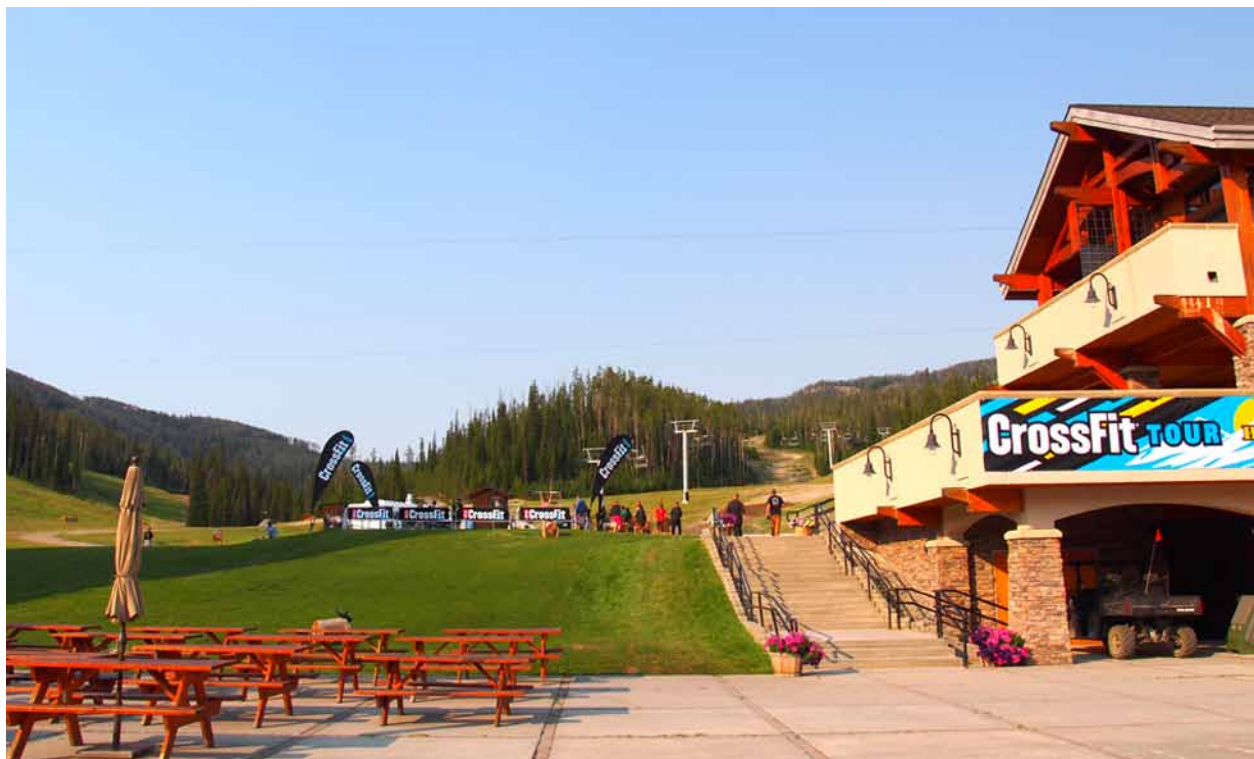

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Big Sky Bonding

CrossFitters assemble to hear Coach Glassman speak and relax in Montana's natural playground.

By E.M. Burton

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All images: E.M. Burton

For the second year in a row, CrossFitters gathered in Big Sky, Mont., to relax, meet new friends, spend time with old ones, and just generally hang out and do what we do naturally—with a heavy emphasis on nature.

In fact, I can't imagine a more ideal spot for the final stop on the 2012 CrossFit Tour than Big Sky, where everybody took it outside. From throwdowns at the Rogue platform and bungee-trampoline jumping to beer-and-burpees in the party tent, there was something to do outdoors for just about everyone.



CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman speaking about the future of CrossFit.

Previously, the Tour touched down in Australia in February, Texas in March, and Denmark in May before the big show at the CrossFit Games in July in California. Following the intense and exciting spectacle of the Games, the Montana event was characterized by an atmosphere that was decidedly greener and a pace that was slower.

The highlight, of course, was the chance to interact with other CrossFitters and hear CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman speak about the future.

