

Edinburgh Reporter's Weekly Sports Roundup



The Edinburgh Reporter's Weekly Sports Roundup starts with boxing this week, and the news that one of Scotland's finest fighters has hung up his gloves on his 35th birthday. 'Amazing' Alex Arthur, who is the capital's most successful boxer since the great Ken Buchanan made the announcement on Twitter, and The Edinburgh Reporter sends our best wishes to Alex in his future career.

Elsewhere, the Monarchs continue their strong start to the season and there is plenty of news from both Hearts and Hibs ahead of the forthcoming campaign.

We would also like to congratulate the Scotland hockey team for their fifth win in a row.

Boxing

Former WBO World Super-Featherweight Champion 'Amazing' Alex Arthur, the most successful Edinburgh fighter since Ken Buchanan, has announced his retirement from professional boxing, with a career record of 31 wins and three defeats from 34 fights.

Announcing the news on Twitter, he said: "Well... woke up today 35. Time goes so fast. "I haven't fought for over a year now, so just want to say I officially retire from boxing."

Alex's rise through the amateur ranks culminated in securing gold in the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur. Two years later, he turned professional and in October 2000 he won the British title at Braehead Arena in Glasgow when he beat Dewsbury's Steve Conway.

He followed up that victory with two defences against Carl Greaves and fellow Scot Willie Limond; however he was denied the Lonsdale belt for keeps when he lost to Michael Gomez in front of a sold out Meadowbank Stadium, the first professional boxing card in the city for almost 20 years. Boxing promoter Frank Warren called the fight "the greatest contest seen on these shores since Nigel Benn beat Gerald McClellan in 1995"

Alex made his comeback the next year on 27 March 2004 by stopping Michael Kizza in the first round for the IBF Inter-Continental super featherweight title. He made two defences of that title before fighting Craig Docherty for the British and Commonwealth Super-Featherweight titles. The fight also took place at the Meadowbank, and ended with Alex knocking Docherty out in the 9th round.

His next fight was a 12 round points decision against the reigning European champion Boris Sinitsin, which meant that he held the British, Commonwealth and European title belts at the same time.

Alex put all three titles on the line against fellow Scot Ricky Burns whom he also beat on points.

On 21 July 2007 Alex stopped Koba Gogoladze in the tenth round to win the interim WBO super-featherweight title recognised as one of the 4 main 'World' belts.

He made his first defence five months later against fellow Brit Steve Foster Jr, and again won on points after a close fight.

Following that win Alex was due to fight Joan Guzmán who held the full version of the title, however the Dominican decided that he wanted to move up a weight division which meant that Alex was recognized as the organization's world champion.

On 9 September 2008, Alex lost the title in controversial circumstances against Nicky Cook, with claims that he had been

'robbed' by three English judges in Manchester.

Since then Alex has beaten Mohamed Benbiou via TKO in Round 1 at the Bellahouston Sports Centre in Glasgow, and lost on points to Nigel Wright at the Metro Radio Arena, Newcastle, before with two back to back wins against Peter McDonagh in September 2010 and Jay Morris in December 2010 both in Glasgow.

His last two fights were both at Meadowbank, beating Aleksander Vakhtangashvili on a TKO in the 4th round in August 2011 then Michael Frontin on points on 14 April 2012.

A born-again Christian, Alex has been a regular speaker in local schools in recent years and a tireless charity fundraiser. He was awarded an MBE in the 2012 Birthday Honours for services to boxing.

Elsewhere, an East v West boxing event took place in Motherwell featuring boxers from clubs around the United Kingdom including Edinburgh, Carlisle and Wigan. The results are listed below:

Callum "Head" Hunter (Gladiatorial Combat) beat Willie "The Doonhammer" Devlin (SK Boxing Promotions) on points.

Andy "Boom Boom" Thorburn (Holyrood Boxing Club, Edinburgh) defeated Ilyas "The Terrible" Tashuev (SK Boxing Promotions) on points.

Gordon "The Bull" Brennan (Trench Boxing Club, Dunfermline) secured a points victory over Stan "Too Good" Wood (New Blood Martial Arts, Carlisle).

Mark "Too Strong" Armstrong (SK Boxing Promotions) beat Awais "Kiss My" Butt (Wigan) on TKO in round two.

