

= Sixto Escobar =

Sixto Escobar ( March 23 , 1913 ? November 17 , 1979 ) was a Puerto Rican professional boxer . Competing in the bantamweight division , he became Puerto Rico 's first world champion .

Escobar was born in Barceloneta and raised in San Juan . There he received his primary education and took interest in boxing . After gathering a record of 21 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 as an amateur , Escobar debuted as a professional in 1931 defeating Luis " Kid Dominican " Pérez by knockout . Early in his career , he moved to Venezuela due to the lack of opponents in his division . There he received an opportunity for the Venezuelan Bantamweight championship , but lost by points . Subsequently he moved to New York and began boxing in other states , eventually capturing the Montreal Athletic Commission World Bantamweight Title . In 1936 , he defeated Tony Marino to unify this championship with the one recognized by the International Boxing Union , in the process becoming the third Latin American undisputed world boxing champion . After retiring , he worked as a spokesperson for beer companies in New York , before returning to Puerto Rico in the 1960s , where he resided until his death . He received several posthumous recognitions and his name was used in several sports venues and buildings . In 2002 , Escobar was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame .

= = Early Life and amateur career = =

Escobar was born in Barrio Palmas Altas , a sector of Barceloneta , Puerto Rico , to Jacinto Escobar and Adela Vargas . Early in his life , he moved to Tras Talleres in Santurce , a subsection of San Juan , Puerto Rico . There he received his elementary and secondary education , up until the seventh grade , when he decided to dedicate himself full @-@ time to his sports career . In Tras Talleres , he began developing an interest in boxing and received instruction in said discipline . Although at this time , boxing was illegal in Puerto Rico ; remote places such as a house ? s backyard or rooftops were used to organize clandestine fights without attracting attention from the local police . In 1928 , a Puerto Rican boxer named Ángel " Sotito " Soto moved from New York to a house near the Escobar family ? s residence and established a gym in his backyard . There he gave boxing classes to Escobar and several other young athletes . After several months of instruction , Soto prepared a boxing card with included three @-@ round fights , in which each round lasted two minutes . In this event , Escobar earned his first victory , defeating a pugilist identified as " Gobar " by knockout in the first round . After this match , Escobar continued fighting in clandestine gyms . He met and was received by Ignacio Peñagaricano , the owner of Victoria Gym . Escobar received his boxing license through Peñagaricano . On February 16 , 1927 , governor Horace Mann Towner legalized boxing and allowed the establishment of organized boxing matches . Professionals would fight Fridays , Saturdays and Sundays which , were considered the best days of the week , while amateurs could compete the remaining days of the week without limitations . As an amateur , he fought in 23 combats , gathering a record of 21 wins , one loss and a draw . His draw was against Ramón Rodríguez of San Lorenzo and his only loss was in the hands of Pedro Montañez from Cayey , in a fight that took place in March 1930 .

= = Professional career = =

Escobar turned professional on September 1 , 1930 , in a fight card organized at the Victory Garden gym in San Juan . In this event , he defeated Luis " Kid Dominican " Pérez , who entered the fight as the Dominican Republic 's champion , by knockout in the third round . In Puerto Rico , Escobar fought in 15 contests , before moving to Venezuela after the popularity of professional boxing declined in his home country . This move was motivated by Roberto Andrade , who provided transportation to the country . In Venezuela , he fought in Caracas , competing against José Lugo , Sindulfo Díaz , Rafael " Morality " Morales , Pica Pica and Simón Chávez among others . On November 11 , 1931 , Escobar competed against Enrique Chaffardet for the Venezuelan Bantamweight Title , but lost by decision . After 17 fights , he returned to Puerto Rico and competed

