

Boxing Clever

Rehab News talks to Jason Kenny, a Rehabilitative Instructor with National Learning Network's Jutland Hall Centre in Limerick, and member of boxer Bernard Dunne's winning team.

IT WAS LIKE A FIGHT STRAIGHT

out of a *Rocky* movie. At stake was the title of Super Bantamweight Champion of the World and the boxers, Irishman

Bernard Dunne and Ricardo Cordoba from Panama, entered the O₂ arena in Dublin last March with a sense of destiny. But, at the end of the day, there could only be one champion.

In the eleventh round, following an exhausting and body-bruising contest, Bernard Dunne claimed the title having knocked his opponent to the canvas a staggering five times. The home crowd was ecstatic. To the casual onlooker, it seemed incredible that Dunne was able to find the final reserve of energy needed to overcome his opponent once and for all. But National Learning Network instructor, Jason Kenny, wasn't surprised.

That's because Jason, as well as being a rehabilitative instructor with National Learning Network's Jutland Hall centre in Limerick, was also a crucial part of Dunne's backroom team. Together with his colleague, Blue Shinnars, Jason worked with Bernard on devising a nutrition plan that would ensure he was in prime condition, both physically and mentally, for the big fight.

Speaking to *Rehab News*, Jason says, "Bernard was a joy to work with. It's not easy changing the traditional methods used to reach and maintain a desired boxing weight. Boxers are



Pictured: The new Super Bantamweight World Champion, Bernard Dunne (centre), with National Learning Network instructor, Jason Kenny (left) and Blue Shinnars, both of whom were members of Dunne's backroom team.

notorious for sweating themselves and barely eating anything at all until they reach their target weight for the weigh-in. Then, it's no holds barred, and they tend to eat whatever they can before the fight.

"Unfortunately, a lot of the food they are consuming has no nutritional value. But Bernard really took on board everything that we were saying to him about putting the right fuel into his body, ensuring that he was hydrated and that he maintained a balanced blood sugar level.

"The day before the fight Bernard had weighed in at 8 stone 9lbs. Yet, within just 30 hours he had gained a staggering 11 lbs. He was

well hydrated and nourished, and it showed. We'd done our job, and Bernard did his. He fought like a champion and truly deserved his hard-earned title."

While Jason and the rest of Bernard's team were in Dublin for the fight, back in Limerick, the students from National Learning Network's Jutland Hall were in front of their television sets cheering on the Irish boxer. The group has recently become involved with the Special Olympics and activities at the centre include aqua aerobics, bowling, ice skating, go-karting, soccer and basketball. So, you never know, Jason may be part of the backroom team for another sporting hero – one from Jutland Hall – in the very near future! ■