

# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

## November 2014

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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## The Need for Speed

CrossFit Games athlete Valerie Voboril and powerlifter Laura Phelps Sweatt explain how they use intensity to limit their time in the gym.

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By Hilary Achauer

November 2014

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Will Duncan/CrossFit Journal

On a Friday afternoon in early October, Valerie Voboril—a five-time CrossFit Games competitor with four top-five finishes—worked out with the sounds of “Dora the Explorer” drifting into her backyard gym from the living room.

Her 3-year-old daughter, Vin, repeated Spanish words to the TV while Voboril and her training partner, Marc Rizzo, finished the conditioning section of their workout. Other than “Dora,” the only sounds were Voboril’s feet making contact with the plyo box and the medicine ball hitting the floor after she completed her reps.

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Tai Randall/CrossFit Journal



**Five-time CrossFit Games competitor Valerie Voboril utilizes a well-equipped backyard gym to get the most out of her training sessions.**

Voboril doesn't play music when she trains. It's not because the sound bothers the neighbors.

"It's one more thing I have to set up," Voboril said.

Setting up music takes time, and Voboril's hour of training is a model of efficiency and focus. Voboril has a lot going on in her life—other than being one of the top CrossFit athletes in the world. She's a mother, a wife and a full-time fourth-grade teacher. She doesn't have hours to spend at the gym, so she's learned how to get the most out of her training sessions.

Most CrossFit athletes don't aspire to compete in the Games, but many people struggle to balance work, family life and fitness. Similarly, strength sessions can eat up hours, but there are time-efficient ways to get beastly strong, according to Laura Phelps Sweatt, a world-record-holding powerlifter and staff member for the CrossFit Powerlifting Trainer Course. It's all about efficiency and intensity.

Short, intense sessions are not the only way to train, and some people love to spend long hours in the gym. However, many CrossFit athletes only have an hour to spare. Here's how to make that hour count.

## Sippy Cups and Squats

Voboril was done with her day of teaching. It was 4 p.m., and she was home with Vin, with exactly one hour to work out before going to the beach with her family.

To avoid wasting time in the car, especially in traffic-clogged Los Angeles, California, Voboril trains in her backyard gym. A Rogue rig takes up the back section of the yard, with Voboril's name placard from a Southern California Regional decorating the back fence—two other placards form one of the lifting platforms. A climbing rope and rings hang from the rig, but everything else is carefully organized in the storage shed next to the rig, which houses barbells, medicine balls, bumper plates, plyo boxes and even a rower.

Voboril started with a quick warm-up—some strict chest-to-bar pull-ups, a few air squats and some stretches with a PVC pipe. The warm-up took 10 minutes. Rizzo—Voboril's friend, coach, training partner and former roommate—arrived while she was finishing her warm-up, and then the two of them started on the first part of the workout, programmed for Voboril by C.J. Martin of CrossFit Invictus.

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**Voboril ... never rested more than 90 seconds between sets, even when she had to run into the house to get a sippy cup of water for Vin.**

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"Warming up is getting everything out of the shed," Rizzo said.

Over 10 sets, Voboril and Rizzo built to a heavy weight for a complex of a power clean, a front squat and a squat clean. Voboril propped up an iPad displaying a timer, making sure she never rested more than 90 seconds between sets, even when she had to run into the house to get a sippy cup of water for Vin. Voboril always times her rest periods.

"Sometimes I shorten whatever rests (Martin) gives me, which makes the time go faster, if I feel good," she said. "When you're tired, the time goes really fast. By the end, if you're maintaining that rest, it doesn't feel like a rest at all."

Toward the end of Voboril's sets, Vin wandered over and sat on her mother's barbell. It was almost time for Voboril to pick up the barbell, and Vin didn't move. Voboril spoke gently to Vin, giving the 3-year-old choices.

"Would you like to go in the shed or on the trampoline? It's Mommy's turn."

Vin looked up at her mom.

"You can go over there," Voboril pointed to the middle of the rig, "or swing your own kettlebell." She picked up a child-sized plastic kettlebell, but Vin didn't move.

The rest period was over, and Vin looked at her mother. Finally, she got up and wandered off to the trampoline, and Voboril completed a power clean, a front squat and a squat clean.



*Voboril, like many CrossFit athletes, only has an hour to dedicate to training, so it's important to make it count.*



After the final set of the complex, Voboril and Rizzo started on the next task: 6 sets of 3 front squats. Vin settled in the living room to watch “Dora the Explorer.”

During the rest between her last few sets, Voboril went into the shed and got out a plyo box, then a medicine ball. She put away extra plates in the rest period before her last set, and by the time she had finished her final set of front squats, the workout space was ready for the conditioning part of her workout: 7 rounds of 15 wall-ball shots, 10 toes-to-bars and 10 burpee box jumps every minute on the minute.

Voboril was about halfway through her workout when Vin came into the backyard and asked for a frozen yogurt. Voboril finished her burpee box jumps and ran into the house, grabbing a frozen Go-Gurt and handed it to Vin before picking up a medicine ball and starting in on the 15 wall-ball shots, which Martin told her must be unbroken every round.

Her sprint into the house cut into Voboril’s rest time and only gave her a few seconds to recover before the minute was over, but that didn’t appear to slow her down. The ball moved up and down just as quickly and smoothly as in the first few rounds.

Vin ate her yogurt and watched her mother finish the last round. Finally, with the last burpee box jump, 7 rounds were done. Instead of indulging in a post-workout flop on the ground, Voboril immediately began putting the equipment back in the shed, even though she was covered in sweat and gasping for air.

She and Rizzo put everything away, fitting it all carefully in the shed and closing the doors. Voboril was still breathing hard as she walked away from the outdoor gym space.

It was 5 p.m., and Voboril was done.



*Voboril stood atop the podium at the 2014 SoCal Regional, flanked by Rebecca Voigt (left) in second and Lauren Fisher in third.*

### Moderated Intensity

While Voboril increases the volume of her training in preparation for the CrossFit Games Open and the SoCal Regional, she limits her training to an hour or less about five days a week at this time of year. Sometimes she trains for 30 to 45 minutes at lunchtime. Her school is only 2 miles away, and two days a week she has a lunch period back-to-back with a prep period, so she has time to work out, cool off and eat.

Voboril said she's learned from these shorter sessions that longer is not necessarily better. She said the short, intense training sessions leave her shaking and quivering.

"So much can be gotten out of (those shorter sessions), and you're done," Voboril said.

Voboril is particularly adept at setting a pace and not slowing down until the work is done or the time ends. She showcased that skill in her Friday-afternoon workout. Voboril often fools people during competitions because she never appears to be moving quickly, but when others start to slow down, she just keeps moving. In her 7-round workout, the form on her wall-ball shots, toes-to-bars and burpee box jumps never changed. Her seventh round was about as fast as the first.

If someone is looking to fit in effective training sessions in a short amount of time, Voboril recommends three days a week of 30 minutes of hard conditioning and then an hour of lifting one or two days a week.

"I feel like lifting takes a little more time, and you don't want to rush it," Voboril said.

"Even (after) a 20-minute hard conditioning session ... you feel good, you got something done, but you didn't spend forever doing it," she said.

Voboril said working out at a home gym allows her to be single-minded about finishing her training session. She's also found other benefits of working out at home.

"The times I do make it into the gym for funsies, it's like, 'He deadlifted 295 lb. for 5. You can outdo him if you do 300 lb.' So what do I do? I do it. And I'm sore for a week," she said.

"I prefer to work out at home. I don't talk as much, so I can get my training done in a short amount of time, and I don't start one-upping," she said.

With a full-time job and a family, Voboril has more on her plate than many of her competitors. Many high-level



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

***Despite doing less daily volume than many of her peers, Voboril has been on the CrossFit Games podium regularly since 2010.***

CrossFit athletes own affiliates or work as coaches, which gives them a more flexible schedule and access to a gym during down time between classes. Over the years, Voboril has learned how to use her extra responsibilities to her advantage.

"I think it's forced me to be a little bit more present. It's almost when I have too much free time I can worry about too much," she said.

Voboril's approach also helps her prevent burnout.

During the CrossFit offseason, Voboril picks one or two days to go all-out. On those days, she deliberately pushes herself to the edge. For her other workouts during the week, she said she works hard but doesn't test her limits.

"It's supposed to be fun," Voboril said of her training.

"I don't want to burn out," she said, as Vin brought over a painting of red loops on butcher paper.

"It's beautiful," she told Vin, smiling at her daughter.

Courtesy of Laura Phelps Sweatt



*Professional powerlifter Laura Phelps Sweatt uses a stopwatch to make her lifting sessions more efficient.*

### Talking Isn't Squatting

Phelps Sweatt has a simple tool to make strength sessions more efficient: a stopwatch.

Phelps Sweatt is a professional powerlifter who has broken world records 45 times. She currently holds eight world records in the squat, the bench press and the total, and her deadlift of 560 lb. is No. 2 all time in her weight class, 165 lb. She got involved in CrossFit in 2009, when she started teaching the CrossFit Powerlifting Trainer Course. The biggest mistake CrossFit athletes make, Phelps Sweatt said, is not timing their rest periods during strength sessions.

"We tell CrossFit athletes to put a timer on themselves," she explained.

The system Phelps Sweatt teaches—and follows herself—is the conjugate method, developed by Louie Simmons of Westside Barbell. It's a four-days-a-week system in which the upper body and lower body are trained on separate days. On the two **dynamic-effort days**, athletes do faster

reps at lower weights. On the two **max-effort days**, athletes typically perform variations of the major lifts—seated barbell presses, good mornings, rack deadlifts, etc.—and work to very heavy loads.

