



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE: 1 AUGUST 2014**

### **TEAM NI BOXERS REACH FOUR FINALS**

Northern Ireland's Michael Conlan, Paddy Barnes, Joe Fitzpatrick and Michaela Walsh will fight for gold in the Hydro on Saturday after coming through their respective Commonwealth Games boxing semi-finals.

Sean Duffy, Sean McGlinchy, Connor Coyle, Steven Donnelly and Alanna Audley-Murphy had to settle for bronze.

Michael Conlan was involved in the most controversial contest of the day and had to survive a deep cut over his right eye and subsequent Welsh appeal in order to make it through to the men's bantamweight final and before he faces England's Qais Ashfaq he'll have to pass a medical on Saturday morning.

The London 2012 bronze medalist was ahead on the judges scorecards when blood started flowing from a gash sustained after an accidental clash of heads with defending champion Sean McGoldrick from Wales in round 2.

After initial treatment the cut was opened up again and with 13 seconds remaining in the round, on advice from the ringside doctor, the fight was stopped and Conlan awarded the verdict.

"The cut isn't as bad as we thought it was, bit unfortunate that I was cut but it went to points and I got the decision. I thought I was boxing well up to the cut. I'm confident I'll be fine for the final, I'll pass the medical and there wouldn't be a chance that I was going to miss the final. They'd have to cut my head off," said the St John Bosco fighter.

"I've never been cut in my whole career and now its happened twice in the one tournament but that's the way it goes. I'm getting better and better with every fight. I'll box the way I normally box in the final and do the business."

The Welsh appealed the decision claiming the cut was there as the result of a head butt but it was dismissed.

Paddy Barnes was largely untroubled in his quarter-final against Fazil Kaggwa from Uganda.

He'll now face Deveindro Laishram of India in what promises to be a tasty light-flyweight final with Barnes seeking to successfully defend his Commonwealth title.



"I had to save myself a bit. You saw what happened to Michael earlier on. He got a cut (and the fight was stopped) so I had to be a bit cautious."

Barnes added, "He's very, very good, very fit and strong. I beat him in the London Olympics quarter-finals though."

Michaela Walsh will meet Olympic champion Nicola Adams from England in the final of the women's flyweight.

The 21 year-old from the Holy Family club in North Belfast won a split decision over India's Pinki Jangra but looked nervy in the opening round before easing to victory in the latter stages of the contest.

"She was a tough fighter but I stuck to my tactics in the fight and came on strong in the later rounds. I'm delighted to get through and earn my place in the final."

She added, "I've always said I'm only here for one medal and that's gold. I believe I can beat anyone and I'm here to win. This is my first big tournament - it's like my Olympics - and I hope to finish with a gold."

On facing Adams, who defeated Mandy Bujold of Canada, with the winner to be crowned the first female champion in Commonwealth Games history, Walsh said: "Months ago I said my dream was to fight Nicola Adams in the Commonwealth final and when I go to bed tonight I will dream of that gold medal hanging round my neck. I know if I perform to the best of my ability I can beat her. She is the golden girl and I'm only a baby but in the ring it's a different story."

19 year-old Joe Fitzpatrick was perhaps the surprise package of the day as he overcame the world number 15 Michael Alexander from Trinidad & Tobago to make the lightweight final.

What made his win even more impressive were the cuts he was suffering from a previous bout that required further treatment after this contest.

"The cuts are fine. They were much worse on Tuesday but they've healed up quite well," said the Immaculata fighter.

He'll now face hometown favourite Charlie Flynn

"It's just another fight and if I just keep boxing the way I'm boxing I will beat him. You still haven't seen the best out of me, but you'll see the best in the final and I'll get the gold medal. I can't wait."

Light-welterweight Sean Duffy and light heavyweight Sean McGlinchy both put up strong performances but came up a little short against quality opponents.



Duffy lost out a unanimous decision to Junias Jonas from Namibia but in his return to big time competition the 2008 silver medalist from the Commonwealth Youth Games was pleased with his efforts.

“He was a very tough opponent but on any other day it could have been my fight, today just wasn’t my day. It’s good to come away with a medal after all the weeks and months of preparations. There will be many more major tournaments coming up for me and this won’t be the last you’ll see of me,” said the 23 year-old from Armagh.

A very good New Zealander, David Nyika, beat McGlinchy. The tall Kiwi used his long reach to keep the Derry man at arms length and picked him off on the counter.

“He was better on the day, there’s not much else to say. I tried everything I could, there’s nothing more I could say that I should have tried. I’ll look at the fight and then take things from there,” said McGlinchey.

“I’m amazed in what I’ve achieved. I’m disappointed that I didn’t get the gold, we all came here with those expectations but in my first year at Elite level I’ve won the bronze and this has given me the taste for it.”

Lightweight Alanna Audley-Murphy was the first local fighter into the ring in the evening session but Australia’s Shelley Watts proved too strong winning unanimously. “Obviously I’m gutted not to get the decision, it was unanimous, I thought it might be split but I can hold my head up high, hopefully I’ve lost to the winner and I can watch the replay back and see where I went wrong.”

She added, “At least I’m going home with something, there are people her who don’t get to the semi-finals and go home with nothing. I came here for the gold and I didn’t get it and I’m disappointed but I’ll learn from the experience.”

Steven Donnelly and Connor Coyle were the last two Northern Ireland hopefuls to enter the fray against two top class India boxers.

Donnelly, in particular, can count himself unlucky going down on a split decision to Mandeep Jangra after winning the first round.

