

= Leo Burke =

Leonce Cormier ( born June 29 , 1948 ) is a retired Canadian professional wrestler . He was born in Dorchester , New Brunswick . He competed across Canada , in several American promotions , and wrestled internationally for both Puerto Rico 's World Wrestling Council ( WWC ) and the National Wrestling Alliance ( NWA ) in New Zealand . In Canada , where he spent the majority of his career , Cormier used the ring name Leo Burke . In the United States , however , he competed as Tommy Martin .

Over the course of his career , Cormier held 46 wrestling championships . Several of his title victories came as part of a tag team with his brothers , three of whom were also professional wrestlers . He had long @-@ term storyline feuds with such wrestlers as Cuban Assassin and Bret Hart , both of whom he later reconciled with and joined forces with to hold tag team championships . Since his retirement in 1992 , he has also trained many wrestlers for both World Wrestling Entertainment ( WWE ) and World Championship Wrestling ( WCW ) . Cormier also competes in occasional wrestling matches and has been honored by both the Cauliflower Alley Club , a fraternal organization of professional wrestlers , and Stampede Wrestling , who inducted him into their hall of fame .

= = Career = =

Growing up in a wrestling family , Leonce Burke decided at age six that he wanted to become a professional wrestler . He followed in the footsteps of his older brothers Yvon and Jean @-@ Louis , who trained him to compete .

= = = 1960s = = =

Cormier made his professional debut in 1966 . Competing in Central States Wrestling , an affiliate of the National Wrestling Alliance ( NWA ) , he used the ring name Tommy Martin . He won his first championship belt on October 11 , 1968 by defeating Bob Brown for the NWA Central States Heavyweight Championship . Later that month , he gained another title when he formed a tag team with his brother Romeo ( who was competing under the ring name Terry Martin ) to win the Central States version of the NWA North American Tag Team Championship from Brown and Bob Geigel . The reign as tag team champions lasted for seven days before the Martins dropped the belts in a match against The Texas Outlaws ( Dick Murdoch and Dusty Rhodes ) . The following month , Martin also lost the heavyweight championship to Rhodes .

= = = 1970s = = =

Cormier spent much of the early 1970s competing in the Maritimes for his brother Jean @-@ Louis ' Eastern Sports Association ( ESA ) ( which owned International Wrestling , or IW ) as both a singles and tag team wrestler . He did not want to use their name recognition to further his own career , so he took the last name of his friend , boxer Jackie Burke . The four Cormier brothers all competed in the territory and often joined forces in feuds with the promotion 's top heel ( villain ) wrestlers . Burke won the IW North American Heavyweight Championship on June 22 , 1971 by defeating Eric Pomeroy . The title reign lasted for three months ; Gino Brito won the title from Burke during a match in Halifax , Nova Scotia , but Burke regained the championship five days later . On August 8 , 1972 . Burke teamed with his brother Romeo again ( who was now wrestling as Bobby Kay ) to win the ESA International Tag Team Championship . They held the title until the following June , when they dropped it to Fred Sweetan and Kurt Von Steiger . In August 1973 , Burke became the first ESA Taped Fist Championship when the promotion awarded him the title .

Burke next competed in the NWA 's Amarillo , Texas territory . He teamed with another brother , Yvon , who competed under the ring name The Beast . In January 1974 , they defeated Don Fargo and Hank James to win the NWA Western States Tag Team Championship , which they held for two

months until a loss to Ricky Romero and Dory Funk , Jr .. Returning to the ESA , Burke had a short reign as IW North American Heavyweight Champion in May 1974 , which he followed in July with another reign with the ESA International Tag Team Championship . Holding the title with his brother The Beast , Burke held the championship for less than one month before dropping it to Geto Mongol and Great Kuma . That month , he also dropped the Taped Fist Championship to Mongol but regained it in a rematch within days . The following year , he held the North American Heavyweight Championship twice more , defeating Bolo Mongol and Bob Brown . For the second victory , Burke substituted for Killer Karl Krupp , who was unable to compete . Although Burke won the match , the title was later returned to Brown after Brown appealed the decision , claiming that a substitute wrestler should not be eligible to win a championship . Burke also had one final reign with the Taped Fist Championship before vacating the title .

