

George Edward Foreman was born to JD and Nancy Foreman on January 10, 1949, in the town of Marshall, Texas. An impoverished youth, Foreman often bullied younger children and didn't like getting up early for school. Foreman became a mugger and brawler on the hard streets of Houston's 5th ward by age 15.

George Foreman, from Thug to Boxer

Luckily, he was saved by Lyndon Johnson's Job Corps program, which helped troubled kids. Foreman traveled to California, where he met Job Corps counselor and boxing coach Doc Broadus, who encouraged Foreman to become a fighter.

Once he began to train at the gym, Foreman rapidly established an impressive amateur record. The culmination of his amateur boxing career came at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, where he won a gold medal. (His 25th amateur fight)

He got extra attention when he brandished an American flag after his win; "I wanted everyone in the world to know I was an American," he later explained, "and proud of the opportunity that I was given to do what I had done."

Foreman Becomes Heavyweight Champ

In 1969, Foreman turned professional. Within two years, Foreman was ranked the No. 1 challenger by the WBA and WBC; by 1972, Foreman's impressive record was 37 wins (most by knockout) and no losses.

Foreman got his shot at the world heavyweight championship when he was scheduled to fight Joe Frazier in Kingston, Jamaica, on January 22, 1973. Frazier was the favorite going into the bout, but Foreman knocked him out in the second round. An unprecedented TV audience watched Foreman become the champ -- the fight was HBO Boxing's first-ever broadcast.

Foreman successfully defended his title twice. He beat Puerto Rican heavyweight champion Jose Roman in 50 seconds, the shortest heavyweight championship match; Foreman also beat Ken Norton (who had just beaten Muhammad Ali) in a mere two rounds. But when Foreman faced off against Ali himself in the summer of 1974, he went down.

The much-hyped "Rumble in the Jungle" in Kinshasa, Zaire, had been delayed due to an injury Foreman had suffered in training; Ali had spent the interim taunting Foreman relentlessly, which made him too angry and frustrated to stay focused.

Foreman Becomes Preacher, then Champ Again!

After taking 1975 off, Foreman returned to boxing, winning a number of fights before losing by decision to Jimmy Young in Puerto Rico in 1977. It was in his dressing room after the fight that Foreman had a religious experience; he then gave up boxing and became a born-again Christian.

He was ordained a minister and began preaching in his hometown of Houston, Texas. In 1984, he founded the George Foreman Youth and Community Center, a non-denominational place for kids who need direction like he once did.

However, the George Foreman Center needed money to stay operational; by 1987, Foreman decided to return to boxing to support it. Foreman proved his detractors wrong when he kept winning fights into his 40s; in 1991 he had a shot at the title, but lost to champ Evander Holyfield by decision.

In 1994, however, Foreman took on the new champ Michael Moorer, and knocked him out in the 10th round; Foreman became, at 44, the oldest fighter ever to win the heavyweight crown, and also the fighter with the most time between one world championship and the next. Foreman gave away his titles in 1995, after defending them against Axel Schultz and refusing a rematch.

George Foreman & the Lean Mean Grilling Machine

By the time Foreman retired from boxing (again) in 1999, he was well on his way to a second career as a businessman. Since the early 1990s, Foreman had discovered his talent for salesmanship, and by the end of the decade, he was making millions off of infomercials marketing the George Foreman Lean Mean Grilling Machine which has sold over 100 million units to date.

George has also spent over a decade promoting Meineke Car Care Centers and has grown the business to over 1000 franchises. George has now successfully launched a line of environmentally safe cleaning products, exclusive line of personal care products, a health shake called George Foreman's Life Shake, a prescription shoe for diabetics to prevent amputations, a restaurant franchise called UFood Grille, 10 books, and the list continues to build. (www.georgeforeman.com) When not promoting Meineke mufflers or selling grills, Foreman tends to his ministry and charitable work, including most recently his "Knock-Out Pediatric Cancer" initiative. (www.knockoutpediatriccancer.com) He spends free time with his family on his ranch in Marshall.