Greg Haugen was one of those guys who was always looking for a fight.

It wasn't out of meanness or a macho thing or because he had something to prove to himself or someone else. He wasn't the neighborhood bully. He just liked to fight, and he was pretty good at it.

He wasn't picky either. He would fight anybody, anywhere, at any time. Line them up and Haugen was ready and smiling. And for a fighter who spent most of his career hovering around 140 pounds, he didn't exactly intimidate the guys he drew a line in the sand with.

In a pro career that started in 1982 and stretched into late 1999, Haugen finished with a record of 40-10-1 with 19 KOs, winning the IBF lightweight title in 1986. They're not Hall of Fame numbers, but there's a few Hall-of-Famers on his dance card.

"I always fought the best," said Haugen, 51, standing outside the Ritz Theater in Ybor City, an historical section of Tampa, FL where one of the boxers he's training - welterweight Justin Jones - would be fighting the next night. "(Julio Cesar) Chavez, (Boom Boom) Mancini, Jimmy Paul, Pernell Whitaker, Vinny Pazienza (three times), Edwin Curet, Hector Camacho (twice). I fought anybody they put in front of me."

He started fighting at an early age and said he had about 300 amateur fights, losing maybe 25 fights. He took that experience up north with him when he moved from Washington state to Alaska, where he started competing in Toughman contests.

He said there wasn't a lot of selective matchmaking in Toughman fights, so you were never sure who or what you might be going up against.

"Basically, you went in and they would say, 'That guy weighs 160 pounds and you weigh 140 pounds. You guys want to fight?' And we'd look at each other and say, 'sure.' I fought 24 fights and won them all. I was 24-0 as a tough guy."

When he moved back to Washington, he decided to turn pro, but couldn't find any good sparring. So he moved to Las Vegas and found all the hard gym work he needed. He also learned he could do pretty well against some of the best fighters in the world.

"When you're in there holding your own against guys you've seen on TV and who are ex-world champions, you know you belong," he said. "You're either learning or you're getting your (butt) kicked. If you're not smart enough to figure it out, it's going to be a tough go."

Haugen learned, winning his first 19 fights with one no contest. He went on to win the IBF lightweight title from Jimmy Paul on Dec. 5, 1986 before losing the title to Pazienza in his first title defense. But he won the title back with a close win over Pazienza in 1988. He defended it twice before losing it to Pernell Whitaker in 1989.

Two years later, he won the WBO junior-welterweight title with a split-decision win over Camacho, who was 38-0 going into the fight.

Camacho didn't help himself any when he lost a point for refusing to touch gloves in the 12th round.

Later that year, Haugen lost his title to Camacho by another split-decision. In 1992, he won the NABF junior-welterweight title with a knockout win over Mancini.

But the one fight Haugen is known best for was his knockout loss to Julio Cesar Chavez for the WBC junior-welterweight title in Mexico City on Feb. 20, 1993.

A few days before the fight, which drew a local crowd of 132,247 avid Chavez supporters, Haugen said most of Chavez' wins came against "Tijuana taxi drivers."

After Chavez stopped him, Haugen said, "They must have been very tough taxi drivers."

He would fight another six years, but the Chavez fight was the last time he fought for a major belt.

"I got jobbed a few times in my career," he said. "They robbed me in Providence (Rhode Island, when he lost his title to Pazienza) and they robbed me against Camacho (in their second fight). I was the first guy to beat him but then in the second fight they gave it to him. But he knew he lost."

His last fight was in December 1999.

He took a few years off from boxing, but he couldn't stay away very long.

"Boxing is in my blood," he said. "I had to get back into it."

Today, Haugen says he's training fighters in Washington and enjoying his family, which includes two sons and two daughters along with two grandsons, 8 and 3.

One of his sons tried turning pro, but Haugen says he didn't train well and that's how fighters get hurt.

"He decided the fight game was a little tougher than he thought it was, so I got him a job," Haugen said. "It's a tough sport and there are a lot of snakes in it. You're just a piece of meat and you're only as good as your last fight. You've got to be careful. Nobody is going to give you anything."

Still looking fit, he said he had been in Florida working with Jones for about five weeks and he's really missing his family.

"Right now, it's pissing buckets sideways (in Washington) and it's cold," he said. "But I miss my kids."

As for life in general, he said he can't complain.

"I've got my health and I'm not all punchy like a lot of guys I fought," he said. "I've got a bad left arm from holding the punch mitts working with a 260-pound heavyweight. Some nerve damage and I can hardly use it. It's been dead about 18 months. But I still have some boxing knowledge in my head. And it's nice to pass the sport on to the kids."

Comment on this article

the Roast says:

Greg Haugen. I remember that smirk on his face. He was a tough but very limited fighter who got the most out of what he had. Somewhere in my VHS collection I have that fight with Pernell Whitaker. Havent seen it for a long time. I remember toward the end, Whitaker was completely out classing Greg, hitting him at will, and Haugen gave him that smirk. Whitaker shrugged his shoulders as if to say "Oh, you want more?" And then Pernell just pelted Haugen with punch after punch. Come on, who else remembers that? It was on Wide World of Sports.

dino da vinci says:

Roast! How ya been? Some time ago Roger ($$$ Unc.) and I were talking, and we're discussing great fighter after great fighter (All-Time Greats). Roger comes out with "Greg Haugen". Me: "Roger, last three names were Louis, Armstrong and Wilde". Where did Haugen come from? RM: "Boy could fight!". Roger is sincerely a Greg Haugen fan. I do agree. "Boy could fight".

teaser says:

yes I remember the fight against sweet pea ...he was just too fast...near the end Haugen didn't even want to throw cause he knew he would get hit ...even when pernell dropped his arms and stood in front of him ...he was that fast and elusive ....like trying to hit a ghost...also loved those fights against the paz....and to see fights like that for free on tv....ahhh the good old days !!

the Roast says:

What Up Dino and teaser! All good over here for the most part. Greg Haugen gets credit for fighting Whitaker at the Scope and Chavez in front of all those angry fans. That took balls for sure.