in five cards . But professional boxing suffered another decline in interest , which forced Escobar to work as an accommodator in baseball games three days of the week , generally on weekends . In the meanwhile , Tony Rojas , a friend of his managers Gustavo Jiménez and Arturo Gigante , convinced them to release Escobar of the contract which bound them . Since Escobar turned professional while he was still legally a minor , his father had to sign the unbinding agreement . After succeeding in this task , Rojas presented Escobar with a steam boat ticket to New York , which covered his food , clothes and hotel expenses . Escobar reached New York in early 1934 , intending to " obtain fame and honor " for " [ his ] motherland " , there he was received by Rojas and professional trainer Whitey Bimstein . His first fight in the United States took place in Holyoke , Massachusetts on May 7 , 1934 . In this contest he was paired against Canadian bantamweight titleholder Bobby Leitham , defeating him by technical knockout in the seventh round .

Escobar 's manager , Lou Brix and his trainer recognized that Escobar could be close to a championship fight once the incumbent , Panamanian Alfonso Teófilo Brown , refused to defend the championship against the first contender , which led to it being stripped by the National Boxing Association ( NBA ) . A rematch was then organized against Leitham . This was an eliminator card organized by the Montreal Athletic Commission , which was to determine a contender for their vacant Bantamweight World Championship , against first contender Baby Casanova , who attended the card . After scoring three knockdowns in the fourth round , Escobar connected another punch that injured Leitham , after which Leitham 's manager surrendered the fight . This marked Leitham 's last fight . Following this result , the NBA immediately called for a fight between Escobar and Casanova . By this time he had gained a reputation as a quick and technical boxer , capable of gathering quick knockouts with body punches if confronted by an unprepared opponent . The fight took place on June 26 , 1934 , and it was organized in Montreal , Canada . Escobar scored a knockdown in the third round ; the fight concluded in the ninth round when Casanova lost by knockout . With this win , Escobar won the Montreal Athletic Commission World Bantamweight Title , thus becoming the first Puerto Rican to win a world boxing championship title . This had a significant impact on Puerto Rico , where it was constantly discussed by the general public . Songs , decimas and poetry were written about this accomplishment . However , the New York State Athletic Commission ( NYSAC ) and International Boxing Union ( IBU ) of France didn 't recognize the outcome of this fight , conserving Tony Marino and Brown as their recognized champions .

= = = Undisputed world bantamweight title = = =

On August 8 , 1934 , he defeated Eugene Hart by points in a non @-@ title match organized in Canada . This was the first time in his career that Escobar completed a 15 @-@ round contest . After this event , he stayed in Montreal expecting to fight against the winner of a matchup between Louis Salica and Bobby Quintana , which was scheduled to take place on December of that year . However , Escobar was forced to cancel his plans after suffering a heel injury when he was hit by a car . He spent a month in inactivity while recovering , and in the winter he returned to Puerto Rico . The governor ordered to have all government buildings closed so that public employees could attend a welcoming ceremony . The event , which took place in Old San Juan 's dock , was followed by a parade . Upon arriving in Barceloneta , Escobar was recognized as a " predilect son " of that municipality by the city 's mayor , which was followed by a week of festivities in his name . Escobar pursued a fight with Brown , but his offers were refused while the Panamanian pugilist promoted a campaign protesting the removal of his recognition as champion , demanding to be reinstated .

On August 7 , 1935 , Escobar defeated Peter Santol , who was considered Canada 's best bantaweight and held the Canadian Boxing Federation & Montreal Athletic Commission ( MAC ) world titles , by unanimous decision in 12 rounds . However , Escobar still wasn 't considered the division 's Undisputed Champion because Baltazar Sangchili had defeated Panama Al Brown and was recognized by the IBU . Due to this , Santol sent a letter to the NYSAC noting that the fight was of eliminator nature , even though it was recognized as a titular contest by the NBA and MAC . Wanting to be recognized as such , Escobar pursued a title unification fight against Tony Marino , who had defeated Sangchili by knockout in his previous fight . He won the fight by knockout in the

tenth round , receiving the " undisputed world champion " distinction . On November 13 , 1935 , Escobar became the first Puerto Rican to win a title fight in the first round , defeating " Indian " Quintana by knockout .

