

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

March 2013

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Never Too Young to Survive

In today's world, your kids might need to be their own bodyguards in an emergency. Parent, police officer and CrossFit Defense coach Rick Randolph explains how to prepare your children for a life-threatening situation.

By Rick Randolph

March 2013



All Photos: Sally Randolph

I play fight with my kids a lot—slap boxing, wrestling them on the bed. The two oldest love it; the baby just paws at my face and giggles. They drop down into fighting stances—fists clenched, hands up—and sneer. My 7-year-old daughter likes to throw a jab-cross-hook combo and finish with a knee. She hit me with it the other day and said, “I’m gonna kick your ass! I mean, butt. Sorry, dad.”

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We need to teach our kids that in the real world, winning means survival.

But they also know we are playing and dad is not going all out. They know they can't beat me in a "real fight."

The problem is they have no idea what a real fight is. They think real fights are the videos of dad in a cage with a referee and an opponent. They know they can't beat me there. In fact, my 10-year-old son thinks dad can beat up anyone in the world if I want. He thinks I'm invincible.

It recently occurred to me that I spend all this time coaching other people's kids on self-defense, and I wondered if I do enough training with my own. I hadn't even talked to them about the December 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

How to "Win"

I asked my kids, "Who would win a real fight between a 200-lb. man and a 10-year-old girl?" They were sure the girl would lose. I asked why. They explained the man is too big and strong and could hurt the girl if she fought him. I asked what a win would look like for the girl. They said she would have to beat up the man, maybe give him a bloody nose or a black eye.

The problem, I explained to them, was the way they envisioned a win. They thought a win looked like a referee holding both fighters' hands, then raising the winner's. They saw a win as holding the bad guy down until the police got there to take him to jail. That's when I showed them a video of an attempted abduction of a 10-year-old girl by a real bad guy.

In the video, the bad guy approaches a group of children on the street from behind and grabs a girl. She flails, screams and kicks until the bad guy decides the kid isn't worth the effort. He drops her and runs away. I asked my kids if that was a real fight. Both, wide-eyed, said it was. I asked who won. "The little girl," they both said.

The problem for my kids—and most people for that matter—is the way they see a win. A win, in a self-defense situation, is getting home safe.

Hell, yeah. If that was the equivalent of a UFC fight, the referee was raising that little girl's hand while doctors attended to an unconscious bad guy. She'd have her picture on a cereal box. Upset of the year. Huge win. But it happens. Every day.

The problem for my kids—and most people for that matter—is the way they see a win. A win, in a self-defense situation, is getting home safe. Bad guys don't want a fight, I told them; they want a victim. You don't have to "beat" a bad guy; you have to give him a fight. If you give them a fight, most bad guys will go find a victim. That's how a 10-year-old gets her hand raised in victory. That's how she "wins" against a grown man. I told them the secret about bad guys that my coach, Tony Blauer, taught me: bad guys don't want to get hurt, don't want to get caught and don't want it to take too long. Make one of those three things happen and you can "win."

"If It Was Fight or Die, I'd Fight Him"

And then came Sandy Hook.

I didn't know what to tell my kids. That bad guy didn't care about getting hurt or caught. I thought maybe it was better not to tell them. My boy is a bit of a worrier and an over-thinker. I have found, however, that his worry is often eliminated if he has a plan. So we made one.

I started with statistics and said it would probably never happen to them. I told them we were just talking about it on the off chance it ever did.

I told them there were three things they needed to do if a bad guy came to their school:

First, I told them to run away. If they could do so safely, they should run as fast and as far as they could until they couldn't hear any gunshots. I told them the rules no longer applied. If the principal normally said they weren't allowed to climb a certain fence or go in a certain area or cross a street, now they were allowed to do so. I told them when it comes to self-defense in a worst-case scenario, do what you have to do. When teachers and administrators who are responsible for accurate headcounts are not around or incapacitated, I told my kids I wanted them out of there as fast as possible while still being safe. When teachers and administrators aren't available to help, make your own best decisions, I told them.

I'm not sure who taught me this or where I got it from, but I tell my kids if something bad is happening and they can't find their parents or someone they know, run to any mom for help. Moms have an amazing protective instinct, and I'm pretty sure if any kid ran to my wife and told her some creep was trying to get him, she'd do whatever she could to protect him. Moms are crazy that way—awesome crazy.

Finally, I told them—as I watched my wife swallow hard—that if they had no other choice, they should fight.

Second, I told them to hide if they couldn't run. I told them to find a place to go where no one would find them, then get small and get quiet—a trash can, a closet, somewhere out of sight. I told them bad guys like that won't be searching every crevice; they are looking for quick, easy targets.

Finally, I told them—as I watched my wife swallow hard—that if they had no other choice, they should fight.

"You want me to fight a grown-up with a gun?" my son asked.

"If you can't get away or hide, what else can you do?" I asked.

"If it was fight or die, I'd fight him," he replied.

I told my kids to get the teacher to help. I told them to grab other kids to help—I want to do a drill to see how many 10-year-olds it requires to take me down. I told them to grab scissors, baseball bats, chairs, whatever they could find. My son nodded. So did my daughter. I explained that their job was to get home to see their mom and me. Like Coach Blauer says, "Even kids might need to be their own bodyguards."

It's unthinkable I even had to discuss it with a 10- and 7-year-old. In fact, as the time grew between us and Sandy Hook, it started to seem less important.

But then I read a story about a woman in New Jersey who saved herself from an attacker who broke into her house, as well as a report about another high-school student who brought a shotgun to school in Southern California and was confronted by two teachers. And I remembered the things I want—the things we need—kids to know.

Ultimately, even at 10 and 7 years old, my kids are responsible for their own safety.

I want to put my kids in a bubble and not let anyone touch them, but I know that isn't realistic. I want to assure them a shooting or abduction would never happen, but, honestly, I can't. I want them to get to be kids and not have to worry about all that garbage and sickness in the world, but what I really need them to know and understand is that ultimately, even at 10 and 7 years old, they are responsible for their own safety. Even though it's difficult for dads and moms to think about, it's the least we can do.

My son said it best, "Being a dad isn't always easy, but it's your job."

It's our duty to protect them and—more importantly—to teach them to protect themselves.



First, run. Second, hide. Then, when there's no other option, fight.

About the Author

Rick Randolph is a CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids trainer. He trains at CrossFit Anywhere in Folsom, Calif. He is a CrossFit Defense Coach and a Blauer Tactical Systems SPEAR law-enforcement and military coach, a Personal Defense Readiness coach, and a member of Tony Blauer's mobile Training Team. He is a full-time police officer and defensive-tactics trainer at the Roseville Police Department.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit: A Sisyphean Endeavor?

Dr. Jane Drexler asks who we are between the first rep and the last.

By Dr. Jane Drexler

March 2013



Kim Bellavance

"He is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock." —Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

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The Moment Between Rounds

If you want to wax philosophical about CrossFit, few better moments will capture your attention than the Dog Sled event of the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

Look at the now-iconic image of Chris Spealler, and you see an unforgettable moment: all eyes were on a man whose whole being was focused on the Herculean effort of pushing a way-too-heavy-but-somehow-not dog sled across an arena floor.

The dog sled was part of the second half of a multiple-round workout that included three rounds of overhead squats and double-unders, and then three rounds of handstand push-ups and a 385-lb. dog-sled push from one end of the arena to the other, 40 feet at a time. After each 40-foot push, we watched Spealler and every other athlete stand up, turn around, and walk back to the beginning in order to earn—through HSPUs—the right to push the sled again.

We don't usually pay much attention to the time in between rounds, when not a whole lot is going on. What's to look at? It's people walking, resting or catching their breath. We don't usually see that as worthy of sustained attention. But I want to linger on that moment.

Rather, in that pained
expression and wearied walk,
Camus saw the face of freedom,
triumph and agency.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Man versus sled.

I want to linger on the moment because, like Spealler and the others, we all do workouts in which, at the end of one round, we turn around and walk back to begin the next. It's a component of every AMRAP. It's that minute in Fight Gone Bad between the row and the wall-balls. Every fiber of our being knows we are about to re-start something grueling, and our exhausted minds and bodies are readying themselves to do it all again.

I want to linger on that moment, too, because I think Albert Camus could say a lot about it. Indeed, Camus, the French existentialist philosopher who wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus*, thought that kind of moment—the moment “in between” the struggles—was the most important moment in Sisyphus' life, and, by extension, our own lives.

Camus did not see merely rest. He did not see only a man catching his breath and readying himself to begin again his struggle. Rather, in that pained expression and wearied walk, Camus saw the face of freedom, triumph and agency.

The Myth of Sisyphus

So who is Sisyphus?

Sisyphus (pronounced SIS-uh-fuss) is a tragic figure in Greek mythology and in general owns one of the worst fates the ancients could come up with: an eternal existence of “futile and hopeless labor.”

Having angered the gods for several reasons, Sisyphus was cursed to spend all of eternity pushing a rock up to the top of a steep hill, only to have it roll back down each time. Camus describes it well:

One sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass At the very end of his long effort measured by sky-less space and time-without-depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it back up again towards the summit. He goes back down to the plain.

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus repeats this series of events for all eternity.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Jenny LaBaw, preparing herself for the next round of rope climbs.

Sisyphus as Existentialist Metaphor

Sisyphus' fate is a metaphor for our fears about life generally (and for existentialist philosophers, including Camus, it's not just a fear; it's a reality): “What if this is all meaningless? I get up every day, I go to work, I come home, I do this, I do that, not much changes. Not much alters the path of the rock that I push up my own hill, only to do it again the next day.”

We have probably all quietly felt, at one time or another, Bill Murray's bar-soaked question in the movie *Groundhog Day*: “What if you were stuck in the same place, and every day was the same, and nothing you did mattered?”

Existentialism can seem pretty damn depressing at times.

But actually, existentialism as a philosophy can often be profoundly hopeful. Existentialists like Camus spent a good chunk of their philosophic efforts trying to show us that, even when it seems it never stops and never means anything, life is momentous and meaningful. Even when it seems we are cursed by the gods to live out drudgery and never feel finished, we are not victims. Even in those darkest moments when we feel that “our whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing,” we are still agents in our world. Even “Sisyphus is happy.”



Staff/CrossFit Journal

We gain strength, both mental and physical, when we return to a challenge, take a breath and try again.

So, how does Camus try to explain these points? Precisely by lingering on that seemingly insignificant moment when Sisyphus, having watched the stone fall back down the hill, turns around and walks back to retrieve it. Camus says, "It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me."

Why? Because at that moment—in between the feats of struggle—Sisyphus is conscious. While this moment of consciousness ensures the tragedy of his fate (after all, truly knowing that your fate is something horrible is a key part of what makes it horrible), this awareness also "crowns his victory" for Camus.

**It is the moment of clarity, resolve,
willful stepping that breaks up the
fog that is the struggle.**

"That hour is like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering," and in that hour's knowing, in that hour's accepting, lies the key to a person's triumph over his or her struggle. It is the moment of clarity, resolve, willful stepping that breaks up the fog that is the struggle. At that moment—in those steps—"He is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock."

Stronger Than the Rock

Anyone who has done Fight Gone Bad, an AMRAP or five-rounds-of-whatever probably knows a little bit about what it means to call something a "Sisyphean endeavor": immersed in the fog of the struggle, it seems to never end, it seems to be utterly grueling, and it seems to repeat itself over and over again, with each element seeming insurmountable at the time.

What goes through our minds during the last rep of one round of Fight Gone Bad and the first rep of the next? Who are we in that moment? Stumbling off the rowing machine between rounds and walking back to start again, desperately hoping the minute break will pass slowly, we are at that moment Sisyphus.



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CrossFit proves to us again and again that we are stronger than the task before us.

And particularly between rounds 2 and 3 (or gods forbid rounds 3 and 4 of a 5-round Fight Gone Bad), we do not find our struggle pleasant. The rock is not an easy burden, and we know this. We know the next round will hurt. Sometimes we smile in resignation or camaraderie, sometimes we cuss in panic. But Camus would tell us that neither are acts of defeat. Both are acts of defiance.

In that act of turning around and walking back to begin the next round, we have beaten the rock. We have said to the rock, "You don't own me. I own you. You do not conquer me. I conquer you." At those moments, we are stronger than the burden, stronger than the worry, stronger than the mundane.

We are stronger than the rock.

Camus believes we are not powerless in misery—even if we are cursed to live lives of suffering, monotony or despair, for 17 minutes or for an eternity—because we are free and triumphant in between rounds as we walk consciously and willfully back down the hill to again take up our burden.

One need not imagine the scene as looking all that triumphant. Camus doesn't kid himself: Sisyphus walks down "with heavy but measured step." Indeed, we can often look wearied and frayed. And there are times, too, when "the boundless grief is too heavy to bear. These are our nights of Gethsemane," when faced with melancholy or overwhelmed with suffering we ask the cup to pass from us. We wonder if we can keep doing it. But, even in weariness and doubt, in the middle of it all, we still push on, taking each step willfully.

And that's Camus' point: While it may be true that a fundamental quality to our lives is that we are never finished, we are often plodding along in drudgery and we are often in suffering, we are also not defeated if we remain conscious and willful in our steps back into the fray.

This is why Camus speaks to me as a CrossFit athlete. For Camus, Sisyphus was a metaphor for meaning and agency in a life full of struggle. And Camus lets me imagine Fight Gone Bad, AMRAPs or five-rounds-of-whatever as metaphors for life. What if, like Camus, we saw the walk back—the willful stepping—as the key to our success and our joy?

Kim Bellavance



There is triumph in struggle, no matter how grueling.

What would matter then would not be the PR last week or the disappointing score on yesterday's WOD, because those are only brief stops on the rock's path and "the rock is still rolling." Even competitions are not end points, only moments in an unfinished journey. Hell, even Chris Spealler can't retire!

**We are not defeated if we remain
conscious and willful in our
steps back into the fray.**

What would matter, then, would be all those moments when we've decided to head back into the fray, all those moments when we have summoned the will to keep going, even and especially when it has felt unbearable.