Burke continued to compete for Central States Wrestling , and he teamed with The Beast in a tournament for the vacant NWA Western States Tag Team Championship . The brothers defeated Silver Streak and Ricky Romero in the finals on February 20 , 1976 to win the belts but lost them in a rematch one week later . Returning from Texas to Nova Scotia , Burke became the only person ever to hold the ESA Maritimes Heavyweight Championship . He defeated The Brute to win the title ; when the ESA closed in 1977 , the title became part of Romeo Cormier ( Bobby Kay ) ' s Trans @-@ Canada Wrestling ( TCW ) . TCW closed later the same year , and Burke 's Maritimes Heavyweight Championship was retired . In 1976 , Burke also defeated The Brute to begin another reign as IW North American Heavyweight Champion . He later dropped it to Michel Dubois but regained it by defeating Frenchy Martin on July 14 , 1977 . The title was also retired when TCW closed that month . Prior to the promotion closing , Burke also had a short reign with Hubert Gallant with the ESA Maritimes Tag Team Championship . While competing in Nova Scotia , Burke also challenged Terry Funk for the NWA World Heavyweight Championship . Burke controlled the majority of the encounter , but Funk intentionally got himself disqualified 55 minutes into the match . Because the title cannot change hands on a disqualification , Funk retained the belt .

In 1977 , Burke moved to Calgary , Alberta to compete for Stu Hart 's Stampede Wrestling . He teamed with Hart 's son Keith to win the Stampede Wrestling International Tag Team Championship in early 1977 by defeating The Cuban Assassins . Although they dropped the belts to The Royal Kangaroos , Burke was able to regain the title in September 1977 while teaming with his brother Romeo ( who was then competing as Bobby Burke ) . On December 10 , however , they lost the belts to Michel Martel and Mr. Hito . In the new year , Leo Burke focused on competing as a singles wrestler and won the Stampede North American Heavyweight Championship on several occasions . He defeated Don Gagne ( formerly known as Frenchy Martin ) for the first title and Michel Martel for the second . He won it once more , by defeating Larry Lane , before leaving the area to compete briefly in New Zealand . Competing for the NWA territory there , he won the New Zealand version of the NWA British Commonwealth Heavyweight Championship . He soon vacated the title , however , and returned to Stampede Wrestling .

== = 1980s == =

Upon his return to Calgary in 1980 , Burke teamed with Keith Hart once again to win the promotion 's International Tag Team Championship . He also began feuding with Keith 's brother Bret Hart around that time . Burke defeated Mr. Sekigawa to win the North American Heavyweight Championship but lost it to Bret Hart later that year . He regained it in a rematch but dropped it to Hart once again . Burke returned to Canada 's Atlantic Coast briefly to compete for Atlantic Grand Prix Wrestling ( AGPW ) and won the promotion 's North American Tag Team Championship with Hubert Gallant . They lost the belts to Cuban Assassin and Bobby Bass that summer , but Burke was able to regain the championship by teaming with Stephen Petitpas . AGPW only promoted shows in the summer , and Burke then returned to Calgary during AGPW 's off @-@ season ; while there , he teamed with his brother Bobby Burke again to regain the International Tag Team Championship in December 1980 . Two months later , he had another reign as North American Heavyweight Champion after defeating " Dr. D " David Schultz ( who later regained the title in a

rematch ) . Another reign as NWA Central States Heavyweight Champion followed in November 1981 , in which Cormier returned to his Tommy Martin ring name .

Returning to Stampede Wrestling once again , Burke entered and won a tournament for the vacant North American Heavyweight Championship , defeating Duke Myers in the final match on March 21 , 1982 to win the title . He dropped it back to Bret Hart three months later , however . He followed this with a brief return in August 1982 to AGPW , where he defeated Rick Valentine to win the AGPW United States Heavyweight Championship . On November 19 , 1982 , Burke teamed with his longtime rival Bret Hart to win the Stampede Wrestling International Tag Team Championship . After losing the title the following month , the feud resumed , and Burke defeated Hart for the North American Heavyweight Championship on January 14 , 1983 ; the men continued to face each other , and Hart regained the championship that May .

Around that time , Burke spent more of his time competing in Central and Eastern Canada . He wrestled for Maple Leaf Wrestling in Toronto , Ontario , where he feuded with Johnny Weaver . In the summer of 1983 , he held both the AGPW United States Heavyweight Championship and the AGPW International Heavyweight Championship . He was also credited with an additional reign as United States Heavyweight Champion because he regained the title in a rematch after it was vacated due to a controversial match against The Spoiler . In February 1986 , Burke had one final title reign in Stampede Wrestling , holding the International Tag Team Championship with Ron Ritchie .

Back in AGPW , Burke continued to win championships . He held the International Heavyweight Championship three more times from 1986 to 1989 , and held the North American Tag Team Championship three times as well during that period . He won the tag team titles by reuniting with former partners Hubert Gallant and Stephen Petitpas ; the third reign came with Cuban Assassin , a former enemy of the entire Cormier wrestling family .

A turning point came in Burke 's wrestling career in the late 1980s when he decided to compete in Puerto Rico 's World Wrestling Council . He quickly won the promotion 's top title , the WWC Universal Heavyweight Championship , by defeating Caribbean wrestling veteran Carlos Colón on December 17 , 1989 .

