

SPORTS



WBC CHAMP-- FORMER WORLD BOXING COUNCIL JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION ELISHA OBED, LEFT, IN ACTION.

Final bell tolls for Elisha Obed

I've been told that Friday, July 13, is set for the funeral of the late Everette "Elisha Obed" Ferguson. The death notice, however, indicated that arrangements are still to be made. Whatever the situation, whenever the funeral service takes place, family/church organizers ought to be aware that at some point, the bell should be tolled for the late great pugilist.

The Bahamas Boxing Commission will provide the bell.

For those of us who have been close to the former World Boxing Council Junior Middleweight Champion, the occasion is bound to be bitter sweet. I, and many others lament the poor health situation that robbed the boxing fraternity of his meaningful presence for about a decade. As for me, personally, I will always have the special memory of his last celebration as a revered sports icon.

The occasion was the 2009 Caribbean Awards for Sports Icons (CASI) bash at the Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston, Jamaica. Obed was still able to get around on his own initiative although, he moved about with a trusted brother-in-law. The Pan American Caribbean Boxing Organization (PACBO) sponsored his trip, enabling him to interact with CASI Founder Al Hamilton and other regional/world sports luminaries, inclusive of one Michael McCallum, a former multi-world title holder.

Obed was excited to be in an elite sports/social setting once more. He relished the days. Upon our departure, Obed told me he wished several more days could have been spent in Kingston. He was sad to leave, but his stay was joyous.

Particularly pleasurable for him was the meet and greet evening. That's when I recognized how highly Obed was regarded by other champions. Michael "The Body Snatcher" McCallum, of Jamaica, was thrilled when he found out that Obed was in attendance.

I have a vivid memory of the

moment when he spotted Obed. He rushed over and hugged the Bahamian-born former world champ.

"Man, you here. This is fantastic! You know, this one of our great boxing heroes. Man, he was good. He was good," exclaimed McCallum.

Throughout the remainder of the three-day CASI activities, McCallum interacted often with an appreciative Obed. While we in The Bahamas were always proud of Obed's sports accomplishments, by 2009, he was about two decades removed from the limelight. Generations of Bahamians had grown up with little or no knowledge of Obed's greatness as a boxer.

There had never been before, another regional/international gathering to gauge the feeling of other champions and noted sports figures, for what Obed contributed to boxing. In Kingston at the 2009 CASI event, however, McCallum exemplified the general feeling for Obed in world boxing circles.

It was the first time he had been saluted by his peers in such a grand fashion.

It was a special moment in time for the champ.

Soon, the final bell will be tolled for Obed on the last leg of his earthly journey.

In life he was decorated to some degree.

Obed was declared a National Hero in a House of Assembly ceremony; inducted into the National Sports Hall of Fame; the Florida Hall of Fame; the Bahamas Boxing Commission Hall of Fame; displayed on the Airport Heroes Wall; and the Queen Elizabeth Sports Heroes Walk.

No doubt, he was one of the truly great sons of the Bahamian soil.

