

The man behind Steve Collins' remarkable win tells how he masterminded the coup

INSIDE THE MIND OF TONY QUINN



The Brenda Power interview

THE ODDLY-shaped sitting room of Tony Quinn's Martello Tower, overlooking the Malahide coastline, is entirely over-run with fantasy characters. Unicorns and winged horses and mythical creatures stand around the floor by the walls, loiter in the nooks and corners, perch on strange vantage points around the room like St Patrick's Day spectators climbing dangerous heights for a better view. One wall is entirely lined with Dr Quinn's framed diplomas, degrees, qualifications, awards, and there's a po-faced poster insisting, "I am the Count of Monte Cristo and the self is my unlimited treasure source". It's like the set of a bad BBC2 new age chiller, all the usual gew-gaws rounded up to define the lair of a Very Mysterious Person.

The only indication that Tony Quinn just might be sending up the genre came from the solemn display of three Disney dwarves along the door frame. Doc, Dopey, Happy. Or perhaps he just got fed up framing credentials and hit on a novel way of announcing his Doctorate in Clinical Hypnotism.

Dr Tony Quinn, hypnotist, ex-

bodybuilder, alternative medicine and health food guru, has been a vaguely familiar face to most people for almost 20 years now — if he's not quite a household name, he's certainly a half-way celebrity since his freewheeling newspapers drop through most letterboxes from time to time and are curiously scanned before going back out again. In appearance, he resembles a bad BBC2 casting director's notion of what an Irish cult leader might look like, with his '70s showband singer's curly hair, neat beard and broad applecheeked smile.

But in the last week Tony Quinn has become the object of much national curiosity and media attention, most of which he has spurned. As Stephen Collins' "mental coach" he drew certain interest but he can thank Chris Eubank for his current fame. The English boxer threatened to withdraw from the big fight in Millstreet when he discovered that Collins had been using Quinn's services.

When Collins' won, after one of the most peculiar pre-fight routines in boxing lore, Quinn's part in the underdog's victory proved all manner of comic book conceptions. With his trusty pocket-watch, it seemed, he'd put the Irish fighter in the throes of a hypnotic trance and Collins woke up to find himself world champion. Waiting for Tony Quinn, in the weirdly appointed sitting room of his tutored home, I reckoned the night just before he did something in the clichés — one wrong word and I'd find myself down in Malahide Garda Station indignantly reporting the theft of my bellybutton.

Then a panel opened suddenly in one wall and Tony stepped through. "I like catching people out with that one," he said with his grin. He didn't actually catch me out, since there was a rattling and a thumping outside the panel for a few minutes as though someone was stumbling against it, and by then my appearance from a puff of smoke would have seemed passé, anyway.

He looks even less like a hypnotist, guru and mysterious charismatic leader than the publicity shots would have it. Quite normal, actually, and it's hardly any wonder that he's in the cliché trappings, the unicorns and the crystal figurines, are so inappropriate, after all: "They're all things people gave me," he says, looking around the room as though it was a stranger's parlour. "Actually, I don't live here at all, I live in London. It's a nice house, though, isn't it?"

He's 49 but could pass for 39, suntanned from the weeks in Las Vegas training with Collins and, in his tee shirt and track suit pants, Tony Quinn cracks most closely with the part he says he played in the Collins camp.

"I had a physical coach. I was his mental coach. Even Chris Eubank says that boxing is 15% endurance and 85% psychology. You've got to be in the right frame of mind to get into a boxing ring with a world-class athlete like Eubank, so before I started working with Steve I had to be sure he was someone who was prepared to use all of his mind to be the best he could be. When he called me up for the first time, I said if your mind is as good as your body, we're in business."

It was Eubank's evident and expressed belief in the power of the psychological advantage in the boxing ring that made him the perfect foil for the "trick", as Collins described it, that the Irish camp had up its sleeve. "If it was the other way around, and I'd come rolling into town



Tony Quinn: 'What I did was I wrote a programme for his mind, like human computer programming... and I installed it mentally'

JOHN CARLOS

VITAL STATS

Age: 49
Qualifications: Doctorate in Clinical Hypnotology; Master of Science from the University of East London.
Early jobs: Selling posters for the Augustinian Fathers.
Current jobs: Hypnotist, alternative medicine and health food guru.
Philosophy: "I help people become healthy by making them believe that they are well. Climbing the mountain is not the problem; the trick is to learn not to look down."

with Eubank, there wouldn't have been a gap out of Steve, he'd have been beaten and he'd have gone home," says Tony. So, though it almost appeared the fight, they agreed that news of Tony's involvement in Steve's training would "tip out" during a radio interview. Eubank, seriously rattled, threatened to pull out, saying he was afraid that a hypnotised opponent might not feel pain and so fight on past his physical capabilities.

"But it wasn't true to say that it was a complete trick," says Tony Quinn. "What I did was I wrote a programme for his mind, like human computer programming if you like, based on what he told me he wanted to do, and I installed it mentally."

