ho's the antihero now?

One was reviled, the other fêted. Chris Eubank rode in on a Harley to fight a man who claimed to have been hypnotised to feel no pain – now Steve Collins's demise has seen him overtaken in popularity by Eubank



HAT's interesting looking at them now in their middle years is the neat role reversal they've undergone. In the 10 years since they stared each other down across an illuminated square of carwas in a milliminated square of carwas in a milliminated square of carwas in the years of carwas in the years of the property of

kind to the man who beath im on that unforgettable St Patrick's weekend in 1995. Steve Collins should have enjoyed a lifetime at the country's bosom for what he did that night. Instead, as the wadding of middle age settles around his waist, he become the country beath of the condition of the co abhorrence of each other giviliality. He was genuinely but lovably bonkers.

Barry Hearn, who man aged both flighters, tells the story of taking Eubankt ose Barbara Streisand at Wembley. Five minutes before curtain, Eubank left his seat in the front row to answer a call of nature. When he returned, he stood at the top of the abks, the front row to answer a call of nature. When he returned, he stood at the top of the abks, the part of the suddence got not heir feet and clapped and cheered him all the audience got not heir feet and clapped and cheered him all the back to the front row took longer than one of his famously by potracted ring entrances. When he sat down, he tapped the floor manager on the shoulder with his cane and said, "Inform Ms Streisand she may commence."

But the real punchline, according in Hearn, is Eubank wasn't joking.

Millstreet scarred him, learn asked Collins to step in. By his own admission,

Hearn didn't give Collins a hope against his Matchroom stable's star and meal ticket. Collins arrived at the press conference in Jury's dressed as Darby O'Gli, in a thorn-proof jacket, flat cap and dicket by bow, and clutching a shilleingh. He was a clutching a shilleingh. He was not be paid out of the fight because of his lack of respect. Collins was sitting in a green Jaguar on Baggot Street Bridge, walting for a friend to bring along the Irish wolfhound to complete the ensemble. As it turned out, the hotel had an o-dogs door policy and he had to sit outside. It was a pity for him. He missed an afternoon of what started out as good-natured pantomine

but which turned nasty when Collins explained why he'd come in fancy dress. He was paid, until the control of t

Eubank said, then stormed out, stopping only to tell Lord Mayor John Gormley what to do with his offer of a tour of the city and to promise the media a fight to the death. "It made me hate him intensely," Eubank wrote in his autobiography, "which is the gravest mistake to make as a boxer."

the best boxer

Tony Quinn effect was grossly exaggerated and Collins took a step away from him when people started forgeting who it was who actually beat Eubank. Quinn did little more for Collins than any decent sports psychologist would have done on him, teaching him visualisation techniques one of which

Eubank's voice.
But the idea Collins would be conditioned not to feel pain was too much for Eubank, who three years earlier had left Michael Watson in a vegetative state. The night before the flight, he told Hearn was pulling out and had to be talked out of going home. Such a pened in the hackground that never came out until Collins and Hearn parted ways in the Dubin High Court two yeas later. The night before the flight someone broke into the referee's hotel room and cut his foldness to shreds. The implication was someone was trying to influence of the contract of th

shreds. The implication was someone was trying to influ-ence the result, but whose way was never clear. Eubank entered the ring on a Harley and left it just over an hour later to chants of, "On your bike," Collins listened to the theme tune from Rocky on his Walkman while Eubank performed his ring entrance before what was a vintage fight.

before what was a tribulg-fight. Collins fought in a gear that Eubank had forgotten existed during three years of soft fights. For every punch he landed he found two in his

shot.

But as Eubank demonstrated against Watson, he was at his most dangerous when he was hurt. In the 10th, he sent Collins sprawling backwards across the ring and onto the seat of his pants with the best pumph of the eaching him visualisation each graph in visualisation eshiques, one of which hade him think of Donald fuch care with the best punch of the haded volke every time he heard bubank's voice.

But the idea Collins would be conditioned not to feel pain "so I froze ... That mistake was too much for Eubank, could me with the pain the

Whether Eubank could or couldn't have finished Collins off is a debate that will rage forever. In his defence, Collins had an ironclad jaw and was smilling at his corner at the point where he hit the ground, suggesting the punch surprised him more than it hurt him.

It doesn't matter now. Collins won the battle. But Eubank can look back at 10 years remove and say that he won the war.

A few nights before their spiky press conference in

A few nights before their spiky press conference in Dublin, Collins sat down in the kitchen of his home in Castleknock and wrote a little speech. "Chris Ebanks," he wrote, deliberately misspelling his name to annoy the champion, "has never lost a professional boxing bout. He is both hoved and despised by millions of people. But in order to achieve greatness, he has to experience defeat, he has to be able to handle it and return again."

In 41 words, Eubank's future scarily foretold. But not his own.
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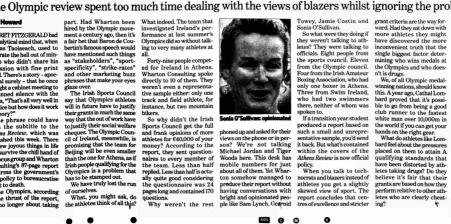
Ignoring the stark realities of Athens

The Olympic review spent too much time dealing with the views of blazers whilst ignoring the problems drugs create for athletes

GARRET FITZGERALD had GARRET FITZGERALD had an analytical mind that, when he was Taoiseach, used to frustrate the hell out of ministers who didn't share his obsession with fine print detail. There's a story - apocryphal surely - that he once brought a cabinet meeting to a stunned silence with the words, "That's all very well in practice but how does it work in theory?"

The phrase could have

The phrase could have been the subtilet to the Athens Review, which was published this week. There are few joyous things in life that survive the chill hand of the focus group and Wharton Consulting's 87-page report confirms the government's new policy to bureaucraties sport to death.



We don't know. The Athens Review maintains the pretence that everyone at the Olympics competes on a level playing surface. It describes the Irish team

It describes the Irish team for Athens as the best pre-pared ever, a claim that's impossible to prove. We do know that one athlete pre-pared by ordering EPO over the internet from Peru and another rode into the Games on a horse that had two human anti-psychotic drugs in its system. Some preparation.

in its system. Some persons of the doping issue, it mentions that Ireland finished 54th overall in the medal table, based on Cian O'Connor's now tainted gold. The top three in the medal table were the United States, China and Russia, the countries that lead the world in the science of doping athletes.

We should be asking do we

want to carry on playing with these people, not how we can get closer to them. That's why over the next 10 years we'll produce two Michelle Smiths for every Sonia O'Sul-livan YOUNG RUGBY



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