= = = 1990s = = =

Burke held the WWC title until February 1990 , when he dropped it to TNT . This was followed by a return to AGPW , where he held the tag team championship with his brother Bobby Kay . Back in Puerto Rico , Burke defeated Colón again on March 24 , 1990 , this time to win the WWC Television Championship . Four days later , he also won the WWC Caribbean Tag Team Championship while teaming with Chicky Starr . They won the title from Invader # 1 and Invader # 4 but dropped it back to them in May . Shortly after dropping the tag team title , Burke defeated Invader # 1 in a singles match to win the WWC Caribbean Heavyweight Championship . Burke 's final title victory came in the summer of 1990 , when he defeated Ron Starr to win the AGPW International Heavyweight Championship for a fifth time .

= = Retirement = =

After retiring from full @-@ time wrestling , he went to Calgary in the early 1992 . His old rival and real @-@ life friend Bret Hart arranged a position for Cormier as a trainer for the World Wrestling Federation ( WWF , now World Wrestling Entertainment ) . Cormier helped train Ken Shamrock , Mark Henry , Adam Copeland ( known as Edge in WWE ) , Jason Reso ( known as Christian in WWE ) , and Andrew Martin ( known as Test in WWE ) . He also trained two former Canadian Football League players for their careers in professional wrestling : former Edmonton Eskimo Jeff Thomas , who later opened his own wrestling training school , and former Ottawa Rough Rider Glenn Kulka , who went on to compete for the WWF .

When Cormier 's contract expired , he began training wrestlers for WWF rival World Championship Wrestling . In January 2002 , he was hospitalized with septicemia and was put on life support before

recovering . In November 2005 , he underwent surgery to replace his right knee ; this was followed by a left knee replacement in February 2006 . He has had eight operations on his knees altogether . After his last surgery , WWE invited him back to resume training wrestlers , but Cormier declined . Since his retirement , he has worked in the now @-@ closed bar at Calgary 's Cecil Hotel and has also operated a mobile coffee and sandwich shop .

Although Cormier considers himself retired from professional wrestling , he continues to compete from time to time . He was featured in a news video by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation during a return to the Maritimes for a match in 1998 . In June 2009 , it was announced that he was participating in an Ultimate Championship Wrestling Legends Tribute Tour in Atlantic Canada alongside his former rival Cuban Assassin . In 2010 , Burke refereed a match at the final wrestling card ever promoted at the Berwick Arena in Nova Scotia .

Cormier has been inducted into the Stampede Wrestling Hall of Fame . In 2009 , the Cormier wrestling family was honored by the Cauliflower Alley Club in recognition of their contributions to the sport . Bret Hart has described Burke as " one of the greatest Canadian wrestlers ever " . Les Thatcher , who competed against Cormier , said that he , " technically , is probably one of the most sound performers that ever stepped foot in a ring " . Michel Martel , who wrestled against Cormier for several championships , called him " a great worker " and " a professional in the ring and outside the ring " .

In 2013 Cormier appeared in the Victoria Pavilion , in Calgary , Alberta for the Hart Legacy Wrestling promotion .

= = In wrestling = =

Finishing moves  
Sleeper hold

= = Championships and accomplishments = =

Atlantic Grand Prix Wrestling

AGPW North American Tag Team Championship ( 6 times ) - with Cuban Assassin ( 2 ) , Hubert Gallant ( 1 ) , Bobby Kay ( 1 ) , and Stephen Petitpas ( 2 )

AGPW United States Heavyweight Championship ( 3 times )

Central States Wrestling

NWA Central States Heavyweight Championship ( 2 times )

NWA North American Tag Team Championship ( Central States version ) ( 1 time ) - with Terry Martin

Eastern Sports Association

ESA International Tag Team Championship ( 2 times ) - with Bobby Kay ( 1 ) and The Beast ( 1 )

ESA Maritimes Heavyweight Championship ( 1 time )

ESA Maritimes Tag Team Championship ( 1 time ) - with Hubert Gallant

ESA Taped Fist Championship ( 3 times )

IW North American Heavyweight Championship ( 6 times )

NWA New Zealand

NWA British Commonwealth Heavyweight Championship ( 1 time )

NWA Western States Sports

NWA Western States Tag Team Championship ( 2 times ) - with The Beast

Stampede Wrestling

Stampede North American Heavyweight Championship ( 8 times )

Stampede Wrestling International Tag Team Championship ( 6 times ) - with Keith Hart ( 2 ) , Bobby Burke ( 2 ) , Bret Hart ( 1 ) and Ron Ritchie ( 1 )

Stampede Wrestling Hall of Fame

World Wrestling Council

WWC Caribbean Heavyweight Championship ( 1 time )

WWC Caribbean Tag Team Championship ( 1 time ) - with Chicky Starr  
WWC Universal Heavyweight Championship ( 1 time )  
WWC Television Championship ( 1 time )