

TRIBUTE – BRENDAN INGLE/DEAN FRANCIS

On a very sad day for British boxing, on behalf of the CBC I would like to pay tribute to two figures who, in different respects, brightened up the sport with their respective contributions during their active years.

**BRENDAN INGLE MBE**

Brendan was a decent professional boxer back in the '60s and '70s but it is for his outstanding work outside the ropes for which he will be remembered.

In the '70s, he managed Sheffield boxer, Mick Mills whose early career was very successful, later becoming a more 'have gloves, will travel' kind of boxer, as well as Central Area Champion Glyn Rhodes, but it is with the great Herol 'Bomber' Graham that he received international acclaim. Herol, along with Rhodes, set the tone for the 'Ingle' defensive style which, with a few exceptions like Kell Brook, seemed to be the trademark of the still famous Wincobank gym.

The late Mickey Duff once quipped that Ingle boxers 'walk into the gym backwards'.

Among the many Champions he trained and managed were Brian Anderson, Fidel Castro Smith, Clifton Mitchell, Paul 'Silky' Jones, Kell Brook and probably the most outstanding and successful of his charges, 'Prince' Naseem Hamed.

However, for me, the boxer who conceivably clearly illustrates Brendan's training and motivational skills is the former World Cruiserweight Champion and now 'Sky Sports' pundit, Johnny Nelson. Johnny lost 11 out of 14 amateur contests and Brendan told me that in early sparring sessions, when cornered, Johnny's knee would come up defensively, so unlike a pro he was at that time.

With Brendan behind him, Johnny went on to become a first class professional boxing Champion, but then challenged twice for versions of the World's Cruiserweight Titles in the early '90s in what were possibly 2 of the worst and boring World Championships ever televised. Afterwards, Johnny became TV and box-office poison – nobody wanted him.

Brendan picked him up, got him going again, taking contests all around the World until finally he re-established him in world class, winning a European Championship along the way.

Johnny went on to win the WBO Cruiserweight Champion of the World in 1999, a title he defended 14 times (1 draw) retiring undefeated in 2005.

They say 'great boxers make great trainers' but the case of Brendan and Johnny Nelson, I have no doubt that even Johnny who, I am told, is 'in pieces' at today's sad news, would acknowledge that without Brendan, it unlikely he could have gone on to achieve all that did.

As well as the Champions, Brendan worked with troubled youth in Sheffield and it was as much for this, as well as his boxing successes, that he was made an MBE by Her Majesty The Queen.

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## DEAN FRANCIS

Dean's early death from cancer at the age of only 44 is a tragedy, having lost a fight he has fought so bravely for so long.

Dean had a very successful career as an amateur in both the Home Counties and ABA Championships although he never won a final in the latter Championship in the era of David Starie and Joe Calzaghe. I followed his career at that time through the pages of 'Boxing News', having a special interest as I boxed his Dad, Trevor, in my last contest in May 1968.

Dean turned pro in 1994 winning his first 9 contests. I recall former BBB of C General Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary and Commonwealth Chairman, Ray Clarke going to Chris Eubank's gym in Hove to see an applicant boxer in a trial bout. Whilst there, he watched Chris sparring with then novice pro Dean. When he came back to my office he was full of praise for this young boxer he had not heard of previously, feeling that here was a star in the making.

In his 10<sup>th</sup> contest in 1995 Dean came unstuck against Zaf Ballogou for the WBC International Supermiddleweight Championship, losing a tough contest on points, but came back to win a WBO Intercontinental Supermiddle Title, and then the British and European titles.

At this point in his career he was one of the brightest British prospects of his time but in 1998, he challenged for an IBO International Title against Undra White, a boxer he might have been expected to beat, losing in 4 rounds after retiring with a dislocated shoulder. After that and for me, he never was quite the same boxer.

After a 4 year gap, Dean came back to win an English Cruiserweight Title, then at Lighthheavy, our Title, an IBO Intercontinental and the British Title.

Towards the end of his ring career, he developed an interest in fashions, a career he went on to pursue after retirement.

A good looking and personable young man, Dean never quite achieved what some of us believe he was capable of, although by most boxer's yardsticks, a career of 34 wins, 5 losses and 1 draw, winning English, IBO and WBO 'Inter' Titles, British, Commonwealth and European Titles in 3 different weight divisions along the way, would be counted as a great success.

It is just that there was a time when Dean looked like a World Champion in the making and the professional tragedy of a dislocated shoulder when he had not fully matured as a pro almost certainly inhibited his reaching that goal.

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To Alma, John, Dominic and all the Ingle family, as well as to Trevor Francis and family, the CBC extends their most sincere condolences.

SIMON BLOCK  
Hon Secretary  
Commonwealth Boxing Council