

The 'Blue Bomber'

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The late 60's and early 70's spawned an array of fistic talent in the heavyweight division. From the great champions Patterson, Liston, Ali, Frazier and Foreman along with Ellis and Terrell to the parade of bonafide contenders. Almost always among the top contenders of the day were the names of Chuvalo, Quarry, Bonevena, Norton, Lyle, Shavers, Bugner, Leotis Martin and Henry Clark. Throw in a Mac Foster, Boone Kirkman and Chuck Wepner and you get an idea of the talented mix. Among the elite during this time was a fine fighter out of Michigan named Al "Blue" Lewis. It is conceivable that if "Blue" would have boxed in a different era, he may have become a champion.

Lewis turned pro in 1966 and quickly racked up eight straight victories that year. He continued to roll in 1967 winning six more. Among his victims were veterans Aaron Eastling, Willie McMillan and Dick Wipperman. Al's 14 bout win streak ended when rugged Bob Stallings in seven rounds stopped him. "Blue" regrouped in 1968 and he reeled off five more wins, twice beating Stallings in rematches. He also scored a huge victory stopping highly regarded Eduardo Corletti in two rounds. People began to take Lewis seriously as a legitimate contender.

The bubble burst on November 26, 1968 when Lewis soared to an early lead over veteran Leotis Martin but faded down the stretch, the bout being stopped in the ninth round. Three months later Al again failed to beat the clever Martin dropping a ten round decision.

Lewis spent the rest of 1969 and 1970 trying to re-establish himself. He won six straight including a kayo win over Cleveland Williams. On October 4, 1971 "Blue" traveled to Argentina to meet Oscar Bonevena. He returned with a seventh round disqualification loss. Many felt that Al was getting the better of Oscar at the time of the stoppage. His performance against Bonevena was good enough to get Al a shot at Muhammad Ali. The former champion was fighting all the contenders trying to eliminate all of them to force a bout with titleholder Joe Frazier. The Ali-Lewis content took place on July 19, 1972 in Dublin, Ireland. Muhammad struggled with Lewis before scoring a knockdown in the middle rounds. Al rallied back but Ali finally ended matters in the eleventh round.

Lewis came back in 1973 beating Charlie Reno but then losing a surprising verdict to Big Jack O'Halloran. Lewis then scored three straight kayo victories over mediocre opponents. He then decided to hang up the gloves finishing with a 30-6 record. Today "Blue" is a respected trainer in Detroit.