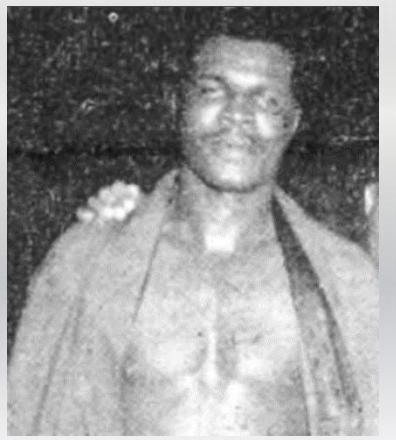
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Daniel 'Gentle Daniel' James

Boxing

Inducted in 1985

The nickname is, of course, a delicious piece of irony, one that lulled many an opponent into false hope against Trinidad and Tobago's first true, great, sweet scientist, the name to which boxers are sometimes referred.

Any notion of gentleness on Daniel James' part was soon obliterated by his left hook and series of solid jabs, as he traveled the Caribbean and Latin American region to take on the best in gladiatorial battles that kept Trinbagonians glued to their radios and newspapers, in their support of the light-heavyweight boxer.

A resident of the Belmont Orphanage in Port of Spain, James was discovered by boxing manager, John Matthias Douglas, who often scouted the boxing gyms of the local orphanages seeking talent.

Daniel honed his talent by getting experience on the amateur circuit before Douglas arranged his professional debut in early 1945 against fellow Trinidadian Ansell Adams. The bout went the distance, with Daniel winning on points.

Barely six weeks later, Daniel was fighting Cuban Rene Sanchez for the West Indies Light Heavyweight title held in Woodbrook, and with that hammerlike left hook Daniel knocked out his opponent. Within two fights he was a regional champion.

Now there were challengers to his crown, the first of which came from Jamaican Syd Brown, with two encounters in May and June 1945, earning the same results: wins by Knockout for the not-so-gentle Daniel. Another Cuban, Kid Tunero, offered Daniel his toughest challenge yet, but he held on for a draw, thus keeping the title.

Adams and Tunero tried again, with a repeat of the prior results, a win on points and a draw, while Guyanese Joe Hyman felt the full force of Daniel with his defeat by Knockout.

Incredibly, in the year of his debut, Daniel had fought nine boxing matches – the frequency of which would be unheard of today – and did not lose any.

1946 brought fewer bouts to Daniel's schedule but it also brought his first loss, by Technical Knockout, to Juan Jose Fernandez from neighboring Venezuela. But, with typical boxer's courage, he fought Fernandez at Mucurapo (specifically Ethel Street in lower St. James) three months later and won by a clear Knockout. That second fight was considered epic and had a purse to match: $1,000.

Over the 1946 to 1948 period, Daniel lost and drew two matches against the Dominican Republic's Carlos Perez, both bouts again taking place at Ethel Street. He then travelled to Aruba in June 1948 for his first fight abroad, and beat Perez in a points victory.

That win garnered him wider acclaim and set up fights with the likes of Americans Holman Williams and the noted Bert Lytell. Daniel won on points against Williams, but the more talented and experienced Lytell out-pointed Daniel on an April 1949 night in St. James, setting up two revenge bouts later that year which resulted in a win for Lytell and then a draw, again in front Daniel's home crowd.

The strength of boxing in the nation in the 1940s and 50s meant that as well as foreign fighters there were plenty of local challengers for Gentle Daniel. After defeating Jamaica's Lloyd Barnett for the British West Indies Light Heavyweight title, Daniel took on countryman Cyril 'Easy Boy' Francis and won on points.

There was a new challenger in the form of Yolande Pompey, seven years Daniel's junior and also a former orphanage resident. Their three consecutive fights took place between 1950 and 1951 were keenly contested, neither fighter giving an inch in the quest to be the best in the land with the national title at stake. The first bout at Ethel Street ended in a draw. A more one-sided affair at Skinner Park, San Fernando saw Pompey win by unanimous decision, while the third fight – back at St James – saw Pompey retain the title by Knockout.

Daniel fought until 1953, winning all four of these non-title fights by points decisions. He retired in July 1953, always residing in Belmont and having lit up the local sporting landscape with his talent. For his title

winning endeavors, Daniel James was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1985.

Light- Heavyweight Division

Debut 09th February 1945

Bouts: 32

Won: 20

Draw: 5

Lost: 7