

# I'M FIGHTING THE FIGHT

Cult

By GARRY DOYLE

**ROBBIE MURRAY will enter the ring for the third time in his professional career on Saturday night.**

Facing him will be Brighton's Dean Larter, the toughest opponent Murray has faced yet - but not his toughest fight.

For boxing is child's play compared to what the 26-year-old light welterweight has come through.

Murray's biggest fight began when he was two, when doctors discovered that the Dubliner, now 26, had a serious form of asthma, and for the next eight years he was constantly in and out of hospital.

Doctors told him that he would never be able to play competitive sport. Murray listened but said: "No, you're wrong."

Within six years a sick child had become a champion boxer.

Murray recalled: "I wanted to box. It was all I wanted to do and when I told doctors this, they looked at me kindly and gently said - 'no, no, you won't be strong enough.'

"But I was determined to win this fight. Stephen Maher, the trainer at my local club, worked and worked with me to enhance my lungs.

"Within six years of starting with him, and working on exercises to improve my breathing, the asthma was gone.

"I have gained everything from boxing - so I won't hear of people slating the sport.

"But I want to use my career to promote the fact that I overcame this illness as a child and that I can inspire other kids who are ill to fight back and win their battles."

To inspire as many people as he hopes Murray needs to become a household name. In boxing that is not easy.

There is a cult following for the game in this country, but the floating fans who move from sport to sport only get engaged every so often.

But with big-time boxing coming back to Belfast this Saturday when Jim Rock tops the bill at the Odyssey, Murray has his chance.

Winning his first two bouts has increased his confidence and his profile, doing enough to convince Frank Warren that he is worth some investment.

Murray said: "I know I'm good. I have skill, a punch, I'm durable and I'm hungry. Nothing scares me.

"I've been told that Saturday will be a tough fight. But asthma is the hardest fight I've ever had.

"Any time I'm in training, any time I'm in the ring and questioning my resolve, I think back to when I was a kid and how worried my parents were.

"I think about what I went through and it makes me more determined to do well.

"I know that I can win belts because I've been in the ring with good champions and I've stood my ground.

"I sparred with Shea Neary when I was an amateur; I've been sparring with Jim Rock, Neil Sinclair and Eamon Magee in the last six months and I was able to show that I could handle myself.

"It was after getting into the ring with Neary three years ago that people told me that I had to go pro. They said 'you've too much talent there going to waste. Go for it.'"

And last year he went for it.

After a reasonable amateur career that brought him to three national finals, he made the jump from the voluntary to the paid ranks last year.

His career has started well but it is too early to say how far he can go.

Murray said: "I don't want to make stupid predictions of myself.

"With me, this career is going to happen gradually. If I'm going to do it then I will

have to move up gradually through the ranks.

"But I believe I can do something. As an amateur I was frustrated.

## Stronger

"I was only getting into fights as the final bell went.

"Now as a pro I can feel myself getting stronger as the rounds go on.

"I'm not going to delude people and say in three years time

Robbie Murray will be a world champ.

"But I'm not in this game for the sake of it. I am here with the desire to win a universal belt at some stage.

"If you don't have that ambition then you are wasting your time.

"I know it will be tough but then life is tough - and I've already overcome the hardest bout of my life."