



West Texas Middleweight: The Story of LaVern Roach (Sport in the American West)

Frank Sikes

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LaVern Roach, a skinny kid from the small town of Plainview, Texas, rose from obscurity to become one of boxing's most popular figures during the 1940s. Roach's rise to prominence occurred during an era when boxing shared the spotlight with baseball as the nation's top two professional sports. As a result of Roach's death--which marked the first nationally televised fight during which a boxer died from injuries received in the ring--the sport of boxing came under closer scrutiny by the general public than ever before. West Texas Middleweight is the story of Roach's all too brief journey from a West Texas amateur, to enlistment in the US Marines, where he captained the nation's most successful military boxing team, to becoming a Madison Square Garden main eventer. He received the distinction of being named The Ring Magazine's Rookie of the Year for 1947 and was considered a top ten contender for the middleweight championship of the world. This book chronicles Roach's road to his final fight-and it explains why, as noted by legendary boxing trainer Angelo Dundee, 'boxing changed because of LaVern Roach.'

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