On days when the weights are lighter and the reps are higher—dynamic days for those following the conjugate method—Phelps Sweatt said athletes should not rest more than 45 seconds between sets. On heavier days, she said the rest period should be two to five minutes once the athlete gets above about 80 percent of his or her max.

"Obviously, a more conditioned athlete can err on the side of two minutes as opposed to five minutes," Phelps Sweatt said.

"What starts to make people's workouts last longer is not being on a timer and chit-chatting with people between sets and just kind of moseying along," she said.



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**“What starts to make people’s workouts last longer is not being on a timer and chit-chatting with people between sets.”**

**—Laura Phelps Sweatt**

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She said people would be surprised if they timed themselves and found out how much time they were actually taking in between sets. Shortening up the rest periods dramatically can transform the nature of a strength session and drive up the intensity.

“If I put a stopwatch on myself on dynamic-effort days and keep (the rest periods) to 20 to 30 seconds, it’s far more difficult than when I don’t time myself. It’s more of a conditioning workout, so you’re getting the best of both worlds,” Phelps Sweatt said.

In 2013, Phelps Sweatt and her husband, Shane Sweatt, opened a CrossFit affiliate—CrossFit Conjugate—next to their personal-training gym.

A year later, their team took second at the CrossFit Games.

“After doing the (powerlifting) seminars every month, I started getting familiar with CrossFit and started seeing how Westside conjugate system is perfect for CrossFit. It’s right up (a CrossFit athlete’s) alley,” she said. Phelps Sweatt said powerlifting is constantly varied, just like CrossFit.

She thinks following the conjugate method is a great way for CrossFit athletes to improve and break through plateaus without spending hours under the bar.

“We attack all weaknesses, and 80 percent of the training is assistance work and accessory movements, and 20 percent is classic barbell lifts,” Phelps Sweatt said.

For her, strength work is the most important aspect of CrossFit.

“Strength will carry you a far way, rather than just doing long met-cons all the time,” she said.

“If you had to pick, if you had this limited amount of time, my heavy emphasis would be on strength,” she said.

Phelps Sweatt thinks CrossFit athletes would benefit from spending time on accessory work.

“If you literally have no time, accessory work will take you farther than you think, because you are addressing weaknesses. People who can’t get a muscle-up, well, we do a lot of tricep work and upper-back work. If you’ve got something that just won’t progress, focus on the accessory work and make that your priority,” Phelps Sweatt said.

“What’s nice about our system,” she said, “is it doesn’t take long. It takes maybe 45 minutes.”

(For more info about the conjugate method, read the CrossFit Journal article [“The Westside Conjugate System”](#) by Louie Simmons.)

### **Train Smarter, Not Longer**

Some athletes—including many CrossFit Games competitors—enjoy spending hours in the gym, and their lifestyles allow it. For athletes with the time and the desire, long training sessions are one way to approach CrossFit. This doesn’t work for everyone.

Many CrossFit athletes have a limited amount of free time in their day. However, less time in the gym doesn’t have to mean reduced fitness. Intensity is one of the key words at CrossFit Level 1 Trainer courses, and attendees are always reminded intensity is the variable most commonly associated with improved fitness.

For Voboril, prioritizing things other than CrossFit has made her happier and healthier, but it hasn’t diminished her performance.

“More is not better for me,” Voboril said. “It really isn’t. For me, my body doesn’t perform better just because I’m doing more work.”



### **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 writes 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 [hilary-achauer.com](http://hilary-achauer.com)*



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## Turning Admin Into “Adminimal”

Affiliate owners describe creative ways to offload work so they can focus on the big picture at their gyms.

By Emily Beers

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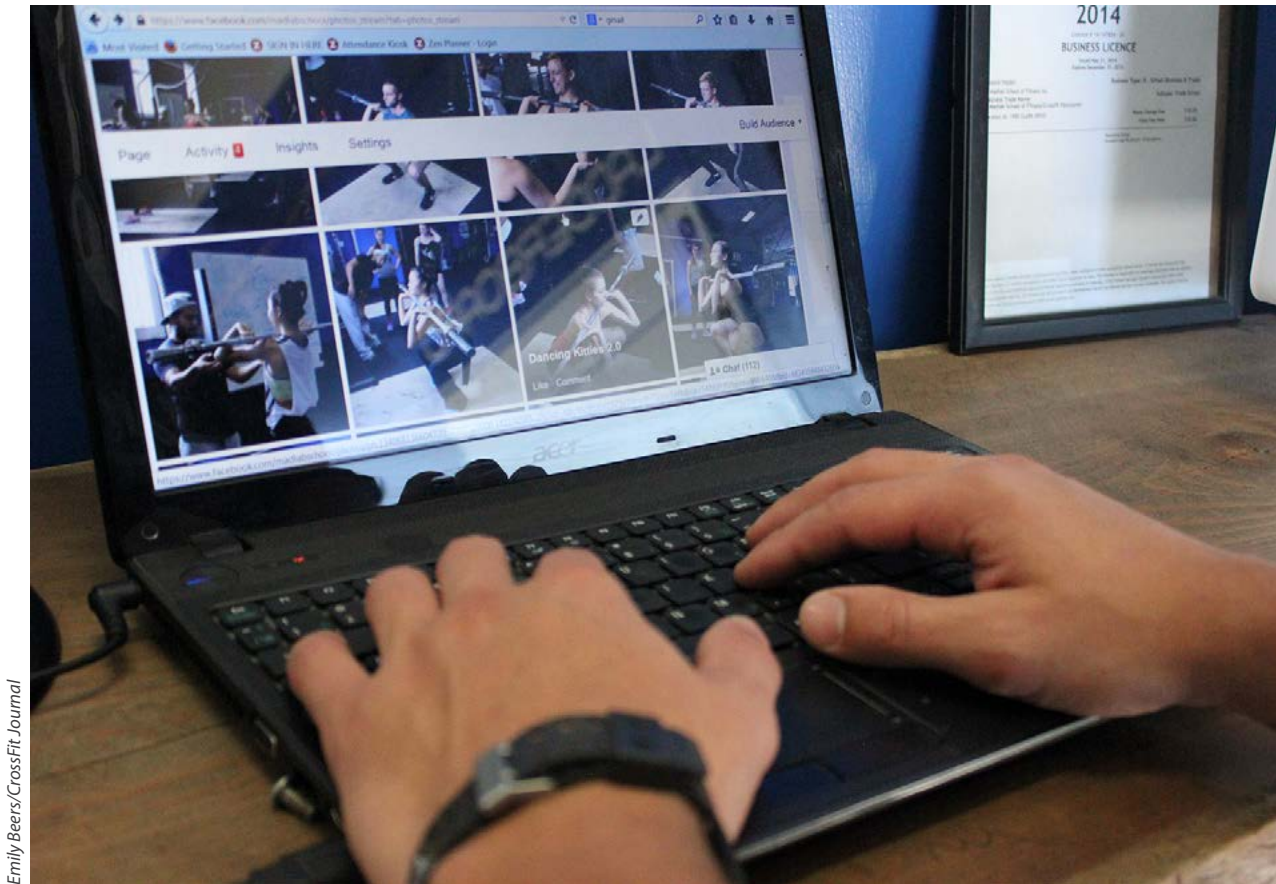


Courtesy of Theo Isekouras

When you open a CrossFit affiliate, you quickly learn you're more than a coach, and if you try to tackle every job that comes your way, you might not find time to sleep, let alone time to train your clients and develop coaches and your business.

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Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

***Most affiliate owners opened businesses to improve fitness for their clients, and offloading administrative tasks can help them get back to coaching.***

Imagine this very common scenario:

You wake up at 5 a.m. and send a dozen emails before scheduling a post to go up on your website in the evening. You know if you don't do it now you'll run out of time later. After that, you quickly edit a video of a client getting his first muscle-up, which you upload to your affiliate's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

A quick sip of coffee, and then it's time to take a look at last week's attendance report. Five clients who haven't been there in two weeks need an email to see what's up. It's payday tomorrow, so you sift through your reports for the month before hopping on the phone and ordering a dozen new lacrosse balls and rubber bands because they keep disappearing.

Finally, it's time to fill out the paperwork for your sign permit, which you'll drop off at city hall on your way to coach your first client of the morning.

When you arrive at the gym at 8 a.m., you're relieved to take off your secretary's hat and put on your coach's cap.

Exciting and fulfilling as all this can be, it can also be exhausting. If you let endless administrative duties take over your life as an affiliate owner, it can be incredibly distracting to your business. This is why many owners today have found solutions to ease the headache.

Some are hiring full-time administrative or facility managers, others are shifting certain duties onto coaches, and others still are relying heavily on technology to make their lives easier. No matter what they're doing, these affiliate owners agree that shifting administration duties has freed them up to develop their clients, coaches and businesses.

### Technological Solutions

For Lindsey Marcelli of CrossFit Eminence in Thornton, Colorado, automatic functions make life easier.

"I'm all about scheduling things and having things automatic. Saves me time, especially when life happens," said Marcelli, who has discovered that Facebook lets her schedule posts up to six months in advance.

Similarly, Hootsuite—a management site for social media—is a useful tool that helps with scheduling posts, not just on Facebook but also on Twitter and Instagram.

"That way you don't spend all day on Facebook, and you can keep your page active daily in advance," Marcelli said. "You can do your entire weekly workouts posts in one hour."

On top of taking advantage of technology that lets her schedule her posts, Marcelli also gives her coaches specific administrative duties so they all share the responsibility. For starters, each coach is responsible for writing one blog post per month, and each coach is now an editor on the gym's Facebook page to "spread the admin fun across everyone," she said.

