

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Wrangling the Road Warriors

Three affiliate owners in destination cities share secrets to dealing with visiting athletes while ensuring members receive the attention they deserve.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



Courtesy of Monique Ames

At CrossFit Evolution in Florida, strict drop-in procedures are in place to keep the focus on members of the gym.

Those who travel often constantly rave about the gracious hospitality they receive from CrossFit affiliates all over the world.

Visiting other affiliates for a workout away from home is part of leading a fit lifestyle, building the global CrossFit community, experiencing new coaching styles, bulking up the T-shirt collection and getting acquainted with the locals.

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But visiting athletes also create management challenges for affiliate owners. It's not uncommon for coaches to curse on the inside when a visiting student who claims to be very experienced shows up 10 minutes late and then exposes complete ignorance of the squat clean, resulting in a need to direct attention away from members and toward the visitor who wants to do the workout as prescribed no matter what. Even on-time and proficient athletes can pose a challenge if a box has limited staff and a busy coach has to try to get waivers signed and T-shirts sized in between running workouts.

The best policy for athletes is to be humble, gracious and low maintenance when visiting another box. When that happens, everyone wins.

The former problem has a lot to do with the athletes themselves, while the latter highlights another challenge of running a small business. Both, however, can be addressed in a variety of ways.

Joe Marsh, Monique Ames and Bryant Powers all run affiliates in destination cities and have dealt with just about every situation you can imagine. As a result, these affiliates have developed visiting-student policies that work for their specific business, and they might work for you, whether your box is in a high-traffic area or a remote location.

Although Marsh, Ames and Powers have adopted different attitudes and policies toward visiting students, they all agree on one thing: If you're ever visiting an affiliate for a workout, the best policy for athletes is to be humble, gracious and low maintenance. When that happens, everyone wins.

Case Study: CrossFit Las Vegas

It was a regular day in early October at CrossFit Las Vegas. A dozen students were warming up for the noon group class that was about to start. Three of the 12 students were visiting from other affiliates.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

CrossFit Las Vegas uses its website to get visitors ready so coaches can focus on coaching rather than paperwork when drop-ins arrive.

As the clock struck noon, Marsh summoned the class, introduced the visiting students—one was from New York and the other two were from Canada—and got them started with T-spine and hip mobility, followed by some painful quad mashing.

After that came lifting: a 20-rep back squat. Each person in the class knew his or her fitness level, how much weight to put on the bar and how to approach the daunting 20 repetitions.

With 20 minutes left in the hour, Marsh smiled and announced Fran as the final part of the day's work. After a couple of groans, the athletes set up their bars, quickly warmed up their thrusters and prepared to enter the Fran pain cave.

One of the men in the class, a long-time regular at CrossFit Las Vegas, was a retired firefighter who calls himself "Pops."

"I don't even think people around here know my name. They just know me as Pops," said the man whose real name is Calvin Garland Sr.

Pops has been doing CrossFit for a couple of years, and one of the things he loves about CrossFit Las Vegas is the variety of people he gets to meet.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

On the visitors board at CrossFit Las Vegas, pins indicate home cities of traveling athletes who've stopped partying long enough to hit a workout.

"I love all the visitors. Usually about once a week or so, I'll drive some of them back to their hotels on the Strip. It gets expensive taking cabs in this city, so they usually appreciate the ride. And I get to talk to people from all over the world," he explained.

The class ended without a hitch. Pops loaded his truck with visitors and drove them back to Caesars Palace, and CrossFit Las Vegas carried on as normal.

Taking in visiting students wasn't always this smooth for Marsh, whose affiliate is just 4 miles off the infamous Las Vegas Strip in one of the world's major tourist cities. Although Marsh has always welcomed visiting CrossFit athletes, he didn't always have proper policies in place to handle them.

He used to spend countless hours answering redundant emails and phone calls from would-be guests, as well as

dealing with unexpected visiting students who often showed up late for class, disheveled and bleary after surviving a late-night Las Vegas adventure. By the time waivers were signed, payments were processed and a quick welcome was given, it was hard to start group classes on time. Meanwhile, Marsh's regular students—his loyal, paying members—took notice, and Marsh took action.