This outcome made it possible to organize a fight against Louis Salica , it was the first time that Escobar fought a title fight in Puerto Rico . The card was promoted by Arturo Gigante and Gustavo Jiménez Sicardó . Escobar won the fight by unanimous decision , while Jack Dempsey served as referee . He participated in Mike Jacobs 's " Carnival of Champions " on September 23 , 1937 and lost the title to Harry Jeffra by unanimous decision . Shortly after , he recovered from this loss and he returned to the gym ; he defeated Johnny Defoe in a preparatory contest . On February 20 , 1938 , Escobar faced Jeffra in a rematch organized at the El Escambrón baseball park in Puerta de Tierra . He won the contest by unanimous decision , scoring three knockdowns . This became an early example of fights that attracted the attention and criticism of boxing analysts , particularly those in New York . On April 2 , 1939 , Escobar defeated Kayo Morgan before a sold @-@ out crowd of 15 @,@ 000 at the Estadio Sixto Escobar , which had been inaugurated three years earlier . After this fight , he received The Ring Bantamweight Championship , which was presented by the magazine 's editor , Nat Fleischer . Later in 1939 , Escobar received a draft notice from the United States Army , ordering him to take a physical exam for possible military service . He and his manager presented the issue to the Puerto Rico Boxing Commission , managing to receive a postponement of two months before surrendering his title . On April 6 , 1940 , Escobar fought Simón Chávez for ten rounds in what ended as a draw . Escobar then fought some short non @-@ title fights , of which he lost four , all by points . On December 2 , 1940 , Escobar participated in his last professional fight , losing to a ten round decision to Harry Jeffra . Throughout his career Escobar avoided being knocked down or out in any fight , all of his losses being by decision . In April 1941 , he was drafted by the Army and participated in World War II .

= = Retirement , death and legacy = =

After his military service , Escobar confronted problems to meet the bantamweight 's limit and retired . He became a spokesman for a liquor brand and relocated to New York temporally , with his family . Subsequently he returned to Puerto Rico where he worked selling liquor in bars . In May 1947 , Escobar and Jiménez Sicardó co @-@ promoted a fight with the intention of bringing fans back to boxing . In the main event , Diego Sosa was matched against Francisco Colón García . Escobar was inducted into the Madison Square Garden 's Boxing Hall of Fame in 1950 . Escobar continued in his job as a liquor salesperson , during which it was common for liquor salesmen to drink a little bit of the product which they sold in front of potential customers . This contributed to the development of Escobar 's alcoholic tendencies . His alcoholism would later combine with his diabetes and contribute to his death when he was 66 years old . Weeks before his death , Escobar participated in his last ceremony , where Diego Suárez , president of V. Suárez & Company. gave him a recognition .

After his death , the town of Barceloneta honored his memory by a statue . His remains are interred in Barceloneta , according to a memorial written to honor his life . Escobar became the first world boxing champion in history to have a statue in his honor . On June 9 , 2002 , Escobar was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame . He became the fourth Puerto Rican to receive this distinction and the first to be included in the " Old Timers " section . In March 2005 , a second statue of Estobar was unveiled at the Estadio Sixto Escobar in San Juan . Among the celebrities that attended the ceremony were former boxing world champions Julian Solís and Alfredo Escalera . This statue 's location served as a remembrance tribute during the 94th anniversary of Escobar 's birth , when a flower crown was placed at its feet . During this date , an activity was presented by Puerto Rico 's House of Boxing in the library of the Pabellón de la Fama del Deporte Puertorriqueño . Among those who attended the ceremony were Solís , Escalera and Iván Calderón . On this date , People Inc. presented a documentary covering his life , which was donated to the venue . Several buildings and streets were named after Escobar posthumously , including the Auditorio Sixto Escobar . The house where he lived was later turned into a library and museum bearing his name .

= = Professional championships = =