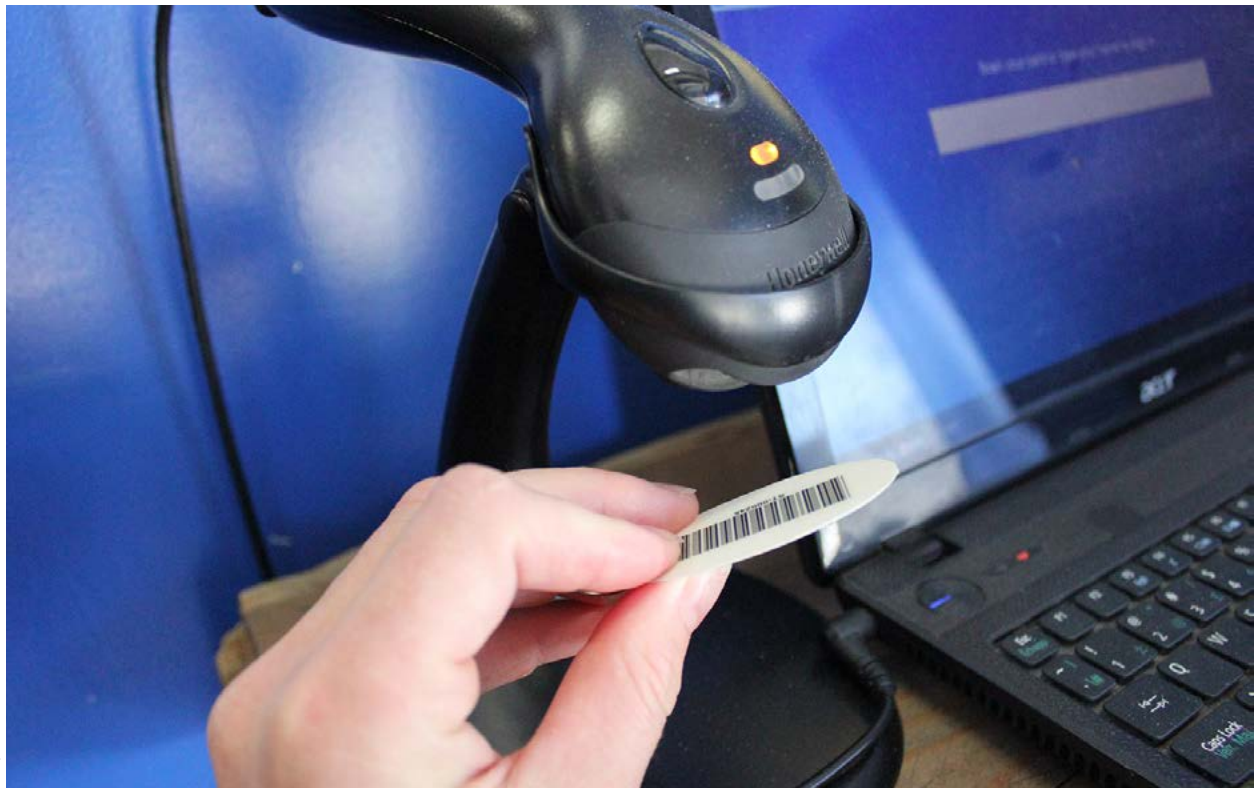
"We sit down during our monthly coaches meetings, discuss a topic. They each pick a specific discussion in regards to the main topic and blog. This helps me and my husband as the owners to get relevant info to our members monthly," she added.

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**When it comes to using  
technology, creativity is key.**

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When it comes to using technology, creativity is key. And options exist when software isn't designed to do exactly what you want it to do. Mike Ives of CrossFit 782 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, provides proof.



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

*Technology can be used to streamline administrative processes and gym procedures, leaving owners more time for other tasks.*





**With a sign-in system in place, owners can run a variety of reports and use software automations to track down absentees.**

Many affiliate owners struggle to find a foolproof way to keep track of attendance, and many blame client compliance for their difficulties. Some affiliates issue key tags to make it easy for clients to sign in, but many clients still forget, no matter how far owners go to encourage clients to swipe their tag.

"Members don't like signing in," said Ives, who took matters into his own hands to combat the issue.

Because of the compliance problem he had, he developed a web-based app clients download onto their smartphones. As long as clients have phones with them, the app signs them in automatically as soon as they enter the building.

"Everyone always rocks their phone with them anyway," said Ives, who explained that the app works by using the phone's location functionality through a technology called geo-fencing.

The clients create an account and log in just once. After that, the phone knows what's up.

"So members just walk in, and it automatically tracks their attendance," Ives said. He added that the app doesn't even use any of the phone's data.

From the owner's end, all he has to do is set up an account and plug in the gym's civic address.

"It means the owner doesn't have to track attendance himself or use key tags or scanners," Ives said. And it means coaches don't have to waste time at the start of class getting members to go to the computer and sign in before they begin the warm-up.

Ives has gone to such great lengths to develop this system because keeping track of attendance is really important for client retention, especially at larger affiliates with hundreds of members, he said.

"I can get a membership report to see who's showing up for classes, and, more importantly, when people aren't coming to classes," Ives said. He finds his solution so helpful he's going to start offering it to other interested affiliates.

"It generates member reports that (trigger) you to get in touch with people when they haven't been there," he added.

Sometimes all these clients need is a friendly reminder.

Whether the bane of your existence is attendance compliance or Facebook posting, with a little creativity, technology can be a welcome friend, and clever affiliate owners can find other ways to use software and hardware to solve a host of other issues around the box.

### The Right People in the Right Places

Because the workload is often too much for one person to run an affiliate, many owners have hired full-time support staff, ranging from general and administrative managers to operations and facility managers to directors of training.

Theo Tsekouras of CrossFit H-Town in Houston, Texas, got to the point where he needed a full-time general and operations manager to reduce his workload.

"When we first opened, we were a garage affiliate. Prospects, marketing, emails—every line of the business you could think of—was me," he said.

Tsekouras called all the admin work "a time suck."



"Although it was necessary, it never ended," he said. As the business grew, it got tougher to keep up.

"The back-end stuff—the client engagement that needed to happen, the follow-up emails, putting memberships on hold—it all became a lot to deal with," he said.

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**"The back-end stuff—the client engagement that needed to happen, the follow-up emails, putting memberships on hold—it all became a lot to deal with."**

**—Theo Tsekouras**

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Today, CrossFit H-Town Arts District and CrossFit H-Town Heights have 550 members total. To deal with administration, Tsekouras' wife is the general manager, while one of his long-time members has more recently become the operations manager, meaning she handles all the new-member intake as well as liaising with clients.

"Front-desk (staff) report to her, as well," Tsekouras said. "We also have a food program. Members buy meals from us, and she handles all this stuff, too."

One of Tsekouras' coaches is now his director of training and has taken over coach development.

Having full-time support staff has allowed Tsekouras to spend more time with his family and on his business.

"Typically now what I'm doing is helping with website stuff, expanding the website and services to members, developing new programs like strength classes or master's classes, or figuring out ways to make more money for my coaches," he said.



Courtesy of Theo Tsekouras

***Theo Tsekouras hired full-time support staff to help grow his affiliate, giving him more time to focus on family and other aspects of the business.***

Ken Andrukow of Reebok CrossFit Ramsay in Calgary, Alberta, is another who decided to hire specialized managers to reduce his workload. Although he started his gym more than a decade ago, he finally decided to hire managers this year. Andrukow brought in a full-time administrative manager responsible for duties he simply didn't have time for, and he employs a facility manager to look after cleaning and equipment. He said hiring staff was the best decision he's made in a while.

"All in all, these changes have allowed me as owner and head coach to focus on the development of athletes and coaches, which has helped increase our membership to more than 400," Andrukow said.

On top of this, having full-time people in charge of specific duties has also helped take the load off his coaches.

"Now coaches can focus on the lesson plans and on running the workouts," he said.

Another important lesson Andrukow has learned is the importance of developing specific policies and procedures so his coaches and managers always know how to handle a situation.



***A manual ensures coaches at Reebok CrossFit Ramsay are well versed in the affiliate's procedures regarding client interaction and gym policy.***

"(For example), we now have a written manual that deals with things like follow-up procedures with members, as well as incident reports and how to open and close the gym," he said. "A typical operations manual."

This has helped make things more clearly defined for the full-time people he recently hired.

"Instead of saying, 'You're going to be the admin person. I'm not sure what you'll be doing, but you'll figure it out. See you later,' now people know exactly what they'll be doing," Andrukow said.

Whether it's an administrative assistant you need, a facility manager or a director of training, Tsekouras and Andrukow agree that placing people into clearly defined roles will help any business grow. Doing so has made all the difference for them.

### Getting Your Coaches on Board

For Courtney Brevitz of CrossFit Kenosha in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a simple reading exercise led to big changes around her box.

She had all her coaches read a well-known article published in the Harvard Business Review called "[Management Time: Who's Got the Monkey?](#)" by William Oncken Jr. The article has been described as the best article ever written about delegation, time management and the politics of power in a work environment. It warns managers not to carry too many unnecessary "monkeys" on their backs all at once and instead shift some of these responsibilities onto their subordinates.

The article was passed on to Brevitz from a friend of hers who worked in the business world. At the time, she felt bogged down by 100 little administrative jobs that kept popping up, and her coaches kept throwing more monkeys onto her back.

"They'd say things like, 'Oh wait until (Courtney) gets in tomorrow and she'll deal with this,'" Brevitz said of how her coaches unknowingly gave her more chores to do.

While she had a great coaching staff working for her, Brevitz needed her coaches to understand what life is like for the business owner. So she sat them down to explain how taking more responsibility is ultimately in their best interest.

"I started out by telling them we have a great coaching staff, but I needed to explain to them the big picture of the business," Brevitz said. "What happens to the growth



Courtesy of Courtney Brevitz

***Courtney Brevitz, owner of CrossFit Kenosha, lets her coaches take the lead on projects and tries not to micromanage their efforts.***

of our facility when a manager's time is bogged down by monotony or day-to-day things?"

