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QSR

Jared Fogle's weight-loss plan has made Subway millions—and him an American icon.

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FRESH IDEAS:
REFUELING WITH BEVERAGES



Since losing 245 pounds eating Subway sandwiches 10 years ago, **Jared Fogle** has made a full-time job out of leading consumers to the Subway Promised Land.

SUBWAY'S Savior

It's hard to believe that it's been almost 10 years since Subway introduced the nation to a guy named Jared Fogle. In the first commercial, which originally ran only in the Midwest, that regular guy told a story that has now become a part of American pop culture: He'd been overweight as a kid—a product of what he calls "a sedentary lifestyle" e.g. too much TV and receiving a video game system early in life—and eventually ballooned into a 425-pound Indiana University college student. A self-crafted diet of mayo- and cheese-free Subway

sandwiches twice a day helped Fogle drop the weight, and he ultimately slimmed down to 190 pounds.

News of Fogle's unconventional diet eventually reached Subway headquarters, and his career as a Subway spokesman took off. Fogle's once-local ad campaign began to run across the country, inspiring thousands to "Eat Fresh" and popularizing the notion of the "Subway Diet."

A decade after shooting that first commercial, Fogle is still eating Subway (for free now) and has become an

10 YEARS OF EATING FRESH

American icon. "It's definitely a very surreal ride," he told *QSR* while in Los Angeles. "I would have never thought in a million years that it would have been happening to me, but you sort of sit back and take it all in."

And it's a lot to take in. Since becoming "The Subway Guy," Fogle has met countless celebrities including Oprah Winfrey, Larry King, and, the day *QSR* interviewed him, Steve Carell and Anne Hathaway. He's also been parodied on *Saturday Night Live* and in a *South Park* episode, which he describes as "hysterical," calling the cartoon's season six episode "true, typical, tasteless *South Park*."

Fogle's rise to fame, however, has not been without what he calls "haters." Mainly they are bloggers who have simply had enough of Fogle's dominance over fast-food pop culture. "To be honest," he says, "having been heavy through so much of my childhood and having to develop thick skin has really helped me to deal with those types of people."

His die-hard Subway franchisee fan base hasn't hurt either. "Franchisees are really the ones I work for," Fogle says. "They're really the ones who are actually advertising for Subway since the advertising is funded by franchisees." All of Subway's nearly 30,000 stores, located in 86 countries, are owned by franchisees who have put their trust in the chain's friendly brand ambassador. And why wouldn't they? According to a February *Advertising Age* article, same-store sales fell 10 percent in 2005 when Fogle was temporarily off air. While Fogle maintains that he didn't even notice the time away from the camera three years ago, rumors circulated that the brand was fading him out and taking its creative in a new direction.

"People forget that Subway usually goes about two or three months without running my ads," Fogle says. "That year they went a little bit further, and all of a sudden word got out that they were shelving me, which I was unaware of and still don't think happened." Even while off-air, Fogle's 2005 schedule was still filled with Subway-related speaking engagements and press events.

In fact, Fogle has been Subway's official spokesman since he graduated from college in 2000. Fogle wisely won't disclose his salary, but he does admit that "they don't pay me all in subs."

Subway makes sure to get its money's worth. Fogle travels about 220 days a year, "mainly domestic—anywhere from Jackson, Mississippi, to Tampa, Florida, to Seattle."

To celebrate his decade of healthy eating, Fogle is spending 2008 traveling the country on a "Tour de Pants," which kicked off in Times Square in February. Along the way, he's stopped at the XLII Super Bowl in Phoenix, the Final Four in San Antonio, Texas, and a Cinco de Mayo celebration in Denver. While on tour, he's also visited elementary schools, telling what he affectionately calls "my story" and encouraging children to lead healthy lifestyles. Though the majority of the students were born after Fogle's commercials began airing nationally, they recognize him. "The kids from about third grade and above definitely know who I am," he says. "That's also why that's a really good age to target. They really haven't made up their minds as far as their habits, so they're reachable." Ironically, he points out, they probably know who he is because they watch too much TV, "but I guess that's a result of being a part of pop culture," he concedes.

During his yearlong Tour de Pants, Fogle hopes to raise \$1 million to help fight the childhood obesity epidemic. Although Fogle says

partial blame for the obesity crisis lies with the quick-service industry, he believes consumers are ultimately responsible for their own health. "When I was losing my weight," he says, "I didn't expect the burger places and pizza places to close their doors to me. The bottom line is that it still takes an individual person's effort, and you've got to want to change." He reinforces this idea when talking to young people about leading healthy lives. "I really try to make sure that they understand that they have to make their own decisions, like I made for myself, to avoid wearing a size 63 pair of pants," he says.

Fogle, who comes across as a humble man, admits that he believes his ad campaign with Subway has had a positive effect on the food-service industry. "I think it's forced a number of restaurants out there to up their number of healthier options," he says. "It's gotten consumers to say, 'Hey, there's no reason I can't have something that tastes really good and is also good for me.'"

One would assume a go-with-the-flow media darling such as Fogle would be a hot commodity in the fast-food marketing arena, but in his years with Subway no other brands have tried to lure him away. Of course, they have never had the opportunity. Fogle says he never eats quick-serves other than Subway—a decision he attributes to his goal of staying healthy rather than his contract with the chain. "I've never had to go out and push Subway, it's part of my story," he says. "Subway is what allowed me to lose weight, it was the mechanism and is still a big part of my life."

Being in front of the camera is also a big part of Fogle's life. "I'm a lot more comfortable in front of a camera, and I'm not nervous anymore," he says.

In an age where company spokesmen seem to change with the seasons, Fogle has experienced almost unrivaled exposure. Through TV appearances, hometown tours, national ad campaigns, and, yes, even a book tour, Fogle collects thousands of enthusiastic fans. One man even asked him to sign the hood of his car with a black Sharpie. "I kept saying, 'Are you sure? I'll do it, but are you sure?'" he recalls. "It was pretty funny."

Fogle zealots not only want autographs, they also want to repeat his weight-loss success. Ever since Fogle's story became public, Subway has been flooded with letters and e-mails from fans claiming to have experienced years of obesity only to be saved by the Subway Diet. The number of Subway Diet followers grew so large, the company formed the group, Friends of Jared—a play off recovery groups like Friends of Bill W. "Subway decided to actually do a small campaign, about a year or two into my ads, involving other people saying that it wasn't just me doing it. There's a lot of other people who have become inspired," Fogle says. "Whether it was 30 pounds or 100 pounds, it's been really neat to see."

With 10 years of healthy living and thousands of fans and franchisees behind him, Fogle says he will continue trying to motivate people to get fit for as long as the brand will let him. "I'd love to be with Subway for a long time to come, and the great thing is that the future is an open book. It's been a surreal 10 years, and I hope the next 10 years are just as surreal."

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Jared Recommends Direct Technology Innovations for your Credit Card Processing.



Jared poses with Michael Slominski, Direct Technology Innovations



Michael Strahan, NFL Football Player and Jared Discuss Credit Card Processing.