Today, Marsh has a meticulous online system in place that both handles the intake logistics as well as pre-qualifies visitors, ensuring quality control.

In fact, when you log onto the CrossFit Las Vegas website, there's an [entire section devoted to visitors](#).

On top of registration policies, the visitors section of his website also has information for tourists—maps, directions, class schedule, fees—so visitors don't bombard Marsh with emails. It's all very common sense, Marsh

explained, but it's made a world of difference in terms of saving him time dealing with inquiries one at a time.

To speed up the process of waiver signing and registration, visiting athletes must fill out an online waiver prior to their arrival and create an online account that puts them into CrossFit Las Vegas' client-management system. Marsh requires drop-ins to have three months of CrossFit experience, though new athletes who want to try CrossFit while on the road can schedule an intro session.

Marsh used to spend countless hours dealing with unexpected visiting students who often showed up late for class, disheveled and bleary after surviving a late-night Las Vegas adventure.

As strange as it might seem to some that a vacationer or business traveler would find his or her way into a CrossFit box for the first time, Marsh said it's actually common at his affiliate.

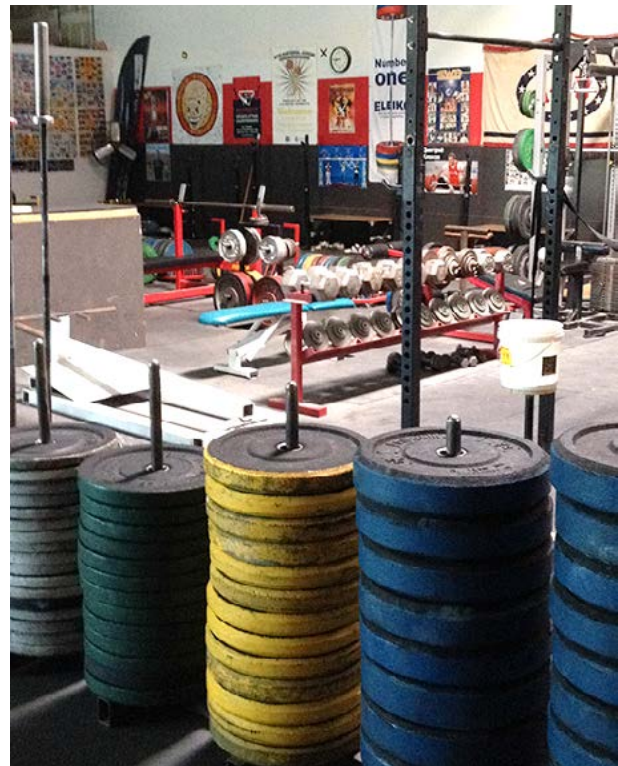
"We used to have way more situations where a CrossFit athlete would show up and bring some of his buddies who don't CrossFit. 'We're here for my stag. Can my friends work out, too?' they would ask me," Marsh said.

"No, they can't work out. If they don't CrossFit already, I'm not throwing them into this class," he added.

To solve this, Marsh's site specifically requests that members have at least three months of CrossFit experience at another affiliate in order to drop in at CrossFit Las Vegas.

Also, Marsh now pre-qualifies visitors by requesting an email from the athlete's coach, who must vouch for the visitor's competence in CrossFit movements.

For the most part, this has solved the quality-control issue. Every now and again, the visitor's coach will let Marsh know about an athlete's limitations, but generally visitors are well versed in the CrossFit movements.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

If all this looks foreign, you probably need more experience before dropping into CrossFit Las Vegas.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

As is tradition, visiting athletes always want a T-shirt, and some will buy four or five as gifts for friends.

"We've never had an email stating the visitor wasn't good to go," Marsh said.

At present, about 35 or more guests pay drop-in fees at CrossFit Las Vegas each week. The cost for a class is US\$20 for one visit and \$10 for any subsequent visit. In some months, as much as 20 percent of Marsh's gross revenue will come from visiting-student fees. But where Marsh really capitalizes financially is through the tradition of picking up a CrossFit T-shirt when visiting a new gym.

"I run out of T-shirts every month," said Marsh, who finds that many visitors buy three or even four T-shirts to bring back to friends.

