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## MAN ABOUT TOWN

# Luke Blackall



**Simon Vincent** and Fred Sirieix are not men to be trifled with. The former is a captain of industry (the European president of the Hilton hotel group). The latter is the quietly authoritative general manager of one of my favourite restaurants in London, Galvin at Windows.

Tough though they may be, for

them to go ten rounds with Clinton Mckenzie, as they did this week, was not their usual day in the office.

You see, Mckenzie is a former British and European boxing champion, a man who once fought Sugar Ray Leonard. He looks far fitter than his 56 years might suggest and he had a home advantage as the fight

took place in his south London gym. The shaven-headed Sirieix and the dapper Vincent did, however, have one advantage. They would take it in turns to slug it out with the former champ, as a tag team.

Any thoughts that this would simply be an exhibition were quickly dispelled as both challengers came out hard, landing some strong punches, and taking quite a few themselves.

This punishment wasn't, you understand, simply an example of two men's masochistic desires. There was also a charitable aim – the pair were hoping to raise money for

Galvin's Chance. This charity, a brainchild of Sirieix, takes groups of people between 18-25 – many of whom come from troubled backgrounds – and trains them to work in the hospitality sector. And in this era of rising unemployment and a visibly disaffected youth, it is very much an organisation of our time.

While headlines proclaim there are

a million unemployed young people in the UK, there remain thousands of unfilled jobs in the hospitality sector, all waiting for enthusiastic employees.

But the work of Galvin's Chance is about more than getting people to work in restaurants. Indeed, it may

turn out not be the right field for those it takes in.

It's not just about introducing them to the workplace, it is also giving some a chance they have never had before, inspiring them to think that there are possibilities out there. And it is, of course, telling them that good things in life are worth fighting for.

Which brings me back to the fight. Despite, presumably, a couple of sore heads the next day, everyone was declared a winner. And after the pugilists' performance, I wouldn't back anyone trying to leave the restaurant or hotel without paying...