On Friday, Aug. 10, the welcome reception from 4 to 11 p.m. officially kicked off the last stop of the Tour for 2012, welcoming subject-matter experts, affiliate owners, CrossFit staff, and athletes from all over, including two-time Games champ Rich Froning Jr. and Dan Bailey. While temperatures had been unseasonably high that afternoon, the big sky opened up, and rain cooled things off quite a bit.

The next morning, CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman gave an inspirational speech and took questions from the crowd.

Coach Glassman Speaks

Following Saturday's buffet-style breakfast, Coach Glassman addressed the gathered crowd.

"In these troubled times," Coach said, speaking specifically to the affiliates and referring to the economic challenges we all face, "what you are doing is nothing short of health and wealth creation. Anything that creates health and wealth is so priceless that no one should own it."

The relationship that CrossFit Inc. has with affiliate owners is unusual in the business world, which is likely why CrossFit has garnered so much attention from those at *Forbes* magazine, as well as would-be purchasers. People can generally recognize quality, and most want in on a good thing if they can get a piece of it. Coach described the relationship CrossFit has with the affiliates as "a covenant," adding, "It's not for sale—at any price. And staff and I are here to safeguard it."

To a rapt and well-fed audience, he explained that the plan for growing wealth for your children and future generations includes being a good trainer, shooting for excellence and embracing virtuosity.

"A trainer trains and doesn't do anything else, (with) knowledge, experience, talent, skill and commitment," Coach Glassman explained. For the video, click [here](#).

Coach also talked about selling shirts and gear as part of the pleasure of owning a gym but not a critical part of the business model.

"We sold shirts," Glassman said. "Why? It was just part of the community. It was part of who we were. They said foul things that shocked people; they were cool. That's a part of the whole thing. Let's leave the supplements and the power bars and the apparel as a critical part of your revenue, let's leave them to another gym model. Now I'm not going to tell you not to do those things. I'm just telling you I'd never do them."

Speaking of cool shirts, Coach was sporting a special T of his own at the event, with "Unbuyable" emblazoned across the chest and the most sinister looking, Reebok-CrossFit-shoe-wearing Pukie ever seen on the back. The message was awesome, funny and profound all at once: He's got your back. You want this guy in your corner.

Wanting to be in the service of others is at the core of what CrossFit is.

Always one to share, Coach explained CrossFit's trade secret.

"It's our review criteria on the essays (for affiliation). The No. 1 plus is, 'I want to make this a better world and extend this benefit to others,'" he said.

Wanting to be in the service of others is at the core of what CrossFit is, and the long-term goal now for Coach Glassman and CrossFit is to finish the acquisition of the entire company and then protect it forever.

"I'm going to get (CrossFit) out of everyone's reach—forever," Glassman said. "It's too important. It's too important. The temptations to get hold of this thing are incredible."



Coach Glassman's new shirt, with "Unbuyable" across the front, sent a clear message to would-be purchasers of CrossFit.

He added: "It's too precious for the marketplace."

He doesn't need a partner, Coach explained; he needs the affiliates to be successful. For himself, his children, his staff and their children, and the affiliates and their children, successful affiliates are all that is needed. The CrossFit Games exist simply to promote the interests of CrossFit affiliates to the larger world, and the Games themselves exist only because of the volunteer spirit of people like Bill and Caity Henniger and many others.

For those curious about CrossFit's initiatives—the SAT-prep program, building schools in Kenya, preventing infant drowning, and fighting catastrophic children's illnesses—Coach explained that the projects are part of a program that now goes beyond squatting and doing Fran.

"It's who we are to care about those things. It's part of our identity. It needs no explanation," he said.

He added: "It's a brand statement. It lets the whole world know who you are. ... When you realize, 'I can make a difference in Africa,' ... you come to realize how easy it is to make a difference at home."

Just by being who we are, we all represent the CrossFit brand. According to Glassman, "We can make a positive difference anywhere we go. If the affiliates are there, it's a better place because of it."

Athletes, coaches and HQ staff all made new connections, strengthened practices and old friendships, and just generally had an awesome time.

He continued: "Ask the people who run this place. They'll tell you. Ask the vendors in the shops. They've seen it. The kids who run the events here, they all know it: 'CrossFitters are good people.' They ask us, 'Who are you? What is this CrossFit?' I'm so proud to tell (them), 'It's the affiliates. Talk to them, they'll tell you who they are.'"

"The thing that we have, no one can take away from us."