The Ballymena welterweight said afterwards, “He was very elusive and hard to catch. I definitely won the first round then let him back into it in the second but every round was close. It was then just a matter of who wanted it more in the last round. I dug in and he was using his head a few times but I definitely thought I’d done enough in the last there. It was a scrappy enough round and I thought I should have got it but that’s the way it goes.”

Coyle was beaten by Vijender Singh at middleweight.



"I just couldn't get going. I don't know what happened tonight. I didn't perform as well as I can, as well as I hoped. I wanted gold. But a bronze is better than nothing. But I was coming here to win the gold, so it's still a little disappointing."

## BOWLS

Barbara Cameron's final bowl at international level won the bronze medal for Northern Ireland as she and Mandy Cunningham beat Jersey 15-14 in a thriller at the Kelvingrove Bowling Centre.

The 52 year-old had been trying for five Commonwealth Games to win that elusive medal and after fulfilling that dream she revealed her intention to retire.

"Before I came away I had made my mind up that after 75 home international caps that this was going to be a good time to bow out. I might change my mind but that's the decision I came to before we came here and now I have the medal."

In what was a cagey start, both teams traded shots early on but Jersey just had itself in front and won three successive ends from the seventh to go 9-5 ahead after nine. In a tense match throughout, the teams were level nearly all the way and went into the final end level at 14-14. But it was Cameron and Cunningham's day and in winning its second lawn bowls medal of the Glasgow 2014 Games, it denied Jersey a first-ever lawn bowls medal.

Cameron continued, "I've been in this position now on a few occasions but this is it now. I can't explain, it's just unbelievable. No game you can take for granted. It's a dream come true and you never give up on your dreams. I have a pendant that was given to me by my brother that says 'Imagine Believe Achieve'."

Northern Ireland has a rich tradition in ladies bowls but this was the first medal they've won since Margaret Johnston's gold in 1994.

"It was superb, it was great to be involved in that match. It's probably the toughest game in the tournament because the opposition are in pieces now. If you were in the final you were guaranteed a medal, gold or silver, I mean you always want to win the tournament but to win this game and come away with a medal is a dream come true," added Cameron.

Cunningham is in her second Games and was delighted more for her partner than herself.

"The bowl that won the game from Barbara, I'll never forget it. We had looked at all the scenarios and we thought just go for it because you're never going to get this opportunity again and it worked. I'm totally in shock, I'm more delighted for Barbara because this was her fifth game and she desperately wanted a medal so I'm more emotional for Barbara than for myself."



Cunningham added, "She now says she's retiring, hopefully she doesn't but if she does it's been an honour to play with her in her last game."

The Northern Ireland bowling team finished with a silver in the men's triples and bronze in the women's pairs.

## NETBALL

Northern Ireland's netball team finished their first Commonwealth Games in seventh place, rounding off a successful tournament by beating Wales 58-36, a result that meant they exceeded their pre-Games target of eighth.

"We are absolutely over the moon, we are delighted. We came here with the expectation of 8th and we wanted 7th. We got a good start, maintained it, built it throughout the game and just finished off on a high. It was brilliant, said Lisa Somerville who was 46/53 for an 87% shooting success rate as Northern Ireland started off quickly building a 16-6 lead at the end of the first quarter and extending it to 31-18 by half-time.

They with stood a Welsh fight back before pulling away in the final fifteen minutes.

"We knew a lot about Wales and after a really poor World Cup qualifiers which we were disappointed off the back of that defeat to them, this was really the driving force going in to that match. We had a point to prove and on this the highest stage for netball this was the time to do it," added Caroline O'Hanlon

Northern Ireland recovered after losing their first three games to tough opposition in the shape of Malawi, Jamaica and New Zealand but finished with group victories over St Lucia and Scotland before the win over Wales.

"The first 3 games were hard. We still went out with the mentality of playing a good game even though we knew the result might not have been in our favour. So it was a good opportunity to use everybody, and work out some strategies for the last two group games and then the game against the Welsh," said Somerville.

O'Hanlon added, "We have a lot of faith in each other and we are a very strong group, have a strong bench, and had different combinations throughout the tournament. Everyone played their part throughout the course of the tournament. Hopefully this will be a massive promotion for netball in Northern Ireland. We've had a lot of support over the last week or so and that's brilliant to see, and we've had a lot of coverage back home so hopefully we can build on this and have some strong plans for the next couple of years."



## TABLE TENNIS

Northern Ireland's interest in the table tennis came to an end on Friday morning when Ashley Givan and Amanda Mogeey were beaten in the third round of the women's doubles.

They lost 11-7, 11-6, 11-3 to the Canadian pairing of Anqi Luo and Mo Zhang.

## ATHLETICS

Daniel Mooney was tenth in his 1500m heat in a time of 3:45.79 and missed out on a place in the final.

"I am reasonably happy though I came here to make the final; I might have done that if the race pace had been faster but then I always knew it was going to be slow and tactical. I was pleased to be competitive for most of the race. The atmosphere in the Stadium was incredible," said Mooney.

In the final of the 10,000m Paul Pollock produced a strong run and with a surge in the finish straight came home in a time of 29.11.46 for 19<sup>th</sup> place.

"It has been a challenge to get here but I would never turn down the chance to compete once in four years in front of such a crowd."

He added, "The plan is still to compete in the European Championships Marathon in 17 days' time where I will be racing with the Irish team who are hoping to do well."

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