

Sixto Escobar: A Puerto Rican Champion /

Sixto Escobar: Un campeón puertorriqueño

Sixto Escobar was a professional boxer (**el boxeador**) who became the first Puerto Rican to win (**ganar**) a world title. His nickname was “El Gallito,” because he became champion of the bantamweight division, which is called “**peso gallo**” in Spanish.

Sixto Escobar was born March 23, 1913, in Barceloneta, Puerto Rico. He was raised in San Juan, where he attended school and became interested in boxing (**el boxeo**).

Escobar began boxing as an amateur (**amateur**), winning most of his matches. In 1931, he made his professional debut defeating Luis “Kid Dominican” Pérez, the Dominican Republic's champion, by knockout. As a professional (**profesional**), Escobar traveled across the Americas, boxing in Venezuela, the United States, and Canada. In 1934, Escobar won the National Boxing Association (NBA) bantamweight world title.

After winning the world title, Escobar became a hero (**el héroe**) of Puerto Rico. In December 1935, he returned to San Juan. Following orders from Acting Governor Jose Padin, all Puerto Rican schools closed and government offices opened one hour late that day, so that everybody could go to the dock to welcome Escobar. The entire city of San Juan celebrated with a parade (**el desfile**), and Escobar marched holding the lone star flag of Puerto Rico. Barceloneta, his home town, declared a week of celebration (**la celebración**) in his honor. In 1935, a stadium (**el estadio**) in San Juan was also named in his honor. The Sixto Escobar Stadium still stands in tribute to the boxer today.

In 1936, Escobar defeated Tony Marino and became the undisputed bantamweight world champion (**el campeón**). Escobar gave up the title in 1939 and retired from boxing a year later. In the 1960s, Escobar returned to his home town in Puerto Rico where he lived until his death on November 17, 1979.

After his death, the town of Barceloneta erected a statue (**la estatua**) in honor of Escobar's memory. He was the first world boxing champion to receive such a tribute (**el homenaje**). In 1995, another statue of Escobar was unveiled at the entrance to the San Juan Sixto Escobar Stadium. By March 2005, the statue had become damaged from years of exposure to the elements. Instead of being removed altogether, the statue was replaced with an identical one.

Escobar was inducted into the Ring Boxing Hall of Fame (**el Salón de la Fama**) in 1975. On June 9, 2002, Escobar became the fourth Puerto Rican to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York – the first to be included in the "Old Timers" section.