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# **Best of Enemies**

Barry Flynn



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### Best of Enemies Barry Flynn

The boxing saga of John Caldwell and Freddie Gilroy is a story of two world beating Belfast boxers in an era long gone in the social history of Belfast. The two best friends – and Olympic medalists in 1956 for Ireland – became world famous within their sport and their story is one of fame and adulation, coupled with despair and poverty.

A story of alcoholism, of troubles, of despair and glory, of rags to riches to rags again. The professional fight between Caldwell and Gilroy on a cold, sober night in October 1962 was dramatic and brutal. Caldwell and Gilroy attracted a crowd of 16,000 people to the King's Hall. The Cuban Missile Crisis was still ongoing and atomic war was a distinct possibility between the USA and the USSR, but Belfast was more concerned about the fight between its own two super powers at the King's Hall.

From the top of their sporting career, both men would later enter the depths of alcoholism as Belfast and the Troubles impacted on their lives. Best of Enemies is a reflection of society in the 1960s and brings to life a re-lived rivalry which invigorated a generation, binding the social fabric of a city in a sporting event is a hallmark of Irish sporting folklore.

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