



HOULI IN DA 'HOOD

Mike Houlihan's weekly look at Chicago's neighborhoods and the people who give them character

The Dream Team: The Next Green Hope and Pickle Joyce

The dream of the great green hope, an Irish-American heavyweight champion of the world, will never die. Not as long as Marty McGarry is training fighters in the gym above his garage out in Beverly. The buzz is spreading from the South Side that Mike "Pickle" Joyce and his partner Brian Pierce are managing a fighter with some stuff. He's a lad with a left jab like Vicodin. Take a couple of those and you're gonna want to lie down.

Malachy Farrell, 25, is the kid with more than 50 amateur bouts and a pro record of 7-0. He's a seventh son, the 11th child in a pride of 13. 7-Eleven should draw up the sponsorship papers now. This kid is the next big gulp of boxing.

Malachy cleaned classrooms after school to pay his tuition and never had time for the gridiron as a St. Rita Mustang. In sophomore year he entered their fight night and lost to a football player. He was fuming around his house later that night and his brother-in-law Matt Walsh, said, "What's your problem?" Malachy explained his frustration and Matt said, "I'll introduce you to this guy, Martin McGarry. He'll train you. Next year you'll kick this guy's ass."

He has kicked a lot more than that one in the nine years since he's been fighting. "I was terrible when I started. I lost a ton of fights. I just could not get it together, trippin' over my own feet, just couldn't get it down. But like my dad says, it's a tribute to Marty. He turned me into a Golden Gloves champion."

Malachy turned pro last April.

He lives just a few blocks from Marty McGarry. "If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be doin' it. Luckily my parents picked a house that's a mile away from the greatest man associated with boxing there ever was, 'cause I can honestly say that I don't have to worry about things that normal boxers do like getting paid and who to trust, this and that. Because Marty in a million years is gonna do nothing that is gonna hurt me."

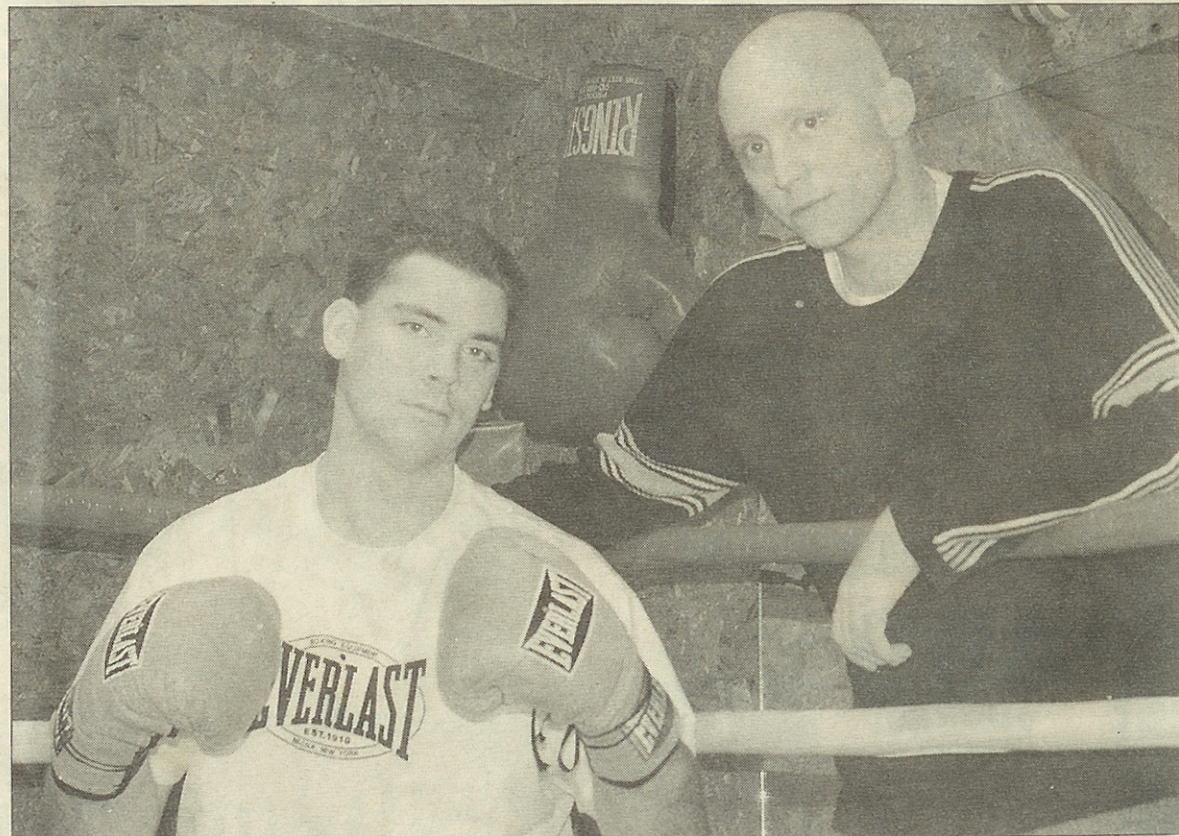
Marty McGarry says, "He's a tough kid; he's a good all-around puncher. He's got a lot of heart, and you can't teach that. He's a natural with the heart of a lion."

