

Boxers offer young 'lags' fighting chance

Budding pros go behind bars to show inmates right way to lead their lives

By Bob Westerdale

BOXING

THIS looney lot should be locked up!

Staff and members of the Sheffield Boxing Centre were banged up for a few hours at Wetherby Prison - but they were more than happy to be detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure.

Trainer Glyn Rhodes and his team accepted an invitation to put on an exhibition at the young-offenders institute, which houses 360 'trainees' aged 15 to 18.

PARSON Cross Amateur Boxing Club are holding their first show of the season at the Colley WMC tomorrow at 7.30pm.

Seventeen-year-old international lightweight Joe Rodgers will be taking on George Ingle, nephew of former feather-weight world champion Paul Ingle from Scarborough, in a contest between two of the top under-19s in the country

Returning from the pro ranks under the new amateur rules of a pro having four contests or less, Kevin England will be boxing open-class light-welter Jamie Dyer of Leeds

A host of other Parson Cross boxers will there, including brothers Aiden, Calum and Danny Cotton, Jimmy Beaver, Jordan Smith, Karl Platts, Jason Carr, Faz Zihid, Perry Howe, and Jack Battles.

Prisoners may be a captive audience, but they can be notoriously difficult people to entertain and inform.

Yet the evening got off to a good start as 100 young lags watched an exhibition of super-fast skipping from Sujad Elahi.

Then unbeaten prospect John Fewkes went on the pads, before the Hillsborough-gym boxer joined Ross Burkinshaw, Carl Wild, Jezz Wilson and Sam Sheedy in sparring.

Then came the opportunity for cell-mates to spar with the pros.

This was the moment some of



Boxing clever: Fighters from Glyn Rhodes' stable outside Wetherby Prison, above, and turning on the style for young inmates, below

the young tough guys aimed to test their street cred.

Result: the more macho they tried to be, the more embarrassed they were by the speed, ringcraft and technique of the professionals.

One 6 ft 3in rogue doggedly pursued Wild around the gym floor with chilling persistence. Wild decided he'd had enough, tapping his assailant nonchalantly on the chin.

There wasn't much power in the shot - but there was enough. He went down.

Another trainee showed the same enthusiasm to stick one on Fewkes. The trouble was the

Sheffield fighter was so quick and deceptive that after three minutes the breathless inmate had slowed to a stagger and then collapsed on a gym mat.

It was with renewed respect that the trainees then listened to Rhodes speaking about, life, future prospects and ambition ... and the need to stay on the right side of the law to succeed.

Rhodes said later: "We do this to broaden the life experience of our boxers. Many of them are from similar backgrounds to the inmates so I hope that those in Wetherby can see how kids of their age can get on in life without causing trouble."

