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AKRON, Ohio — Michael Dokes, a former World Boxing Association heavyweight champion, has died. He was 54.

The Rhoden Memorial Home in Akron said Dokes died Saturday. The Akron Beacon Journal reported that the boxer died in an Akron hospice from liver cancer.

Dokes won the heavyweight title at 24 in December 1982, when referee Joey Curtis made a controversial decision to stop his fight against champion Mike Weaver. Dokes dominated the first round over Weaver, prompting the decision.

An admitted problem with cocaine helped him lose the WBA title only nine months later to Gerrie Coetzee, however, and Dokes never held the heavyweight crown again.

Known as “Dynamite” Dokes because he packed a powerful punch, he had a career record of

53-6-2.

Dokes came back for one last shot at the big time, getting a February 1993 opportunity at the heavyweight title against Riddick Bowe in New York. He earned $750,000 but didn't last long, getting knocked out in the first round at Madison Square Garden.

He last fought in November 1997, when he weighed 280 pounds.

Once regarded by many as one of the most promising young fighters in the game, Dokes succumbed to a cocaine habit that cut his career short. He ran into a string of legal problems that derailed his career.

In 1986, Dokes was arrested in Las Vegas for cocaine trafficking and served two years' probation.

In 2000, he was sentenced to 10 years in jail after pleading guilty to attempted murder, second-degree kidnapping and intent to commit sexual assault against his girlfriend. She was held against her will for six hours in the home they shared.

At that trial, the victim took the stand to tell of her relationship with Dokes, which stretched over 10 years. She said Dokes, who had two prior felony drug convictions, was a good person when he was clean and sober, which he was for several years during their relationship.

But she said drug and alcohol use made Dokes violent, and the violence culminated in the beating and assault when she came home at 5 a.m. from a concert she had attended. She said Dokes punched her in the face and beat her before sexually assaulting her.

"I'm remorseful. There's no excuse for my actions," Dokes said at the time of his sentencing. "I love that woman with all my heart. I truly wanted to spend the rest of my life with her as husband and wife."

He was released in 2008.

The Rhoden Memorial Home said services for Dokes are still pending.