

ZARA WHITE: THE WORLD AT HER FEET!

Zara White is a name we ought to hear a great deal more of in the year ahead, and for many years thereafter, if her success of recent years offers any indication. While also a member of the Butlerstown Camogie Club, Zara (15) has primarily blazed her sporting trail through kickboxing, and is now the proud holder of eight World titles and six National crowns.



Zara is pictured with coach Billy O'Sullivan.

Daughter of Ray and Sandra and sister of Raymond and Eoin, Zara is a student at St Declan's Community College and has acquired a medal collection that few Waterford athletes of her age can similarly boast of.

Well, boast is a word one can't associate with Zara, who wears her success very lightly. And that humility is one of the key strengths that coaches Billy O'Sullivan and David Phelan readily identified in Zara, who first crossed the threshold of Billy's Gym at the age of nine. Within a year, Zara, who trains five nights a week, had secured her first Irish title at the IKF Championships. And since then, she's never looked back.

"There is major talent in Waterford but when they reach a certain age they're gone," Billy told The Munster Express last July. "The reason they're gone is that nobody is taking any notice." Billy told Kieran Foley that a lack of support will have on talented teenagers such as Zara. "If we see kids with potential like Zara, they should be getting support now," he said. "It's no good waiting until they make it and everyone wants to take a picture with him or her. It's too late then." Billy added: "Zara is just so dedicated to kickboxing. She trains so hard and then puts all of that hard work to such good use each and every time she gets into the ring. She really does deserve a higher profile given what she's achieved so far and if she had additional financial support to further enhance her training, well, there's no telling what she could go on to achieve.

Just look at what Katie Taylor has done in boxing: she had access to funding through Sport Ireland before she decided to go professional. If she'd not had that funding, I doubt if she had gone on to win Olympic Gold and to such heights as a pro. I don't see why Zara couldn't do the same if she was similarly funded. She has so much going for her." Zara's successful streak continued last Spring, when she took gold and silver (in low kick and light contact) at the KBI Championships, which were held at the CityWest Hotel. "She's a true champion and we're all so proud of her," said Billy following the Championships.

And last November, Zara truly took things to the next level when claiming three gold medals at the WTKA Unified World Championships, which were held in Marina Di Carrara in Italy. This replicated her success from the previous year's Championships when taking gold in the light contact, full contact and low kick categories.

Should fitness and form hold this year, Zara White ought to end 2019 as a double figure World Kickboxing Champion, which should surely be noted by county and regional sports award adjudicators come the awards season 12 months from now. Remember the name Zara White: it's one that should already be up in lights.