It's easy to see how Camus' point here applies in the middle of Fight Gone Bad or a Dog Sled workout. But what if we thought of our other life activities like that: the going-to-work, paying-the-bills, grounding-the-children, eating-the-right-foods, cleaning-the-kitchen activities? What if we imagined that some of the most important moments in our lives are those moments in between—those vulnerable and quietly triumphant moments—when we, with heavy but measured step, choose willfully to continue walking?

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About the Author:



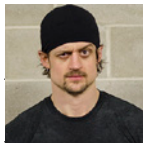
Jane Drexler

Jane Drexler is an associate professor of philosophy at Salt Lake Community College and holds a Level 1 CrossFit Certificate. She has published essays in several books and professional journals, primarily on political theory and ethics. At 43, Jane has a Fran time that's an awesomely average 7 minutes, and her clean-and-jerk max hovers around 135 lb.

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Fuck Compression Tights

Mike Warkentin believes special equipment will never take the place of practice and effort.



Uncommon Sense

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

March 2013



Kim Bellavance

I have little use for the gear debate about which shoes are better for which workout, whether tights help anything at all, which speed rope is best, what wicking system will keep my crotch drier, or whether I'll produce 2 percent more power lifting off plywood instead of stall mats.

Who the fuck has time for this?

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Kim Bellavance

Is it the shoes?

I like gear. I regularly buy things I don't need for my gym, and I love playing around with fitness equipment I don't need. Bands, chains, specialty bars, Oly blocks, kegs, cabers, old fire hoses, Atlas stones ... call it a hobby.

But deep down, I know I probably don't need to mess around with the safety-squat bar all that often. I probably just need to squat. If Louie Simmons loses his mind and invites my weak squat to Westside Barbell, I'll spend some hard time getting to know the safety squat bar. Until that happens, I'm pretty sure a standard barbell is going to be just fine for me on most days.

I also know a brand new speed rope isn't going to improve my double-unders if I don't practice with it relentlessly. The only thing I really ask of a rope is that the handles are made of a plastic that shatters when I whip the god-damn thing against the wall in the middle of a workout. Throwing a rope that creates no shrapnel provides no satisfaction.

"What shoes are you going to wear for this workout?"

Comfy ones that look bitchin'.

"What's your opinion of tights?"

I think they should be reserved for bobsleigh races and Renaissance fairs.

"Do you think you need a different rope?"

No. I think I need more practice with the one I have.

I honestly think that much of the time spent worrying about equipment could be better spent practicing, and I think any minute performance gains might be overwhelmed by simply trying harder during a workout. Could you push 2 percent harder in any workout? Probably.

Similarly, anyone who takes a sip of water during a workout of 15 minutes or less automatically loses the right to gear up. Want to improve your time? Skip the compression sleeves—and the water break. And stay away from the chalk bucket, too.

The words of Oly lifter Jon North also ring true here: "I ain't got time for percentages." By the time I'm done calculating percentages and rigging a power cage with bands, chains and a box to squat on, my buddies are done crushing 5 sets of 5 squats and are balls deep into a gnarly little couplet. They're getting fit. Meanwhile, I'm standing there pounding a chalky knuckle into the keypad of a calculator like some Neanderthal accountant who still can't squat 400.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



Kim Beilance

Find a new rope, put on some actual shoes and then get to work.

I once did a clean-and-jerk workout in a boreal forest on vacation. As I dropped each rep, the plates created depressions in the ground and subsequent pulls from a deficit. By rep 20, the deficit was significant, and I'm sure I could have calculated what that longer pull added to the workout, but who really gives a shit? I finished lifting, dug the plates out of their ruts and went fishing instead.

There is, of course, the placebo effect to consider.

Some people say compression gear just makes them feel better, as do supplements, special equipment and assorted pre-workout rituals usually involving bathroom breaks. If you believe in the placebo effect—and I don't fault you if you do—then please contact me for the ultimate workout chalk. It's pretty expensive, but it's a signature premium blend, and you will notice a huge difference in performance as soon as you start using it. Cash only, my friends, cash only.

At the most elite levels of the sport, when genetic potential is nearing max-out levels and all other options are exhausted, it might be time to gear up, and perhaps someone will shave a sixth of a second off the world-record Fran time clad head to toe in compression gear and wearing goggles, wrist wraps, a special lifting belt, and one weightlifting shoe and one ballet slipper.

That might happen, but I'd actually bet more money on a bare-chested Rich Froning wearing work boots and a skirt. Come to think of it, Froning just snatched 300 and cleaned 370 in running shoes.

I'd also bet that if compression gear actually worked at anything other than a marginal level, Stacie Tovar would trade her signature white bootie shorts for an outfit more suited to the 5,000-meter event at a World Cup speed-skating meet. I don't see that happening anytime soon. It would be bad for TV ratings anyway.

To be clear: if you spend most of Annie picking your speed rope out of the toes of your Vibrams, you've got a definite equipment problem and—I'd suggest—a fashion problem. Or if your Oly shoes are making Helen sound like 15 minutes at a clog-dancing festival, you should change your shoes for fuck's sake. If your speed rope is kinkier than the San Fernando Valley, upgrade that bitch and start practicing.

But if you're testing the sleeves of every barbell in the gym for extra resistance, calculating wind speed for an optimal attempt at Nicole, and using AutoCAD to diagram the perfect bar set-up for Linda while sipping a gourmet concoction of pre-workout supplements, I think it's time to start the clock and get on the bar.

About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the **CrossFit Journal** and the founder of **CrossFit 204**. He needs to practice double-unders more often.*

THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



BREAKFAST CUPCAKES

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

overview

Most kids I know love eggs. And most kids I know love cupcakes. So why not combine the two into a delicious breakfast meal? This breakfast is full of protein, fat and carbs and makes a balanced meal.

4-6 kid servings

ingredients

8-9 eggs
2 small tomatoes
1 avocado
1-2 spoonfuls of pre-made salsa
Sprinkle of lime juice
Salt and pepper to taste

notes

Serve the eggs warm.

directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Coat a muffin tin with cooking spray or butter.
3. Beat eggs, salt, pepper and a bit of water in a bowl until well beaten.
4. Fill each egg cup $\frac{2}{3}$ full and bake for 15-17 minutes, until the eggs are firm.
5. While the eggs are baking, slice the tomatoes into rings, making sure to remove the cores.
6. Core an avocado and put it into a small bowl. Mash it up with a fork up and add salt, salsa and lime juice.
7. When the eggs are cooked, remove them from the pan and plate each egg on top of a tomato slice. Top with guacamole frosting.

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The King of Lifts

Champion weightlifter Donny Shankle says the competition isn't over until the last clean and jerk comes down.

By Donny Shankle

March 2013



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The second of the two exercises in the sport of weightlifting is the clean and jerk. It is my favorite of the two simply because there is more weight on the bar.

The clean and jerk is also the most recognized lift for those people unaccustomed with the sport. To clean a barbell means to pick it up off the floor and bring it up to your shoulders in one continuous effort. The jerk follows the clean, and it involves taking the bar from the shoulders and sharply locking it out overhead.

The clean has evolved over the years and has gone through some theatrical changes. Originally, the bar could not touch the body on the way up. It had to be lifted cleanly away from the weightlifter—hence the lift's name. This gave way to the continental clean, the split clean and eventually the squat clean, which is what weightlifters today practice. Today the bar is allowed to make brief contact with the body so long as the exercise remains uninterrupted. The squat clean (or just clean) implies picking the barbell up off the floor and receiving it on your shoulders in a full squat position—hips below knees.

For a clean to be technically passable in competition, the elbows cannot touch your legs at the bottom, and the bar cannot be repositioned on your shoulders in the bottom or as you stand up. Great weightlifters know cleaning well requires confidence, strong legs, an understanding of oscillation, and a commitment to not waste any time once you are at the lowest point of your squat.



Olympic weightlifting judges are on the lookout for the slightest arm bend once the bar goes overhead in the jerk, so a decisive lockout is essential.

Strong legs are a requirement to cleaning well, just as having a great lockout and strong shoulders are required in the snatch. For this reason, weightlifters will spend years in the squat rack moving some tremendous poundages over their career. Squatting is often also important because the clean is very neurologically demanding. Weightlifters will squat to keep their legs strong without zapping their nervous system constantly. At one point I was squatting up to maximum weights 18 times a week in training. In order to even be on this team, you had to be ready to warm up with a minimum of 120 kilos (265 lb.) because that is what we always left on the bar.

**Your gut was nauseous from
the mere sight of the bar,
but your nerves were as cool as
the other side of the pillow.**

Your legs were always in pain, but they were strong. Your shoulders and upper back were always raw from where the bar rested, but they too were strong. Your gut was nauseous from the mere sight of the bar, but your nerves were as cool as the other side of the pillow.

Squatting that much, that heavy and that often develops the strong hips and legs you will need for the clean. The repetition sets in motion the coordination you will need to clean like a professional.

There is no wasted time during the clean. Once the bar comes into you off the floor and you bring your hips through aggressively, you are standing. Never sit in the bottom of a clean for any amount of time. Let me repeat that: never sit in the bottom of a clean for any amount of time. Just in case you still do not understand the gravity behind how important this is, I will say it yet again: never sit in the bottom of a clean for any amount of time. Once you receive the bar on your shoulders—move!

Oscillation is the bend you get from a heavy bar, and you can use this oscillation to help you stand up from the bottom of your clean. In order to do this you cannot be lazy. The back has to be as rigid as a sailor at full mast on liberty, and you have to use the stretch reflex in your legs. Your hips and knees will naturally bounce you up slightly as you hit the bottom of a squat or clean. In training, you are learning to use this stretch reflex to your advantage in combination with the oscillation of the bar.

Applying all of the techniques described above makes for a beautiful clean.

The Jerk

The jerk is the fastest of the three lifts, and just as in the clean, oscillation plays an integral role in your success. Feel the bar wrap around your shoulders during your dip, and drive hard with the legs. The arms have to be completely locked out once you have heaved the bar off your shoulders during the jerk. The judges in competition are always looking for that slight elbow bend at the completion of a jerk. They can be a bit fastidious here at times, so it is best to just snap yourself down under the bar like lightning each and every time. Give them no reason to speculate.

Notice I said “snap yourself down under the bar” instead of “snap the bar up.”

Bar velocity on the jerk is different than for the clean or snatch. There is no gradual acceleration. A jerk is what it is by definition: a sharp, sudden movement. Remain vertical on your dip and drive, get your back knee down and feel your weight equally on each leg while in the split.

The big kahuna, however, is making some noise with your lead foot. This is where the power is. If you are trying to slap that lead foot out sharp and fast and you have weightlifting shoes on (which I hope you do), then the sound of your lead foot hitting the platform should crack an echo like a 9 mm going off. Weightlifting is not ballet, so stay off your toes. Toes do not slap; the flat of your foot does. The gym is not a library, so make some noise. The next time you jerk, think about a huge, ugly, venomous bug creeping towards your foot. Stomp the life out of that creepy-crawly before he bites you. Crack that lead foot down at the exact same time your arms lock. Whatever you need to do to find that powerful change of direction between your dip and your drive, do it. Don't miss the jerk. Missed jerks have a tendency to stick with you and leave a bitter taste in your mouth.



The key to a successful jerk is stomping down your lead foot just when your arms lock out overhead.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



The gym is not a library, so make some noise.

That is what weightlifting is. It's about doing what you need to do to find a way, and never, ever stopping.

This is what the clean and jerk looks like in training: you go into the gym and put a new personal record on the bar. You begin to pull the thing, and in the back of your mind there is a little fucking gremlin that convinces you it is too heavy. With style points, you just pick it up slowly into your hips, but you are too chickenshit to go under the bar.

A week goes by, and this time you make up your mind not to look like a nob-head. You get set, pull, finish hard and move under. No chance! The bar shoots your ass back about five feet, sending you crashing into the wall behind you. A few more crashes like this and you are likely to bring the whole damn gym down.

Another week goes by, and this time you pull it, finish hard, and receive it with your elbows up, but you fail to stand up.

Two more weeks go by, and this time you pull it, finish hard, receive it and stand up with a struggle. You are so excited at this point you begin to get dizzy, and as you try to jerk you have nothing left in you, so you just dump it off of you and collect yourself as you sit down.

Another week goes by and this time you clean the weight beautifully. You dip and drive the bar to lockout but fail to gain control in the split.

Another two weeks go by, and this time you clean it and jerk it like a champion. Your coach says, "Down," and with a sense of pride you give the air a double fist pump. The last time you felt this good was when your girlfriend whispered vehemently in your ear, "You are an absolute god in bed."

Now put on another kilo and do it all over again.

Weeks will eventually turn into months, months into years. Nevertheless, that is weightlifting.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



In weightlifting, there is no room for doubt.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Few things feel as good as a rock-solid PR clean and jerk.

Beyond the Snatch ...

The competition isn't over until the last clean and jerk comes down. You get six attempts at a weightlifting competition: three for the snatch, three for the clean and jerk. The same way a powerlifter knows it's not over until the bar comes off the floor, or a 400-meter runner knows it isn't over until the last leg, the weightlifter knows nothing is final until his last attempt at the clean and jerk is down. The last clean and jerk is what wins the competition, and to make it you have to be conditioned.

To go out there and make all your lifts shows you have not only taken your training seriously but you have also put in the exact amount of time training your clean and jerk as your snatch. Many amateur weightlifters get caught up chasing a bigger snatch over and over in training. They burn themselves out to the point where they are not putting the same amount of effort into their clean and jerk. This is a mistake. Put just as much hard work into the clean and jerk, and in competition never think you are out of it just because you happened to not snatch well.

Take this lifter's experience in competition as an example:

At the end of the snatch portion of the competition, Gloria walked over to the leaderboard. She was disappointed in herself for missing her opening snatch and her third attempt. Showing the discipline of a true champion, she said to herself, "It is what it is. Time to put that performance behind me and get ready for the clean and jerk."

As she looked up at the leaderboard, she saw she was still not that far behind. Even though Gloria had made only one snatch, the girl in front of her was but 6 kilos ahead of her. Gloria's coach came up to her as she was re-taping her thumbs.

