

Toughest fighter of all

Gym'll fix it as disabled Damon, 10 works out

By Richard Marsden

DISABLED youngster Damon Driver is so unsteady on his feet his mum daren't let him out of the house on his own.

The 10-year-old, from Darnall, has faced years of medical treatment after being diagnosed with a form of cerebral palsy, called spastic diplegia, which affects the movement of his legs.

But now he is being helped to overcome his condition... through boxing!

After being introduced to the sport by his grandfather Jack Driver - a pal of Sheffield trainer Brendan Ingle - the Phillimore Primary School pupil can't get enough of it.

And every Wednesday afternoon, Damon, who has a twin sister Aliyah, is hard at work on the punchbags at Glyn Rhodes' gym in Hillsborough.

Mum Lindsey Driver, 29, said: "He absolutely loves it, it's all he talks about.

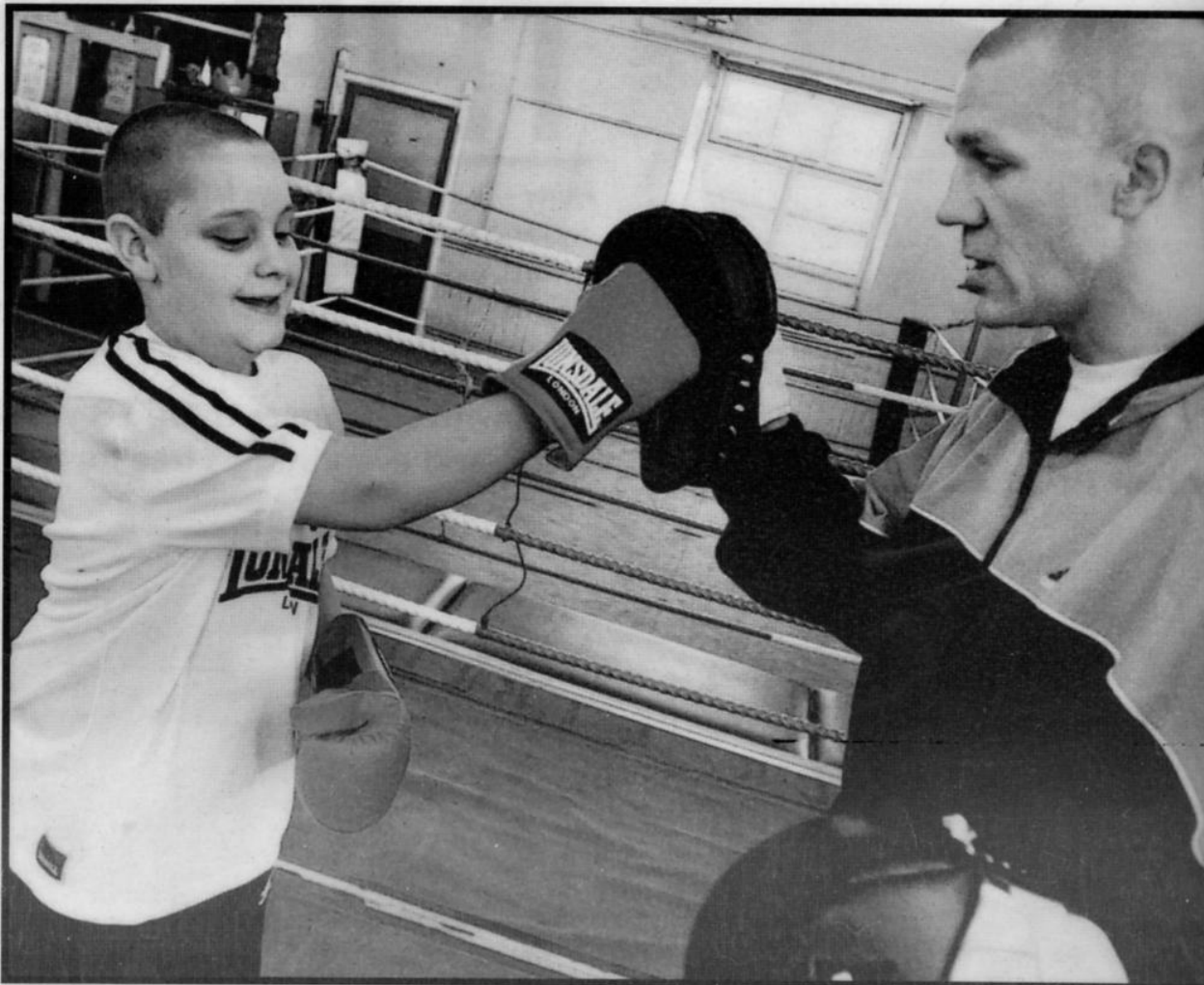
"Damon's main problems are his balance and co-ordination - and boxing should help 100 per cent. I've talked about it with his physiotherapist and consultant at Ryegate Hospital, and they have encouraged him.

"Because of his condition, Damon has been less active than other kids. I don't let him out on his own as he falls over very easily and might injure himself - and he can't play sports like football.

"In the past, this made me worry about his weight, but boxing helps keep him in shape.

"He was also becoming frustrated because he had no way of letting off steam. Now he's a lot calmer at home."

Damon became interested in the sport during regular stays with his grandad, who lives in Basford Street, Darnall.



Boxing clever: Damon Driver, who has cerebral palsy, works out with trainer Glyn Rhodes at his gym in Hillsborough **Picture: Steve**

videos of fights involving stars such as Nigel Benn and Mike Tyson, and taught him the basics ranging from throwing punches to stance and balance.

Ms Driver said: "Damon

'Damon is tougher than all of us ... he has a battle on his hands.'

Glyn Rhodes

loved it."

Her dad encouraged her to take the youngster to a gym where he could learn the sport properly.

But due to Damon's disability, Ms Driver was faced with a problem finding one which would let him train.

and they didn't want to know," she said.

However, family friend and professional boxer Reagan Denton pointed her in the direction of Glyn Rhodes' gym in Burton Street, Hillsborough.

Ms Driver said: "Glyn told me Damon's disability wouldn't make any difference and over the last month, he's started going every Wednesday afternoon.

"I'm happy to take him - he's comfortable there and he gets treated like everyone else."

Damon was first diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of two, and Ms Driver said she was "devastated" to discover his condition.

Over the years, he has had to undergo regular courses of medical treatment and make dozens of visits to hospital.

years, doctors will need to operate on his legs.

Mr Driver, 56, a steel erector, who has been interested in boxing since he was 13, said: "Kids with a disability sometimes get picked on but the sport can bring them out of their shells.

"I always knew Damon wanted to do a bit of boxing - I'm pleased he has taken such an interest. I hope it will give him the determination to come through his operations."

Glyn Rhodes said: "When he first came to the gym, he was a little quiet but he's come out of himself and the training is helping his co-ordination.

"In our gym you have lots of tough people, but Damon is tougher than all of us. He has a battle on his hands and you have to take your hat off to him."