The CrossFit Community

Fired up by coach's words, the crowd had a plethora of outdoor activities to partake in, both on and off-site. CrossFitters enjoyed golf, fly fishing, whitewater rafting, twin ziplining, a high ropes course, skeet shooting and paintball, all while generally enjoying each other's company.



A few brave athletes faced off in a vicious beer-and-burpees WOD.

The Reebok barbecue dinner on Saturday evening began at 6 p.m. and featured a wide variety of healthy local fare, including bison and venison. At 7:30, the first Rich Froning/Dan Bailey Challenge WOD went down, where the 2011 and 2012 Games champ and 2011 Open champ challenged teams of two. I missed the stunning Perseid meteor shower because I was too focused on the Team Kettlebell Snatch challenge and beer-and-burpees competition, which was overseen by Dave Castro.

Athletes, coaches and HQ staff all made new connections, strengthened practices and old friendships, and just generally had an awesome time. Family, friends, fitness and fun were general themes of the event that closed out the 2012 Tour schedule and came as a holiday at the end of the CrossFit competition season.

For the Hennigers of Rogue Fitness, who brought the equipment for the WODs and regular throwdowns, it was a chance to relax.

"It's really nice. With the Games just over, this is a bit of a vacation, a relaxing time to hang out with people who are normally going at full speed," Bill said. He and Caity—who won the CrossFit Games in 2008—joined Rory and Angela McKernan for some fly fishing. Bill caught three fish.

It's funny to note that those who don't CrossFit can profile us. I met a man staying at the hotel for business. He and a friend had been out golfing, and they approached the CrossFit tent for a beer. The bartender, however, turned them away, explaining, "Yeah, you're not CrossFit." The poor fellow took it to heart, interestingly enough, and rather than get angry, he decided he was going to start CrossFitting when he returned home.

Cathy Iverson, an interior designer and athlete from CrossFit Sisu in Minneapolis, Minn., appreciated the sense of having something in common with everyone at the Tour event. The "commonality that all of us have here is what's important," she said.

"It doesn't matter what level you're at. We're all the same. Whether you're very experienced or you're two weeks into the gym, it doesn't matter," she said.

I mentioned how I appreciated the family-oriented nature of the gathering, and Iverson trumped me a bit by telling me she brought 17 of her family members with her. Her 78-year-old mother was in attendance and, while she isn't currently CrossFitting, she is curious to try it out.

Iverson's son, Jeffery, is new to CrossFit, and she appreciates the incredible opportunity CrossFit gives him.

"I haven't seen anything else give to my son what CrossFit gives him. I'm at a point in my life, where it's not about me and my generation anymore. It's about future generations and the potential these guys have," she explained.

The family arrived a week before the official gathering and did hikes, went up in the chairlift, took a lot of pictures and met people. The natural setting was something Iverson most enjoyed about this stop in the Tour.

"Big Sky offers such a healthy environment that I think it's a natural thing for CrossFitters," she pointed out. The family did a 13-mile hike on Thursday, and Iverson said that "without CrossFit, we might not have been able to do it."

Indeed, the Tram to the Top of Lone Peak broke down on one "expedition," and CrossFitters in attendance had to hike the rest of the way.

Iverson also appreciated the chance to meet and talk to Coach Glassman, and she fought back tears while watching her young son thank Coach before Saturday's dinner, shake his hand and talk to him about the future.

**"This is part of
being members of this
community. ... This is too
important to miss, really."**

—Meghann Holloway

Megan and Paul Southern, owners of CrossFit Pleasanton, appreciated the gathering as downtime with good friends.

"It's way more intimate," Paul explained. "You get to just hang out. You might see Coach at the Games, but you're not going to get to hang out and talk to him there. Same thing with Coach B (Mike Burgener) and all these other fantastic people here. This is just such a concentration of personalities with a wealth of talent and great people."



3-2-1 ... Human slingshot!