"Remember to move your feet and attack the bar on these cleans. Easy clean, easy jerk, right?"

"Right."

"Don't let this girl think she has beaten you. You have trained harder than anyone else here, and it will show during these next three lifts. Attack the bar, Gloria. Be aggressive."

As she started warming up she noticed she was feeling strong. She knew all the extra time spent in the squat rack was about to pay off. Over the past 16 weeks she had increased her front squat by 12 kilos, which is huge for someone like her who has been weightlifting for eight years. Her legs looked like they could split coconuts. On each jerk she did, she made sure to slap her lead foot hard and punch her head through.

"That's right. Same way we practiced in training. Move the light ones fast, and the heavy ones will be fast too," her coach said.

**Out of the corner of her eye,
she spied her competitor
dancing all over the platform
like a newborn baby giraffe.**

On each clean, Gloria felt the stretch reflex in her legs and stood up immediately. The more weight her coach loaded on the bar, the easier the lifts were getting. Out of the corner of her eye, she spied her competitor dancing all over the platform like a newborn baby giraffe as she jerked.

"Chicken legs," Gloria whispered under her breath with a sneering half smile.

She was up. Her coach opened her up at the exact same weight as the girl in front of her in the snatch. After tightening her belt and taking a few slaps on the legs from her coach, she went out and killed it. The crowd was aghast with how easy she made the weight look compared to the other girl. Gloria cleaned her opener with such ease that even her coach was in shock. Like a stoic queen, she walked back into the warm-up room and sat down.

On her second attempt, she had to wait longer than she or her coach expected. She was ready for this, though. Ms. Chicken Legs and a few other lifters were missing cleans left and right. Gloria took a light weight in the warm-up room because she had to wait so long in between attempts. All the hard work she had put into conditioning and working the clean and jerk in training was showing, and these extra attempts to stay loose were no problem.

On her second attempt, her coach called for a weight that would put her 3 kilos above everyone else in the clean and jerk. Again, like a methodical master, she got up from her chair, tightened her belt, waited for some slaps down her legs from her coach, and walked up to the bar with such confidence you could feel it perforate your own skin.

She cleaned the bar yet again with such ease that you could hear the crowd sigh in amazement. "One, two, three," Gloria counted to herself as she found her heels and pushed her elbows up. Her dip and drive was so fast you would have missed it had you blinked. Gloria was down under the bar with a startling crack of her lead foot that reverberated like a cat-o'-nine-tails lashed across a criminal's back. Her coach applauded and told her to sit down. Anyone in the crowd not showing an interest at the start was all eyeballs and ears now.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

***A tough fight with a clean can sometimes make the jerk
an even greater battle. Easy clean, easy jerk.***



Staff/CrossFit Journal

No matter the weight on the bar, when practicing the clean and jerk, always move quickly and decisively.

The way Gloria was lifting, her coach decided to make sure she had the last attempt. Ms. Chicken Legs had one attempt left too, and she was convinced her 3-kilo lead in the snatch was still enough to win overall. Out she went for her last attempt. After a valiant but ugly clean, she had nothing left in her legs to even try to jerk. Gloria was up now. Her coach called for just enough weight on the bar to tie the girl in the lead in total. Gloria already had the win for the clean and jerk, and because she was lighter she would be the overall winner as well should she make the lift.

On her last attempt, Gloria went through the exact same steps as before. She wasn't excited. Instead, she had her poker face on and was focused. As she walked up to the bar and grabbed it, her mind was clear. She emptied every thought from her mind and accepted that at this moment all that mattered in the universe was to pull this bar like she was ripping the head off a god-damned lion.

Gloria was down under the bar with a startling crack of her lead foot that reverberated like a cat-o'-nine-tails lashed across a criminal's back.

She dropped her hips, set her back and pulled. Both her hips and her chest came off the floor at the exact same time as she pushed her knees back. Her hips came through once the bar passed her knees and hit the bar with such ferocity it's a wonder the bar didn't break in two. Like a falcon diving for its prey, Gloria was under the bar, caught the bounce and was immediately back up again. "One, two, three, heels," she went over again in her head before she jerked. The crack of her lead foot was not as loud as her previous attempt, but it was loud enough. She jerked it. As she brought her feet together and waited for the down signal from the judges, she had a wide smile across her face. After she received her three white lights, she stripped the bar, letting everyone know the competition was decided and she was the winner.

Keep your cool—always.

Remember, snatches are cute, but clean and jerks win. I have seen countless weightlifters work themselves up in a frenzy because they snatched poorly. The best weightlifters make all their lifts, but if they should happen to not do well in the snatch, they know it isn't over.

Gloria knew that, and that's why Gloria won. She worked hard in the gym on her clean and jerks and on making her legs strong. Her experience kept her cool under pressure.

**Snatches are cute,
but clean and jerks win.**



Every kilo is earned.

Get on the Bar

The clean and jerk is the king of lifts, and the lifter who lifts the most here will walk king among men.

There is something raw about the clean and jerk or just weightlifting in general. There is a great satisfaction in picking something heavy up off the floor and putting it over your head. This satisfaction is intensified if you manage to do it easily. People will come up to you and ask, "How do you make that look so easy?"

In your mind, you know there were no easy steps.

"Hard work and I am really fuckin' strong," is what you say back to them.

There are no secrets behind weightlifting. The first thing I always say to someone who is interested in being a weightlifter is, "Be prepared to lift a lot of weights." I guess that goes with anything you want to be good at. No matter what it is, be prepared to work hard and put in the time.

I love seeing a person's confidence spiral outwards for the world to see once he or she starts weightlifting. Both the snatch and the clean and jerk have a way of making you feel a great primal sense of accomplishment. The snatch will get away from you, roll out, launch you forward, fall on you and question your resolve.

The clean will crush you, squish you, round you, rip you, shoot you, and knock you back on your heels and bury you.

That last one has happened to me more than once, and I learned real quickly why the plates are the diameter they are.

The jerk will tease you and test you, but go after every one of them no matter what the clean ends up looking like.

Making your lifts in training and always trying to add another kilo is what weightlifting is all about. You have to fight for each kilo or half kilo and work harder for the next one.

This is how you get strong and how you become a great weightlifter.



Courtesy of Donny Shankle

About the Author

Donny Shankle is a five-time U.S. national champion in the sport of weightlifting. In 2007, he was awarded the most inspirational lifter award at the annual Arnold Classic held in Columbus, Ohio. Donny is a Marine Corps veteran and resides in Fort Mill, S.C. Today, he is in pursuit of the Rio Olympics to be held in 2016.

THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

POT OF GOLD SOUP

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

overview

Soup can be tricky, and soup can be sticky. But not this soup. This soup is simple to make, and, well, maybe just a little sticky. In keeping with seasonal cooking, we use pre-cut butternut squash to simplify the recipe. Involve your kids in making it with you, as they can easily help toss the squash with olive oil and use the immersion blender to purée. This soup is well worth its weight in gold.

makes 4-6 servings

ingredients

2 packages pre-cut butternut squash (12 oz. each)
5 sage leaves
1 cup of coconut milk
20 oz. Trader Joe's chicken broth
Salt to taste
4-6 slices of bacon (can be cooked ahead of time)
1 tbsp. coconut oil
Olive oil for baking

directions

1. Cook the bacon at 400 F on a wire rack for 15-20 minutes. Let it drain on a paper towel. This can be cooked the day of or ahead of time.
2. Toss the butternut squash with a small amount of olive oil. Salt it lightly, and then place it in a 9 x 13-inch baking pan and cook it for 20-30 minutes at 400 F, until it becomes very soft and fork tender.
3. Heat a large pot at medium heat and add the coconut oil. Once the oil is hot, fry the sage leaves. This takes about 2-3 minutes.
4. Add the roasted butternut squash, the broth and the coconut milk, and cook for approximately 15 minutes.
5. Remove from the heat and purée the mixture with an immersion blender until it is smooth.
6. Return the purée back to the pot and cook it for another 10 minutes.
7. Add salt and pepper to taste.
8. Top with chopped bacon and serve warm.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Deconstructing Pukie

Hilary Achauer gets to know the clown and examines the physiology behind exercise-induced vomiting.

By Hilary Achauer

March 2013



Alicia Anthony Baldwin

Ben Bristow was just being polite.

His girlfriend had brought in some homemade date-chocolate energy balls for him to sample pre-workout. Bristow, a coach at CrossFit 858 in San Diego, Calif., ate a few of them about 25 minutes before the workout that day. The Marine of 12 years was a two-year veteran of CrossFit and thought this would be enough time for digestion before the workout.

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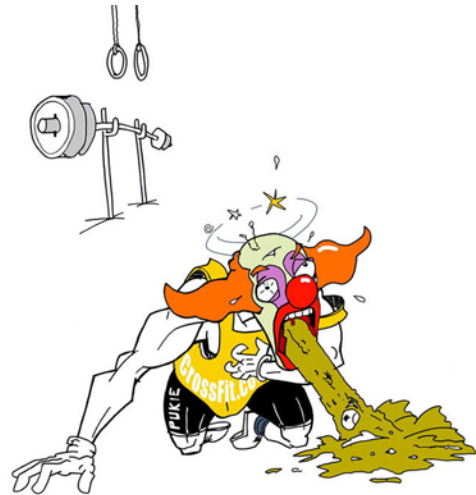
Unfortunately for Bristow, CrossFit 858 was tackling Kalsu: 100 135-lb. thrusters with 5 burpees at the top of each minute until the thrusters are finished.

Bristow regretted eating those date balls almost immediately.

"On the 58th rep, I lost it," he said.

Bristow ran outside and puked in the bushes, then valiantly came in and carried on. He got in 10 more thrusters before he had to run outside again.

The workout was over.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Bristow regretted eating those date balls almost immediately.

Rite of Passage?

In the almost three years I've been doing CrossFit, I've experienced most of the unpleasant physical rites of passage that come with the sport: ripped hands, scraped shins and even the surprising Ab-Mat ass burn.

However, after doing hundreds of evil and frightening workouts, I've never worked out so hard I vomited.

Some less insane people might say, "That's great! Who wants to throw up?"

I don't exactly want to throw up, but CrossFit's mascot is a barfing clown named Pukie, and I've long harbored the suspicion that I've never thrown up because I don't push myself hard enough.

"Maybe some people are more prone to post-WOD barfing than others," said my always-reasonable husband.

Maybe—but why?

"There is a good deal going on physiologically in the body in response to strenuous exercise," Sarah Kirtland said. She's the fitness manager at San Diego State's Aztec Recreation Center and is earning her master's degree in rehabilitation science.



Paul Woo

A visit from Pukie.

"The primary explanation for vomiting is dilation of the blood vessels to the working skeletal muscles and the concomitant vasoconstriction of vessels leading to the viscera (i.e., stomach, intestines). Therefore, if there is anything in the stomach during this type of exercise, the body is likely to eliminate these contents," she explained.

Maybe eating lunch right before Fran is like asking for a visit from Pukie.

But is questionable timing of meals the only culprit?

**Maybe eating lunch
right before Fran is like asking
for a visit from Pukie.**

Another cause of vomiting and nausea during exercise is the production of lactate, which can cause the body's pH level to drop rapidly. During exercise, the cells go into high gear in order to give the body energy for the workout. The method through which the body gets more energy is aerobic and anaerobic metabolism. A byproduct of this process is a decrease in blood pH.

"The entire system becomes too acidic, and everything comes up. This is more common in fit individuals," said Jacob Lawler-Schwartz, a graduate student finishing his master's degree in kinesiology at San Diego State's School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences.

He says he believes a person's physiological makeup is the biggest factor in whether he or she will vomit during intense exercise.

"Everyone's physiology is different," Lawler-Schwartz said. "But when someone vomits during or after exercise, there are a few mechanisms at work. It's a case of exercise-induced nausea, associated with a training state. It's a shock reaction."



Alicia Anthony Baldwin

One of these people just ate a triple cheeseburger and is now regretting the decision.



Jenn Jones placed in the top 30 at the CrossFit Games without vomiting once.

Kirtland agrees that the propensity for exercise-induced nausea and vomiting has a genetic component.

"Everyone has a different resting heart rate, a different max heart rate and various levels of hormones," she said. "You're not going to get the same response. Everyone has a different physiological capability. Some people's bodies are effective at that near-lactate threshold, and they are good at maintaining stability—whether that is pH levels or blood flow."

Despite these theories, nobody is quite sure exactly what causes exercise-induced vomiting. Part of this is due to the challenges of the human model. Everyone's physiology is different, and it's difficult to tease out the myriad factors that cause nausea and vomiting during exercise.

"We can use animal models to infer, but at most we have anecdotal evidence. There is no definitive answer," Kirtland said.

Everyone can agree that vomiting happens when there's a constriction in places that don't need the immediate oxygen and blood flow demanded by muscles working intensely, but scientists are not sure why some people are more prone to reaching this state than others.

The Smoking Gun

"I'd throw up once or twice a week," Jeff Sing said. "Box jumps always made me throw up."

Sing, an athlete at CrossFit 858, has been doing CrossFit for about six months. Prior to starting, the 29-year-old was obese and out of shape. He ran half marathons and worked out regularly at a Globo Gym but still had trouble losing weight.

Sing spends his day working in a cubicle as an engineer, and he was sick of being out of shape and feeling terrible. Desperate for a change, he started working out at CrossFit 858.

"It killed me. And I loved it," Sing said.

However, after three months of CrossFit, he found he would throw up frequently, especially in an intense conditioning workout.

"If I didn't throw up, I'd dry heave and cough," Sing said.

He had cleaned up his eating, but there was one unhealthy habit he hadn't changed: Sing was a smoker. He had smoked for 10 years, starting in college. He smoked about a pack every two days. After struggling with a nasty cough and a feeling that he had water in his lungs, Sing made a decision to stop smoking.

"I didn't want to smoke anymore," he said. "I quit, and it sucked. I was miserable."

Sing stuck with his resolution, and now, after three months of not smoking, he doesn't cough anymore. Even better? "I haven't puked in two to three months," Sing said.

"I did Fran last week and I managed to do it RX in less than 10 minutes," he said, proudly. "I felt dizzy, but that was about it."