Then she handed them the article from the Harvard Business Review.

"It gave them perspective," she said. "It helped them realize that I'm working my butt off, but it also gave them insight as to why things weren't progressing as quickly as we wanted them to."

From there, talks opened up about how to improve things for everyone.

"We discussed our vision and goals, and I had a tremendous response (from my coaches). My employees have since started taking on initiative on different projects, and the entire atmosphere of our box has changed," she added.

For starters, her head coach came to her and initiated a girls' night.

"She hosted a 'sip and paint,'" Brevitz said, explaining that this involved women from the box getting together to drink wine and paint a picture.

"Then I had another trainer come to me and plan a nutrition challenge," Brevitz said. Two other coaches approached her and asked how they could help make life easier for her.

From there, Brevitz started to give away jobs to coaches—things like entering contracts into the system—freeing her up to work on parts of the business she used to neglect because she was too busy.

"I'm really able to focus on growing programs and looking at analyzing the business more closely—our finances and stuff like that—whereas before I would say, 'Oh, I'll do this later,' because I'd get caught up entering contracts," Brevitz said.

As an owner, Brevitz learned from the article that she can't try to micromanage everything; it's best to let her coaches take the lead on certain projects.



Her next plan is to continue to give coaches even more responsibilities and autonomy in certain areas. For starters, she's turning one of her coaches into the manager of CrossFit Kenosha's personal-training program.

"And as we get bigger and bigger, I'll need a manager in every department," she said.

Now that she has her coaches on board, Brevitz is confident in CrossFit Kenosha's future.

### Putting It all Together

Mike Jones helps run four affiliates: CrossFit St. Paul, CrossFit Minneapolis, CrossFit St. Louis Park and CrossFit Minneapolis Northeast.

Considering the scope of his business—between the four locations, Jones and his business partners have 700 active clients—he knew he needed sound policies and procedures in place to be successful. This involved both people and technology.

Today, Jones has given up much of the administrative duties to his general managers, of whom he has four—one at each box.

Managers deal with emailing, member accounts, billing, attendance and taking in new clients, freeing up Jones to focus on developing new business ideas and other things such as his competition and CrossFit Kids programs. He also coaches eight to 10 hours per week. And other than that, a great deal of his time is spent making sure his coaches and managers are happy and performing well.

"I try to have one-on-one conversations with our full-time employees each week, even if it's just a standing-meeting format," Jones said.

Like Marcelli and Ives, Jones' managers rely on automated technology, through Mindbody Online, to make their jobs easier. A host of similar programs exist.

For example, when a new inquiry shows interest, much of the process happens automatically. First, the potential member registers for an intro session online, so nobody has to communicate with the newbie until he shows up at the gym. And then when the recruit signs up for a specific day and time to get started, he receives an automated email that verifies his registration. Once the member completes his on-ramp sessions, registration and even payment for regular classes is handled in the same manner.



Courtesy of Mike Jones

*Mike Jones (left) helps run four affiliates with a total of 700 active members.*



"The only time we have to manually accept first-time payment is if they want to start via private training or if someone just shows up to start on-ramp (without registering), which happens occasionally," Jones said.

Once a client is a member, his payment is 100 percent automatic, meaning it runs forever or until the membership is cancelled, so no time has to be devoted to chasing members down to deal with membership renewals.

Despite reliance on technology and automation, Jones recognizes the continued importance in developing a relationship with clients, so personalized emails between coaches and clients still happen. Templates are available for certain topics, but the coach is free to add a personal touch when necessary.

Attendance reports also help his managers. If a person hasn't been to the gym in two weeks, he or she will appear on a "no-show report," which automatically signals managers to send out a personal email to see what's up with the client.

While his managers handle most admin, Jones still does payroll, but he has a great system in place that allows him to devote no more than 30 minutes a month to the task.

Jones is very focused on time management, so he limits his weekly staff meetings to 45 minutes each week to avoid accidental two-hour meetings, and his managers send out meeting notes each week to reiterate the important topics that were covered.

"You need brevity and you need to be organized," he said.

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**Mike Jones explained that the policies and procedures he has in place today are a far cry from what his box looked like on Day 1.**

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Jones explained that the policies and procedures he has in place today are a far cry from what his box looked like on Day 1.

"When we started the business, we went three years without official meetings at all. And then we eventually established the weekly staff meeting, and with an iron fist we built the agenda each week," Jones said.

Jones' next goal is to reduce the amount of time he spends on scheduling each month. Although most days have a set schedule, meaning the same coach coaches the same classes each week, the weekend classes are coached by different coaches each week, which means time must be devoted to sorting out the schedule each month. Jones' goal is to change this soon by giving more control to his coaches and general managers to make the weekend schedule themselves.

"It's not possible to do everything," Jones said.

Once Jones realized it was time to delegate, it ultimately allowed him to focus on the meat and potatoes of his business, and, more importantly, on his family.

"I also have three kids. I still work a lot of hours, but I'm able to take the kids to school and be available for them," he said.

### Free Yourself

Regardless of what you prioritize as an affiliate owner—hiring part-time or full-time assistants or managers, delegating roles to coaches, or relying heavily on technology—the important thing is to set your business up so it doesn't bog you down with never-ending administrative hassles.

Affiliate owners agree: Get that monkey off your back so you can focus on your coaches and your clients—the most important parts of your affiliate.



### About the Author

*Emily Beers is a CrossFit Journal contributor and coach at [CrossFit Vancouver](#). She finished 37th at the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games.*





# SWEDE on KUWAIT

by EMILY BEERS

CrossFit Games athlete

Marlene Andersson explains

how she's grown to love her

adopted Middle Eastern country.

THE  
**CrossFit** JOURNAL





Asia's sole female representative at the CrossFit Games, Marlene Andersson wore more clothing than her competitors out of respect for the traditions of her adopted country.

It was 93 F at the StubHub Center.

The heat of the midsummer sun made the Triple 3—3-km row, 300 double-unders, 3-mile run—much tougher than it should have been.

Dry-mouthed, scorching-hot athletes were thankful for the various water stations. But even with hydration stops that also acted as a place for athletes to splash water on their heads, many of the fittest in the world were humbled as their running speed was reduced to a snail's pace. Even multi-year CrossFit Games champion Rich Froning had to walk on more than one occasion.

Needless to say, men were shirtless for the most part, while women wore little more than booty shorts and a sports bra. Except one.

Marlene Andersson, an expat Swede who was Asia's female representative at the Games, remained modestly covered, wearing a T-shirt and capri tights underneath slightly more conservative shorts.

It's not that she wasn't hot; she was. But representing Kuwait—a country that borders Saudi Arabia and Iraq and has a population of 3.3 million—comes with responsibilities the other 41 female competitors didn't have to deal

with. One of these responsibilities was to be mindful of how wardrobe choices might be perceived by the many Kuwaitis watching back home.

Andersson explained the minimalist apparel of her peers isn't seen as acceptable in Kuwaiti culture, and the last thing she wanted to do was offend people in a country that took her in with open arms.

"They have their views about what's decent or not," Andersson said. "What I try to do is at least live a little bit by their rules, so I don't want to act as if I'm a foreigner. I am living in their country, and I want to be respectful of the rules."

So out of respect for Kuwait and her Kuwaiti husband, Andersson chose to wear more conservative clothing than the rest of her competitors at the Games. While fellow athletes looked at her and thought, "Strip down, girl. It's stifling hot," Andersson has grown accustomed to training and competing in layers.

"All of my (Kuwaiti) friends and members of my box—they're all very open-minded people, so they probably wouldn't care whatever I was wearing. It's not like they're looking at the other athletes and cursing them," she said.



Andersson had to deal with the heat at the CrossFit Games, but she's also had to adapt to summer temperatures above 110 F in Kuwait.

She continued: "But I wouldn't want someone to think, 'Oh my God, look at what she's wearing. And because I'm married to a Kuwaiti, I'm just taking my safety measures, just in case, and so nobody can say anything negative.'"

Andersson explained dress varies considerably from woman to woman in Kuwait. She estimated that 30 percent of women in Kuwait City, where she lives, wear a hijab—a veil that covers the head and chest—in public, while others wear headscarves.

"And then some only cover their hair, and then others dress in jeans and a T-shirt," she added.

From a Westerner's standpoint, Kuwait's culture is more modest, but Andersson has discovered people are ultimately just people. Her friends at her gym in Kuwait—Inspire Pure Fitness Kuwait/CrossFit 965—watched the CrossFit Games just like fans anywhere else in the world, and they were similarly awed by the athletes.

"They're watching, saying, 'Look how strong she is. Look how fast she is,'" Andersson said.

"They're just looking at performances, and, of course, they think the girls are hot. They look at that, too, obviously," she added with a laugh.

"I AM LIVING  
IN THEIR COUNTRY,  
AND I WANT TO BE  
RESPECTFUL OF  
THE RULES."

—MARLENE ANDERSSON



## SWEDEN TO KUWAIT, VIA THE U.K.

Andersson, now 30, grew up in Sweden and moved to London, U.K., when she was 24 to work at a rehabilitation clinic. She discovered CrossFit while in London and admits she didn't take to it right away. Exhausted after her first session, she told herself she'd never do another, but three months later she decided to try again.

Before she knew it, she was coaching and competing in the sport and soon discovered she was pretty good. In 2014, Andersson won the Asia Regional and secured the event's lone qualifying spot in the CrossFit Games.

