

DEATH OF A FIGHTER IN GUADALAJARA

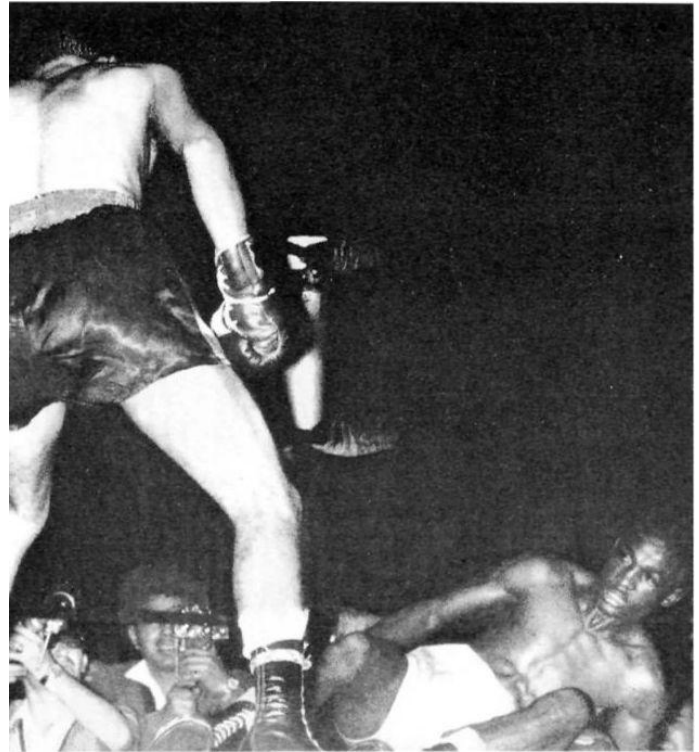
Sports Illustrated, November 16, 1959

This Mexican sure hits hard," a fighter told his handlers in Guadalajara one night last month. "I am tired," he said then. "Let's go home and rest." Then he turned, gasped, "Joe," and collapsed. Twenty-nine hours later he was dead. News stories at the time told the sad story of Walter Ingram, but no words tell it as well as these pictures, which have just come to light.

Ingram had come to Mexico to fight Joe Becerra, the bantamweight champion of the world. He had won only one of four fights this year, and they said he was a pichón, a setup. But for four rounds he answered every blow. "The kid had guts, such guts," they said in the gym back home where Ingram used to work out.

In the fifth round Becerra caught Ingram with an awesome right to the jaw. Ingram reeled and clinched desperately. For the remainder of the fight he took terrible punishment. Why Ingram's corner allowed him to continue is inexplicable. Even more inexplicable is why the referee allowed the dreadful beating to go on. In the ninth round, when the fight was finally stopped, Ingram protested. He wanted to finish. Becerra embraced him, helped him to his stool. Minutes later, Ingram was unconscious.

A boxing commission doctor ordered his legs massaged. And for 15 minutes they were. Then he was carried to his dressing room and his legs were massaged some more. At the suggestion of other doctors Ingram was sent to the hospital.



DOWN FOR EIGHT-COUNT IN THE NINTH

He was taken first to a small clinic, which refused him because it was full and the hour, midnight, was too late. Next he was taken to a social security hospital, which refused him because it only treats members of Mexico's social security system. He was at last admitted to the Mexican American Hospital, where he was operated on for a dural hemorrhage, a

bursting of the blood vessels in the outer membrane of the brain. He died, they said, of a heart attack following respiratory interruption. Walter Ingram was 24; he left, in Weirton, W. Va., a widow, three children and a 1958 Mercury.

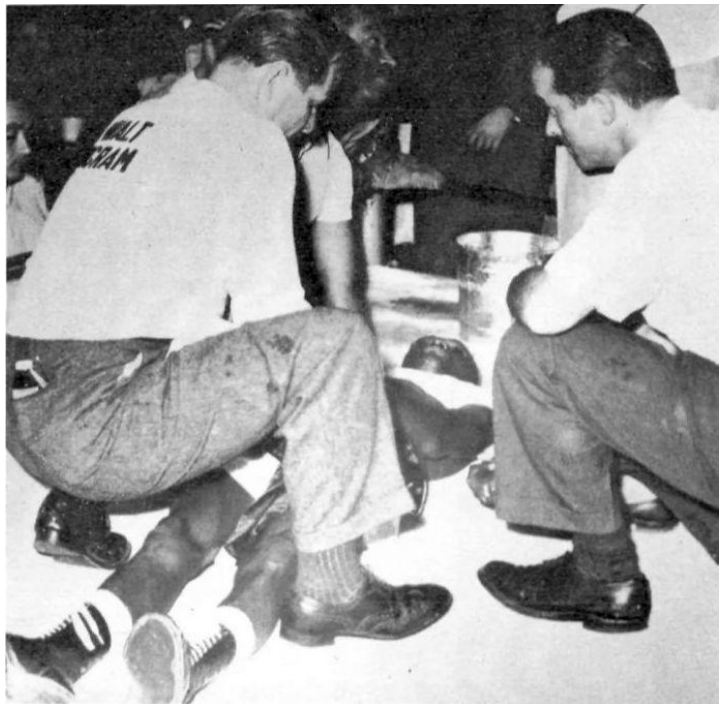
"I don't know what to do," said the sorrowing Becerra later. "I want to rest for some time and go some place where I can meditate alone away from everybody."

"He was never floored but once before," they said at the gym. "He was always going, going, going."

No one can know if Ingram would have been saved if he had been hospitalized immediately. Doctors agree, however, that from the moment he collapsed he should have been placed in an oxygen tent.

Who is to blame? The Mexican press blames the referee for not stopping the bout in the fifth round, and the boxing commission for permitting Ingram to fight without a physical examination. There are very few ring casualties each year, but these few almost always occur where expert, rigorous medical supervision, able, firm officials and sophisticated commission control are lacking. In New York, for instance, there has not been one serious ring injury since 1953, when a medical advisory board was established. The blame lies not in the game but, alas, in the administration of it.

"Walt was just getting on his feet," they said at the gym. "And a nice kid. You know what I mean, nice? I mean, they liked him so much he was always on the front page."



HANDLERS ATTEND INGRAM AFTER BEATING BY BECERRA



JOE BECERRA HELPS CARRY INGRAM'S FLAG DRAPED COFFIN. THE BEWILDERED CHAMPION CANCELLED HIS NEXT FIGHT