Although he sometimes misses the mark on T-shirt inventory, Marsh generally orders more before he needs them to ensure he has enough sizes in stock. He always carries four standard sizes for both men's and women's apparel, so transactions have become relatively seamless.

It's taken some time to hammer out successful procedures and policies for visitors, but today Marsh is happy with how his gym manages the flow of visiting athletes.

"We still get the occasional visitor fresh off the plane with luggage in tow who clearly hasn't read the website, but for the most part, the system runs smoothly," he said.

Case Study: CrossFit Evolution

Monique Ames is the owner of CrossFit Evolution in Longwood, Fla., north of Orlando.

Her visiting-student policies have changed a lot over the last seven years. She used to welcome visitors, but when they started detracting from her service to her members, she banned drop-ins. Today, she allows some visitors but has strict policies about who can join in.

"When we first opened up, everything about CrossFit was new, and nobody in our classes really knew what they were doing, so having one more inexperienced person didn't interfere with the class because programming was made for people who didn't know what they were doing," Ames explained.

"But as our members grew and developed with us ... I stopped having time for the newbie," Ames said.

CrossFit Evolution puts all their members through personal-training sessions prior to allowing them to attend group classes, so a visitor who doesn't understand basic squat mechanics quickly becomes a problem to the group dynamic and the flow of the class. As CrossFit Evolution developed, visiting students started to become a problem in other ways, as well.



Courtesy of Monique Ames

Years ago, inexperienced visitors fit right in with inexperienced members at CrossFit Evolution. As programming changed to accommodate skilled, experienced athletes, coaches didn't have time to bring raw guests up to speed.

Courtesy of Monique Ames



It isn't that guests are unwelcome at CrossFit Evolution. It's just that the gym members always come first.

"I actually had a visitor write a bad review about us, saying that he didn't get enough attention in the class. The dude didn't know what he was doing, and it took away from the class," Ames said.

She added: "Our regular paying members were being overshadowed, and visitors were complaining about paying \$20."

It's not that Ames doesn't want to welcome new athletes into her gym; she just won't do it if it means detracting from the experience of her regular members. They come first.

**When they started detracting
from her service to her members,
Monique Ames banned drop-ins.**

In a situation many affiliate owners know and detest, some visitors insisted on training on their own in the corner—dropping weights aimlessly, sometimes crashing them into racks or the wall—and generally creating a ruckus as Ames was trying to coach a group class.

When it became obvious to Ames that visitors were hurting as opposed to helping her community, she decided to stop allowing visitors all together.

What happened after she made the announcement on her website surprised her: People started sending her hate mail. Some people who emailed threatened to post bad reviews of CrossFit Evolution, while other angry writers went so far as to say they hoped Ames went out of business.

"The first hate mail I received, I was just like, 'Wow, I can't believe the nerve of people,'" said Ames, who simply ignored the email. "It's not worth my time, and I believe you can't make everyone happy, so I don't try to."

As a sort of compromise, Ames currently allows only experienced CrossFit athletes to drop in, but she doesn't advertise this on her website. What she has found since implementing this policy is that her drop-in numbers

remain low and manageable and the visitors she does get add value to her group classes.

"We just ask when they call or email that they need to have six months of CrossFit experience," Ames said.



Courtesy of Monique Ames

Experienced visitors are now welcome to drop in at CrossFit Evolution, but participation is not guaranteed if skills are lacking.



Courtesy of Monique Ames

When traveling, check in with the affiliate ahead of time to make sure it welcomes visitors.

And if aspiring visitors don't have six months of CrossFit or more under their belt, Ames won't hesitate to turn them down. Ames is very clear to all aspiring visitors that if they don't meet her movement-standard criteria, she reserves the right to not let them in, regardless of how long they have been doing CrossFit.

"If someone comes in and doesn't have the experience they said they did, we'll tell them to leave," she said. This has only happened once, she said.

The reason her standard is so high isn't because she's an elitist; it's because she feels allegiance to her own members and wants to make sure movement quality is high in all her classes.

"We do a lot of strength training here, so everyone needs a decent foundation," she said.