"Razor" Ronnie Stephen (SK Boxing Promotions) beat Vasos "Ares" Makris (Holyrood Boxing Club, Edinburgh) on points.

John "Cruel Intentions" Stevens (SK Boxing Promotions) triumphed over Paul "The Destroyer" Davis (Blackpool) with TKO in round one.

Curtis "Big Time" Biggam (Impact Gym, Holytown) beat Lee "Lights Out" Coates (New Blood Martial Arts, Carlisle) on points.

Martin "The Tank" Green (SK Boxing Promotions) defeated Adam "The Warrior" James (Wigan) by TKO in round one.

"Magic" Marc Kerr (SK Boxing Promotions) beat Maly "The Animal" Richardson (Blackpool) with a knock out in round one.

Gary "The Mint" Murray (SK Boxing Promotions) beat "Main Event" Mickey Nolan (New Blood Martial Arts, Carlisle) on points.

Rugby by John Preece

The draw for the British and Irish Cup was made on Thursday and Edinburgh club, Edinburgh Academicals, featured as one of the four Scottish clubs in the draw (the others are Ayr, Gala and Stirling County). London Scottish are also included, but hardly pass as a 'Scottish' club these days with very few 'exiles' in the squad.

Accies were drawn in Pool 2 where they will face 'Wales 2' (Welsh teams have not yet been identified), London Welsh and, the aforementioned, London Scottish. Matches will be played both home and away over three pairs of weekends in October, December and January.

In looking forward to the challenge, Bob Easson, director of rugby at Edinburgh Accies said: "It's an exciting draw. We are working really hard to continue to professionalise the set-up at Accies and this (competition) gives us the opportunity to challenge the players and ourselves. It also gives the players the chance to benchmark themselves and experience rugby at a

higher level.”



Photograph www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography

Which indeed it will, as the Scottish club scene is almost wholly amateur, with a few professionals from Edinburgh and Glasgow playing to keep in condition or on the way back from injury. The English Championship teams, on the other hand, are largely professional set-ups, but tend to use the B+I Cup to ‘blood’ their younger or more inexperienced players. Whether that trend will continue as the competition gains status will remain to be seen.

The Scotland Seven’s squad are currently playing in the Rugby World Cup 7’s in Moscow and on Day I, defeated Japan in a closely fought 19-17 win, which nearly all went wrong as Japan came back in the second half from 19-0 down with five minutes left on the clock.

Day two started well with a 21-5 points victory over the hosts, Russia, but a 41-0 defeat to South Africa, the Group B winners, consigned the Scots to the Plate competition.

Here they won against Portugal, taking the match 17-0 and, as we ‘went to press’, will go on to play Canada in the semi-final.

And finally: News of Scotland’s Women’s sevens team from Marbella makes grim reading. After going down fighting, but not unexpectedly, 31-7 to England, the Scots went on to lose 43-0 – that’s forty three to zero! – to the Netherlands of all teams (33-0 win for the 15-a-side Scots) and 31-5 to Germany to finish in twelfth and last place in the table and, therefore, to also lose their FIRA Grand Prix status for next season. Drawing boards at the ready...

Football

BDO, the administrators of Hearts have issued a deadline of 12 July for formal offers for the club. A sales memorandum has been sent to all parties who have already expressed an interest in buying the club, which indicates that negotiations are on-going with the relevant parties in Lithuania.

Supporters have bought an additional 1500 season tickets following the plea by BDO that 3000 were required to raise sufficient funds to see the club continue to trade throughout the close season.

The Scottish Premier League has already handed the Tynecastle side a 15-point deduction for next season, as well as a ban on signing players.

Some good news however, Danny Wilson will remain at Hearts after the club received confirmation that signing the defender would not breach their registration embargo. The 21-year-old former Rangers and Liverpool defender agreed a three-year deal at Tynecastle following a loan move last season.

It is believed Wilson, who has five Scotland caps, has taken a 50% wage cut on the contract he had previously agreed with the club, with Jamie Hamill, Jamie MacDonald and Ryan Stevenson having already agreed to reduced wages.

Meanwhile striker John Sutton has left the club after refusing to accept a pay cut, and has re-joined former club Motherwell.

Hibs will face a trip to Ireland or Sweden after being drawn against the winners of Drogheda United and Malmo FF, in the second qualifying round of the Europa League.