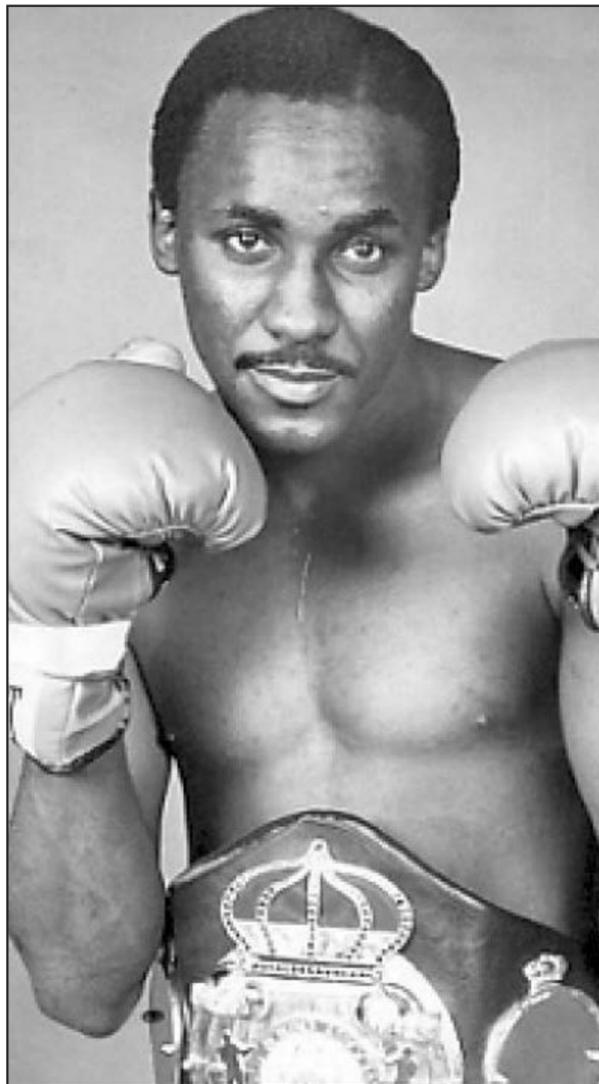
To God be the glory!

May his soul forever rest in peace!

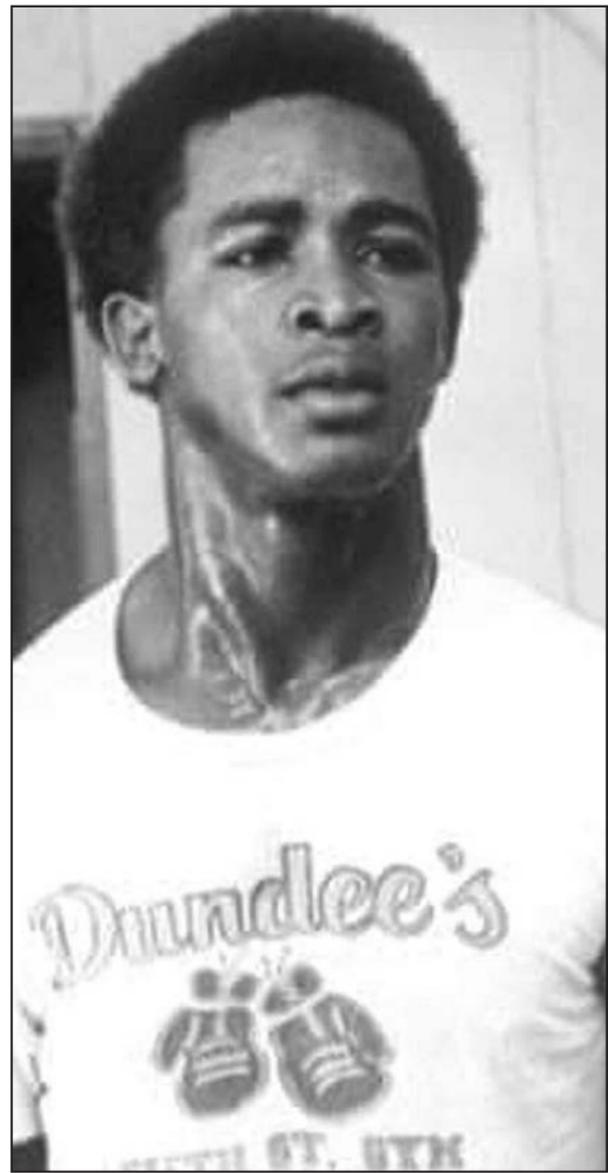
**To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturrup at sturrup1504@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at 727-6363.*

SPORTS SCOPE

BY FRED STURRUP



MICHAEL MCCULLAM



ELISHA OBED

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~ Michael McCallum