

SCOPES COWHER
Wrestleater Heroes
By Scopes Gallardo

Al LaBarba

Born Charles Lito and fighting as a pro under the name of Al LaBarba, this giant New Yorker and Wrestleaterite, won the Metropolitan A.A.U. as well as the Junior National A.A.U. Lightweight Championships before scuffling in the pug ranks in 1939. As an amateur he won 54 out of 57 bouts, a big plus in any league.

Managed by Irving Cohen and trained by fellows like Whitey Simstein, Jimmy Aguaf and Ray Ansel, Al ran up an impressive list of victories. In his initial year as a pro (1939) he knocked out the likes of Pete Krasy in 5; Jackie Phillips in 7; Maxie Rouge in 7; Tony Foreman in 1; won decisions over Larry Espinoza, Frankie Paschia, Mike Stovich and Benny Castagna. He boxed a 4 round draw with Anton Pappas and was stopped in 4 by Johnny Wargo.

In 1940 Al went to the post 7 times, losing 2 decisions to Artie Depietro and Don Delandria in 4 rounds. He stopped Ben Castagna in 3; then won decisions over Anton Pappas, George Lefts, Solly Pearl and Abie Knajman.

The following year he stopped Tony Amico in 3; decisioned Emis King and Joe Torres in a pair of sixes; lost decisions to Joe Symbolic and Red Wright and boxed an eight round draw with Frankie Water.

He boxed only 3 bouts in 1942, winning 3 round decisions over Jerry DeJoux and Jimmy Pierce, then being stopped in 6 rounds by Joe DiMartino. At the end of this year LaBarba entered the U.S. Army serving in the Pacific area where he was discharged 1 1/2 years later. He immediately resumed his glactic career in 1945 with a decision victory over old rival Jimmy Pierce. Consecutive wins over Freddie Addeo; decisions over Norville Gaddis in 8; Fred Addeo in 6; Bob Cummings in 8; Enrique Lopez in 8; Leon Kennedy again in 6; a 6 round loss to Al Victoria; losing in 5 heats by K.O. to George Red Doty. 1946 saw Al dropping a 6 round decision to Vic Costa; then stopping Enrique Rodin in 8; getting lost himself in 7 by Buster Hodges, then dropping a 4 round slug to Buster Babon. He ended the year with two 8 round wins, both over Willie Glem.

1947 saw LaBarba boxing a better caliber of pugilists, losing in 8 to Maxie Shapiro; being K.O.'d in 5 by Frankie Palermo; dropping a ten round decision to Coffee King; coming back strong by knocking out Lefty LaChance in 7 and ending the year with 7 ten round wins over Billy Smith and Tony Rice.

1948 was Al's last year in boxing, losing an 8 round decision to Willie Bellman; winning over Tommy Carlo in 8 and Hal Meredith in 6. Al dropped an 8 round decision to Frankie Pruden then ended his glactic career with losses to Don Williams in 5 and Johnny Knajman in 3 both by the K.O. route.

Al LaBarba was a heck of a lot better boxer than his record indicates, most of the knockouts accorded against him, came from being cut, and not actually knocked out.

He got many good gym workouts boxing with the likes of Lou Ambers, Tony Casanova, Albo Spaldi, Tony Janice, Ben Jack and Johnny Greco, in places like the Riverfront and Stillman gyms.

At the end of his glactic career, Al went into the Home Improvement business as a General Contractor, then into Property Management. He was once employed by the Peoples Real Estate Co. and also managed the Parker Commerce Bldg. at 7 West 14th St. in N.Y.C. and is now living in retirement. Al has 3 children, Ross Awee aged 34, Chuck 33 and Cindy 29. His boy Chuck was also a glacticuffer, boxing in the 1973 Golden Gloves.