The Easter Road side started the season with a 1-1 draw in the friendly against Ian Murray's Dumbarton at the Bet Butler Stadium.

Pat Fenlon handed three players their first start in the green and white jersey, teenage defender Bradley Donaldson took the

right back spot, whilst summer signings Owain Tudor-Jones who joined the club from Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Liam Craig who joined from St Johnstone started in midfield.

✘ After a goal-less first half, Hibs took the lead five minutes after the break through Alex Harris, when the teenage winger was put through and his shot deflected off Dumbarton keeper Ewings before ending up in the back of the unguarded net. The Sons of the Rock equalised immediately through Ally McKerracher after the defence failed to deal with a low cross.

Hibs then created several good chances through Handling, Robertson, Craig, McPake and substitute Sam Stanton whose late shot clipped the crossbar, but the game ended all square.

Hibernian: Williams, Donaldson, Hanlon, Forster, Stevenson, Harris, Jones, Taiwo, Craig, Cairney, Handling: Subs: Robertson, McPake, Stanton, Gold, Caldwell, Horribine, Murdoch

Photograph by <http://www.jcmackintosh.co.uk/>

The players leave for a pre-season training camp on Spain today where they will play three games, against a Gibraltar XI (twice) and Nottingham Forest.

In addition, the club announced that former Hearts' full-back Fraser Muller has signed a one year contract, following a medical last Tuesday.

East of Scotland League

The East of Scotland League will retain two divisions after a meeting last week. Eight Edinburgh Clubs will play in the Premier Division, whilst two; will compete in the First Division. The full list of teams is listed below.

Premier Division: Civil Service Strollers; Coldstream; Craigroyston; Edinburgh City; Edinburgh University; Heriot-Watt Uni; Lothian Thistle Hutchison Vale; Spartans; Stirling

Uni; Tynecastle.

First Division: Berwick Rangers; Burntisland Shipyard; Duns; Easthouses Lily; Eyemouth Utd; Kelso Utd; Leith Ath; Ormiston; Peebles Rovers; Hawick RA; Hibernian

Women's Football

Hibs beat Farmington 4-1 in Forfar, with a brace apiece from Kirsty Smith and Susan Emslie, whilst Spartans beat Buchan 6-1 at Ainslie Park, , thanks to a double from Sarah Clelland and one each from Kirsten Reilly, Diane Barry, Sarah Ewens and Claire Crosbie.

Speedway

Another fantastic result for the Scotwaste Monarchs on Friday night at Armadale as they beat league leaders Leicester 52-37 moving up to fourth place with matches in hand over the teams above them.

The victory wasn't as comfortable as the score-line suggests and it took a strong finish with three 5-1s to secure the win.

In heats 13 and 15, Craig Cook and Claus Vissing picked up maximum advantages over Nieminen and North, and in fact, other than junior Tommy Fenwick (who did a decent job without scoring); all the home men scored at least 6.

Monarchs' next fixture is a home tie against Ipswich Witches in the League Cup on Friday 5 July then they travel to Glasgow two days later to face the Tigers in the league.

Hockey by John Preece

Last weekend, Scotland's men secured their fifth victory in a row with a 5-2 defeat of England 'A' at Peffermill. Leading 3-0 at half time, the Scots went 4-0 up, before England pulled a goal back from a penalty corner. Five minutes later, Scotland put the match out of sight with a fifth goal, but

England scored late on to leave the final score at five goals to two.

Something for the fans to look forward to is the news that the BBC has secured the broadcasting rights to the EuroHockey Nations Championship to be held in Belgium from 17-25 August. Scotland's matches will, however, only be available on iPlayer, on-line or via 'the Red Button', but it's a start. Live hockey on 'normal' telly... Who would have thought..?

Badminton

Edinburgh's Jillie Cooper has been forced to pull out of the BWF Individual World badminton championships in the Chinese city of Guangzhou from August 4-11, with a foot injury.

Mixed doubles partner Robert Blair has also been ruled Martin Campbell will be in the team of five alongside Patrick Mac Hugh (Kinross) in the men's doubles. Scottish team: Men's singles: Alistair Casey (Glasgow). Women's singles: Kirsty Gilmour (Bothwell). Men's doubles: Martin Campbell (Edinburgh) and Patrick MacHugh (Kinross). Women's doubles: Imogen Bankier (Glasgow)