Lawler-Schwartz says he thinks Sing's smoking-related barfing might have something to do with the amount of carbon dioxide produced versus the oxygen consumed.

"The buildup of tar in the lungs blocks the receptors from taking in oxygen," he said.

Carbon dioxide builds up in the blood, and this oxygen debt could alter the pH in blood, leading to nausea and vomiting, Lawler-Schwartz said.

The lack of vomiting isn't the only good news in Sing's life. After six months of CrossFit and clean eating, Sing has lost 35 lb. A recent doctor's appointment revealed he was no longer obese and his cholesterol was within normal levels.



Miranda Oldroyd knows how to push herself, and she often pays the price.

Elite Vomiting

It makes sense that smoking would affect performance and produce unpleasant side effects, but what about high-level CrossFit athletes who frequently push themselves to the edges of their abilities? Do all of them get to the point where they vomit?

Former gymnast Jenn Jones competed in her first CrossFit Games in 2012 and placed 28th. This 28-year-old full-time nurse knows how to push herself and has competed at the highest level of the sport, yet she's never vomited during or after a CrossFit workout.

"At certain points I've felt nauseated, but I've never thrown up," she said. "I always try to manage what I have in my system. I don't eat for at least an hour and a half before I go to the gym."

In competitions, Jones said she grazes and is careful to never push herself beyond the "red line."

"I try to be very aware of where that line is, where I can't do any more," she explained. "I think for some people, the panic mode will trigger nausea. I try to never get panicked because then I can't perform. I take a deep breath and keep moving."

Jones said she didn't see Games athletes losing their lunch right and left at the Games, and that's the pinnacle of the sport. If there's a time to puke during a workout, it would be with \$250,000 on the line and the world watching. Most of the puking Jones sees is from people who are new to CrossFit, who either make the mistake of eating right before a workout or whose bodies just aren't used to that type of exertion.

Do elite CrossFit athletes get to the point where they vomit?

Kirtland said she feels a likely cause of vomiting during intense exercise is lack of preparation.

"If you have an improper warm-up and don't gradually build up to the exercise, your body will have a violent response," she said. "Some people require a longer warm-up."



The theory that high-level CrossFit athletes don't vomit doesn't explain one of the more famous pukes in CrossFit: [Miranda Oldroyd's post-Fran barf](#) from Sept. 9, 2010. Pat Barber, a multi-year Games competitor, has also talked about puking "after each workout" when he first started CrossFit ([Don't Call It a Comeback](#)).

Oldroyd, who has been doing CrossFit for five years, is a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff. She is also part of the on-camera talent for the CrossFit Games. Even back in 2010, she was extremely fit and experienced, but as she said at the end of the video, "I think I've only ever done Fran one time without puking."

Oldroyd said she used to vomit more frequently when she started CrossFit.

"These days (I don't puke) as frequently," she said recently. "When we first started, I puked at least once a month. Nowadays it is rare and usually only happens in competition. Every once in a while I will (vomit) in a regular workout, but not too often."

For Oldroyd, it was a process of figuring out what to eat—and when.

"I absolutely have to be very careful about when I eat," she said. "I think my figuring this out has helped in the puking becoming less frequent. I also have to worry about what type of food I eat pre-workout. For the most part, it needs to be easily digestible and (I need) a minimum of one hour before I go hard in a workout. Sometimes this fails and I will still throw up even if it has been hours since I have eaten."

Oldroyd said she feels there are many factors that contribute to her exercise-induced vomiting, and her propensity for puking has decreased as she's increased her level of fitness and learned how to control the circumstances that lead to her vomiting.

If she does make it to the CrossFit Games this year, it's likely she'll be looking for a place to discretely lose her lunch.

"I have noticed a major correlation of vomiting when the stakes are raised," she said. "I have never gotten through an entire competition without puking at least once. I think the reason I puke when it's Fran is a combination of the level of intensity and the nerves that go along with it."



No matter how carefully she manages her warm-up and pre-workout nutrition, Oldroyd has a tendency to vomit when the stakes are high.

Oldroyd said she thinks the biggest factor contributing to her puking is not her level of fitness or how hard she pushes herself but rather her genetics.

"I think I may have the genetic profile to puke," Oldroyd said, "as most of my siblings who have tried CrossFit have puked on their first WOD. I remember my first time ever puking due to physical exertion was when I was 11 years old at a race in elementary school. This trend continued in high-school track and even a few times from bodybuilding-type workouts."

How Many Blocks in Vomit?

For those who think vomiting after a CrossFit workout is a sign you're hardcore, keep in mind that ejecting all those nutrients is not going to make you any stronger.

"If your goal is to build strength, throwing up goes against (that goal)," Lawler-Schwartz said. "The nutrients you ingested prior to the workout won't go to repair and rebuilding."

If you're frequently vomiting from exercise, you will have trouble making performance gains, Kirtland said.

**Things just get weird,
and sometimes you have to
pay the clown.**

"It's a beautiful balancing act," she added.

On the one hand you want to push intensity, and sometimes you trip hard on the red line. That's part of pushing your limits and competing. On the other hand, you need food for fuel and liquid for hydration, so regular vomiting can derail your nutrition and might indicate you need to make some changes to lifestyle or diet. Smoking would appear to be a bad idea if you want to avoid puking, but few CrossFitters light up for other obvious reasons. Experimenting with food and time of intake might also result in a few less trips to the bucket marked "not for chalk."



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The clown pays a visit.



This one will freeze near the entrance to the gym and serve notice to all who pass through the door: it's go time.

But sometimes people vomit during and after workouts. It just happens. Scientists don't totally understand why. Things just get weird, and sometimes you have to pay the clown.

That, of course, will often result in a video being filmed as you retch, and maybe even a special T-shirt from the gym.

It also brings up important nutrition questions for conscientious CrossFitters.

As Oldroyd said after her famous on-camera puke: "Do I have to re-eat all those blocks?"



About the Author

*Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary is an editor and writer for the **CrossFit Journal** and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilaryachauer.com.*

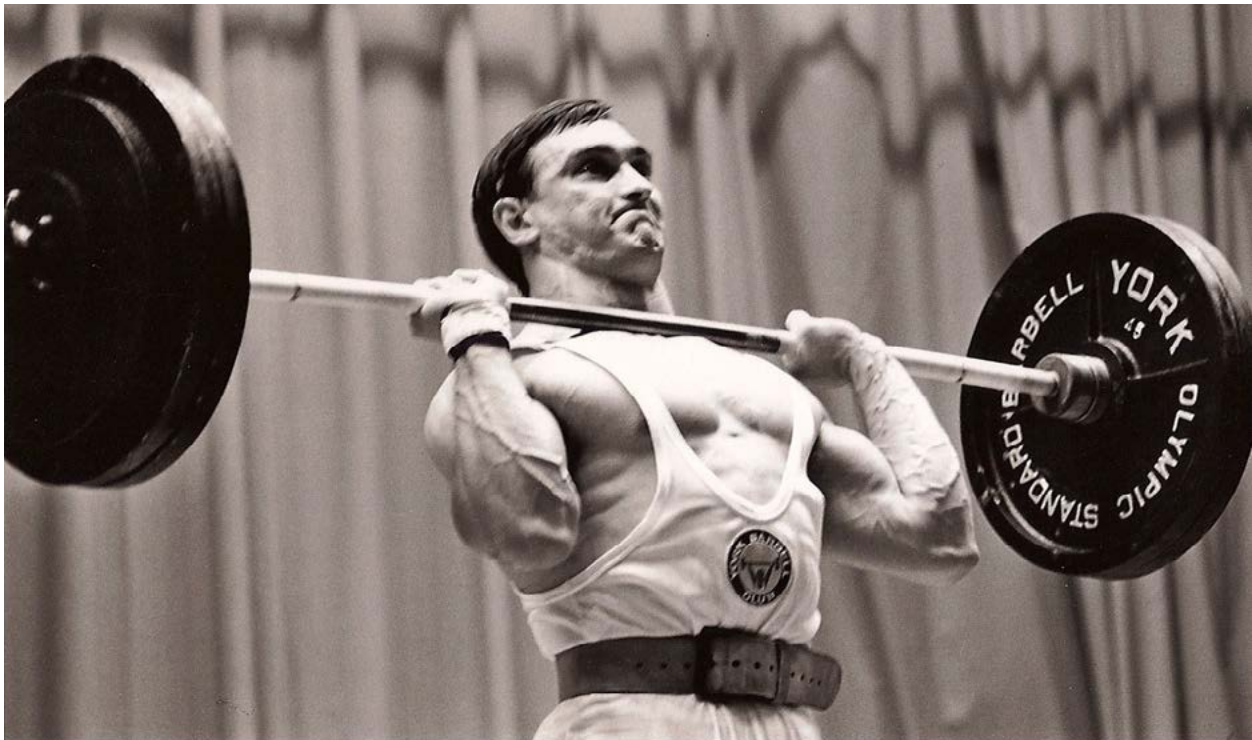
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Forgotten Lift

Bill Starr explains the technique for the Olympic-style press, which helped set records but ultimately ushered the lift out of competition.

By Bill Starr

March 2013



Jody Forster

The overhead press was once the standard test of strength for anyone wanting to get considerably stronger. Whenever anyone wanted to know how strong you were, he always asked, "How much can you press?"

The first goal that every beginner strived for was to clean and press his body weight. In some cases this took a year or more. The next goal was to be able to clean and press 200 lb. That separated the men from the boys. It still does in my opinion. How many athletes are able to handle that much weight currently? Very, very few. Of all the athletes that I have trained in various universities of the years, only a handful were able to handle 200 or more in the press.

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How Much You Bench?

Now, of course, the gauge of strength is the bench press, and 300 lb. is what 200 was for the overhead press. If the overhead press is even part of the strength program, it is almost always relegated to being an auxiliary exercise, and only moderate to light weights are used. Why did this switch from the overhead press to the flat bench come about?

The first reason was an innovation that Tony Garcy of the York Barbell Club came up with in the early '60s. He invented a highly technical style of pressing that required timing, quickness, coordination and—most of all—balance. Previously, Olympic lifters used brute strength to elevate their presses. Tony's version was a high-skill movement, and it took a great deal of practice before anyone could get the feel of what he was trying to do.

Tony Garcy invented a highly technical style of pressing that required timing, quickness, coordination and—most of all—balance.

When the foreign lifters saw him press in the '64 Olympics and '65 Worlds, they saw that he was onto something and began copying his style. Within a short time, nearly every foreign Olympic lifter was using the technique with great success, and it was referred to as the "Olympic style" or "European style" press. Few people know that it was Tony and not any foreign country that developed this dynamic lift.

While the newer style sent records soaring in all weight classes, it became the death knell for the press because it became extremely hard to judge. The bar was rarely pressed at all. It shot off the shoulders and was instantly locked out. And those who leaned back excessively made the move in the blinking of an eye, so it was difficult to tell if the lifter leaned back too far, which was the reason for disqualification. But the hardest part to judge was determining if the lifter started the lift with bent knees.



Staff/CrossFit Journal



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The Olympic press employs a degree of layback, and athletes need to train to be able to use the technique without injury. It takes years of practice to develop the strength required for safe layback with heavy loads.

Judging became erratic, especially so on the international stage, where politics came into play. Some lifters were able to get away with such blatant knee kicks that the lift looked like a push press. The battles between the Communist countries and those favoring democracy were the ones where the judges used the press to keep lifters from doing well. At the '68 Olympics, I watched a Cuban lifter elevate his first two attempts in the press in a strong, steady fashion. Two judges, one from Puerto Rico and the other from Canada, gave him red lights. They did give him white lights on his final attempt, but they had made sure that he would not be in contention for a medal.

It became obvious that the International Olympic Committee had lost all control over the judges when it came to the press. But how could they eliminate a lift that had been an integral part of the sport for so many years? Initially, they tested the waters with the idea that dropping the press would make the meets much shorter. That didn't wash because long meets only occurred at a few contests, mostly on the East Coast.



Cleaning and pressing 200 lb. or more is an impressive feat of strength few can perform.

That's when someone came up with the idea of safety. All of a sudden, there were articles on the subject that overhead pressing was harmful to the lower back due to leaning backward to finish the lift. Athletic trainers, sports-medicine doctors and coaches, mostly those who thought all weight training was dangerous, joined the bandwagon.

In 1972, the International Olympic Weightlifting Committee voted to eliminate the press from official competition. For the record, there was never any evidence to show that the lift was harmful to the back. In fact, overhead pressing is one of the very best exercises to strengthen certain parts of the back, which I'll get into later on.

In this same time frame, several other events happened that altered the status of the overhead press from a primary movement to an ancillary exercise. Joe Weider took control of the sport of bodybuilding and immediately dropped the athletic points that were part of the AAU rules. A bodybuilder could gain those five points by participating in any sport, and because most were doing many of the same exercises as the Olympic lifters in the gym, they entered Olympic meets.

The lift that the majority of bodybuilders excelled at was the press because they did lots of them. They believed, and rightly so, that the overhead press was one of the very best exercises to build a strong, impressive upper body. There are few exercises that can develop the deltoids and triceps as well as overhead presses.

**No longer was the press a
test of upper-body strength.
But it should be.**

Yet once the athletic points were dropped, aspiring physique contestants stopped doing the three Olympic lifts and the flat bench replaced the overhead press in their routines. I have to believe most of them did this simply because the flat bench is much easier to do than the overhead press.

While this was going on, the sport of powerlifting was growing rapidly. It was much easier to train on the static lifts



In the start position, your wrists should be as straight as possible, and you can use tape to enforce the position if flexibility is lacking.

than it was the more complicated Olympic movements. The bench press was the test of strength for the upper body in powerlifting, and for the most part, the overhead press was completely ignored.

Strength training for athletes was also emerging during this time, and Tommy Suggs and I did everything we could to push this movement forward. With the full backing of Bob Hoffman, owner of the York Barbell Company, we put on countless exhibitions and clinics and attended several coaching conventions every winter. That's when we came up with the Big Three, a simplified strength program that could be done with a minimum of equipment. It consisted of the power clean, back squat and bench press (see [The Holy Trinity of Strength Training](#), published May 27, 2009).

