

Boxer Sanders Dies of Injuries; Four-Hour Brain Operation Fails

By JOHN AHERN

Heavyweight boxer Eddie Sanders died of a subdural hematoma yesterday afternoon, 18 hours after he was knocked out in the Boston Garden ring by Willie James.

The United States Navy seaman, stationed at the Fargo Building, underwent a four-hour emergency brain surgery early Sunday morning and never regained consciousness.

The 25-year-old fighter a native of San Diego, Calif., died just as his young wife, Mary, returned to his room to see him. She was at ringside when Sanders was knocked out by a routine combination of punches and she went with her husband in the police ambulance to the Massachusetts General Hospital.

The cause of death was established by an autopsy per-

formed by Dr. Michael A. Luongo, associate medical examiner of Suffolk County. Dr. Luongo said the injuries that precipitated death "were from this fight, although there was minimal evidence of old injuries." He added those injuries had nothing to do with this case.

Sanders' death was the second ring fatality in the United States in two days. Featherweight Ralph Welsler died at Klamath Falls, Ore., Saturday after being knocked out Friday night by Teddy Hall of Vancouver, B. C. It was the second boxing death in Massachusetts in 20 months. Dick Miller died in the ring at Worcester, April 21, 1953.

Following customary procedure Capt Francis G. Wilson, head of the Boston Police headquarters homicide squad, will seek a complaint against James

on a technical charge of manslaughter this morning in Central Court.

It is expected a date will be set for a hearing and the court will be informed the fatal injury was incurred during an authorized prize fight conducted under proper regulations. The State Boxing Commission will meet this morning to decide what action it will take.

Sanders, 1952 Olympic heavyweight champion, went down in the 11th round of a scheduled 12-round fight for the New England heavyweight championship. The combination of punches that landed didn't seem to carry much force. But Sanders slumped to the ring, landing on his right side before rolling over on his stomach.

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(Photo by Charles E. Carey, Globe Staff)

HER HUSBAND DIES IN RING ACCIDENT—Mrs. Mary Sanders, whose husband, heavyweight Ed Sanders, died after being knocked out in Boston Garden bout.

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Referee Joe Zapustas started counting over Sanders, the only professional athlete in the Navy allowed to continue his career. When the count reached three Sanders began to tremble convulsively and seemed to be gasping for breath. At that point Zapustas called Dr. Samuel Sandler of Cambridge, Massachusetts Boxing Commission physician, into the ring. After a quick examination Dr. Sandler ordered Sanders carried from the ring in a stretcher. When the injured boxer didn't respond to treatment in the first aid room, Dr. Sandler sent Sanders to the hospital in a police ambulance.

Within 45 minutes of arrival at the hospital, the Navy fighter was operated on by Dr. William Sweet, a Boston neuro-surgeon, to relieve the pressure of the blood clot.

Extensive Bleeding

Dr. Sandler, who witnessed the four-hour operation, said Sanders suffered extensive brain hemorrhages.

"In most cases of head injuries the hemorrhaging occurs in the layers of protective tissues," Dr. Sandler said.

Dr. Sweet reported Sanders was bleeding "from more than one point inside the skull," when he arrived at the hospital. "Only one blow may have done it, but more likely it was several," Dr. Sweet added.

The injured fighter received two blood transfusions during the operation and he was bedded down in ice in an attempt to lower his temperature and blood pressure. After the operation Sanders was placed in an oxygen tent.

Twice during the fight Sanders was staggered. In the second round James landed a right to the left eye, nearly closing it. In the 10th round James said he hit him a right hand uppercut and called it "the hardest punch of the fight."

At the end of that round, Dr. Sandler went to Sanders corner to talk to him.

"He was perfectly normal at that time," Sandler said. "He answered my questions and his reactions were good. George Araujo (knocked out in an earlier fight) looked much worse than Sanders."

James, a Roxbury citizen now fighting out of New York, was visibly shaken, after Sanders was rushed to the hospital.

"I'm terribly sorry," he kept repeating. "I didn't realize he was hurt at the time he went down. I thought he would come to in a couple of minutes. I've hit other fighters much harder."

The winner, who weighed 208 pounds in comparison to Sanders' weight of 217½, thought Sanders was "very tired" when he came out for the 11th round. He pointed out the Navy man never had fought more than 10 rounds previously.

Saturday night's fight was only the ninth for Sanders in his professional career of less than a year. Only twice previously had he gone the 10-round distance. Both times he fought Burt Whitehurst of Baltimore. The first fight was a draw. Sanders won the rematch. On the strength of that victory he was signed for the regional title defense with James, who has been fighting professionally for five years.

An athlete in high school, at Compton Junior College in Los Angeles and at Idaho State College, Sanders could have suffered a head injury in competition. If he did, it wasn't apparent during an extensive physical examination Saturday afternoon.

"It was the most thorough examination a fighter could get," Henry Lamar, chairman of the Massachusetts Boxing Commission, revealed.

"I wanted to check on rumors Tommy Collins had injured his hand, so I asked Dr. Sandler to check Collins more extensively than usual. Then I thought it would be a good idea to go all out on every fighter. I stayed in the room with the doctor and the fight-

ers in their turn, and the doctor really worked them over.

"He checked and rechecked their backs, spines, legs, lungs, hands, eyes, ears, feet and reflexes. We were in there for hours. Then Dr. Sandler checked every boy again before he went into the Garden ring," Lamar said.

"If there was anybody we could call perfect physically, it was Sanders," the commissioner claimed. "He was a clean, fine boy, and he was the last one you would think of to be hurt in the ring."

Head Didn't Hit Ring

The boxing commission will meet this morning at 9:30 to discuss and study the case. Negligence on anybody's part has been ruled out. Facilities at the Garden were perfect, and the ring was padded in excess of minimum requirements.

According to commission rules there must be a two-inch protective padding of celotex and hair under a canvas mat. The Garden padding, being used only for the second time Saturday night, measures closer to three inches, according to Lamar. He also stressed Sanders' head did not hit the ring.

A spokesman for the Navy said: "We are deeply grieved by this turn of events. Sanders was a fine young man and everybody from the commandant down is shocked."

The Navy man explained Sanders was given permission to fight "on his own time. He could not compete on Navy time." It was not revealed why the Olympic champion was allowed to fight professionally.

Sam Silverman, promoter of the Callahan A. C., sponsor of Saturday night's fight, was shocked at the news of Sanders' death.

"He was one of the finest boys I ever met," Silverman said. "He was a credit to everybody who knew him. I can't say enough good things about him."

Silverman contacted Mrs. Sanders and told her he would pay all the hospital, medical, surgical and funeral expenses. Because of the accident, he cancelled his proposed fight show for Dec. 23.