

THEY ARE WELL ABLE TO PACK A PUNCH

MADDE

ROLE MODEL: Irish gold medal winner Katie Taylor



NEWS IN BRIEF

BYPASS GETS UNDER WAY

A TRAFFIC-CHOKED West of Ireland town is the only Irish town which will get a new bypass this year. Last week Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar turned the sod on the N5 Ballaghaderreen Bypass scheme in Roscommon. The bypass will remove a bottleneck on the N5, will benefit motorists, hauliers and the people of Ballaghaderreen and will take two years to construct at a cost of €59 million.



as girls ring the changes

had ulterior motives.

"They were in school with some of our girls, and they saw them being pally with the boys they knew through boxing. So they joined to meet boys," Jimmy laughs.

"At one point they were coming along in make-up! We had to weed out the ones who weren't serious. It's a huge commitment to train three nights a week, and at weekends, and go to competitions, but it's worth it whether you're a boxer or a coach," Jimmy says.

The club now has eight girls and 34 boys, including 17-year-old schoolboy Kealan Hurley, who suffers from aplastic anaemia, but has just got the all-clear from Crumlin Children's Hospital to continue boxing, and Luke Hurley (11), who started aged six.

Some of the girls, including National Ladies' Novice Champion Donna Cowman (17), had to spar against boys in the beginning - and Donna still does.

She's also sparred against champion Lynn McHenry, and is training to be a coach. At just 50kg, the petite schoolgirl is surprisingly strong for her size.

Even tinier is Jamie-Lee Kirby, who won last year's Girl Three Championship. At just 39 kilos, she often spars against boxers twice her weight.

Munster Champion Erin Walsh and

last year's Munster Champion Zarah Breslin are sparring buddies and also help out with coaching the newcomers, such as Laura Kelly (12) - who followed her granddad into the sport.

Kerry Whelan (13), won the Munster Championship two years ago and is in training for her next big fight. And while she was inspired by Katie Taylor, she also credits her brother with encouraging her to take up boxing.

Stamina

Jimmy believes that boxing is not just about winning prizes.

"It's great for fitness too. You build up strength and stamina and you look after your nutrition better."

At a time when a lot of young girls are obsessed with being skinny at all costs, Jimmy believes boxing encourages girls to focus instead on a healthy lifestyle.

"You can't just starve yourself to make the weight before a fight, you need energy as well. You can't fight if you're weak or dehydrated."

"Katie Taylor is a great role model. She lives a clean, healthy life. You won't see her falling out of nightclubs, drunk. We can't thank her enough for what she has done for young girls."

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