harrison Dempsey to adopt his name, lost only three times in 64 contests.

● **Jack McAuliffe** did better than his pal Dempsey. He fought 36 times and never lost. Mind you, he was on the lucky end of a few dubious decisions, especially in his 74-round draw with Englishman Jem Carney for the undisputed lightweight title. McAuliffe's supporters stormed the ring when he looked a beaten man. Rarely in top condition, Jack was a naturally gifted boxer with the durability to survive long battles.

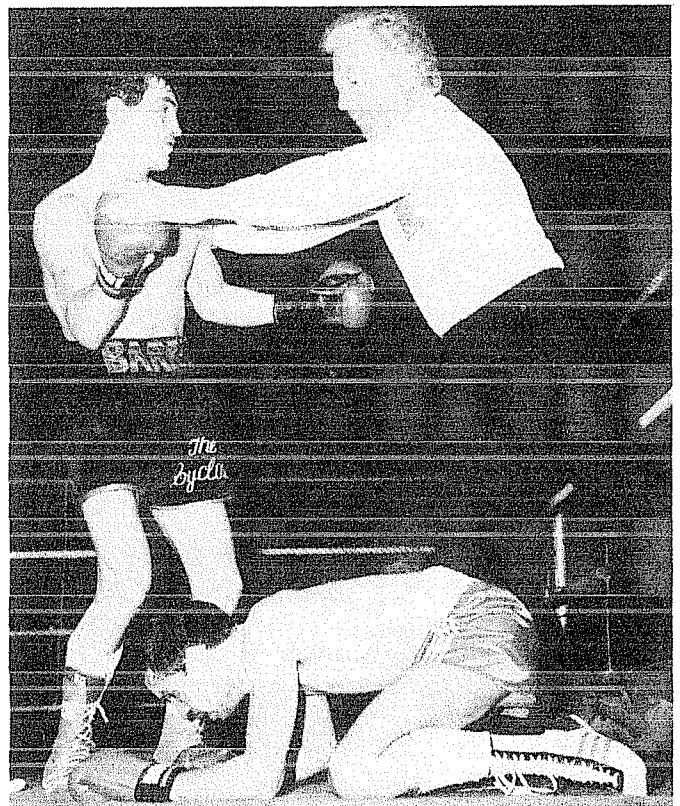
Nonpareil Jack Dempsey

A Nation

Who was the best British fighter of all-time? The best Mexican? The best Japanese? The debate will rage forever. In an attempt to fuel the fire, or at least offer some perspective, *The Ring* has asked several of its correspondents to compile their personal top-10 lists.



Flyweight champion Dave McAuley slugs it out with Rodolfo Blanco (above left). The Irishman rose from four knockdowns to win on points. Featherweight Barry McGuigan kayos Farrid Gallouze (above right) to retain the European title.



● **Mike McTigue** was as exciting as watching a caterpillar munching a cabbage. His ultra-cautious style didn't endear him to anyone but his wife, who liked to see him come home unscathed. Nevertheless, his speed and pinpoint jab enabled him to outsmart bizarre Battling Siki in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day 1923, and capture the world light heavyweight crown. How could he have lost?

● **Dave McAuley** claims more successful title defenses than any other Irish-born champion. In an age when world crowns are as plentiful as flies in a farmyard, his five retentions of the IBF flyweight belt doesn't quite have the merit of bygone times. But the Irishman never let cuts or knockdowns (there have been plenty of each) get him down. He was one of the gutsiest champions of recent vintage.

● **Rinty Monaghan** got his nickname from the '30s movie wonder dog Rin Tin Tin. The little Belfastman fought like a bulldog, aiming to end proceedings with a powerful right hand. Usually he succeeded. Trouble was, he often spoiled things by turning in some stinkers. He was still king of the world's flyweights when a chest injury forced him to quit in 1950.

● **Tom Sharkey** misses out on the list of Irish-born world kings. But he was one of the roughest, toughest, gamest fighters of them all. Only 5'11" and 180 pounds, he took on the biggest and best around the turn of the century. World champion James J. Jeffries, 35 pounds heavier, twice failed to put him away, first in a 20-rounder, then in a bitter 1899 title battle lasting 25 rounds.

● **George Gardner's** black mark was losing the world light heavyweight crown to a 41-year-old over-the-hill Bob Fitzsimmons. But he did topple top-notchers such as Kid McCoy, Jack Root, and Peter Maher, and, in 1902, survived 20 rounds with Jack Johnson. At his best, Gardner was a clever stylist with a fairly decent punch.

● **Jim Coffey** was one of the numerous White Hopes paraded as a potential conqueror of despised black heavyweight champion Jack Johnson. Knockout wins over Soldier Kearns, Fireman Jim Flynn, Jack "Twin" Sullivan, and Arthur Pelkey catapulted him into the front ranks. But in 1915, Frank Moran's sweet "Mary Ann" right hand caressed him to sleep in the third round.

Patrick Myler, who is based in Dublin, has written a book on Irish boxing history. He is a frequent contributor to The Ring. ■