Is he the great green hope, Marty? "Well, I hope there will be some greenbacks comin' off of him!"

Pickle Joyce is the boxing coach at Leo High School with 30 amateurs fighting for him. Malachy is one of only three pro fighters managed by Pickle. He says Malachy "comes from a real good Irish family. I'm not even sure if he's the toughest kid in his family."

Mary and PJ Farrell are the parents of Colleen, PJ, Michelle, Tricia, Kevin, Danny, Tony, Timmy, Erin, Brendan, Malachy, Courtney and Sean. That's what happens in an Irish home when the TV goes on the fritz.

Malachy has never been injured in the ring, but horsing around with his brothers is another story. "My dad and all my brothers all belong to the Knights of Columbus. So we were in the softball league up there and afterward, it was really hot out. We had everyone come back 'cause we got an enormous pool out back. So we're



Promising heavyweight boxer Malachy Farrell (left) not only will have the luck of the Irish in his corner Friday night, but also his brother Sean, who's fighting his own battle against cancer. —SCOTT STEWART/SUN-TIMES

all out there, goin' swimmin', drinkin', whatever. Me and my brother Kevin, who's humongous, decide let's go in and just start cleanin' house, throwin' guys around and everything."

Like a backyard family donnybrook, with bodies flyin' through the air?

"Yeah, throw 'em anywhere. So I jump on my brother Brendan and he turns around and cuts me right on the corner of my eye."

What did he hit you with?

"His fist! All these fights I've had I've never so much as had a bloody nose, and this guy, one punch cuts my eye open. He told me, 'You never fought anybody as tough as me!'"

With 13 kids in your family, there's bound to be more than one brawler at the dinner table. Knuckle sandwiches were served right along with the pork chops. That could be why some folks call

Malachy "The House of Pain."

The seventh son has an impenetrable confidence about him. When I remark that Marty told me he always wanted a champ, Malachy says, "He'll get one."

Malachy has been asked a million times if he's the next great white hope. "I don't know if I'll be the 'hope,' but I'll be the next great white something!"

There are several contenders for that title on the South Side.

The flag of Ireland precedes Malachy into the ring for every bout. His youngest brother, Sean, 21, carries the tricolor and works the corner. Sean's probably the toughest of the Farrells because he beat cancer once and it came back and he's battlin' it again. Malachy loves having Sean in his corner. "It's kind of a win-win situation, 'cause his strength, I feed off of that. His doctors make sure he's available for every fight. He's only

missed one so far."

Opponents have more to fear than Malachy Farrell's knockout punches. They're fighting his whole family. Smart money says the House of Pain can't be beat.

Malachy has a fight Friday night at 115 Bourbon Street (www.hitboxing.com) in Merrionette Park. Call (630) 787-6600 for tickets. The heavyweight matchup pits the 6-foot-4, 235-pound Malachy against 6-foot-8, 280-pound Wallace McDaniell, Refrigerator Perry's first cousin. Send McDaniell's mail to the queer street address.

And Malachy says bring it on. "The bigger they are, the better I look. It'll be fun. I'll have to defrost the fridge!"

Watching these monsters tear into each other will be like a Godzilla movie without the Japanese, just hundreds of South Side Irish Micks guzzling beer and cheering for Malachy. I can't wait!