With a strict policy in place, CrossFit Evolution averages just a handful of visitors each month, and the athletes happily pay the \$20 fee. On her end, Ames is happy to welcome experienced athletes who stop by for a workout.

Case Study: Hawaii

Bryant Powers' affiliate is CrossFit Oahu, and he's involved with running four others in Hawaii. They're all located within 20 to 30 minutes of each other, and CrossFit Oahu in Honolulu is the largest.

Powers welcomes visitors with open arms and doesn't even charge them a drop-in fee.

"I decided not to charge visitors because when I went to the original CrossFit gym in Santa Cruz, they didn't charge me."

—Bryant Powers

"I decided not to charge visitors because when I went to the original CrossFit gym in Santa Cruz, they didn't charge me, so I guess it's what I was brought up with," he said.

He added: "A lot of affiliates started out that way."

Courtesy of Bryant Powers



Located in prime vacation territory, CrossFit Oahu relies on great coaches who can quickly get visitors up to speed and scale workouts as needed.

Powers admits it's hit or miss in terms of the level of knowledge any given visitor displays.

"Of course we have people that come in that have no clue, but what we tell the coaches is to keep the visitors safe. We don't spend all our time with the visitors," said Powers, who sometimes has as many as eight guests show up for a Saturday-morning class at his Honolulu facility. Usually they aren't a problem.

"We just scale down what they have to do (if they're inexperienced). So if it is snatches, we just have them do overhead squats or air squats. Our coaches are pretty good at this point," he added.

"Most people just want to come in and complain about how humid it is, take a picture outside, get a workout in and buy a T-shirt."

As he doesn't charge for drop-ins, Powers generates revenue from T-shirts sold to traveling CrossFit athletes. He's an artist, so he draws and designs all his T-shirts

himself, creating different ones for each of the five boxes he's involved with.

Powers believes not charging people a drop-in fee makes them more inclined to purchase merchandise. From T-shirts to wrist bands to socks to gymnastics grips, Powers simply asks visitors to buy something before they leave if they've enjoyed their time at his box. More often than not, visitors do more than he asks.

"Not only do most people buy a T-shirt, they often buy lots of things. People go to Hawaii and want to buy something Hawaiian, and CrossFit athletes like to buy CrossFit stuff," he said.

"I think we have the perfect storm for visitors. We have a bunch of cool stuff, and most people buy between \$30 and \$500 worth of merchandise," he said.

Sometimes Powers even has tourists come by with no intention of working out; they just want to buy T-shirts.



Drop-ins to CrossFit Oahu are free, but most visitors purchase something from the affiliate's apparel and gear collection.

Because of the large number of drop-ins, Powers has front-desk employees who help with the logistics of signing waivers and T-shirt sales, as well as a full-time employee who deals with maintaining and delivering inventory.

Between the five affiliates, merchandise sales are between \$10,000 and \$20,000 each month, which amounts to approximately 10 to 20 percent of gross monthly revenue.

Being a Quality Visitor

Marsh, Ames and Powers have very different policies in place for visiting athletes, but they all agree that guests have the potential to be good, bad or seriously challenging—and it all depends on the attitude of the guest.

They've all had the visitors who have never done a thruster before, who show up late, and who bombard them with emails and phone calls asking for directions, taxi numbers, and info on class schedule and fees. Some of these guests are genuinely in need of assistance, but others are simply lazy and could have taken the time to read the website and follow the instructions.

Other guests have a knack for leaving equipment lying around after a workout, while others respond to instructions with charming sentences that begin with "at my box" or "when we squat at home."

And all the affiliate owners have had the guy who is "training for the Games" and demands to make noise and clank barbells in the corner as the class unfolds.

The good visitors who make up the majority of traveling athletes understand CrossFit movements and are willing to listen to the advice of a new coach. They know that working with different trainers is a great way to get perspective, learn different cues and even find new solutions to old problems. They know they're guests, so they keep their feet off the coffee table.

They do their homework, read the affiliate's policies and complete any requisite paperwork prior to their arrival if they can. They use Google Maps or a GPS to navigate their way through the city. They respectfully show up on time. And they graciously and humbly join a class.

"It's just common sense," Marsh said. "But it makes all the difference."