Although we both believed the overhead press to be the better lift to develop upper-body strength, we didn't want to have to defend two of the three exercises in the program. We had our hands full with the back squat, primarily because of the bogus research done by Dr. K.K. Klein at the University of Texas. Our second choice after the overhead press was the incline press, but there just weren't any incline benches in high schools and colleges. In truth, not many fitness centers or gyms even had them.

So by default, the bench press became part of the Big Three, and after I published *The Strongest Shall Survive*, it became a fixture in every strength program in the country. And finally, highly engineered exercise machines, such as the Nautilus, exploded on the scene. As a result of all these changes, the overhead press virtually disappeared from the scene, and if it was included in a program, it was always done with light weight, usually at the end of the workout. No longer was it a test of upper-body strength.

But it should be.

Safe and Effective

As far as the safety factor, the overhead press is not nearly as harmful as the flat bench. In the quest for higher and higher numbers in the bench press, athletes resort to rebounding the bar off the chests and bridging when the bar sticks on its way up. Both are extremely stressful to the shoulders and elbows and, in some cases, the wrists as well.

The accusation that leaning back excessively in the press put the lower back in jeopardy was partially true. But what was understood was that those who did lean way back only did this after years of practice. And over those years, the muscles and attachments in the lower back grew

stronger and stronger so they were able to handle the stress. Secondly, as every athlete learns quickly, it's not easy to lay back when pressing a heavy weight.

What was understood was that those who did lean way back only did this after years of practice.

Some layback is desirable and necessary in order to handle a max attempt. But to lay back at the exact moment to help the bar stay in motion is a difficult skill to master. Timing and balance are critical, and it takes a whole lot of practice to get it down pat. This aspect of the lift was the most difficult to learn for all the athletes I taught to press in this fashion. So laying back too much is not really a problem at all, which means the lower back is not in danger of being overly stressed. As I just mentioned, as the athlete perfects this move over time, he is also making his lumbar, and the other muscles in his back, stronger.

Another point in favor of overhead presses is that they strengthen the rotator cuffs. When the press was still the standard of strength, no one had ever heard of an injury to the rotator cuff. In fact, they were unknown muscles. If you asked the most knowledgeable coach or lifter where they were located, they wouldn't have the faintest idea. They're not even mentioned in the kinesiology and applied anatomy text that was considered the best on the subject in the '60s.

The current rash of rotator-cuff problems can be directly linked to overworking the bench press and the lack of overhead exercises. When a weight is pressed overhead, those rotator cuffs are strengthened considerably. When doing a flat bench, they are not. Whenever athletes come to me seeking advice about their rotator cuffs and are not yet to the point where medical attention is required, I start them on overhead presses. I have them use dumbbells for several weeks before graduating to a bar. I also have them drop the flat benches completely and do overhead presses three times a week. It works, although it may take several

months for them to get their rotator cuffs strong enough so that they stop hurting. The overhead press is a perfectly safe and very beneficial exercise when it is done correctly. But this is true for every exercise in strength training, including rather tame movements such as curls, lateral raises, bent-over rows and even back hyperextensions.

One of the things I liked about doing overhead presses from the very beginning was they could be done with a minimum of equipment. All I had at my disposal for the first two-and-a-half years I trained were standard bars and weights. They worked just fine. I think having to turn the bar over during the clean rather than having the bar revolve smoothly actually helped me get a bit stronger. I also like the idea that I could do the movement alone, because I was the only person using the base gyms during my service. No spotter was necessary, and if I failed with an attempt, I simply let the bar come back down to my shoulders and put it on down to the floor.

Cleaning and pressing weights helped me build a stronger foundation than pressing off a rack. I did the combination movement for the simple reason that there were no racks available. And this was the same for nearly every other strength athlete in the '50s. We made use of what we had available, and it forced us to work harder than those who followed us and had the luxury of equipment that made things easier.

The Press: A Quick Lift

Having made my case for the merits of overhead presses, I'll move on to how to perform them correctly. Even if you do not plan on adding presses to your routine permanently, it's still a smart idea to understand the various form points in the event you want to teach the lift to someone else.

While learning how to do this dynamic style of the press, I find it's best to take the bar off the rack rather than cleaning it. That is, of course, if you have a rack in your weight room. This will allow you to concentrate on the various parts of the lift without having to think about the clean. Begin with an empty Olympic bar. Your grip for the press is about the same as you would use for power cleans or deadlifts. Extended your thumbs on an Olympic bar so that they just touch the smooth center. Should you have very wide shoulders, a wider grip will be needed, and vice versa for those with narrow shoulders. The general rule of thumb for all pressing movements is that your forearms are vertical during the exercise.

The rack position is extremely important, and it's slightly different than the rack for a jerk. The bar should rest on your frontal deltoids without touching your collarbones, at that point where the sternum meets the clavicles. To provide a muscular ledge on which to place the bar, just shrug your entire shoulder girdle upward so that your frontal deltoids provide that ledge.

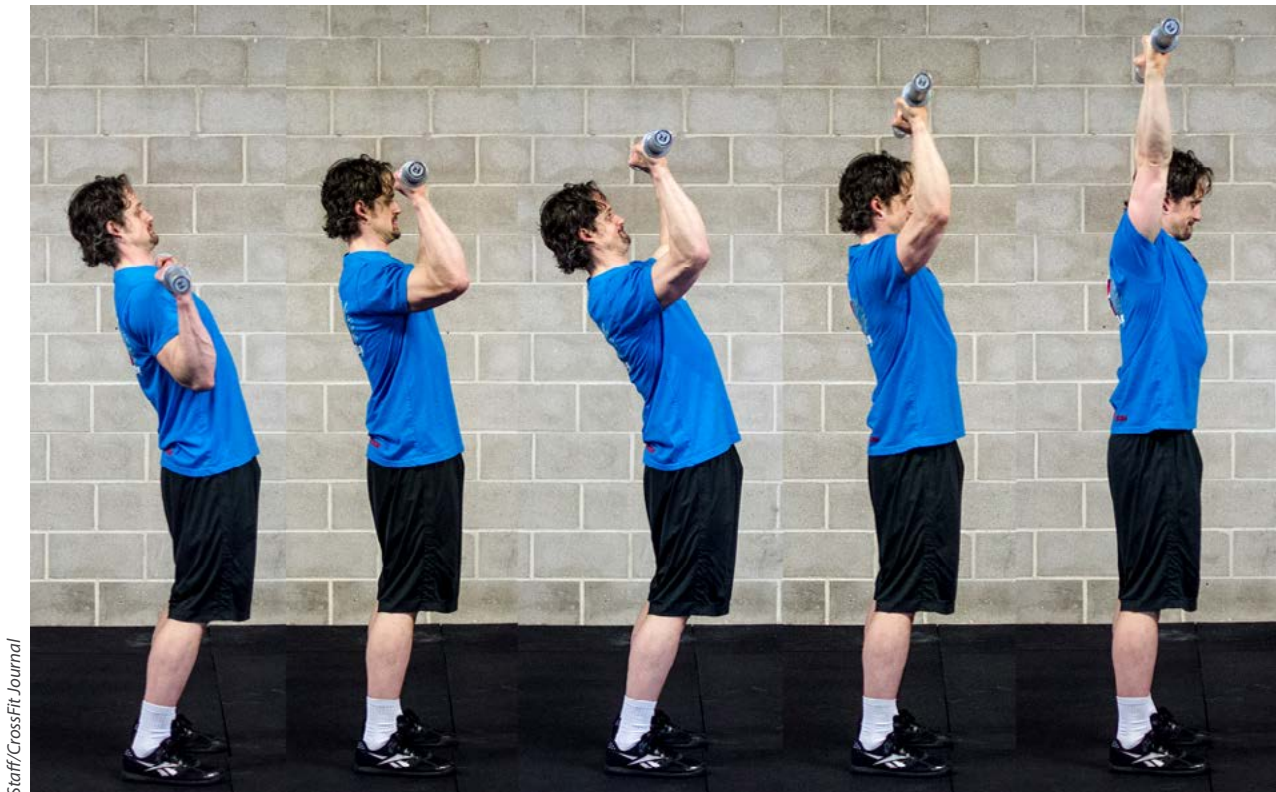
Your elbows will be down and tucked in tightly against your lats. Your wrists have to be absolutely straight. Should you have trouble keeping your wrists locked at any stage of the lift, wrap them with trainer's tape. This is a good idea for anyone just learning the lift because the wrists are placed under a new form of stress, and an ounce of prevention is still worth a pound of cure. Never allow your wrists to flex during the execution of the press because that diminishes the power generated from the shoulders into your arms and finally the bar.

Pressing really starts with your feet, so your base has to be solid and in the right position. Set your feet at shoulder width with your toes pointed straight ahead. Your feet need to be in this position so that the weight can be

shifted from the balls of your feet to your heels, then back again to the balls in a nanosecond.

To ensure a strong base, think about gripping the floor with your toes, much like a bird locked firmly to a tree limb. Everything up to this point is the same as if you were about to do a conventional overhead press, but now the form becomes quite different. With your knees straight, extend your pelvis forward and create a bow with your body. The bow starts at the back of your heels and ends at the back of your head. The bar should be directly over the center of your feet and your hips so you will be starting the lift from your power base.

Take a moment to tighten every muscle in your body, with special attention to your abs and glutes. Imagine yourself as a powerful coil of steel. I said that your knees needed to be straight, but they shouldn't be locked. This is usually confusing to a lifter. Yes, this is how they teach recruits to stand at parades in the military. Those who didn't heed the instructions often fainted because the locked-out legs impeded circulation. Try it without the bar and you'll understand what I mean.



By locking your knees aggressively (Frame 2), the bar will jump upward. Then you must quickly drop back into your starting position while continuing to push the bar upward (Frame 3). This technique requires a precise bar path and perfect timing.



It can take years to develop any proficiency in the Olympic press, which became popular in the '60s.

Get set in that coil, then blast the bar upward in a very precise line, and at that same moment, lock your knees. That combination will send the bar flying upward. Here's the tricky part: as soon as you have uncoiled and locked your knees, you must drop back into that coiled starting position while continuing to put pressure on the moving bar. Lock it out and hold it for a few seconds overhead. The bar should be set on a line right above the back of your head. Then lower it back to your shoulders and take a few moments to make sure all your mechanics are correct before doing the next rep.

This Olympic-style press is really a quick lift and is more difficult to learn than either the squat snatch or squat clean.

This Olympic-style press is really a quick lift and is more difficult to learn than either the squat snatch or squat clean. So don't expect to do it perfectly right away. It takes tons of reps before you will finally get the feel of what you're trying to do. But those who have the determination and patience to drill on this high-skill movement all eventually come to me and say, "One day, it just happened. The bar shot off my shoulders and was suddenly locked out overhead. It was like magic." When done absolutely correctly, that's just what the lift feels like.

A few more points:

- Never follow the upward-moving bar with your eyes. This will make you lean too far backward in the middle and final stages of the lift. In Frame 3 on Page 6, the lifter should be looking straight ahead rather than at the bar.
- As you are coiled and about to launch the bar upward, your weight needs to be pushed forward, over your toes. When you drive the bar off your shoulders and come erect, the weight shifts to your heels, and when you drop back into the starting position, the weight shifts once again back to your toes.

- At the conclusion of the start, your body must be completely erect so that you can put all your power into the bar. Over time, you will also be able to include your traps into that initial move, which will add even more punch.
- Also, as you drop back into the coiled position, you absolutely must maintain control of the line of flight of the bar and keep pushing up against it. Any hesitation in that move and the bar will stall. With max poundage, that will result in a failure.

Driving the bar upward with a burst of power in a very precise line is one of the hardest parts of this form of pressing. It requires a great deal of practice, and for those who have difficulty with this part of the lift, I have them drill on the start until their line is tight on every rep. Then they can incorporate the middle and finish into the movement more readily.

The key to making an Olympic press with a considerable amount of weight is locking your knees during the start with authority. This is exactly what ski jumpers do. When they hit the end of their takeoff, they snap their knees into a locked position, and this provides them with that extra bit of power to soar higher. The same idea applies to the Olympic press. By locking your knees forcefully, that added pop sends the bar a fraction higher, which gives you the time to recoil and press the bar to lockout.



The knees are locked out in Frame 1—an error in start position. They are straight but unlocked in Frame 2, allowing the lifter to snap them into a locked position.

When every move is in sync, the bar will blast off your shoulders and be locked out in the blinking of an eye, and you will understand why it was so difficult for the judges to see any infractions. It's important to remember that you really don't lean back. You will be pushing your pelvis forward until you're curled into a tight, powerful coil.

**It's important to remember
that you really don't lean back.
You will be pushing your pelvis
forward until you're curled
into a tight, powerful coil.**

While learning this athletic movement, you might want to just do 3 reps per set so that you can fully focus on the various form points. But once you feel confident that you're doing the lift correctly, start following this routine: 3 sets of 5 as warm-ups, then 3 sets of triples. After a few weeks, add in another set of triples, then do it again after another month, so that you're getting in a total of 8 sets. And every so often, do doubles or singles instead of triples.

Those who have done conventional presses in the past or are still doing them will have more difficulty with the form on the Olympic press than those who have never done any type of pressing. But with practice, those with experience can make the switch. That's what nearly every lifter in the '60s had to do in order to be competitive. It took me the better part of a year to make the adjustment, and I still wasn't as proficient as some of the younger lifters who learned the Olympic-style press at the very beginning of their careers.

The question naturally comes up, "Why not just do a conventional press instead of having to spend a great deal of time with the more complicated Olympic press?"

If a person is just interested in bodybuilding, the conventional press is fine. But if an athlete would like to include an exercise in his strength program that not only will make him considerably stronger but will also enhance a host of athletic attributes—such as timing, coordination and most of all balance—then he should learn to do the Olympic-style press.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

***Strive to keep your wrists absolutely straight
in the set-up for the press.***

When high-skill exercises such as full cleans, snatches, jerks and Olympic presses are done to perfection in the weight room, the attributes that are greatly enhanced by the dynamic lifts can be carried into any sports venue. In other words, lifts that require you to utilize a great many attributes will make you a better athlete.

