

## **Bobby Hinds (1931-2023): A Most Unusual Boxing Story** **By Arne K. Lang (Published in *The Sweet Science* April 5, 2023)**

Bobby Hinds, who passed away March 14, 2023 at age 91, would have likely spent most of his adult life behind prison walls if not for boxing. True, one can say this about dozens of former prizefighters, but Hinds story is yet unique. When he was a boy growing up in Kenosha, Wisconsin, it was preposterous to think that he would someday grow up to be a multi-millionaire without breaking any laws.



Hinds had a terrible home life. His father was an alcoholic and his mother had polio. At age 10, he was remanded to a reformatory for a string of robberies. There he learned the rudiments of boxing and learned his lessons so well that he became the youngest Golden Gloves champion in Wisconsin history, earning him a scholarship to the state's flagship university in Madison.

At UW, a national boxing powerhouse, Hinds, competing as both a light heavyweight and a heavyweight, was reportedly 38-2 with his only defeats coming in the championship round of NCAA national tournaments. He majored in art with an emphasis on sculpturing and graphic arts and, upon graduation, accepted a position as an art teacher at Madison East High School.

At age 26, Hinds was lured back to the ring and made his pro debut in Chicago. His opponent, Gene White, was 25-11 according to newspaper reports (18-10 per *boxrec*) and identified in the papers as the heavyweight champion of Minnesota.

Hinds vs. White, slated for four rounds, was on the same bill as the second meeting between four-time rivals Sugar Ray Robinson and Gene Fullmer, a fight televised on ABC. Robinson, fighting a day before his 37<sup>th</sup> birthday and dressed as the underdog, scored a smashing fifth-round knockout, knocking Fullmer down for the count with a perfectly placed left hook.

Hinds vs. White was the walk-out bout. Because the Robinson-Fullmer fight ended early and ABC needed filler to meet its obligation to its advertisers, Bobby

Hinds (then known simply as Bob Hinds) wound up making his pro debut on national television.

Hinds knocked White down in each of the first two rounds. After the second frame, the Minnesotan returned to his corner with a badly lacerated mouth and the ring doctor wouldn't let him continue.

Lore has it that among those tuning in was the principal of his high school who fired Hinds the moment he turned up for work the following day. In Wisconsin, schoolteachers were prohibited from moonlighting for money during the school calendar.

Like so many yarns about prominent people from humble backgrounds, this story stretched the truth. Hinds continued to teach for several more years. The principal even made him the ice hockey coach although he never learned to skate. With Hinds at the helm, Madison East won two city titles.

He had two more fights before he left teaching. In May of 1957, he knocked out a novice named Bob Adams in the opening round at a show in Milwaukee. School was still in session and Hinds was reprimanded. According to a story in the La Crosse Tribune, Hinds "was given an ultimatum by the Board of Education to give up his ring career – or else." The story said that Hinds' annual salary as a schoolteacher amounted to about \$3,890 (roughly \$42,000 in 2023 dollars).

Hinds fought again the following year, defeating Los Angeles journeyman Leroy "Chubby" Duez who was disqualified for landing a punch after the bell ending the second round. And that, as it turned out, would be Bob Hinds final fight. He left the sport with 3-0 record and would shortly leave the teaching profession as well, taking a job as a life insurance salesman.

Hinds was a crackerjack salesman but the big money didn't start rolling in until he invented and patented a new kind of jump rope. Inside the nylon cord were sections of plastic tubing strung like beads.

Hinds extolled the benefits of jump roping for physical fitness. He claimed that 10 minutes of jump roping was as beneficial as 30 minutes of hard jogging. He carried a rope with him wherever he went and showed off his jump roping prowess at every opportunity. As part of his shtick, he claimed to hold the world record for the most revolutions in 10 seconds.

America's Jump Rope King appeared on a box of Wheaties, was invited on the Johnny Carson show, and was featured in an "On The Road" segment on the "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." This came about when the host and