About the Author

Emily Beers is a CrossFit Journal staff writer and editor. She competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team, and she finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012. In 2013, she finished second in the Open in Canada West.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Found Money

Schools and CrossFit affiliates are teaming up to improve fitness and brain function in children, and opportunities for funding abound if you know where to look.

By Chris Cooper

February 2014



Chris Cooper/CrossFit Journal

Traditional physical education can get a shot in the arm from creative teachers who know how to access special funding.

Physical education has flatlined.

While the obesity epidemic rages and many schools lack the money, time or knowledge to implement a comprehensive approach to physical activity, CrossFit Kids is bringing fitness back into the curriculum, and the growing demand is creating new opportunities for CrossFit Kids affiliates.

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Though a school may not be able to pay for coaches to run programs, money is often available through not-for-profit agencies, various foundations and government programs. And if you know where to look, it's easy to find.

"Finding grants where schools are eligible is fairly easy," said Lura Poggi, Coordinator of School Programs for CrossFit Kids.

Some CrossFit affiliate owners are now leveraging these grants to pay more coaches, expand their businesses, help more kids and revive P.E. in their communities.

CrossFit Hurricane Blows the Doors Off

Louisiana is the 48th healthiest state in the United States according to [America's Health Rankings](#), and one in three Louisiana kids is obese. John Wilson, owner of Hurricane CrossFit, is attempting to solve the puzzle. His affiliate is located in Lake Charles, La., between New Orleans and Houston, Texas.

When Wilson learned of a US\$300,000 grant fund from Blue Cross Blue Shield to help kids in Louisiana get fit, he immediately realized he had a perfect partner within his gym: Dr. Sabrah Kingham is the principal of St. John Elementary school in Lake Charles, and she's also a CrossFit athlete.

The [Dare to Be Healthy](#) grant is available to schools implementing fitness and nutrition programs in Louisiana and may be available in other states under another name.

"When the grantwriter for our district said that she didn't know how to use the funds, I said, 'I do!'" Kingham said.

Kingham had already begun an after-school exercise program for students, and more than a hundred kids had signed up. Kingham's proposal to Blue Cross Blue Shield was to have more teachers trained as CrossFit Level 1 coaches and CrossFit Kids coaches so she could expand the program and study the results of exercise on kids. Kingham was awarded \$30,000, enough to train 15 coaches.



Chris Cooper/CrossFit Journal

Most schools separate learning and fitness, but CrossFit Kids can bring them together with impressive results.

St. John's Elementary will become a CrossFit Kids affiliate before starting the program. Affiliation is free for schools after teachers have attended a CrossFit Kids course. They also receive a 20 percent discount on the CrossFit Level 1 Trainer Course and the CrossFit Kids course.

"Early intervention is key for anything: nutrition, physical fitness, social skills; it all goes together," Kingham said. "You have to educate them on making good choices and staying physically fit. Seeing the benefit of exercise on their academic performance, how they feel, their self-image, their social skills, and the self-confidence to stand up to bullies makes it full circle."

Kingham's proposal to Blue Cross Blue Shield was to have more teachers trained as CrossFit Level 1 coaches and CrossFit Kids coaches. Her school was awarded \$30,000.

Wilson will lead the program, and teachers who have completed the CrossFit Kids seminar will act as assistants. Students are eager to start the program, and Kingham has

opened two more days of workouts each week to accommodate the demand. The program will grow as more teachers earn CrossFit Kids certificates.

Teachers earning CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids certificates through the funded program will volunteer as tutors in Wilson's gym, taking the program beyond the physical. Hurricane CrossFit has built a separate room for one-on-one tutoring.

"The kids are saying, 'When can we sign up?' They can choose other clubs for P.E. credit, but they choose CrossFit over soccer, football or basketball. They even sign a little contract agreeing to be there, and their parents sign it, too," Kingham said. "This year, we'll have a little educational seminar for parents where we can show data and then talk with them about nutrition. John (Wilson) will be there, too. We want to make sure there's that connection between home and school and that it's sustained."