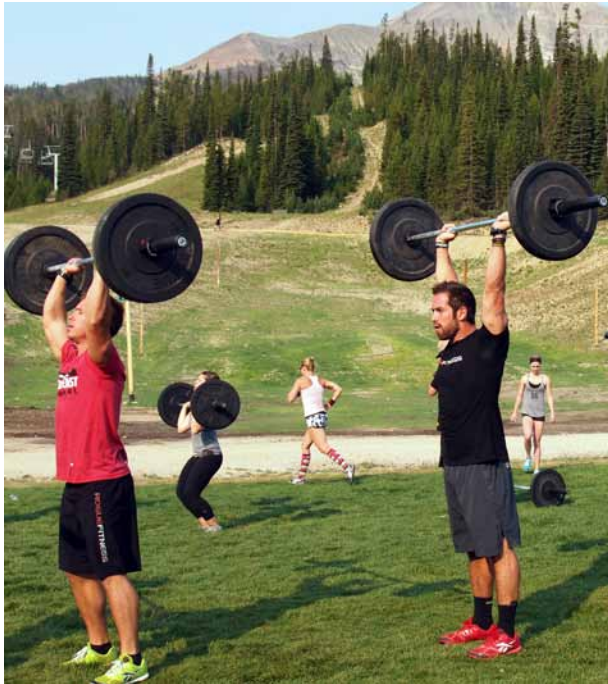
Megan noted that while Big Sky is an awesome place for children, "We didn't bring our kids with us this time, so we actually got to take a nap after the workout. ... This is a great venue to bring your kids, but without them this year we had a chance to connect more and hang out with other affiliates."

Meghann Holloway and Jenn Mayotte, Level 1 trainers at Arenal Fitness in Pikesville, Md., and aspiring affiliate owners, travelled from the East Coast to Big Sky for the astounding natural surroundings and to be surrounded by so many passionate CrossFitters. Having seen the video from last year's gathering, they "just knew that it was somewhere they wanted to be."

The opportunity to be in the presence of so many CrossFitters at once was something they didn't want to miss despite busy schedules.

"This is part of being members of this community," Holloway said. "We're both trainers, we both work two full-time jobs, we're both really busy, but this is too important to miss, really."

They, too, appreciated interaction with Coach Glassman and hearing what he had to say about the future and the importance of the affiliate community. They're at a turning point in their lives—a point many affiliate owners know well—and they're taking a risk by changing their lives and entering into affiliation. They took great comfort in hearing Coach Glassman say that nothing for the affiliates will change, one way or another.



CrossFitters threw down under the Montana sky with stars Dan Bailey (left) and Rich Froning Jr.

Chris Collinson is a Level 1 trainer at his daughter and son-in-law's box, Yellowstone CrossFit, and he also teaches in the aviation program at Rocky Mountain College. Big Sky is his backyard, and when so many CrossFitters come your way, you want to be there. He worked out early, took in Coach Glassman's breakfast talk, fished all afternoon and enjoyed some quiet time. Collinson came to last year's gathering, and he said he just loves meeting everyone. He started CrossFitting four years ago.

"I knew I had to get my Level 1, and I remain continually impressed with staff and the (seminar) trainers."

Baker Leavitt, owner of 2POOD Performance Apparel and Kill Cliff sports recovery drink, loves to attend CrossFit events. Leavitt was at the Fort Worth Tour stop, which he feels was totally different from the atmosphere at Big Sky.

"Fort Worth was more of a party. There were a lot more people there, perhaps because Big Sky is a little bit harder to get to."

Leavitt appreciated the more intimate nature of the Big Sky stop, and he noted that "people were spread out a lot more at the Fort Worth stop. Many people stayed 10-20 miles from the venue. This is a little more intimate with everyone in the same place."

He of course enjoyed hearing Coach speak in the morning over breakfast.

"He really spelled out for us a lot of the things that make CrossFit great," Leavitt said.

Glenn Perra, co-owner of CrossFit Relentless, CrossFit Ironworks and CrossFit 033 in Connecticut, concurred and said that Coach's words were "reassuring" and "straight from the heart."

Leavitt especially liked meeting affiliate owners from the Montana area and admired the pioneer spirit of people who would arrive here at this landscape and think, "Hell, yeah, let's build a house here!"

Notably, GNC just picked up Kill Cliff, Leavitt's beverage, and by the end of August it will be available in over 1,000 stores. Leavitt's been looking for ways to give back to the CrossFit community and thinks the best way to demonstrate his gratitude for the support of his businesses over the years is to contribute to CrossFit's building of another school in Africa. He's already working with HQ staffers toward that goal.

"The degrees of separation are so minute in this community ... CrossFit bends the universe."

Indeed, it seems that it does.

For info on the CrossFit Tour, visit Tour.CrossFit.com.



About the Author

E.M. Burton is a CrossFit Journal staff writer.