

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## SWAT vs. “Fran”

Brian Jolda

“That was F-ing stupid.”

—Eric Lundell after completing “SWAT Fran”

I'd say they were inspired. As anyone who works in public safety knows, there's an ongoing rivalry between cops and firefighters. We are always competing against each other, be it on a field, a diamond, an ice rink, a gym, or on the street. It's “anything you can do, I can do better”—to the max. So when a link to “[Firefighter Fran](#)”—a video of two firefighters doing “Fran” in full bunker gear and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)—was posted with the Workout of the Day on CrossFit.com on [May 4, 2008](#), the spirit of competition awoke in a couple of our local police officers.



Now, who in the police world is the alpha, the king of competition? It's the SWAT guys. If a firefighter can do “Fran” in turnout gear and SCBA, the SWAT guys must be able to do it in their tactical gear as well. And so they were inspired to complete the CrossFit benchmark workout called “Fran” in full SWAT callout gear. This included boots, BDU (battle dress uniform) pants, tactical vest, duty belt, firearm, helmet, earmuffs, and gas mask. In the vest were fully loaded magazines, flashbang stun grenades (you never know when you may have to bang something), ceramic trauma plates, radio, and night vision goggles. The gear alone weighed approximately 50 pounds, but it was the effects of the gas mask that were most significant.

The gas mask was an MSA Millennium, which is made for environments contaminated by chemical and biological threats. Inside the canister attached to the side of the mask is a series of filters for capturing harmful particles. When the SWAT operators inhale, their airflow is



1 of 3

restricted as it passes through the filters. The air then travels through the internal plumbing and into the mask itself, up by the forehead. A system of one-way valves allows them to exhale without allowing contaminated air in. As a result, the SWAT guys' bodies have to work much harder to pull the air into the mask as well as force it back out. The whole process makes it feel like you're trying to breathe through a straw. On top of making it harder to breathe, the mask also gives a feeling of containment—not to mention that it gets real hot and sweaty in there.

Kevin, wearing the olive drab-green BDU pants in the video, and Eric, in the ACU (Army combat uniform) digital cammies, both weighed in at 178 pounds before donning their equipment. All geared up, Kevin weighed 230 and Eric weighed 224. That's 52 pounds and 46 pounds extra, respectively. Kevin's best "Fran" time is 4:10, and he guessed the SWAT version would take him about 10 minutes. Eric's best is 4:27, and his estimate was 15 minutes geared up.

I noticed the effects of the gas mask almost right away. Kevin and Eric both sounded like a couple of rank newbies sucking wind during the first set of 21 thrusters. Kevin powered hard through the first sets of thrusters and pull-ups, taking only a few short breaks to catch a little air. Later he would mention how the gas mask felt "like a coffin" and "the walls felt like they were closing in." The second set of 15 reps seemed to be the toughest for both of them. They had to take longer and more frequent breaks, completing fewer repetitions in a row between each break. When he finished, Eric said he might have missed a few reps "when he blacked out," even though he never actually stopped moving and never lost consciousness. Both of them have completed "Michael" in gas masks, doing all three rounds of the 800-meter run, back extensions, and sit-ups in respectable times. However, it is clear that the gas mask is not a good fit for an anaerobic workout like "Fran". They just couldn't get enough air.

|       | Body weight | "Fran" time | SWAT gear weight | SWAT Fran time |
|-------|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| Kevin | 178         | 4:10        | 52               | 11:18          |
| Eric  | 178         | 4:27        | 46               | 18:36          |





The best performance came during the final round of 9 reps. The finish line, and the prospect of getting the masks off, provided the necessary motivation to spend less time recovering between repetitions and do more reps consecutively. Kevin finished in 11:18, not too far off his ten-minute estimate, and Eric in 18:36. According to Kevin, the added weight was insignificant, but he was totally affected by the gas mask. Eric agreed that it was all he could do to not rip the mask off, but he also attested that that was a *lot* of pull-ups to do with the extra 46 pounds. Either way, I don't expect either of them will be willing to try this again.



#### Online Video

[http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitCentralCT\\_SWATvsFran.wmv](http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitCentralCT_SWATvsFran.wmv)

[http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitCentralCT\\_SWATvsFran.mov](http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitCentralCT_SWATvsFran.mov)



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