The Opportunity for Schools

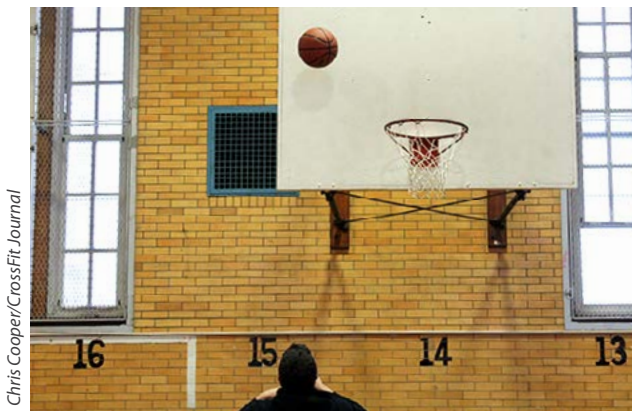
What's more important: teaching the rules of games or instilling a lifetime love of the pursuit of fitness? To a CrossFit athlete the answer is obvious. So why do schools teach dodgeball, handball and basketball in P.E.?

The CrossFit Kids curriculum solves many of the problems schools face: it provides a method, a progression and an attractive alternative to dodgeball. It's been integrated into a host of schools already, so institutions looking to make a switch have access to lots of answers to the questions of what, when and how. Because many workouts can even be done in a classroom, the last question for most schools is, "Who can deliver this program?"

"In most cases, schools get the grants and hire the CrossFit Kids box to deliver," said Poggi. "Most grantors aren't going to give money to anyone who's for-profit. So most grantors will look for nonprofits or schools."

According to Poggi, the funding process usually starts with a parent relationship—a member of the gym who serves as part of a parent-teacher association or teaches at the school, for instance. But even when gyms don't have a strong connection to their local school district, they can still forge one using external funds.

"The grant application is written by whatever individual will sit down and do it—sometimes a box member, sometimes a teacher or an administrator," Poggi said. "People think, 'I can't just do it,' but it's very simple. Just be very clear about what you're going to do in your program,



Physical-education programs that teach games instead of fitness may be missing the mark.



Chris Cooper/CrossFit Journal

Adding a math program to a CrossFit Kids workout can expand a gym's offering and create new funding possibilities.

how you're going to spend your money. It doesn't have to be complicated."

The reporting process after a grant has been awarded can be just as daunting, but when the school is listed as the recipient, it will oversee how funds are used. According to Poggi, this is the most time-consuming part of the process.

"(Reporting is) often harder than getting the money. Overseeing the funds and reporting are sometimes the most cumbersome part. But it's up to the school to oversee it anyway," she said.

Finding a Fulcrum: Get Creative

On Sept. 30, 2013, the U.S. Department of Education awarded 60 grants worth a total of almost **\$32 million** to education agencies and public and private community-based organizations to deliver nutrition and physical-education programs.

Money is definitely available for those who seek it, both from public and not-for-profit sources (see sidebar on

Page 6). Though some funding is available for research, other grants simply require that an "ongoing" program be launched with the funds. Such a program could include for-profit initiatives like CrossFit Kids.

CrossFit Kids gyms searching for third-party funding sources shouldn't limit themselves to grants only applying to physical fitness. As a large volume of research emerges

**CrossFit Kids gyms searching
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Social programs, like those for kids with special needs, may have funding available for extracurricular activities. In the extreme, some insurance plans covering juvenile brain injury have funded daily in-gym programs combining schoolwork with squats.

In other cases, school districts have formed classes for groups of at-risk kids. Rather than confining the “problem students” into a classroom, using CrossFit as an intervention can be an appealing choice.

—Greg Glassman, CrossFit
Founder and CEO



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CrossFit Canton approached middle schools in Georgia about an after-school enrichment program. They used their best advocates: the members at their gym.

"Our members who either teach at the schools or have kids who attend the schools approached the school and pretty much sold it for me," said Karen Camp of CrossFit Canton. "I just called, followed up and set it up."

The school made parents aware of the program, and interested parents enrolled their kids through CrossFit Canton. Camp's program included CrossFit Kids workouts and homework help.

Integrating a subject like math into a CrossFit Kids workout can be as simple as requiring multiplication exercises between squats or building addition and subtraction into a shuttle run. Other gyms incorporate public speaking into workouts: CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif., routinely has its teenage athletes present movements to peer groups to practice speaking in front of an audience.

