

## SUMTER BOY ON TOP.

Bob Montgomery of Sumter has brought a new honor to South Carolina. He is, so far as this newspaper can ascertain, the first native of this state to hold one of the major boxing crowns. He has just become the lightweight champion of the world, defeating Bean Jack in Madison Square Garden in 15 bruising rounds.

For three years the Sumter fighter had been knocking at the door of the top, and he entered last Friday's victorious match with the odds against him.

Montgomery, now 24, can look back on 60 professional bouts since he embarked on his ring career in October, 1938. For his approximately 30 minutes of fighting against the Jumping Jack, former shoe shine boy from Georgia, Montgomery collected \$14,033.68, the largest purse of his career, plus the championship, which means that so long as he holds it, he can claim the lion's share, instead of the smaller portion, of the gate receipts, along with the extras that come a champ's way.

Both races can well take pride in the career of this Sumter boy. *State May 29, 1943*

# Forgotten Battler

By Charles Lesemann

**H**IDDEN beneath a jungle of weeds in the unkempt section of a Negro burial grounds just outside the city limits of Charleston, is the unmarked grave of one of the great old-timers of the prize ring, Bobby Dobbs. After years of travel and fighting in rings around the world, Dobbs seemed happy to live out his life in Charleston where he had friends to help him through difficult circumstances.

Bobby Dobbs was a fighter of remarkable durability. According to records, his fistic appearance numbered more than 1,000 bouts and exhibitions. His career which began in 1875 when he started fighting in bareknuckle contests in the South, spanned over 39 years. He was near to his 56th birthday when he retired from the ring in 1914 after winning a 15-round decision over Lew Williams at Savannah, Georgia.

Among the boxing stylists, Dobbs was a standout. He could pit his speed and cleverness against the best. Three times, he clashed with Joe Gans. Their first match was advertised as a go for the Negro lightweight championship, at the Greenpoint Sporting Club, in Brooklyn, in 1897. It was scheduled for 20 rounds and it went the distance with Dobbs winning the decision.

After four rounds which were little more than feeling out sessions, Dobbs got to Gans with a tremendous body attack in the fifth. Bobby found that Gans

didn't like too many of them downstairs. He concentrated on the body and had Gans weakening in the late rounds.

In 1901, the year before Gans won the world lightweight championship from Frank Erne, Dobbs had two matches with him in Baltimore, Gans' hometown. Gans won both of these bouts. Before their first meeting at Germania Hall in Baltimore, Al Herford, Gans' manager, offered Dobbs \$100 for every round he stayed

over 10. After the 12th round, Herford slipped around to Dobbs' corner, poked his head up under the bottom rope and talked to Bobby.

"What are you hanging around for?" Herford asked.

"For that \$100 a round," said Dobbs, "and I aim to be here some time."

"Listen, I was just joking about the \$100 a round," said Herford. Gans won in the 14th round

when Dobbs quit because of an injury to his hand.

Another of Dobb's opponents was Joe Walcott, the Barbados Demon. Walcott, who hardly ever scaled over 145 pounds, won the world welterweight crown from Rube Ferns in 1901, but he fought them all regardless of size, knocking out middleweights, light-heavyweights and heavyweights. Dobbs scrapped with Walcott at the Southwark Athletic Club in Philadelphia in a bout scheduled for only six rounds. After Walcott had him in distress from a left to the body in the second round, Dobbs rallied in the third and hammered a right under the heart that hurt the Barbados Demon. Dobbs had the best of it through the remaining rounds. Two years later when he fought Walcott again, Dobbs was the victim of a six-round knockout.

"I guess for his weight Dobbs was the best I ever fought," Walcott said.

That Dobbs survived his fistic career without any permanent scars, was testimonial to his defensive skills which enabled him to avoid punishment. There was the night he boxed Charley Johnson, of Minneapolis, at the California Athletic Club in San Francisco. As Johnson rushed him in the second round, Dobbs sidestepped the assault. Johnson lunged past him and went sailing halfway through the ropes. With Johnson throwing punches wildly and missing, Dobbs wasn't touched until the eighth round when he tried to rile the Minneapolis slugger.

"Why don't you hit me? You ain't aimin' at me," teased Dobbs.

"Oh, I'm not, eh!" snorted Johnson, and even as he got out the words, he smashed a mighty wallop against Bobby's ribs.

Dobbs shook the blow off, but he made no more attempts at jesting. The bout was scheduled to go to a finish, and it ended in the 41st round when Dobbs, after nailing Johnson against the ropes and knocking him down with a left hook for a count of nine, smashed a right to the jaw that dropped him for the full count.

There was hardly a fighter of his day who galloped over more of this planet's surface than Bobby Dobbs. He fought in practically every club in the United States, and at various times during his career, gave himself

billing out of Cartersville, Georgia; Knoxville, Tennessee; Ogden, Utah; Charleston, Denver, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. After whipping Gans, Bobby sailed to England where he acquired an array of titles. In London, he won on a foul in a bout with Dick Burge for the welterweight championship of England. Also in London, he knocked out Jerry Driscoll for the British middleweight crown, and in Glasgow, he kayoed Pat McDonald in two rounds for the welterweight championship of Scotland.

Having fought himself out of opponents in Great Britain, Bobby returned to the States and to the South, and outpointed Young Peter Jackson in a 20-round bout at Memphis. Later, the ubiquitous Dobbs made another transatlantic voyage to box in Berlin, Budapest and Copenhagen. For a time, in Hungary, he traveled with a circus as the star performer of a boxing booth.

Once when asked about his parental background, Bobby scratched his head and answered, "My mother married a man named Dobbs."

Bobby recalled that he was born near Collinsville, Georgia. His parents were slaves, and he remembered that when he was a boy during the War Between the States, he froze with terror and hid beneath the bed in their shanty when he heard that Sherman's troops were coming.

While Dobbs was at his fistic peak, he spent money as though he picked it off trees, and to him, fighting for it in a prize ring was just as easy as picking it off trees. The old "easy come, easy go" slide was the rule of Bobby's financial management. He never seemed to care that the time would come when there would be no more fights and no more purses.

His ring days at an end, Dobbs settled down in Charleston. He trained a few local fighters, and was employed as athletic instructor at a Negro orphanage, but in later years, things went from bad to worse with him. Poverty clamped a hard hand on him, and he lived by whatever help he could get. However, he never lost his mirthful disposition. He always flashed a smile and talked about his travels and fights as though the memories were worth more to him than riches.

With infirmities bearing on him, Dobbs was at last admitted to an almshouse. Three days before Christmas 1930, he died in the charity ward of Roper Hospital in Charleston. There's no marker on his grave, but the record he left in boxing will always be his monument.



Bobby Dobbs was one of boxing's durable warriors. His ring career lasted 39 years.

The State

COLUMBIA, S. C., SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1957