While living in London in 2013, one of her clients, a Kuwaiti named Waleed Al-Omar, connected her with Mike Campbell, a New Zealand native and owner of Inspire Pure Fitness Kuwait. Campbell was looking for new coaches and reached out to Andersson in London. She was surprised but flattered by the sudden job offer from a total stranger. Andersson had never been to Kuwait, but the adventurer in her was immediately interested.

"I was just, first of all, intrigued how he heard of me. And then he offered to come to London to do some interviews," she said.

Campbell traveled to London to meet up with his recruit. He explained what she'd be getting into and gave her a chance to ask questions about the small, prosperous country in the Middle East that holds just under 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves.

"What he offered me was something very different. Work itself isn't different, but everything else was really different," she said.

Andersson had typical Western views of the Middle East and was a bit concerned about the cultural differences she'd experience.

"In Sweden, I saw a covered woman and thought, 'What does her husband do to her? She must be so suppressed. Her husband doesn't think highly of her,'" Andersson said of views influenced by societal and media stereotypes.

To calm her fears, she asked Campbell if she could visit Inspire Pure Fitness Kuwait before making her decision.

"He said no. If I wanted to see the job, I had to take it without going to Kuwait first," Andersson said.

Despite Campbell turning down her request, something told Andersson to put her concerns aside and take a risk. So she accepted the job offer and packed her bags.

## BUSINESS IN KUWAIT

Campbell, 38, moved to Kuwait seven years ago. Because his parents traveled for work, he had been roaming the globe since he was 2 years old, so it wasn't strange for him to settle in a foreign place.

Three years ago, Campbell joined up with a Kuwaiti business partner and opened his strength-and-conditioning facility. One year ago, he added CrossFit to the existing business, and CrossFit 965 was born.

Finance was one of the major reasons he decided to settle in Kuwait. Because most of the country's government expenditures are financed by oil revenue, Kuwait is a tax-free country. Individuals don't have to pay any personal income tax, Kuwaiti-owned businesses don't pay business taxes, and nobody pays for services such as water and electricity.

"Kuwait is one of the most affluent countries in the world. In three years, I was offered the ability to open my own gym several times. I was lucky that I found the right people who had a passionate goal of improving fitness and health," Campbell said.

He laughed when asked why he didn't let Andersson visit Kuwait before making her decision to work for him. He said he wasn't trying to be devious or trick her. On the contrary, Campbell was confident in Andersson and confident in the situation she would find herself in at his gym.

"I hand-select the coaches who are coming here. I hadn't met Marlene before, but a friend of mine knew her," he said. "She's an amazing person. She's got a lot going for her, but I think the No. 1 is she's just so humble. She is completely and utterly humble."

He knew he wanted her. It was just a matter of whether Andersson was willing to move.

"The other reason (for not letting her visit) was that I know they're going to be successful when they get here," Campbell added.

Campbell attributes his ability to guarantee his coaches' financial success to his compensation system and the

Kuwaitis who train at his gym. When a new coach arrives at his facility, Campbell guarantees the coach will very quickly acquire 35 hours a week doing one-on-one personal training. His clients pay the Kuwaiti equivalent of US\$90 per session, and the coach earns 50 percent commission.

Most of the clients at his gym work out with a personal trainer five or six days a week, dropping more than \$500 a week on fitness. Campbell's clients pay a small fortune because they can afford it, and working with a personal trainer has become a part of their culture. Campbell explained fitness is rapidly becoming more important to Kuwaitis, and their expectation is to have a full-time coach helping them reach their goals.

Campbell takes pride in his ability to give his coaches an opportunity to make a good living.

"If you don't look after your coaches, you haven't gotten anything," he said.

Campbell said he's also able to take care of his family very well.

"To be able to go home to New Zealand and look after my mom and dad (is great). I was never given anything I've got from my parents, so the ability to go home and buy my mom a new fridge and freezer and a new TV, it's quite nice to have the ability to do that," he said.

INSPIRE PURE FITNESS  
KUWAIT IS MADE UP OF  
ABOUT 90 PERCENT  
ARABS AND 10 PERCENT  
FOREIGNERS, AND  
EVERYONE INSTANTLY  
WELCOMED THE SWEDE  
INTO THEIR COMMUNITY.



At the 2014 Asia Regional, Andersson won three events and took the region's only spot in the CrossFit Games.



## ADAPTING AND THRIVING

One of the first things Andersson found difficult in Kuwait was the suffocating heat. Summer temperatures are stifling; they generally range from 107 to 118 F.

“The heat and humidity you need to learn how to handle ... . You have to try to stay out of the sun,” Andersson said.

Some other challenges for Westerners include the lack of nightlife and the fact alcohol is prohibited in Kuwait. Food options are also different. For starters, Kuwait’s population is mostly Muslim, so pork and pork products are prohibited. And the country sits on one of the driest deserts on Earth, so many fruits and vegetables have to be imported. Andersson immediately missed the local farmers markets of London, where she bought fresh, local, organic produce any day of the week, but she’s noticed Kuwait has started to change, even in the short time she’s been there.

“There’s a huge boom with gyms and fitness and awareness of food,” Andersson said.

Despite the small challenges of her new country, working and training at Inspire Pure Fitness Kuwait made her feel right at home. Her box is made up of about 90 percent Arabs and 10 percent foreigners, and everyone instantly welcomed the Swede into their community.

“It feels like any other box to me. I don’t get a different vibe. They don’t do things differently. They work just as hard. They push each other the same way,” Andersson said.

Men and women work out together, everyone supports each other, and Andersson’s role as a coach is same as it was in London. And just like any other box, genuine friendships form. Andersson felt a special connection with one local in particular, Beshar Al Awadhi. Awadhi was born in Boston, Massachusetts, but grew up in Kuwait. Awadhi’s mother was one of Andersson’s early clients in Kuwait, and soon Andersson started training Beshar, as well.

It soon became evident dating would be very different in Kuwait. In fact, dating as she knew it didn’t really exist. Andersson and Awadhi didn’t date because it’s not acceptable for a man and a woman to hang out together as a couple in public if they’re not married.

“It’s not considered proper. According to the Quran, that’s how it is,” Andersson said.

“He’s traditional and he follows traditional culture here, so I couldn’t date him unless I was engaged to him,” she added.

Instead, the couple started speaking on the phone quite regularly.

“That’s the only way we could speak. We never went out for dinner or to the movies or anything like that,” she said.

Awadhi isn’t what Andersson considers “ultra religious,” but he has his beliefs and sticks to them.

“He tries to be a good Muslim. You don’t lie. You don’t cheat,” Andersson said. She said Awadhi also follows other traditional Muslim customs such as fasting.

When initially contemplating her future with Awadhi, Andersson had to plan for challenges because she isn’t a Muslim.

“We were very honest about what we expected from each other once we got married. I told him, ‘If we ever get married, you can never expect me to change my faith,’” Andersson remembered. “And he said that he was OK with that. He said, ‘If you don’t want to convert, that’s fine.’ If he thought I was converting for his sake without believing, then he would stop me from doing it.”

Feelings quickly grew strong and they knew they wanted to get married. There was just one thing that needed to be done before announcing an engagement: meeting her parents and asking for their permission.

“He said, ‘I will fight really hard for it, but I want their blessing,’” she said of her husband’s persistence.

It was hard enough on her parents when Andersson decided to move to Kuwait, so she knew it wouldn’t be easy for them to see her build her life in the Middle East.

“They were a little bit shocked, especially because it’s between Iran and Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait doesn’t have the hottest neighbors on the block,” Andersson laughed.

“They had the same prejudices that I came with, so they were a bit scared,” she added. “My mom even asked me once if they had roads.”

Her parents were similarly confused by Kuwaiti customs regarding marriage.

“In Sweden, you live with someone for 10 years and then you get married, but here you can’t live with someone unless you’re married. It’s the stark opposite,” Andersson said. “And my parents asked me, ‘How can you marry him unless you’ve lived together?’”

Andersson’s father, Stellan Andersson, remembers his daughter dropping the bombshell on him and his wife in October 2013.

“I remember that we tried to argue both of them to consider and not rush. But in this matter we were not successful,” he said.



Andersson and Awadhi met at the gym and courted by talking on the phone before getting married.

But once he spent some time getting to know his daughter’s would-be fiancé, Stellan and his wife, Britt-Marie Andersson, started to come around.

“We met a polite and handsome young man, and he was very open-minded and uncomplicated,” Stellan said. And most importantly, he could see how this man felt about his daughter.

“He was very clear that he loved Marlene and he wanted to marry her,” he added.

Stellan gave Awadhi his blessing, and the couple returned to Kuwait to plan their wedding.

In March 2014, Andersson’s parents traveled to Kuwait for the first time. They spent almost a week there, celebrated their daughter’s marriage, met Awadhi’s entire family and visited the couple’s new home. Stellan could instantly see how happy his daughter was in Kuwait.

“Our belief is that she has a very good life in Kuwait, and she loves Beshar and the work she has in the gym. She has acclimated in a very good way ... . She is not a complicated person,” he said.

Stellan said he is proud of the woman he raised, someone who has the courage to explore the world and embrace a different culture.

“We hope that we, from the beginning, have tried to give her self-confidence and supported her to strive for her visions and goals,” he said.

“She is still the charming girl from little Sweden,” he added.





After moving to Kuwait without a long-term plan, Andersson found love and a permanent home.



Courtesy of Marlene Andersson



Courtesy of Marlene Andersson

## EMBRACING A NEW CULTURE

Despite finding love and qualifying for the CrossFit Games since moving to Kuwait, Andersson admitted the last two years haven't been without their challenges.

"Just being married gets me more into the culture, and I need to understand it and embrace it in a very different way," she said.

One thing she's learned to understand is her husband's definition of "a good Muslim."

"Beshar said, 'No, no, no. If you're a true Muslim, then women are in the highest regard. They're of more worth than men,'" Andersson said. "They really treat their women like queens if they really believe in the Quran."