Besides, you will discover that doing Olympic presses is fun, and you can't say that for many exercises in strength training.

Then when someone asks you "How much can you bench?" you can reply, "I don't do benches, but I can overhead press 200 lb. Can you?"



About the Author

*Bill Starr coached at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the 1970 Olympic Weightlifting World Championship in Columbus, Ohio, and the 1975 World Powerlifting Championships in Birmingham, England. He was selected as head coach of the 1969 team that competed in the Tournament of Americas in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, where the United States won the team title, making him the first active lifter to be head coach of an international Olympic weightlifting team. Starr is the author of the books **The Strongest Shall Survive: Strength Training for Football** and **Defying Gravity**, which can be found at [The Aasgaard Company Bookstore](#).*

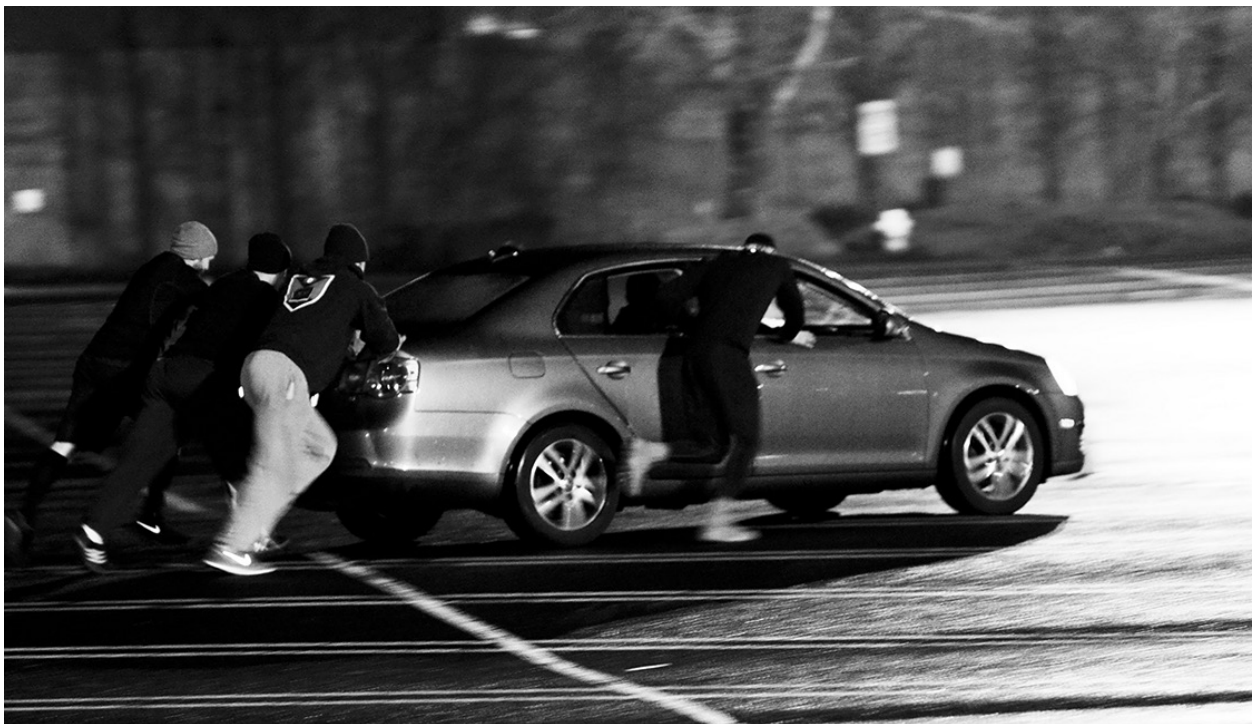
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Chaos League: The Chaos 5000

Fight Club was the beginning. Now it's moved out of the basement and the box. It's called The Chaos League.

By Rob Ord

March 2013



All: Karen Puyleart

You live in an orderly society for the most part. You are brought up learning rules and regulations for almost every situation. Obeying those rules, even mastering them, determines to a large degree how well you will navigate within the structures of society.

Order is good. Order is predictable. Order builds homes, neighborhoods and cities. Order allows you to climb the corporate ladder. Order gives you the sense that you are in control: play the game and everything will be OK. You can plan your future, and if you work hard, you can enjoy it in peace and quiet.

1 of 5

Order is the eggshell that contains the hopes and dreams of your future.

Fire. Earthquake. Car crash. Mugger. Home invasion. Flood. Crack!

"Chaos is the law of nature; Order is the dream of man."
—Henry Adams

Train for Chaos: The Chaos League

At CrossFit HEL (Human Evolution Labs), in Portland, Ore., chaos is embraced as part of the "natural order."

Indeed, chaos is the reality civilized order can never be free of, and failing to incorporate it into your training is tantamount to preparing a boxer for the big fight with nothing but Pilates and positive affirmations.

At CrossFit HEL, the motto is, "Train for Chaos."

The Chaos League is a small group of athletes within CrossFit HEL who embrace guerrilla training—unconventional,

outside-the-box training methods that utilize elements of the natural environment as a means for testing the effectiveness of what is occurring inside the lab. The Chaos Challenge takes this one step further by incorporating the true nature of chaos in the form of extreme challenges and the element of surprise.

Excerpt from the Chaos League member invitation:

Chaos League Membership is by invitation only, and League Members are all equal partners in a grand experiment, whose aim is to elicit the kind of growth impossible in the orderly confines of careful structure.

By definition, chaos is unexpected. Physical and mental challenges, therefore, may come at any time, day or night. Members receive when and where information regarding a Chaos Challenge via text message. The message may also include any special equipment needed for that challenge.

As all members are invited to join the League, they can also be uninvited.



Chaos challenge: 2 a.m., Vancouver Mall parking lot. Dress warm. Bring gloves.



Does your training inside the gym prepare you for life outside the gym?

The Chaos 5000

It was the middle of the night, and it was raining when the League arrived.

Rubbing sleep from their eyes with gloved hands, they sipped coffee in the empty mall parking lot as they waited for the challenge to be unveiled.

About four hours prior, I had sent out a text message. It was brief:

Chaos Challenge
2 a.m.
Vancouver Mall Parking Lot
Dress Warm—Bring Gloves

I had been there for a while already and had measured out a 400-meter course and set up cones. The challenge was to push a “stalled” midsize car 5 kilometers on the coned, slalom course in less than 70 minutes, which would not have been very difficult, except they had to change a tire every 400 meters.

Written as a WOD it would look like this:

12 rounds for time
400-meter lap—5 pushers/1 driver
Change 1 tire

The long oval track had tight turns on the way out, wider turns on the way back. The parking lot had a natural grade that made going out much more difficult and therefore slower than the quick trip back into the pit. In the pit, two members would remove a tire, run it around the car, and put it back on. During the pit stop, all members not changing the tire would do 10 burpees and then hold the FLR (push-up position). The team was required to change the driver every lap.

At first it was awkward. Communication was ineffective. There was no standard operating procedure indicating each member's position on the car and how it would change on the next lap. Tire changes took far too long, largely because putting the tire back on was more difficult than expected, and instead of slowing down and finding a method that worked, the teams struggled frantically on the first couple of changes. In the first few laps the team averaged right about 7:30 per lap, which, if continued, would have resulted in a time of 75 minutes—five minutes over the cap.



The first rule of the Chaos League is that you must be invited to join, and you can also be uninvited.

In short order though, the team started clicking. Communication dropped to only what was essential to initiate the actions necessary to get the job done. Tire changes became fluid as the team embraced the old adage "slow is smooth and smooth is fast." At the end of the final lap, the time on the clock showed 64 minutes 44 seconds. Mission accomplished in the midst of chaos through fluid adaptation and teamwork.

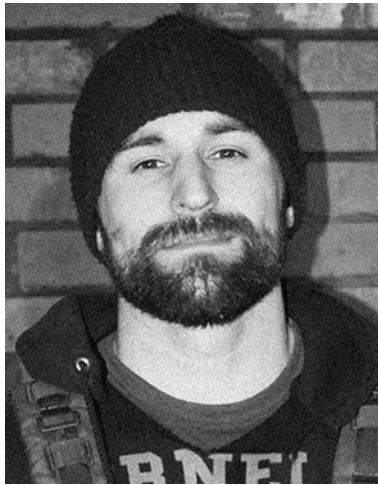
However, the Chaos Challenge was not over yet.

Just as the team pushed the car into the pit on its final lap, I threw a monkey wrench into the mix.

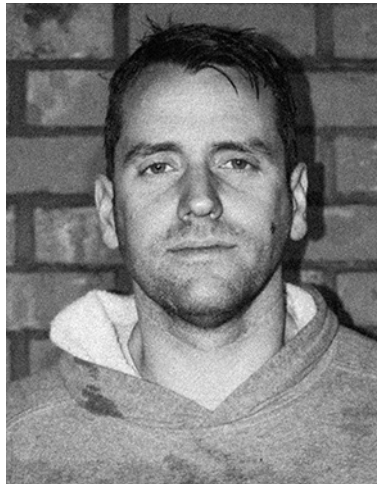
"You are in the midst of a hurricane," I told them. "Just moments ago, a loved one was injured and you were on your way to the hospital with them in the car. Right now your vehicle is stalled near a rapidly rising river, and inside is your injured family member. Local EMS is on the way but will not be on scene before the river rises beyond where your vehicle is sitting. To ensure the safety of your loved one, you must push the car over 50 feet in less than a minute up a slight grade."



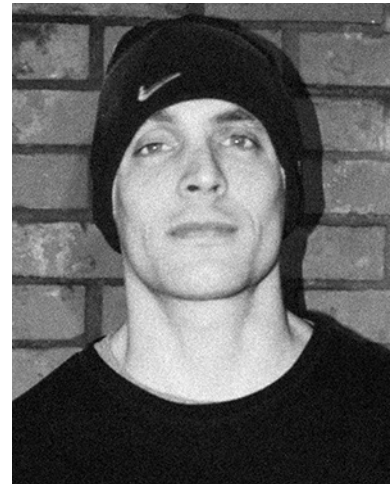
Here are the results of the final challenge:



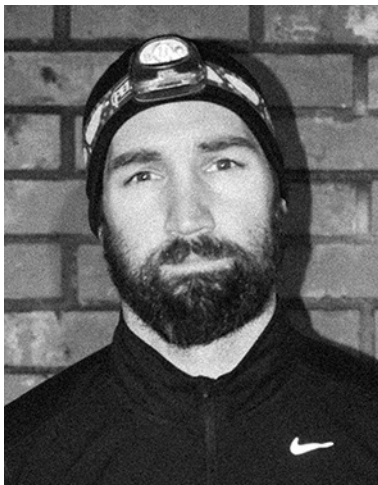
283 feet



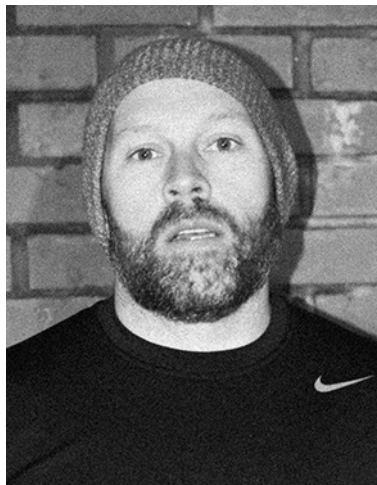
216 feet



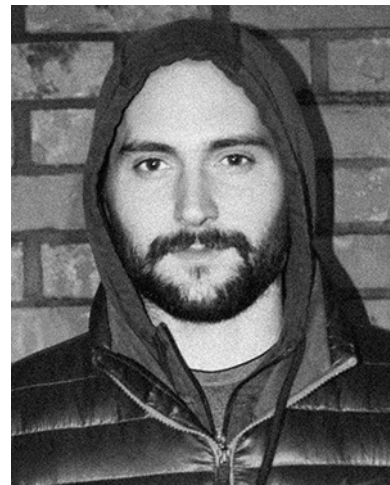
56 feet



46 feet



43 feet



41 feet

Postscript

CrossFit Journal:

The Chaos League invites you to step outside the eggshell of planned video shoots in controlled conditions, interviews by appointment, and articles written in warm, well-lit offices.

If you want to cover The Chaos League, you need to experience the chaos.

Plan to show up in Oregon with a camera and a notebook. Let us know when you'll arrive and how to contact you. Then wait. We'll let you know where to find us.

Bring gloves.



About the Author

Rob Ord is the founder and president of [Brass Ring CrossFit](#), whose primary focus is developing and optimizing human performance through training the whole person—body, mind and spirit. For more information on The Chaos League, visit [Chaosleague.com](#).



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Distance Learning

Hilary Achauer explores the advantages and disadvantages of remote coaching in a sport built on community and personal interaction.

By Hilary Achauer

March 2013



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Traditionally, coaching involves a great deal of immediate interaction between trainer and athlete.

An athlete bangs out five thrusters before stumbling forward on the sixth. Frustrated, she drops the bar, and her coach is talking to her before it stops bouncing. The trainer tells the athlete to get the weight back on the heels and pull the chest up tall to keep the bar over the base of support. The athlete nods, refocuses and works to make the corrections that will result in better movement and more powerful reps.

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It's a feedback loop designed to maximize training time by eliminating errors immediately so the athlete can move forward on every attempt, and it's no doubt been the norm since the first coach paired up with the first athlete.

Carlee Acevedo Fuller's process is a bit different. After finishing her reps, she picks up her phone and sends the video to her coach, Bryan Boorstein, who is more than 200 miles away. As soon as he has a chance, which is usually within 24 hours, Boorstein responds via email and dissects her lifts in detail. Then, the next time she performs the movement, Fuller pulls up Boorstein's email before approaching the barbell.

"I hear (Boorstein's) voice in my head," Fuller said. "He breaks it down so I understand it, and I am able to apply (his coaching) to the lift."

Fuller is part of a trend in CrossFit: remote coaching. Whether it's for CrossFit programming, Olympic lifting, nutrition, endurance or any combination thereof, a number of CrossFit athletes have decided access to their ideal coach outweighs the lack of hands-on, in-person coaching.

