By Daniel Fletcher

Every champion falls, every great fighter declines, and every star burns out or fades away. It is the nature of the beast; as inherent and inexorable a fact as that the Earth orbits the Sun, that grass is green and that Michael Schiavello will scream "Goodnight Irene!" during a fight broadcast when a fighter gets sparked. To get proverbial, *what goes up must come down*, and as a promising young fighter embarks on his career, the ageing warrior must one day reach the point where the journey must end.

Andy Howson lost his ISKA world title last night, and subsequently announced his retirement. He was cheered by a raucous following, and hugged by the friend that had just relieved him of his championship belt. The show was over.

After 13yrs, he admitted that the young had usurped the (comparatively) old, and that his time was done. "After 13yrs, a lot of hard fights and a few world titles" was his own way of putting it, but he neglected to mention the respect of his peers, the support of his friends and his team, and the fact he went out being cheered. Hey, home town or not, even legends get booed at the end... just ask Nigel Benn. Going out to cheers and applause is a pinnacle.

As for the fight itself, it was a counter-striking technician against a shorter, more brawling orientated scrapper in Andy. Dean James used his range well, and though he initially showed Howson a great deal of respect in a cautious opening round, he turned it up a notch in the final minute of the second. A standing elbow landed precisely, arcing down onto Howson's head and cutting him open. The blitzkrieg was expected from the defending champion in the third, but it was this round that the downfall continuted; while Andy pressed, James began to pick him off and avoiding the inside work, landed another elbow from the clinch. Wobbled, Howson was forced back to the ropes, and a short elbow from the clinch dropped him. He survived the round.

(Photo courtesy of http://muaythaiphotos.com)

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