Religion aside, Andersson and Awadhi have had to work through other cultural differences.

"We were in the airport once, and he met one of his old baseball coaches. He said hello to him and chatted with him and never introduced me to him. In Sweden, you always want to introduce your wife. I got really pissed off at him and told him it was really rude," Andersson said.

"Are you ashamed of me?" she asked her husband.

"He said, 'No, no, no—the opposite. You're the most precious person. I only want you to meet special people. He was just an acquaintance. I don't want you to meet him. He's not important,'" Andersson recalled.

Andersson thought about it and realized it was just a different way of thinking.

"I thought he was rude. He was trying to protect me," she shrugged.

And there have been moments in their marriage that have been difficult for him, as well.

"I don't think he thought he'd marry a crazy Swede," Andersson laughed.

Through the challenges, Andersson has grown to respect and love many things about Kuwaiti culture. One of the pleasant surprises was how friendly the people have been.

"They're a very friendly, generous, helpful culture, and also one thing I love about it is they're about keeping in touch with their families," Andersson said.

"They all meet up once a week—brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles—they really love staying in touch. That's something I really like."

## RISK AND REWARD

Andersson moved to Kuwait in March 2013 with fears and apprehension. After living in both Sweden and the U.K., she assumed her brave adventure to the Middle East would be just that—an adventure. And certainly not a long-term one.

"Two years ago, I never would have thought this would be my life. My plan was to go there and work and maybe stay for one year," Andersson said.

But her plan changed when she discovered she felt at home in Kuwait, a land that has challenged beliefs held since childhood. In Kuwait, she's found love and success—all because she took a risk.

"It proved to me how wrong you can be about things without experiencing them," she said. ■

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Beers is a CrossFit Journal contributor and coach at CrossFit Vancouver. She finished 37th at the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games.



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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## ATM Fraud

Remembering a 2007 Tony Blauer self-defense video, four people use acting to devalue themselves as targets and avoid physical confrontations.

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By Hilary Achauer and Rick Randolph

November 2014

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Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

Glory Dawson had finished her waitressing shift and was headed home when she remembered she needed to deposit a check. Dawson went to the ATM, put her card into the machine and saw four men walking toward her.

The men surrounded her.

"How much money you got in there?" one of them asked.

Dawson immediately felt threatened and froze.

"I didn't turn around, I didn't look at them, I just had this second of, 'Oh my gosh. What do I do? What do I do?'" Dawson said.

"You heard him. How much money you got in there?" one of the other men said.

Then Dawson remembered the "devalue" technique from Blauer's CrossFit Defense course. The technique isn't a kick or a punch—or any kind of physical maneuver. She hit cancel and started screaming at the ATM, yelling about having no money and flailing around in what was essentially a foul-mouthed temper tantrum.

"I hit the cancel button and went crazy ... cussing and yelling. I screamed, 'I can't believe that motherfucking bastard took all my money,'" Dawson said.

The men backed away. One of them said, "Oh, she's crazy," as they disappeared.

Dawson got in her car and drove home, safe.



Courtesy of Glory Dawson

***When confronted with potential danger, Glory Dawson remembered Tony Blauer's words and "went crazy."***

Blauer, the CrossFit Defense and Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response (SPEAR) System creator, knows a lot about fighting. His company, Blauer Tactical Systems (BTS), has taught performance-enhancement, fear-management and combative techniques to military, law-enforcement and civilian personnel since 1979.

For a guy who has spent most of his life coaching, researching and studying fights, Blauer goes out of his way to teach people how to avoid them. He spends as much time on the mental and emotional aspects of self-defense as he does on the physical skills.

One of the key self-defense skills Blauer teaches has nothing to do with kicks or punches. It has to do with devaluing yourself as a victim so the potential attacker never becomes the actual attacker.

"Win the fight by not having one," Blauer said.

### What Bad Guys Want

Blauer has a background in wrestling, martial arts and boxing and has been working with law enforcement and the military for years. The basic idea of the SPEAR System is to turn the body's natural startle-and-flinch response into effective self-defense. It's about using your body's instinctive reactions to your benefit and understanding what a bad guy wants and doesn't want.

Blauer says bad guys want one of three things: your property, your body or your life. What they don't want is to get hurt, to get caught or for the confrontation to take too long. If you can show a bad guy that you don't have what he wants, or that a confrontation with you will be loud and difficult, you have a chance of stopping the trajectory of a potentially dangerous situation before it evolves into something worse.

In 2007, [ATM Strategy With Tony Blauer](#) appeared on CrossFit.com. In it, Blauer demonstrates how to make yourself a bad target for potential assailants. He acts out how would-be victims can, after sensing danger, devalue themselves to an attacker during a transaction at an ATM machine.

After hitting cancel on his transaction, Blauer yells at the ATM, "What do you mean insufficient funds? This is bullshit! I have money in here!" His goal in this display of completely artificial rage is to communicate to the bad guy that he is both broke and slightly unstable—not a great target.

As Dawson found out, the technique is so crazy it works.



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**Blauer's goal in this display of completely artificial rage is to communicate to the bad guy that he is both broke and slightly unstable—not a great target.**

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Dawson took one of Blauer's CrossFit Defense seminars at CrossFit San Diego. She'd seen the ATM video.

"The whole 'Tony Blauer thing' I remembered was to devalue yourself. I guess my goal was to act like I didn't have any money and act crazy. I pulled off the crazy part pretty good," Dawson said.

"If I hadn't learned that, I don't know," she said. "I probably would have turned around and engaged them, which would have probably been a bad idea. After that, I don't know."

This technique requires two things. First, it requires an awareness of your surroundings. You have to employ the technique before you are attacked. Second, it requires fear management—the presence of mind to act while feeling threatened or afraid.

"Ninety-nine percent of the people who have survived a violent attack said they knew—there was a premonition or a bad feeling," Blauer said.

"People lose because of fear," Blauer said. "Fear creates doubt. Doubt creates hesitation. In some cases, that can turn into inaction. If that happens during a real violent attack, well, you can imagine the outcome."

Blauer continued: "The mind navigates the body." It's normal to freeze, but Blauer said it's possible to manage your fear and break out of that frozen state.

Blauer teaches kicking, hitting, kneeing, elbowing and gouging (he calls them "close-quarters tools"), but he emphasizes the cerebral side of self-defense. His No. 1 piece of advice is simple: Stop the fight before it starts. While it's good to know self-defense techniques in case a dangerous situation develops, avoiding an attack in the first place guarantees safety.



Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

*"Win the fight by not having one." —Tony Blauer*

Courtesy of Joshua Dean



***When Josh Dean sensed he was in trouble, he implemented Blauer's devaluation strategy immediately and avoided an potential altercation.***

## Early Morning Defense

Josh Dean is an early bird. He coaches the 5:30-a.m. class at CrossFit Peoria in Peoria, Illinois. Dean said Peoria is a fairly safe town, but last year there were reports of three men mugging people. They hit them, kicked them and even used baseball bats. The victims ended up in intensive care.

One morning, when Dean arrived to unlock the gym, he noticed three young guys standing on the street corner.

"Holy shit!" he thought. "Those are probably the guys."

The men weren't dressed to work out, and Dean didn't know of anyone coming for an introductory class. He knew something was wrong. Then the men started walking toward him.

"I had just seen the (ATM) video a week earlier," Dean said. "I thought, 'I gotta do something.' I thought, 'The ATM video might work here.'"

He got to the door to the gym, put the key in and pretended it didn't work.

"Fuck! You gotta be fucking kidding me. Why would she do that?" Dean yelled at the door.

He stomped his feet, turned around and marched angrily to his car. The three men walked away. Dean got into the car and started it as though he was going to leave.

"I just sat in my car and started it up," he said. "I was shaking and nervous. It was a huge adrenaline dump—like I had just finished a round of Fran or something."

While he didn't know for sure if the men were the muggers he had read about in the paper, he said he didn't want to find out.

"Like Coach Blauer said in that video, most people have a premonition. If you have it, don't sit on it. Do something. I believe that video saved me a serious ass whooping," Dean said. "Maybe my life."

In the CrossFit Defense course, Blauer teaches the three D's: detect, defuse and defend. Detect refers to using your senses and instincts to sense a threat. If you can escape without engaging, that's the best option. A technique for defusing a confrontation is devaluing yourself as a target. Defending yourself is the last resort.

"If we only covered the physical, then someone has to wait until they get in a fight to test and apply it," Blauer said.

"Instead, I want you to, when you smell smoke, take action. Look around. If you see a fire starting, take action—stomp it out. If you can't put the fire out, take action—run. But it starts with smoke," he said.

Blauer believes CrossFit athletes are already predisposed to self-defense.

"They have an advantage. That's why we love working with CrossFit athletes," Blauer said.

"The (CrossFit workout) experience starts off with a holy-shit moment—that's the first look at the workout on the whiteboard. Then comes strategy, figuring out how you're going to hit it and move. Then comes the mental toughness. That's the part when you want to stall or quit but you do another rep instead," Blauer said.

It's not just the strength and fitness of CrossFit athletes that make them better prepared to defend themselves, Blauer said. It's the mental toughness and grace under pressure that give CrossFit athletes an advantage.

Yelling at an ATM while surrounded by four threatening men takes a degree of mental toughness. It requires going

against the body's instincts, just like in a workout when the body is screaming, "Take a break, put the bar down." CrossFit athletes are conditioned to ignore that voice and keep going.

"The learning curve is shorter, and it's a cool epiphany when a CrossFit athlete realizes the sport and the training they love has another function, perhaps more important than the training itself," Blauer said.