Is even a minute too long to wait for feedback?

It's not cheap. The cost for remote coaching depends on the experience of the coach and the level of coaching offered, but it usually ranges from \$150 to \$300 per month. That price can include programming, nutrition advice and video analysis but not face-to-face, in-person contact.

For some athletes, that doesn't matter. As the sport grows and becomes more competitive, athletes are seeking out the best coaches they can find, and that may mean a coach who is not located in the same area, or even the same state or country.



Kelli Somers

Fuller doesn't know if her form needs adjusting until after she's done working out and her coach has reviewed her video.

Rob Hammer



Boorstein enjoys writing programming for his remote athletes but says coaching from afar can be frustrating.

But at least one drawback is blindingly clear when it comes to movement: is even a minute too long to wait for feedback? That question says nothing of the intangible value of a coach who can motivate an athlete daily, monitor for signs of overtraining and even read body language to determine exactly what the athlete needs for success in a training session.

Would Gabby Douglas be wearing an Olympic gold medal if she hadn't moved to Iowa to train under the eye of Liang Chow?

How It Began

Boorstein didn't set out to be a remote coach. He is the co-owner of CrossFit Pacific Beach, in San Diego, Calif., a growing, successful affiliate with two locations. Boorstein had been doing programming and coaching for his friend Ryan Fischer, who placed fourth at the 2012 Southern California Regional. Boorstein is in San Diego, and Fischer lives in Orange County, about an hour and a half away.

"I had been coaching Fischer for free, and he wrote a Facebook post about how much his CrossFit had changed since working with me," Boorstein said.

"I do have to say that my CrossFitting has changed dramatically since meeting my coach Bryan Boorstein a year ago," Fischer wrote on Facebook on Oct. 9, 2012. "Huge shout out to that man for molding me into what I am right now! Can't thank him enough ... If anyone out there is looking for personal coaching, I highly recommend contacting him and seeing what he can do for you."

Within two hours, Boorstein was in the remote-coaching business.

Fuller was one of his first clients. The 32-year-old mother of two sends Boorstein upwards of four videos a day. She admits she gets anxious if he doesn't respond right away and will often text him to ask how she did.

Fuller reached out to Boorstein because she felt she wasn't getting the coaching she needed at her affiliate in Bakersfield, Calif. For a while, she made the almost-two-hour drive from Bakersfield to Los Angeles once a week to work with Andrea Ager, but she felt like she hit a wall and decided to start working with Boorstein.

Raymond Ciria, a coach at CrossFit Crown City, in Pasadena, Calif., is another one of Boorstein's athletes. The 34-year-old had been doing CrossFit for two-and-a-half years and started competing in local competitions in the last 12 months.

"I got addicted to the competition side of (CrossFit)," he said. "I knew Fischer through a seminar I attended, and he told me about Bryan. I wanted to see if I could make it to Regionals."

Ciria had been doing his own programming, focusing on his weaknesses.

"I was good at endurance, and I wasn't strong enough. (Then) I programmed too much strength, and my endurance wasn't there," Ciria said.



Courtesy of Raymond Ciria

When he was programming for himself, Ciria had trouble finding a balance between building up his strength and maintaining his endurance.

The Process

As a coach, Boorstein is precise and detailed in his feedback, with an almost Rain Man-like ability to remember his athletes' scores and every lift they ever hit. He cares deeply about coaching and admits it's hard to communicate his type of detailed feedback in writing.

"It's frustrating at times," he said. "I'd much rather have them do it here (at CrossFit Pacific Beach)."

The process begins with Boorstein asking his clients to test a host of skills, including one-rep-max Olympic lifts, max touch-and-go reps at 65 percent, and max pull-ups, handstand push-ups, ring dips, wall-balls and double-unders. All in all, he requires his athletes to test 25 different exercises.

The programming, which is individualized for each client, is time consuming, especially for someone as detail-oriented as Boorstein.

"Writing the programming is super awesome," Boorstein said. "I love trying to individualize something that is so generic. It's the manner in which you combine the elements that (makes) them effective. It sucks not being able to give (my clients) tactile cues, but they are making ridiculous progress," he said.

In eight weeks, Ciria went from a 175-lb. snatch and a 255-lb. clean and jerk to a 205-lb. snatch and a 295-lb. clean and jerk. He also improved his time in a 7-round WOD that include muscle-ups and hang squat snatches from 28 minutes to 11 minutes.

In 12 weeks, Fuller improved her clean and jerk from a sloppy 130 lb. to 150 lb, her snatch went from 85 lb. to 115 lb., and her overhead squat increased from 115 lb. to 140 lb. She also got a muscle-up and improved her conditioning.

She recognizes that her progress could have been faster if she worked with Boorstein in person.

"I finally figured out how to drive my knees back when I'm snatching," Fuller said. "I finally got it, but it could have been sped up in person. It took a few weeks, and it could probably have been fixed in an hour in person."

Ciria said for him the downside of remote coaching is working out on his own. He coaches classes at CrossFit Crown City but does the workouts Boorstein programs by himself.

"I don't have another athlete pushing me," Ciria said, "and I don't have the physical interaction. Discipline is key."

Fuller agrees it's difficult to gauge how she's doing in a particular workout, and she misses one of the finest joys of CrossFit: lying dazed on the floor and talking about how awful a WOD was and how you maybe could have done it a bit better.

A Ripple Effect

Ron Turner has over 15 years of experience coaching team sports, including university-level basketball. He's a coach at CrossFit VO2 Max in Grande Prairie, Alta.

Last year, a CrossFit VO2 Max athlete finished in the top 20 at the Canada West Regional. Soon after, the athlete hired a well-known remote coach and stopped following her affiliate's programming.

She kept coming into the gym but didn't work out with the rest of the athletes. She would show up and do her remote coach's workouts, which Turner said were remarkably similar to his gym's programming.

"You're paying \$200 a month for this?" Turner said he remembers thinking. "Holy fuck. I can make you a better CrossFit athlete in 30 seconds. I'd start by fixing your muscle-up."

"She's so young, and so strong, it wouldn't matter what she did," Turner said. "She could have gone off and played basketball for three months, and she would have improved."

**"If your hip is not moving correctly,
it should be corrected right then
and there, not four hours later."**

—Ron Turner

The athlete saw improvement in some areas, but in separating herself from the gym's community, she missed out on the camaraderie and face-to-face competition that is integral to CrossFit.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

So much is communicated in the eye-to-eye, face-to-face interaction between athlete and coach.

Turner feels that although remote coaching can be effective for some athletes, it has a negative impact on the CrossFit community as a whole. CrossFit is an individual as well as a team sport, but athletes who choose to follow another coach's programming should be aware of the effect it has on their relationship with their community.

Are the gains worth sacrificing those relationships?

Turner said when athletes stop following his programming, it's harder for him to evolve as a programmer. Just as the athlete needs the feedback loop, so does a programmer—to see what works and what doesn't.

"Some people are just paying \$200 a month to get the signature of a (well-known) coach. Why don't you just go on their website (for the programming)?" Turner said.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Stacie Tovar, who placed 12th at the CrossFit Games in 2012, has known her coach since college.

"There have been studies done that when men work out with other men their performance goes up by 30 percent," Turner said. So while people who have remote coaches are seeing their numbers going up, they are missing out on that primal fuel—competing with the person next to you and sweating together on the gym floor.

"It's not optimal to go online," Turner said. "If your hip is not moving correctly, it should be corrected right then and there, not four hours later."

He added: "If you can get better through remote coaching, then you don't need it. Everything is online. Get the workouts from CrossFit.com, read the *CrossFit Journal*, and go on YouTube and watch Olympic-lifting videos."

When asked why he thinks remote coaching is becoming so popular, Turner said that the difficulty of CrossFit is part of the cause. CrossFit crushes athletes in new and different ways each day. For some, having their weaknesses highlighted creates a feeling of inadequacy.

"It doesn't matter how fit you are, you think, 'Wow, I need more cardio.' It just fuels the obsession," Turner said.

This feeling drives many people to hire a remote coach. Instead of patiently working hard with their affiliate's

coach, they hire a new coach in the hope it will help them improve faster. Athletes who frequently switch coaches in the pursuit of a magic formula for success miss out on something that can only be created over time: a strong bond between coach and athlete.

"I have such a special relationship with Joe. ... You have to have that with your coach."

—Stacie Tovar

Stacie Tovar, who finished 12th overall at the CrossFit Games in 2012, has known her coach, Joe Westerlin, since 2003. Westerlin, owner and head coach at CrossFit Omaha, was Tovar's strength and conditioning coach when she played volleyball in college. Westerlin also coaches Kyle Kasperbauer, who placed third at the 2012 Games.



Some people just aren't meant for remote coaching.

"I have such a special relationship with Joe," Tovar said. "He's a really close friend. You have to have that with your coach."

Westerlin agrees.

"I've known (Tovar) for many years," he said. "We've built up a mutual trust. She does everything I ask of her. She's very coachable."

"Joe is sitting there, watching me, giving me immediate feedback," Tovar said. He is able to assess how she's feeling and make changes as needed. "He really wants to know how we're feeling. We're honest with him, and he listens and responds."

A member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff, Westerlin does not have any remote CrossFit clients. He has had the opportunity but declined for several reasons. First, he doesn't have time. Second, "Remote coaching never appealed to

me because of never seeing the person work out. (There's the) fear that they'll do additional stuff or not wholeheartedly follow the programming," he said.

Westerlin said he's heard athletes talking about adding in extra workouts and going against the advice of their coach. This has the potential to lead to overtraining, and Westerlin says "it's not a valid way to assess the impact of the programming. (Programming) is only as effective as its implementation."

How can a coach know if programming is effective if he or she isn't sure the athlete is following it to the letter?

Mike Burgener, the man who runs the CrossFit Olympic Lifting Trainer Course, is regularly tagged in Facebook videos of athletes lifting, and he'll often chime in with feedback.

"A lot of people make a lot of money with (remote coaching). And with technology, you can send videos, and the coach can do a good job correcting form. What the coach cannot discern is the attitude, the information between the ears. That is the critical aspect," he said.

Burgener said he would much rather have athletes in the gym, one on one.

"You can see the technique, how they handle information and the load I give them," he said.

The Distance Advantage

Some athletes find themselves hiring their former in-person coach as a remote coach when life takes them away from their home gym.

Richard Mascaro, a 34-year-old father of two, has been doing CrossFit since 2009. He loved his hands-on training with Paul Beckwith of Carolina CrossFit.

Then Mascaro went back into the military and had to leave South Carolina. Mascaro had seen such improvement working with Beckwith that he decided to hire him as a remote coach.

Beckwith "did all my programming, and I sent him videos," Mascaro said. "He helped with my diet. I would send him the results of my WODs, and then he would critique them and program accordingly."

Mascaro says his improvement did not slow down, even on the highly technical Olympic lifts.

"My numbers skyrocketed," Mascaro said. "When working in-person with (Beckwith), I snatched 205 lb. Now I can snatch 235 lb.," he said.



Westerlin likes to keep an eye on his athletes to make sure they are not adding in workouts or altering his programming.

Mascaro said he did have an onsite coach who would offer pointers, and then he would send his videos to Beckwith. He admits that the delay in feedback was not ideal.

"With on-site coaching, the coach can adjust my body immediately," he said. "With remote coaching, there is a delay."

However, Mascaro said there were some unexpected benefits from remote coaching.

"Some people get too personal with coaches," he said. "They wear their emotions on their sleeves. If they get negative feedback in person, it could derail them for a week. At a distance, there is time for you to make things more objective."

That, of course, perhaps indicates a problem with the actual coach-athlete relationship as opposed to the geographic proximity of the coach to the athlete.

Mascaro admits that it requires discipline to make remote coaching work, but his bond with Beckwith outweighs the downside of remote coaching.

"Paul is one of the best dudes I've ever met in my life," Mascaro said. "He has a special gift."

The Future of Remote Coaching

CrossFit is a young sport that's experiencing explosive growth. Can other, more established sports tell us something about the future of remote coaching and CrossFit?

Despite obvious differences, triathlons and CrossFit share some similarities. Both sports combine multiple disciplines that require athletes to push themselves to the limits of their abilities. The modern-day triathlon has been around since the 1970s and debuted at the Olympics in 2000. However, it's still not a mainstream sport, and elite coaches are not in every city. As a result, many serious triathletes use remote coaches.

Jim Vance is a USA Triathlon Level 2 certified coach, a former elite triathlete with an Ironman PR of 8:37:09, and an elite coach for TrainingBible Coaching. He has also done CrossFit, so he understands the similarities between the two.

Vance said triathletes have used remote coaching for years, but recent advances in technology have made the

experience even better. He has been coaching triathletes since 2003 and said that most of his clients are remote.

"With technology, we can identify training stress. Using power meters and GPS we can track output, and using video we can break everything down," he said.

Vance uses Training Peaks, a training and nutrition software that allows coaches to turn raw data like heart rate, power, pace, stroke rate and other data into easily understood graphs and charts.

"I really think (software like Training Peaks) is the wave of the future," Vance said.

"Remote coaching for CrossFit is only going to take off," he added.

Vance thinks software like this is essential to make the process more efficient and meet the demand. Although triathletes rely more on power, pace and stroke numbers than CrossFit athletes, automating some of the process would make analysis more precise and allow coaches to work with more athletes. Vance admits there are some

things that can't be gleaned from a piece of software, no matter how advanced.

A remote coach has to rely on the athlete's honesty about his or her physical state.

"The one thing is just fatigue level, seeing it in an athlete and knowing when to tell them when they need to take it easy. When you're a hands-on coach, you can see that with your eyes," he said.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Is this athlete working on his box-jump technique or his AV skills?



A cell phone can't no-rep your press, while a skilled instructor can improve movement dramatically in seconds.

Vance said that a remote coach has to rely on the athlete's honesty about his or her physical state.

"Accountability is a major thing. It is difficult (for the athlete) to want to back off," he said.

