

the **CrossFit**
JOURNAL ARTICLES

CrossFit To Go

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Since January, I've been on thirty-nine flights. The madness started with a writing assignment to cover cat skiing in southern British Columbia: ten days. Three weeks later, I was called to hop a few planes to a Canadian mountain range called the Monashees for a backcountry skiing photo shoot for Mountain Hardwear with a few other athletes: nine days. Two weeks later, I left on a month-long assignment for National Geographic Adventure in northern Norway, where I retraced the steps of a WWII escapee on skis across Lapland, about ten degrees north of the Arctic Circle: twenty-nine days. Ten days at home, then I jetted to Nepal for a month to write dispatches for MSN.com on Ed Viesturs's

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historic mountaineering ascent of Annapurna, making him the first American to climb all fourteen of the world's 8,000-meter peaks: thirty days. No rest for the weary, but I like it that way. I like to pack it all in; it feels more efficient that way, like I'm getting things done. Unfortunately, with that "efficiency" that I fiendishly suck energy to achieve, thirty-nine flights in no way augments my level of fitness. CrossFit does.

Most recently, I returned from Nepal, where I spent three exceptionally still weeks at Annapurna's base camp, a 14,000-foot massive moraine pile where I was responsible for the exclusive online coverage of Viesturs's climb for the MSN Travel Central website (www.firstandbest.msn.com). It sounds exciting, but when you pick apart my time there and look at what I was actually doing on an hourly basis, it was in fact quite boring. Days would go by when the only form of entertainment was betting on the exact hour at which the daily dose of dense wet fog was going to roll in or watching prayer flags flap in the afternoon breeze through the transparent window in the communications tent dubbed the "love dome." When boredom of that severity strikes, your mind tests you by making exercise repulsive, by tricking you into thinking, "Fuck it, I'm not going to do anything until I get home in three weeks. It doesn't matter, what matters, who cares, maybe I was meant to be soft." Happens every time, every trip. A sort of blasé carelessness sweeps over you unless you're stubborn enough, like me, to force those

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thoughts out and actually move out into the fog.

Most days, I'd shoulder my pack with some water, food, and down and waterproof layers, blare my iPod at mass decibel output with Thievery Corporation or some electronica or dance music, and scamper out of base camp to hike up a moraine pile somewhere or, more importantly, do a quasi-CrossFit workout along the sandy beach of the coldest alpine lake you've ever felt.

Most days we were shrouded in fog, but I was glad as it hid my backcountry CrossFitting techniques, which most base campers would find brutally archaic. I had no choice. I was stuck at 14,000 feet, surrounded by rock and ice.

My first workout consisted of a warm-up hike up to 15,500 feet, followed by four sets of 40 burpees, 40 push-ups, 75 sit-ups, then a speed hike for three minutes up a steep pile of rocks. I'll tell you what, forty burpees



CrossFit To Go (continued...)

can kill a grown woman at 15,500 feet. Somehow, I lived, and, oddly enough, it cured me of the ennui that my cohorts were still suffering from 1,500 feet below in base camp. My workout made the daal bhat (rice and lentils) tastier, my sleep more restful, and my dispatches easier to squeeze out every afternoon. Each day that followed, I'd stick in my earphones and plod out of camp for my daily dose of CrossFit. Other workouts included tuck jumps up steep rocky hillsides, sprints in dried river beds, pull-ups on tiny edges of 10-foot-tall boulders, box jumps to thigh-high rocks, thrusters with 30-pound rocks, and swings with the same stones. Half the fun was creating my "gym" along the Miristi Khola River; the other half actually laughing at what I was doing alone on the side of a thundering glacial stream with massive seracs avalanching all around me as I stood CrossFitting and sucking wind at 14,000 feet.

Before heading to Nepal, I was mixing CrossFit workouts with loads of yoga, trail running, and cycling, all of which helped my endurance during my time in Nepal. But only one type of training helped my body cope with those altitudes: CrossFit. CrossFit taught my body to perform at a higher level with less oxygen, exactly what I needed at altitudes with half the oxygen of that at sea level. During our week-long trek into base camp, when most people were taking a few steps and then stopping to catch their breath, I kept rolling, arriving at camp sometimes hours before the others. This is not to say I'm tougher, because certainly I'm not, but the intensity at which CrossFit workouts teach the body to perform allowed me to work through the pain, work through the heavy breathing in the thin air. One day I even dropped my pack, ran back down the trail, and relieved a porter of her tumpline load. That capacity comes from CrossFit.

Nepal was just one of the several places around the globe that I've gotten creative with CrossFit techniques to cure my travel travails. It started raining during our last week in Norway, which thwarted our ability to do parts of the ski traverse for fear of massive wet avalanche activity. While my trip mates were content playing solitaire, reading, or drinking bad coffee inside our hotel room, I left on an hour's trip down the road

for a CrossFit workout. One hundred eighty push-ups, 300 air squats, 600 yards of sprinting, and 300 sit-ups later, I was back at the hotel, soaked to the bone and never happier.

For me, traveling generates opportunities to be creative with CrossFit, to relax the rules that barbells and weight rooms imply, and to replenish the passion that got me hooked on CrossFit in the first place. It forces me to break the routine of time and place that I seem to cling to at home and do what feels right for my body that day, that hour, in that geographical location. It makes me dig deep for the drive and motivation that, after forty hours of plane rides across oceans and continents, can be difficult to find and even more difficult to use productively. And, most importantly, it teaches me again to pay attention to how CrossFit boosts my emotional fortitude, focuses my intellectual output, and balances my energy and attitude. So, whenever anyone says to me, "I'm so out of shape; I've just been traveling too much," I reply, "Hey babe, check out CrossFit. It might change your life."