Parents who pay for after-school tutoring may also be attracted to programs combining CrossFit Kids with subject-specific help. In many cities, pricing for small-group tutoring is comparable to pricing for small-group personal training; mixing "homework time" into a hockey player's workout is simple. Best of all, students look forward to their "brain workout."

Camp has also run successful programs at CrossFit Canton for kids with special needs, such as those diagnosed with autism and Down syndrome. Other gyms have had success with similar programs.

Grant Sources

Wilson used a grant from [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana](#), and the funder has similar programs in several states. In Illinois, the program is called [Healthy Kids, Healthy Families](#) and may have other names in other states.

Some programs, such as [GoodSports](#), will fund the purchase of equipment for physical-education programs. Others, such as [SparkPE](#), serve as a clearing house for hundreds of grants promoting health, nutrition and fitness.

CrossFit Kids regularly posts additional grant opportunities on its [Facebook](#) page.

Affiliates and schools are encouraged to research the grants available and put together creative programs that qualify.



Brandi Exarhos

At Kitsap CrossFit, kids hit a workout and then hit the books for Spanish classes.

A growing body of research supports using exercise to moderate behavior, decrease negative symptoms and improve cognition in children. Long-term risk for cognitive decline is also considerably lessened when kids exercise more.

"There were 1,600 papers last year (2012) looking at exercise's effect on cognition. All were positive in the direction of preventing cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease. That's pretty conclusive proof," said Dr. John Ratey, Harvard researcher and author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*.

When a child enjoys play and a parent can see potential benefits beyond physical health, a well-designed CrossFit Kids program has very broad appeal.

There are other creative ways to bring CrossFit Kids into a curriculum. Social programs, like anti-bullying and leadership initiatives, may have unused funds, and tailoring a CrossFit Kids program to match can be simple.



Brandi Exarhos

Research suggests exercise improves cognition and brain function, making training and learning an ideal pair.

"I was just talking with a teacher who was thinking that her school should be using CrossFit as a means to help these kids. Her school had just done an in-service on bullying, and they just watched a movie about it," Poggi said. "It's definitely bubbling to the surface now. We have a lot of box owners who are talking about summer camps, and some boxes are automatically going to morph their program that way."

If it initially seems odd to connect CrossFit Kids with an anti-bullying initiative, consider that some charter schools using CrossFit Kids build a "leadership" component directly into their physical-education classes. It's not a stretch: many CrossFit Kids coaches can testify to the character-building benefits of the program, which emphasizes effort, accountability and the pursuit of excellence. The trick is to identify those benefits, build a curriculum around them and then find a suitable grant opportunity.

Some schools look for measurable outcomes. Especially with older students, the inclusion of a credential—such as a certificate or a diploma—may build the appeal of an externally run physical-education program. For example, a 10-week physical-leadership course that combines CrossFit workouts, public speaking and peer-coaching might be more attractive to a school principal if her students can earn a certificate for completion at the end.

Finally, several CrossFit Kids gyms are now adding a tutoring service or work on a specific academic subject to their classes. At Kitsap CrossFit, Brandi Exarhos launched a CrossFit Kids Spanish program in September.

"The kids are eager to learn and look forward to sitting down for Spanish after they have worked up a sweat," Exarhos said. "I really wanted to use this session as a test to see how back-to-back classes would work logistically for the kids, parents and the gym. It's been smooth sailing for the most part, and I look forward to being able to offer other options (math, reading, etc.) next time around."

With so many options available to affiliates and schools, Poggi offered to look over grant proposals before they're submitted.

"I can review grant proposals, proofread them and give feedback," she said.

Poggi can be reached at lura@crossfitkids.com, and the [Educator Support](#) section of the CrossFit Kids website has lots of information for teachers and administrators.



Chris Cooper/CrossFit Journal

The measurable aspect of CrossFit makes it ideal for administrators who are under pressure to get results that justify funding.

Rules of the Game

The potential upside for CrossFit affiliates is huge: an opportunity to provide meaningful employment for a full-time CrossFit Kids coach, more kids in classes and more parents exposed to CrossFit.