And as any CrossFit trainer can tell you, athletes are prone to doing too much too often, skipping workouts due to life events, lying about injuries or fatigue, ignoring weaknesses, changing programs halfway through, chasing PRs when they shouldn't and generally not doing what they're told. With a coach 500 miles away, all those issues can be hidden, only to come to light when something goes wrong and performance is lacking.

The Human Touch

The Internet has changed the way coaches can choose to operate, and some have success by fostering online relationships based on video and email. For select CrossFit athletes, remote coaching provides access to a level of expertise they can't find close by, and for them perhaps the lack of face-to-face interaction and immediate feedback is worth having a talented coach provide individualized programming and after-the-fact movement review from afar.

But other athletes and coaches prefer the traditional method, where the athlete moves and the trainer makes immediate corrections. That trainer is also the athlete's critic, supporter, psychologist and motivator wrapped into one. Trainers can change a workout with a few words of

encouragement or adjust programming based on their perception of the athlete's energy level. They can call out and correct form errors immediately and create personal relationships based on trust and dedication.

Hiring a remote coach may improve an athlete's performance, but it can also erode the feeling of community that is so integral to CrossFit. For Games-level athletes, this might be a worthwhile sacrifice, particularly for those who don't have access to the level of in-person coaching they need. However, CrossFit athletes should consider the effect of their decision to hire a remote coach. Are the gains worth it, and could they have been made with a bit more work and focused effort?

Overall, the web might offer new opportunities for coaches and athletes, but it remains to be seen whether it can ever replace a coach who can spot and correct a muted hip from across the gym.



About the Author

*Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary is an editor and writer for the **CrossFit Journal** and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilaryachauer.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

From Crunches to Climax

Emily Beers examines the physiology of exercise-induced orgasms, and female CrossFit athletes open up and talk about them.

By Emily Beers

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

It was 1995, a time when crunches were the in-vogue ab exercise.

Wendy was a high-school student. Desperate for a flat stomach to flaunt during the upcoming summer, she started an abdominal routine in her living room.

Crunching away, she told herself the monotony would be well worth it.

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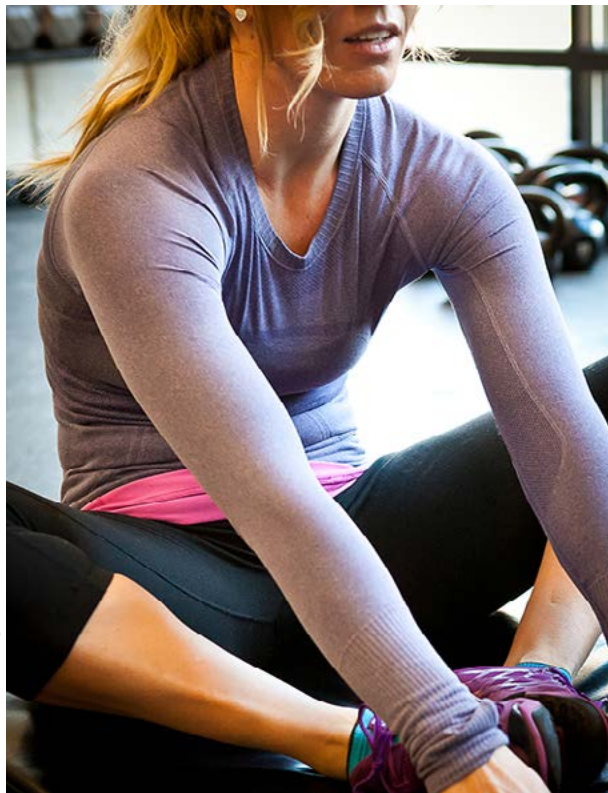
"From pain will come pleasure," Wendy remembers thinking. Twenty, 25, 30 crunches into her routine, and suddenly her body started to feel hot in an interesting new way. The friction from the constant crunching started to stimulate her pelvic region. Thirty-five, 40, 45 crunches into the workout, Wendy kept getting closer to climax with each crunch.

Wendy had just experienced her first crunch-induced orgasm.

At 52 crunches, her abdominal session ended abruptly—and involuntarily. She was flat on her back, breathing hard, her body half numb.

Wendy had just experienced her first crunch-induced orgasm.

In fact, it was her first orgasm ever.



Kim Bellavance Photographie

When the WOD Annie becomes interesting: some women find ab-focused workouts bring them to orgasm.

L-Sit Orgasms: Tabata-Style

Wendy isn't the only woman who can bring herself to orgasm during a workout. CrossFit females around the world have also reported experiencing arousal from certain movements, namely sit-ups, rope climbs and L-sits.

These orgasms are commonly referred to as "core-gasms," because the movements that bring them on are generally focused on the core or abdominals.

Erin from Calgary, Alta., is a CrossFit athlete with the propensity to orgasm mid-workout. For Erin, it began as a young teenager during ballet class.

"It was something that worked the lower abs. At the time, I didn't quite know what was happening and thought it was kind of strange," Erin said.

Workout orgasms disappeared from her life for a while after that, but they re-emerged with greater regularity than ever when she discovered CrossFit in her 20s. By then she was well aware of exactly what was going on in her body as she attempted her first max L-sit hold.

Today, not only does Erin find herself in full-blown orgasm mode after about a 30-second L-sit, but she can make it happen multiple times in a row.

"I generally can do about three or four, and then I can't physically hold the position to generate another orgasm," Erin confessed.

Erin goes so far as to suggest that her L-sit ability is intrinsically linked to her ability to orgasm.

"I haven't been able to get past 30 or 40 seconds of L-sits since I'm not really able to hold an L-sit anymore once I orgasm," she said.

"I generally can do about three or four, and then I can't physically hold the position to generate another orgasm."

—Erin from Calgary

An Anticlimactic Orgasm?

Females like Wendy and Erin have led to an interest in scientific research about females and exercise-induced orgasms.

In 2011, Indiana University conducted a study that included 530 women. It looked at women who admitted to both exercise-induced sexual pleasure (EISP) and exercise-induced orgasms (EIO).

The article produced from the study was written by Debby Herbenick and J. Dennis Fortenberry and titled [Exercise-Induced Orgasm and Pleasure Among Women](#). It was published in the peer-reviewed scholarly journal *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*. One of the study's participants listed CrossFit specifically as the stimulation that caused EISP, though more participants found general activities such as swimming or biking/spinning to be the source.

Like Wendy and Erin, the women who participated in this study also reported abdominal exercises provided the most common way to climax during a workout, and activities such as rope climbs and climbing poles and trees—whenever there is pressure on the pelvic region—also provided the necessary stimulation. Interestingly enough, lifting weights also ranked as a movement that can lead to orgasm.

“Sex may not be the only natural setting for women’s orgasm.”

— Herbenick and Fortenberry



Kim Bellavance Photographie

Situations like this might be related to the pubococcygeus muscle, which controls urine flow and contracts during orgasm.

As Herbenick and Fortenberry pointed out in their article, there is still so much we don't know about the female orgasm. But the concept of an exercise-induced orgasm suggests that perhaps female climax isn't entirely related to sexual experiences.

Evidence of this is the fact that the subjects in this study reported that sexual thoughts and fantasies are not often associated with either EIO or EISP.

"Orgasm occurs—perhaps even normally—outside of sexual settings and in the absence of sexual arousal or stimulation," Herbenick and Fortenberry suggested in the article.

Dr. Lori Brotto, a clinical psychologist, is both a member of the International Academy of Sex Research and runs a private sexual-health clinic. She agrees that exercise-induced orgasms are likely to be—at least somewhat—asexual in nature.

"For the majority of women, psychological arousal and awareness must be present. However, we have evidence that orgasms can also be purely physiological. Many women will orgasm in their sleep, presumably without any psychological awareness. In these cases (as in the case of exercise-induced ones), they are purely physiological," Brotto said.

It could be very simple, explained Brotto: "Exercise increases sympathetic nervous system (SNS) activity and has been shown to heighten sexual arousal. Given the intensity of CrossFit, there is likely quite a surge in SNS activity . . . For women who are easily orgasmic, this might be just enough of a boost to their sympathetic activity to lead them to experience orgasm."

Similarly, in 2000, the *American Journal of Cardiology* published *Sympathetic Nervous System Activity and Female Sexual Arousal* by Cindy M. Meston. It was the first study that suggested female orgasms contain a "purely physiologic component."

The study involved 35 sexually functional females, who were asked to exercise for 20 minutes on a stationary bike—working at 70 percent of their maximum volume of oxygen intake—before watching an erotic film.

Although exercise prior to watching the film did lead to an increase in both vaginal pulse amplitude (VPA) and vaginal blood volume (VBV), "there were no significant differences in sexual arousal, positive affect, or negative affect with exercise alone," Meston reported in the article.

At the end of the study, one of Meston's conclusions was as follows: "Exercise per se does not simply increase VBV and VPA responses, but, rather, exercise in the presence of an erotic stimulus somehow prepares the body for sexual arousal."

Furthermore, Meston suggested that there might be an optimal level of SNS activation to generate sexual arousal, and that levels below or above optimal may have less of an impact on—or even an inhibitory effect—on a female's sexual response.

This could be why Erin can have an orgasm during an L-sit, yet she says, "L-sits are still painful."



Experiencing an orgasm while climbing rope may be a purely physiological reaction for many women.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



Kim Bellavance Photographie

Sadly, experiencing an orgasm does not make L-sits any more fun.

The Wet Filthy Fifty

Building on the point that female orgasms have purely mechanical components to them, Tony Leyland, an exercise physiologist from Simon Fraser University as well as an avid CrossFit athlete, suspects there might be a link between females who involuntarily urinate during workouts and females who have the propensity to orgasm while exercising.

“I always start the (Filthy Fifty) out wet and then have to ride it out for the next 20 minutes.”

—Wendy

A little bit about mid-workout female urination: Walk into any CrossFit box around the world and you'll discover hundreds of women who admit to losing control of their bladder during movements like box jumps and double-unders.

Wendy admits that she hates the Filthy Fifty workout.

“It's terrible. It starts with box jumps and then jumping pull-ups. I always start that workout out wet and then have to ride it out for the next 20 minutes. It's so uncomfortable.”

Leyland suggests a muscular link between involuntary urination and exercise-induced climax.

“The pubococcygeus muscle controls urine flow and contracts during orgasm, as well as being involved in core stability, so any tendency for orgasm may be linked to this muscle,” Leyland said.

A Reason to Study Sex and Exercise

As deviously sexy as mid-workout orgasms might have originally sounded, they are often less than glamorous. While you might expect Erin's favorite CrossFit workout to be "Tabata L-sits/Tabata orgasm," it certainly is not.

"I have better orgasms by actually having sex," she said.

Erin actually doesn't look forward to L-sits, partially due to embarrassment.

"Depending on the day, I dread them coming up, because, you know, it's not like I always want to orgasm in the middle of the workout. Not to mention that it is distracting to wonder if anyone has caught on to what's happening," Erin said.

This is part of the reason Herbenick and Fortenberry think we need to continue to study the female orgasm. It's part of educating women about what's going on in their bodies and ultimately reassuring them that orgasms in the gym don't make them weird or perverted.

Similarly, clinical psychologist Dr. Jocelyne Lessard believes studying things like exercise-induced orgasms can help us help women who desperately need it—like rape victims.

Lessard explained that while some women can only achieve orgasm when they're both stimulated mechanically in specific areas and are in the right mental headspace, other women orgasm involuntarily, as is the case for both Erin and Wendy.

"It may be a very physiological experience and therefore not necessarily linked to mood/ambiance etc., but rather their basic physiology," Lessard said.

"Some rape victims will surely attest to this," she continued. "There can be terrible guilt and self-recrimination from having responded physically to something so unwanted and awful, and that makes it all the more traumatic for these women or teen girls."

Herbenick and Fortenberry added: "To the extent that science can shed light on people's experiences with sex, it may help individuals to understand their experiences as normal rather than bizarre or obscene."

Similarly, female orgasmic disorder (FOD) can be found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, suggesting the female orgasm is a combination of physical and mental factors. In the article [Female Orgasmic Disorder: "I'm Not Able to Climax"](#), both emotional and



Kim Bellavance Photographie

Although not as common as with more core-focused exercises, some women experience orgasms while lifting weights.

anatomical causes of FOD are suggested, and treatment can involve everything from counseling to Kegel exercises. Any research—exercise related or not—into the orgasm would certainly help treatment of the disorder.

Futhermore, orgasm is obviously related to sexual pleasure, though it's not always an essential part of it. Still, few people would decline any information that would lead to more frequent orgasms.

Roped In

Generally speaking, when females orgasm, they describe the sensation as a moment where their body gets hot or goes numb, or where they lose control of their physical selves as the surge of ecstasy rushes through them from head to toe.

Seeing as climbing trees, poles or ropes are three of the movements that can bring a female over the edge, one might assume there's a danger factor involved if an orgasm occurs while clinging onto a rope or tree for dear life. But Sharon, a CrossFit athlete who experienced her first mid-workout orgasm doing toes-to-bars, joined the "30-foot club" without incident.



The female orgasm is not totally understood, and research into exercise-induced climax might shed light on the subject.

“I was 30 feet in the air during a rope climb one time, and I couldn’t take it anymore.”

—Sharon

“I was 30 feet in the air during a rope climb one time, and I couldn’t take it anymore,” Sharon explained.

Despite her seemingly vulnerable position dangling in the air, it didn’t feel dangerous to her when she peacefully had an orgasm six inches from the ceiling of her gym.

“It’s an odd feeling in your body, as opposed to an all-encompassing kind of feeling,” Sharon added. “You’re more in control. It feels very muscular. I can feel them coming on, and if I continue doing reps, I’ll get to the point of climax. But if I had paused halfway up the rope, for example, I probably could have let it pass.”

But she didn’t let it pass, because she knew nobody was watching.

“I could tell nobody around me knew what was going on up there,” she said.

Have you experienced an exercise-induced orgasm during CrossFit? Which movements caused the orgasm? What did it feel like? Please post your thoughts to comments.



About the Author

Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor who finished a master’s degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts WOD HOG, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional Media Director while recovering from surgery. Beers also competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver’s team. She finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012.