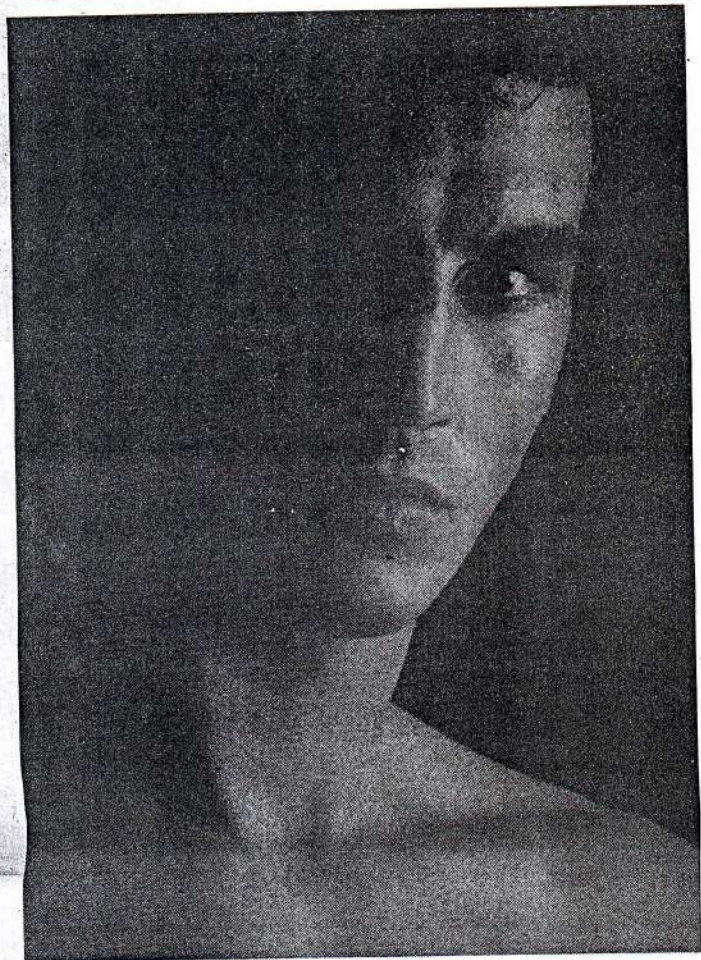


GARY STRETCH -

The Punch Perfect Model

GARY STRETCH is a part time male model with a difference...



turned down the best purse of his career for a rematch. He claims also never to have taken a count since he first put on a pair of gloves.

Gary was born in St Helens, and although he has lived in London for the past four years, still has a heavy Lancashire accent. He took up boxing at the age of ten and admits to being very physical as a boy. He is also a black belt in both judo and karate. Seeing him on TV in his stylish designer shorts he looks less athletic than stringy. In the flesh though he is what most women would call a 'hunk' - broadchested with a

well sculptured physique he simply oozes masculinity and fitness. Sadly, like too many hot prospects, at the start of his career Gary was plagued by managerial problems. Also, somewhat ill-advisedly he continued to train with a hand injury. Altogether he was out of the ring for about a year. I asked him if this was what led to his taking up modelling, but he insists it was not. "I don't think I could ever have had

expanded considerably. He worked for several other agencies as well.

He has done a couple of catwalk jobs, and says he found them 'funny'. His main incentive was financial, because although as British champion and a world rated fighter he is a name, he says in the early days it used to cost him money to fight. "In my career, for three years I earned

nothing. I used to train for ten, twelve weeks, then earn silly money for five. With that kind of thing you've got to do something, so the modelling would fit in with the boxing. He is glad of the money then, but says there are problems now. A lot of people and companies want to use him now, but for his name rather than as a model. There are some assignments which he would be willing to undertake as a model, but not as Gary Stretch, so now he has a business manager Nick Scott, who he describes as 'fabulous'. Nick handles modelling, promo and Gary's other business inter-

ests. Gary Stretch, 'the boxer' is kept entirely separate and is managed by Frank Warren. In his early modelling days he used to do numerous small assignments, but now he is concentrating on working for large corporations. He has been approached by an airline company and is also negotiating with a major jeans manufacturer, so watch out for his face on TV soon. He has been offered a lot of small modelling jobs here and there, but says his management won't let him do them, and he has full confidence in Nick Scott's judgement. It wouldn't be prudent he says to model suits while the jeans contract is being negotiated. Management aside, Gary has turned down so many assignments that the average male model, forever chasing work, might well tear out his own hair in exasperation. But it is not caprice, nor even good business sense that dictates what he does or doesn't model. A lot of it is to do with ethics, in particular loyalty.

Largely on account of his enviable physique he has modelled a lot of swimwear, and is the main model for 'Title Sportswear', one of the biggest sponsors in boxing. He is a personal friend of the company's owner, Richard Atkins. A while ago he was offered £50,000 by a rival company to model their shorts, but turned them down flat. He says of Richard Atkins: "He looked after me when I first came (into professional boxing), and you've got to have some loyalties. If my career lasts two years and I get fifty grand, I spend it then it's gone." And, he says, his friends mean more to him than any amount of money. The sincerity of this statement is underlined by the way he talks about other fighters, for while he says he would beat Nigel Benn, he describes the Dark Destroyer as a gentleman and a really nice guy. He doesn't have a bad word to say about anyone, (snooker, tennis and football players take note). His heroes are Sugar Ray Leonard and Marvelous Marvin Hagler.

Gary plans to quit the ring at the age of 27 and finish with boxing altogether. Does he plan then to go into modelling full time, or films perhaps? He says he would consider acting if the money and the film were both right, but of modelling he says: "I am not a model and never was a model: I just did a bit of modelling work because it fitted in." It's difficult to credit that someone in his position, with an abundance of natural talent, the world at his feet and lucrative offers coming at him from all directions is afraid to take the bit between his teeth, but Gary Stretch is a genuinely reluctant hero and, one senses, far from the happiest of men. Another thing he puts down is his 'glamour boy' image. At times, certain elements of the press have made him out to be a bit of a ladies man, to put it mildly. In reality though he says he hardly ever goes to night clubs, is not a 'drinker' and, incredibly, has not had a girlfriend for six months.

'I don't think I could ever have had a usual kind of lifestyle....'

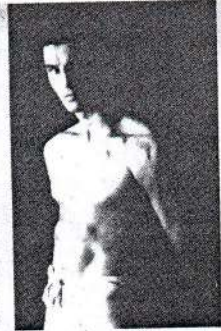
Gary began modelling by accident!

...catwalk jobs are 'funny'...

Gary Stretch 'the boxer' is kept entirely separate...

...failed to recognise champion!

Gary has been offered a lot of small modelling jobs here and there, but his manager won't let him do them..



Gary Stretch is a part time male model with a difference. Six foot one, muscular, and with the slightly sinister dark good looks that led to him being offered a part in a film about the Kray twins, he is less at home on the catwalk than in the square ring. When he checked in at the reception desk at the Docklands Arena where I met him the re-

ceptionist asked him for his name so she could issue him with a visitor's pass. Obviously not a boxing fan, she had failed to recognise the light-middleweight champion of Britain. In the near future he expects his face to be

better known, for with supreme confidence rather than arrogance he predicts he will fight for and win the world title in 1990. Lending credence to this claim is an impressive amateur career which culminated in his winning the 1985 NABC title, and a pro record of 21 wins in 22 fights, his sole defeat resulting from a cut eye stoppage against an opponent who subsequently

by Alexander Baron