

## No Way but to Fight: George Foreman and the Business of Boxing

**Andrew R.M. Smith**

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Andrew R. M. Smith's comprehensive study of two-time heavyweight champion George Foreman, and of the sport of boxing during his long career, is *No Way but to Fight*.

Foreman, a poor middle school dropout, discovered his punch on the streets of Houston's Fifth Ward. He went on to a roller-coaster career as a knockout artist before finding a "softer incarnation" as a cuddly television salesman. Within this frame, the book also traces a golden age of boxing.

The book pulls no punches in bringing forth the fighter and the man. Portrayed first as a big, clumsy bully with no boxing skills, and later as a puncher with an ineffective jab, Foreman built his record by beating up on nobodies. He became heavyweight champion with little more than a devastating knockdown blow. But after the loss of his crown and a frustrated comeback attempt, Foreman matured. He found religion and learned to promote himself before earning another championship belt at the age of forty-five.

Not for lightweight readers, this biography, which grew out of a doctoral dissertation, is based on extensive research. It contains many notes, including input from sports historians and interviews with ring notables and Foreman himself. Still, it will find its audience among fight fans in the reading public. Its analysis reaps insights and dispels misconceptions, bringing forth little-known details about the great fighters of Foreman's era. It's a contextual biography not only about Foreman, but about wrangling over venues, promotional tactics, training strategies, and the politics, culture, and racial background of boxing from the seventies through the nineties.

While *No Way but to Fight* cannot be called a tell-all or an intimate portrait, it includes not only a rags-to-riches tale but a profile of a man who transcended his early challenges and image to become a happy, religious, and successful salesman and father.

JOE TAYLOR (January / February 2020)

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