Since computers are so frequently compared to human brains it ought not to be a surprise to find that the reverse can apply and a brain can, according to Tony, be programmed in much the same way. Steve's custom-built programme included "behavioural modelling", which eliminated a career's worth of repeated errors in two weeks flat, and "future pacing", which allowed the fighter to summon up images of himself as the victor, being feted and acclaimed, by flicking certain triggers as he needed them. The Rocky theme, which pumped through his headphones while Eubank was making an unnervingly cocky entrance to the ring, contained such triggers.

"We also had a programme in there that made it seem to Steve as though Eubank was moving much more slowly than usual, so he was easier to hit, and another programme made

the media about it, people don't understand and they don't really want to, they have these ridiculous ideas of what it involves. When we did those operations the patients were wide awake, talking to me. It took a huge leap of faith for the doctors to actually cut into flesh while the patient was still awake." On the first occasion, the doctor satisfied himself that the patient was truly oblivious by performing several painful preliminaries, none of which brought a response. "And afterwards he said to me, as I started to cut, she started to cry, so I knew I was alright."

He is himself, Tony says, an example of what used to be called "the power of positive thinking". He was the only child of a taxi driver and his wife, Mrs. Adams, Hill in Dublin's North City, and my father always had this idea that

I was a genius, they both doted on me." As a child Tony was fascinated by the Charles Atlas "You Too Can Have A Body Like Mine" ads in the back of his comic books, and one of his earliest achievements was to fulfill Charles' promise: "At one stage," he says, "I ended up with the exact same measurements as him." But he wrote off, too, for the books on yoga and the books on hypnotism. "Anything to do with the mind fascinated me, and it still does."

After a brief spell "sitting meditating on a mountaintop in Africa in 1970, long hair and beard", he returned to Dublin and Tony Quinn Yoga, which became so popular so quickly that "it was like being a pop star, there were people climbing in over the walls." Soon the "mind food stores followed, since the foods necessary for the diets he prescribed weren't

always available here. Now, he says, his biggest interest is Educo, a classical notion of drawing out inner potential which informs the seminars he runs in Malahide each summer. "My parents were very religious people — one of my first jobs was selling pools for the Augustinian Fathers, and I was very proud to be working for them — and I still very much believe in God. If you say that what I do, what I did with Steve Collins, was unnatural, I say look at it from the opposite point of view: what I'm doing is tapping into the God-given capacities that people have, to achieve their full potential, to withstand pain, to be the best and the happiest they can be. Maybe God is unhappy when we throw that potential away."

There were he says, "gurus" built into Steve Collins' mental fight programme "to

stop him exceeding the capacity of his trained body". Did that mean there was a possibility that he could otherwise have been hurt? "Look, I could probably persuade you that you could get into a ring and beat Chris Eubank, but that would be very foolish of us. Before I worked with Steve I had to be sure he had the ability to beat Eubank, you had two fighters who were very evenly matched and it came down to a difference in mental attitude: that night Eubank's mind was divided, Steve's wasn't. Hypnotism

really involves your unconscious attention, the stage at which you're not aware that you are concentrating, so your whole mind is focussed. That's why Steve said it was a "trick", because he felt he'd done so much work himself getting to this state of mind. I couldn't make him do anything he didn't want to do — all I could do was stack the odds in his favour, help him to access the potential that was already there."

So, Collins was hypnotised? "When you think of it, most people are hypnotised, conditioned by their surroundings, to believe they are less than they are. It's like being an only child — statistically, you have a better chance of being successful because you have your parents' full attention and there's nobody around to tell you that you're maybe not as special as you think you are. But why shouldn't all children be given the chance to be the best they can? Teachers should learn how to do this, it ought to be taught in schools. I help people become healthy by making them believe that they are well. Climbing the mountain is not the problem, the trick is to learn not to look down."

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NI soccer fans seek tickets

IRELAND and Northern Ireland meet in a crucial European Championship qualifying game on Wednesday. It is the first soccer match at Lansdowne Road since English hooligans put paid to the Ireland v England friendly in February.

This time there will be no visiting fans at the game, in theory at least. The FAI has given about 200 tickets to their northern counterparts, the IFA. These will be for officials, the players and their families.

There will be Northern Irish fans hoping to shop on the black market for tickets. Among these will be 12 to 15 members of the First Shankill Road Supporters Club.

Winston Rae, a member of

Connell Quinn the supporters' club, is angry that at a time when barriers are coming down between Northern Ireland and the Republic, other people are erecting them. He believes tickets should be issued to northern fans. "We will watch the game in a bar," says Rae. They were offered some tickets by southern fans in a cross-border gesture but declined because, "then they would not be able to go to the match themselves."

He believes the Irish fans showed a great restraint when confronted with the Lansdowne Road violence. "There will be no trouble with the southern fans, we get on well."

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