### Functional Defense

San Francisco CrossFit coach and gymnast Carl Paoli grew up in Spain. As a child, Paoli said he was bullied, attacked and mugged. He said he was afraid to go out in public for fear of being attacked. He carried that with him into his adult life.

"I always weighed my decisions through the fear," Paoli said. "You become very tired of it."

Paoli met Blauer at a course in Las Vegas, Nevada, several years ago.

"Tony talked about how you have to have a strategy and a plan, like a blueprint for how you organize yourself in those situations to create an exit plan," Paoli said.

Paoli watched Blauer's ATM video. He was amused but not convinced.

He said, "I remember thinking, 'No one would do that. That is ridiculous. It wouldn't work.'"

Until it did.

Last year, Paoli was walking into a coffee shop that shared a building with a bank. On his way in, he noticed a guy leaning against the wall. For reasons Paoli couldn't articulate, the guy made him feel uncomfortable. He got the same feeling he used to get when he was a kid just before getting mugged.

Paoli went into the coffee shop, took care of his business and exited. The guy was still there, staring at him. He stepped off the wall and began walking toward Paoli. Instead of panicking, Paoli employed the first self-defense technique he could think of. He put his phone to his ear as though he had a call and started yelling and cursing and screaming at an imaginary person on the other end.

"I just went crazy," he said.

The would-be attacker looked his way and returned to lean back against the wall. Paoli kept moving.

"I called Tony, yelling, and told him, 'I just used one of your strategies in real life!'" Paoli said. "I had learned something about self-defense from Tony without even practicing."



Courtesy of Carl Paoli

**Carl Paoli was skeptical of Blauer's ATM technique until he had to use it himself.**

"As a coach, my goal is to teach people to move through space safely, to go in and come out unharmed," Paoli said. "I teach that from a mechanical perspective: movement. Tony teaches the same thing from a psychological, physiological and physical perspective."

He continued: "We define CrossFit as 'constantly varied functional movement performed at a high intensity.' You don't know what you are going to get, and when you do, it is fast, aggressive and right now—like a mugging."

Paoli sees CrossFit Defense as similar to his own Freestyle courses: athletes apply skills and strengths learned inside the gym outside in the world, away from barbells, rings and kettlebells.

"CrossFit is really about functionality, and Tony Blauer is bringing this back. Tony Blauer is teaching functionality and using self-defense ... to teach functionality. That is CrossFit," Paoli said.



## Crazy Right Now

Jennifer Peck took a CrossFit Defense course from Blauer when she worked out at CrossFit Las Vegas. Fast-forward a few years, and she found herself at a gas station in the wrong part of town.

"I didn't know you didn't go there alone at night," Peck said.

Peck had just gotten off a phone call with a customer-service representative from her credit-card company, straightening out an issue about some purchases they thought might be fraudulent. The conversation was fresh in her mind when she got out of the car and started walking toward the market. She looked up and saw four shadowy figures approaching her.

"This is not good," she thought. Peck remembered Blauer telling her she had to act, to break out of her frozen state.

"I told myself, 'You need to do something or this is going to be bad.'"

Remembering the ATM video, she hit redial on her phone and started screaming at it.

"I have no fucking money, no gas. You better turn my credit card on now!" she yelled.

"I didn't even think about, 'What if it doesn't work?' I just knew I needed to be crazy right now ... let them know this is the wrong target."

The four men looked at her, stopped and walked away.

"And I am just standing there like a crazy woman screaming into a silent phone," Peck said.

"If I had not taken that class, I would have just froze," Peck said.

Peck's experience at the gas station, she said, taught her as much about herself as CrossFit has.

"It's not about (performing well in) some workout," Peck said. "It is just about being stronger than you know. That strength is as much physical as it is mental."

## Spreading Knowledge

Blauer's CrossFit Defense courses feature his self-defense tactics based on the body's physiological response to danger, and he uses CrossFit movements that mirror simple combative techniques. The course also addresses fear-management techniques and how to detect and defuse a threat—the technique in the ATM video.

In addition to his course offerings, Blauer wanted to spread his knowledge just like CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman did when he started posting workouts on CrossFit.com. Blauer loved how CrossFit offered free training advice and jumped at the chance to offer tips to the community.

Blauer put up his ATM video as a way to help people learn simple rules of awareness and how to manipulate behavior. In the end, he wanted people to laugh at a video and think, "I could do that."

"It's fun, it's important, it's immediate, and it's made up of uncommon sense," Blauer said.

Like any CrossFit specialty seminar, a CrossFit Defense course won't make you an expert in a day or a weekend. However, even a three-minute video can be life changing, and learning basic self-defense techniques can make all the difference when you suddenly feel as if something is very wrong.



## About the Authors

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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL VIRTUOSITY

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## Virtuosity 2: A Friend in Need

BayState CrossFit community pulls together in a time of loss.

By Anne-Marie McClintock

November 2014



Courtesy of Mary Ellen Weeks

*Anne-Marie McClintock, sixth from right in purple shoes, surrounded by her BayState CrossFit community.*

I look down at my vibrating phone on my desk. It reads “Gregg M.” It is 7:01 a.m., 5:01 a.m. his time, May 8, 2014.

Why is he calling me?

We haven’t spoken since I moved from Colorado to Massachusetts nine months earlier. I go back to my work. If he leaves a message, I’ll know something is wrong. Even then, I know a voicemail is coming. I know nothing good can come from a 5-a.m. phone call.

1 of 2

### Two Hours Later

I just want to go home and hide, but my colleagues won't let me. I have just barely started to build friendships in this new town, and I'm not sure whom I should call. As a matter of fact, making new friends in a new place was harder than I expected, so I joined CrossFit. I thought for an hour a day they would have to hang out with me, and maybe I would make a few friends. I pick up my phone and call Kristen from the box. I can barely breathe, but I gasp out, "Kristen? Warren's been killed in a car accident. I won't make it to class tonight." Then I hang up.

This is where time and memory deceive me. Life begins to blur. I am numb. Someone drives me home. Mary Ellen, a friend from CrossFit, is waiting at my doorstep. Kristen called everyone I'm remotely close with from our box, and they all dropped everything to come take care of me. Everyone floods in with food, hugs and conversation.

I wake up the next morning thinking it was all a horrible nightmare, but within seconds reality slaps my heart: My fiancé is really dead.

I want to stay in my bed and never come out. Mary Ellen, Chrissy and Kristen will not have it. They drag me to class that morning.

I zone out and put all my focus on the weights. Unfortunately, halfway through the workout, reality comes rushing back in as waves of tears. I try to focus on the music but my body is giving up. Before I know it, James Giles, my coach, is standing right beside me.

"Come on, Anne-Marie. Don't give up now. Get that bar up. You can do it!" Everyone in the box comes to my side as I finish that workout. In that moment I know I have not just found friends. I have a family.

### Lost and Found

It has been four months and 13 days. Every day, I continue on a journey of understanding and healing, and BayState CrossFit has become my therapy. My friendships with my coaches and my fellow athletes are the best friendships I have ever had.

"The real workout starts when you want to stop," I once read.

My BayState family will never, ever let me stop.

And that means everything.



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### Submission Guidelines

To be considered for publication, authors must satisfy the following:

1. Articles must be original, unpublished works. Authors of selected submissions will be supplied with legal documents to be filled out prior to publication.
2. Articles must be submitted in Word documents attached to an email. Documents should not contain bolding, italics or other formatting. Please submit in Arial font.
3. Articles can be 500 words maximum.
4. Each article must be accompanied by at least one high-resolution photograph to illustrate the story. The photo can feature the coach, the affiliate, the community—anything that illustrates the article. Photo guidelines are as follows:

- A. Photos must be original and owned by the person submitting. Photos taken by others may be submitted provided the owner has given permission.
- B. Photos must be in focus, well lit and free of watermarks. Minimum file size is 1 MB. Please review your camera's settings to ensure you are shooting high-resolution images. Cell-phone photos and thumbnails are not accepted.
- C. Photos must be attached to the email as JPEG files. Do not embed files in Word documents. Photo file names should list both the name of the subject and the name of the photographer in this format: SubjectName-PhotographerName.jpg. Examples: JohnSmith-JaneDoe.jpg or CrossFitAnyTown-JimJohnson.jpg.

Virtuosity@crossfit.com is open for submissions. Tell us why you train where you train, and do it uncommonly well.



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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## Level Up!

Chad Vaughn explains what lifters and coaches will learn at the CrossFit Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course.

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By Chad Vaughn

November 2014

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All images: Lindsay and Elliot Schrock

Weightlifting is described as ballet with a barbell, poetry in motion, and a beautiful work of art. As the best weightlifters in the world train to put the greatest weight overhead, they also develop athletic attributes such as strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance and accuracy. These attributes are finely honed through training, giving Olympic lifters relative degrees of the strength of powerlifters, the flexibility of gymnasts and so on.



*The CrossFit Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course contains practical work but is very much designed for coaches.*

Because the lifts have such dramatic effects on so many aspects of fitness and athleticism, top athletes in other sports employ the snatch and clean and jerk to help them succeed in their sports of choice. This is also why the snatch and clean and jerk are a huge part of the CrossFit program. It's no coincidence that the eight attributes listed above are all found on CrossFit's list of 10 fitness domains. And when you add in the task of completing a larger number of reps with these movements at lower weights, you have a very uncomfortable yet very effective method of developing cardiovascular/respiratory endurance and stamina, completing the CrossFit list.

In CrossFit, we want the ability to lift as much as we can for a single rep, and we also want the ability to execute many reps with lighter loads as quickly as possible. Both tasks require a great amount of efficiency: The better the movement and the stronger the key positions, the more I can lift for one rep and the better chance I have of maintaining excellent positioning through high-rep efforts. To maintain efficiency while performing high-rep workouts, you must first learn good technique and

movement with practice for heavier loads, and you must pursue consistency at all times. Efficiency will increase the number of reps you can get in a given interval, which will maximize intensity and dramatically improve your fitness.

