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PRESS RELEASE

Fighting for Equality: Boxer settles case against Ulster Provincial Boxing Council

The Ulster Provincial Boxing Council, also known as the Ulster Boxing Council or UBC, has settled a case brought under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order by Lewis Crocker, a 21-year old boxer from Belfast, for £8,500. Lewis believed that he was not selected to represent Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa in 2015 because of his perceived religious belief/political opinion. The Equality Commission supported his case.

Lewis Crocker, now a professional, was in 2015 a very successful amateur boxer with seven Irish titles and many other significant achievements to his name. He had contested at the World Championships and two European Championships and been honoured at other international contests.

Lewis was boxing with the Holy Trinity Boxing Club in Belfast's Turf Lodge, a predominantly Catholic area, but his community background, which is Protestant, was well known within the boxing community.

Lewis finished top in tests carried out at a High Performance Camp at the Sports Institute for Northern Ireland in 2015. His name was then put forward by the Irish Amateur Boxing Association's High Performance Head Coach for Ulster to the UBC as part of the suggested Northern Ireland team for the Commonwealth Youth Games. The UBC is the body which decides the team selection.

The UBC did not select Lewis for the team, despite his recommendation by the Head Coach. Lewis believes that all those selected for the team were Catholic.

"It was a real shock when I wasn't selected for the team, when I knew I had earned a place on it," Lewis said. "The UBC even refused to hold a box-off to decide who the best boxer was, a process which they have used before. Everyone else who was recommended by the Head Coach was selected. At the time my non-selection created a huge stir within the boxing community and I was devastated.

"I'm happier now that this has now come to an end. I know that taking the case was the right thing to do and, in fact, I hope it has already made a difference. The UBC has said that it has changed its policies. In the settlement they recognise the hurt I suffered when they refused to select me. I'd like, above all, to thank my dad, who has been a rock for me during all this. He's supported me in my boxing since I was 6 years old."

Chief Commissioner Dr Michael Wardlow said: “Fairness and impartiality should be at the heart of the governance and administration of any sport. There certainly should never be any suggestion of a person’s religious or community background being a consideration for team selection. The circumstances of this case left Lewis Crocker convinced that he had been unfairly treated, and that his community background was the reason.

“The Equality Commission assisted Lewis in taking this case under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order, which protects people from discrimination on grounds of religious belief and political opinion. The UBC has acknowledged the hurt, distress and upset suffered by Lewis by reason of its refusal to select him as a member of the five person team to attend the Commonwealth Youth Games 2015 in Samoa. It also affirms its commitment to the principles of equality of opportunity and to ensuring that it complies in all respects with its obligations under national and European equality law and has undertaken to ensure that its officers and members are aware of these obligations. Since the bringing of these proceedings, it has introduced new policies, practices and procedures to ensure compliance in all respects with its obligations.”