

# Heavyweight champ takes on fast food

By Suzi Hosfeld

Two-time World Heavyweight Boxing Champion George Foreman was seen flipping Bison burgers and tossing salads, as well as signing autographs, at the UFood Grill on Friday, Feb. 22. Several hundred boxing fans showed up to meet the champ and get an autographed photo.

It was a rare treat for unsuspecting diners as they entered the packed restaurant at 1201 Piper Boulevard to see Foreman behind the grill. "I just stopped for lunch," stated Fred Hoffman. "I saw all the traffic and people and thought, 'Wow, this must be a great place for lunch.' I'm a boxing fan and I think George is the best ever."

UFood Grill is a healthy restaurant that launched its first location here in Naples last June. UFood Restaurant Group, a franchisor and operator of fast-casual food service restaurants and nutritional product retail stores, recently announced that Foreman has agreed to become the spokesperson for the UFood brand. Many people already associate George Foreman with healthy eating via the ubiquitous grill sold under his name. That complements UFood's concept of eat-smart and feel-great.

Foreman fans young and old lined up early in the morning to see the famous fighter. Even kids who weren't yet born when Foreman was a

prize fighter shared in the excitement. Royal Palm Academy allowed their students to attend a special meet-and-greet session with Foreman. "The whole school was invited," stated Jaree O'Connor, of Royal Palm Academy. "Our school lunch once a week is catered by UFood Grill and we love them. It allows us to teach healthy eating to youngsters."

Foreman's love of people was evident as he talked and smiled at everyone. "Come on over and let's talk," he said. "It's been a long time since I was here last; 1989, I believe. This city is so beautiful, the people are so wonderful and friendly. Naples has really changed since I was here last, but not the beauty."

Foreman was scheduled to leave later that evening. "I'm going back to Texas," he said. "You know I'm a Minister there." Foreman brought his namesake son, George III, with him. "I have five sons and five daughters," added the champ. "When you get hit in the head as many times as I have by the greats, you can only remember one name." All five of Foreman's boys are named George.

Eric Spitz, president of UFood Restaurant Group, was in town to oversee Foreman's appearance. "We have nine stores and we are excited to bring George Foreman here to Naples," stated Spitz. "Our association with such a wonderful spokesperson



PHOTO BY SUZI HOSFELD

George Foreman, center, dukes it out with Mark Messina, left, and Steve Messina of UFood Grill.



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Foreman fans Wilmia Rufo, left, and Lee Aylward at George Foreman's UFood appearance. "We love George Foreman," said Rufo.



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Jaree O'Connor, left, Brittany Allen and Pal Bosler from Royal Palm Academy show off their autographed George Foreman books.

as Foreman is perfectly aligned with his philosophy of healthy eating."

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