

The Croft brothers made Wales proud in the last day of preliminaries at the Commonwealth Games

## **Description**

A strong fifth day of boxing was held at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England where the winners joined the quarter-finals. Only the top eight boxers are still in action in all of the sixteen weight categories in the Games. Wales were amazed on the day and their Croft brothers proved an outstanding performance on Day5.

The Commonwealth Games is one of the top multisport events next to the Olympic Games and European Games and after four years of break, the competition returned to the agenda. Altogether 231 boxers from 55 out of the 72 participating NOCs are competing in the boxing event of the new Commonwealth Games from all of the five Confederations. The finals of the Commonwealth Games will be held in Birmingham on August 7.

## **The bout of the day**

The management of the Welsh Boxing Federation invited a new face to the national team this year, Owain Harris-Allan who competed in a few international tournaments prior to the Games. He is the youngest boxer in their Commonwealth Games squad who will be turning to 19 only later this year. The Welsh teenager faced Lesotho's Daniel Phomolo Lengola who is also a newcomer but he also has strong future potential. Harris started the first round with aggressive attacks and his pressure guaranteed his advantage in all of the judges' scorecards. The quick African boxer replied to several of the attacks but the Welshman had the strong stamina to beat his older rival in Birmingham, joining the last eight of the bantamweight (54kg) following the Croft brothers and Taylor Bevan.

## **The Round-Up**

Wales sent a powerful boxing team to the Commonwealth Games, their loan Croft is one of the flag bearers in the line-ups. He achieved a silver medal at the EUBC U22 European Boxing Championships in March, then a bronze in the EUBC European Men's Elite Boxing Championship in May. Croft was prepared for this moment to box at the Commonwealth Games every day since 2018 and he delivered the best performance with perfect timing. The Welsh southpaw not only used his longer hands but he was smarter and landed shots

from backhand which surprised the Mauritian boxer. Croft enjoyed this debut at the Games and marched to the quarter-finals of the welterweight (67kg) in Birmingham.

Northern Ireland's Aidan Walsh had a hand injury therefore he missed the EUBC European Men's Elite Boxing Championships in Yerevan but recovered to the start of the Games. He achieved a bronze medal at the Olympic Games in Tokyo and he was silver medallist at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast. Walsh was highly confident against Lesotho's Arena Pakela who moved down to the light middleweight (71kg) in the previous weeks. The first round was a very comfortable success for Walsh, one of the judges favoured him 10:8 after three minutes. The Northern Irish boxer controlled the second and third rounds too to eliminate his African rival by large margin of differences.

England's reigning EUBC European Champion at the light middleweight (71kg), Mohammed Harris Akbar had to wait for his debut in the Games until the fifth competition day but he had an emerging performance in Birmingham. The 24-year-old boxer was quicker in the first round than Ghana's 2018 Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Jessie Lartey and gained control of the preliminary bout. Akbar dictated high rhythm and the experienced African was not able to follow his footsteps in their preliminary contest. The English star was simply dominant in all of the three rounds and marched to the quarter-finals.

Ioan's twin brother, Garan Croft had almost the same results in the first part of the year and strengthened the Welsh boxing team in Birmingham. He was silver medallist in the EUBC European Men's Elite Boxing Championships in Yerevan this May and achieved the same in the U22 age group. He had a strong opponent as first, Nigeria's All Africa Games silver medallist Abdul Afeez Osoba but he had advantages in all of the five judges' scorecards. The young Welshman had impressive shots, followed his twin brother and booked his place in the quarter-finals at the light middleweight (71kg) in Birmingham.

### **The quotes of the day**

***"I felt controlled in the ring, I have more gears to go through in the Commonwealth Games. Good to get the first bout under the belt because I have a long wait for the start. I followed my brother, Garan too after my contest,"***  
added Wales' Ioan Croft.

***"I am glad to get my first bout of the Commonwealth Games over. Arena Pakela was a tough opponent and much respect to him. I stuck to the coaches' instructions throughout and I am happy with my performance. I am looking***

***forward now to my quarter-final and progressing forward in the competition,”***  
commented his success, Aidan Walsh.

***“I am pleased with my performance against a tough and relentless opponent. It is great to have got my tournament started with a one win for me and loan,”***  
said Wales’ super talented 20-year-old Garan Croft.

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