Can you improve the flexibility, movement and positional strength demanded by weightlifting while still doing the CrossFit workouts we all love, including Murph, Cindy and Helen? I believe the answer is yes, and the proof I offer is the movement and loads lifted by most if not all CrossFit Games athletes. But how do athletes find the ballet, the poetry and the art within their snatches and clean and jerks? How do we find proper execution that further develops and demonstrates the dynamism, explosiveness and grace of the Olympic lifts?

To answer those questions, let's break down the goal of the CrossFit Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course and explain who should attend.



## Learning to Lift, Learning to Coach

The stated goal of the Advanced Trainer Course is “to teach the coach how to assess and optimize movement, to advance the athlete in the snatch, clean and jerk.”

Some think the new course is for the advanced weightlifter or athlete, but it is 100 percent a course for coaches, and its intent is to improve their technical eyes and give them the tools to advance their athletes in the lifts. That said, we strongly believe a coach can become better by feeling the positions and movements while lifting and being coached, just as we believe an athlete can improve his or her own skills by seeing and correcting others.

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**Some think the new course is for the advanced weightlifter or athlete, but it is 100 percent a course for coaches, and its intent is to improve their technical eyes and give them the tools to advance their athletes in the lifts.**

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Course attendees should be ready to participate in a number of breakout sessions that aim to aid coaches and athletes in assessment and optimization, and they should expect to lift heavy in other sessions. Throughout, they'll get an abundance of detailed coaching on their lifting, and they'll get a chance to coach while staff members guide them. As the course progresses, seminar staff will coach the coaches more and more, assisting them in seeing and correcting errors.

With regard to assessing and optimizing movement, we are not just referring to the snatch and clean and jerk but rather any movement. Many athletes are held back in weightlifting by patterns developed while performing other movements (such as within Murph, Cindy or Helen, to name a few).



*Coaches who attend the course will become better by feeling the positions and movements while lifting and being coached.*

For example, if you always flare your elbows and internally rotate the shoulders on push-ups, you will likely have a hard time with Mike Burgener's “show me your armpits” cue when the bar is overhead. Burgener is asking athletes to externally rotate the shoulders to create a safer and stronger overhead position, and internal-rotation patterns can short-circuit their attempts to do so.

Another example is provided by athletes who regularly muscle weight overhead during low-weight, high-rep snatches, which takes the bar out of contact with the body as they exert power through extension. If you regularly use a round-back deadlift to get the weight to the hips and allow the bar to drift away from you during the pull, you will likely exhibit the same faults with heavier loads, where the margin for error is far smaller. Repeated efforts with these patterns will deeply ingrain them and make it very difficult to improve your movement later on. We'll give tips on how to move to ensure the best carryover to the Olympic lifts, and we'll suggest methods to help athletes achieve the positions we recommend.



***Two-time Olympian Chad Vaughn leads the CrossFit Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course.***

While we do focus on movement in general, we will, of course, take the time to completely tear the snatch, clean and jerk apart in lectures, and we put them back together and create a very simple way to look at the lifts. The reconstruction is continued in breakout sessions in which athletes coach and receive coaching.

An example of one of the technical aspects that we cover in detail is the start position of the snatch and clean. We lower or raise the hips and shift the body forward or back to create different angles at the shins, back and thighs, and we set the athlete exactly where we want him or her to lock in and initiate the lift. This start position will create the exact bar path we want to achieve in this course. While other systems and coaches recommend the bar be “swept back” to the launch position as it comes off the floor, we recommend a start position that will allow you to move the bar straight, or as straight as possible. In this start position, we are looking for the body weight to be more centered on the foot or evenly distributed throughout, with a slightly smaller shin angle and the bar touching the shins.

While this start position can help those who want to lift more in the Olympic lifts, it also has carryover for the CrossFitter, who can use the position to increase efficiency in heavy-weight, low-rep efforts and light-weight, high-rep efforts. This set-up and resulting bar path will cut down on the movement of the body and bar and conserve energy. Think about the effort required to displace the bar rep after rep with light weight, and consider if you would really want to sweep the bar when returning to the floor while performing touch-and-go reps.

Neither this start position nor the start position that will require sweeping is wrong. Each will work for some athletes better than others, but the carryover of a set-up creating a consistently straighter bar path is worth consideration by the CrossFit athlete.

All aspects of the Olympic lifts will be broken down and considered in this manner, helping athletes optimize technique and increase performance on the platform and in CrossFit workouts.

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## **The information presented in the Advanced Trainer Course builds on the CrossFit Level 1 Certificate Course and the CrossFit Weightlifting Trainer Course.**

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### **Building on a Solid Foundation**

The information presented in the Advanced Trainer Course builds on the CrossFit Level 1 Certificate Course and the CrossFit Weightlifting Trainer Course. We present alternative techniques and methods and new material to a more experienced audience, but the information is not intended to conflict with that presented at other courses. Introducing athletes to CrossFit and weightlifting (meaning teaching someone who has never done the movements before) usually requires a different approach than that required for helping a more experienced athlete optimize performance. Continued use of introductory information and cues can sometimes hinder the development of intermediate or advanced athletes, much like too much detail presented too



early can overwhelm an inexperienced lifter and potentially limit long-term development.

Introductory courses must present the easiest, most effective way to introduce weightlifting movements and set athletes up for success. An example would be the three-position teaching method for the pull of the snatch, as taught in the CrossFit Level 1 Certificate Course. The PVC or bar is put in each position as the athlete moves from one to the other and learns to recreate each position on his or her own: high hang, mid-thigh and mid-shin. This three-position approach is a simple and very effective way to teach someone who hasn't done a lot of snatching before or has done no snatching at all. The pattern helps coaches address errors commonly seen in new lifters, but as the lifter becomes more experienced, positions, cues and drills usually need to be modified to address other errors or to prevent the creation of errors when the exaggerated beginner positions are maintained for too long. At this point, alternative techniques can be introduced to help lifters find what works best for them.

An example of an alternative technique would be a jerk that employs high elbows and a chin lift (like a Pez dispenser), as described in the video "[Head Movement for the Jerk With Chad Vaughn](#)." This technique is, of course, different than the chin-tuck method taught in the CrossFit Level 1 Certificate Course, and it's different from the jerk taught at the first level of the Weightlifting Trainer Course, at which attendees are instructed to keep the elbows down and out in the pressing position.

None of these techniques are wrong. They are just alternatives to try with yourself or some of your athletes to see if they optimize performance. For instance, less flexible or smaller athletes may benefit from keeping the elbows high in the jerk set-up, while others will find success with the elbows lower. A good coach knows many techniques, as well as the order in which they should be introduced to athletes.

For example, I would recommend first teaching the jerk with the chin tucked and the elbows down and out because it's easier and keeps things more consistent in the beginning. Also, understand that the "Pez technique" is specifically for maximal efforts; we are not recommending it for low-weight, high-rep efforts. In Grace, for example, it would be a waste of time and energy to aggressively tilt your head back in this way rep after rep, and we spend time in the Advanced Course confirming this.

The goal of the course is to help an athlete reach his or her potential in the Olympic lifts, whether he or she wants to perform better and get fitter or compete at the local, national or international level. To optimize performance, coaches and athletes have to be able to identify what they are doing wrong, and they need to have the tools to fix these errors. The Level 1 Certificate Course, Weightlifting Trainer Course and Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course give athletes these tools and build on each other with the goal of long-term development and improved performance.

Personally, I've had to re-learn how to better introduce newer CrossFit athletes and weightlifters to the snatch and clean and jerk. At one point, I was teaching everyone more in line with the techniques taught in the Advanced Course, and the job got done, but not as efficiently and effectively as it could have for the beginners.

Trust in this three-step CrossFit progression that is laid out before you. The techniques introduced in each are presented in a specific order with an eye on efficiency and effectiveness.



***The Advanced Course introduces techniques that will allow experienced lifters to optimize their form for best results on the platform.***

That said, I'll leave you with a few Advanced Course topics that can be appreciated by athletes of all levels:

1. Barbell mobility work: any stretch in which a lifter holds an exaggerated weightlifting position with a barbell or other load.
2. A four-step process to assess and fix faults, including practice with video review.
3. Focus work: how to engage your mind to find clarity amid the complexity.
4. Programming tricks for setting up a sport-specific weightlifting program and combining it with CrossFit.

To take the Advanced Course, attendees must have held a CrossFit Level 1 Certificate for at least one year and completed the CrossFit Weightlifting Trainer Course. These prerequisites ensure everyone is on the same page and has a sound foundation we can use to explore other aspects of Olympic weightlifting. Though the Advanced Course content runs deep in detail, the

course flows very smoothly because of this shared foundation.

Hope to see you in an Advanced Course soon!



### About the Author:

*Chad Vaughn is a two-time Olympian, a nine-time national champion and an American record holder in the sport of Olympic weightlifting. He was introduced to CrossFit in 2008 and began working within the community in early 2010. Chad is part owner of CrossFit CenTex in Belton, Texas, where he holds weekly weightlifting classes while now leading the CrossFit Weightlifting Advanced Trainer Course. Chad has a natural, matured understanding of how the body best moves and is highly motivated to help anyone find his or her perfect snatch and heaviest clean and jerk.*

*Chad is assisted in the Advanced Course by Matt Bruce and Jodi Vaughn. You can read more about them at [CrossFitweightlifting.com](http://CrossFitweightlifting.com).*



***"The better the movement and the stronger the key positions, the more I can lift for one rep and the better chance I have of maintaining excellent positioning through high-rep efforts." —Chad Vaughn***