**"We have a database of
over 1,500 teachers who
have contacted us around
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in their school."**

—Lura Poggi

"Educators see this snowball and say, 'I've got to look into that,'" said Poggi. "We have a database of over 1,500 teachers who have contacted us around using CrossFit Kids as their phys.-ed. curriculum or in their school."

And these schools need CrossFit Kids coaches.

"Because of the fiscal realities of education, the two communities are going to rely heavily on one another," Poggi continued.

Restrictions on CrossFit Kids affiliates are minimal.

Many schools want the benefits of the CrossFit Kids program without asking their teachers to take the course. In these cases, CrossFit Kids coaches may attend and teach all the classes they like. A CrossFit Kids coach can visit schools and deliver after-school programs without the school itself becoming an affiliate or obtaining its own CrossFit Kids coaches.

"I can go lead programs at any school in the district or help phys.-ed. teachers in the district without a problem," Poggi said.



Phys.-ed. programs have taken a beating in many schools, so it's often up to administrators to find outside funding and creative options if they want to bring fitness to their students.

A CrossFit Kids coach must work only within one school district.

"As a CrossFit Kids trainer, I can go and do an after-school program at all the different schools within a district," Poggi explained. "But if the school wants to become a formal CrossFit Kids affiliate program, they can only be attached to one trainer. Each school can only be affiliated with one trainer."

Some schools want to become CrossFit Kids affiliates or have their teachers attend the CrossFit Kids Seminar. In that case, each school must become its own affiliate; a district cannot affiliate. As stated earlier, affiliation is free after at least one teacher on staff has taken the CrossFit Kids course.

The Body—and Beyond

Though not a teacher himself, Wilson leveraged his connections to bring cognitive enhancement and CrossFit to hundreds of children in his city.

"Our goal moving forward is to have 10 local schools be CrossFit Kids affiliates, including a charter school. Two will be coming online as soon as they (obtain their certificates). I have five other P.E. coaches who are coming in and

working out. It's just a matter of time," Wilson said.

He's not coasting, either.

"We want to see if we can build a 12-by-12 classroom at our gym, and we're looking for volunteer tutors. Maybe it could be some of the give-back for teachers who are having their (seminars) paid for. We'll be utilizing the [Khan Academy](#) for help," Wilson said, referencing the non-profit educational website whose mission is to provide "a free world-class education for anyone anywhere."

Wilson is one of several affiliate owners who are blazing a trail into the educational realm. By leveraging the social, emotional and physical benefits of CrossFit Kids, other boxes can follow his lead.

"If kids can have access (to CrossFit) through the schools, then that's a huge gift that we're giving to this generation," Poggi said.



About the Author

Chris Cooper is a writer for CrossFit. He owns [CrossFit Catalyst](#) in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Thin Red Line of Fitness

That moment when your lip starts quivering, your face goes numb and you realize you went out too fast. Emily Beers investigates the pros and cons of “red lining” during a workout.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



Kim Bellavance

If you’ve spent any time at a CrossFit box, you’ve seen it happen. It might have even happened to you.

Usually, it’s painful to watch. Often, it’s unnecessary, avoidable. And always, it’s self-inflicted. The Fly and Die, the Crash and Burn, the Red Line—all usually look something like this:

“We’re doing Tabata push-ups today. Choose a number you think you can maintain for all eight intervals. Be conservative here—it’ll sneak up on you,” warns the coach. “Your score is the lowest number you get in any of the eight intervals.”

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Those who have been here before know what's about to happen to their shoulders, pecs and triceps. So they take their coach's advice and choose a conservative push-up number. But there's always one dude who ignores the part about being conservative.

**When all is said and done,
his final Tabata push-up score
is a meager three.**

"Screw it. I can hold 16 push-ups each interval," he thinks to himself with supreme confidence.

The first round goes well for everyone. The experienced athletes only use half of the 20-second interval, while the

CrossFit rookie, who has spent his life benching, throws down 16 push-ups. Feeling jacked up and vascular, he's sure he's en route to an impressive score.

Round 2 looks similar. Everyone holds his or her numbers. Then Round 3 hits and the rookie's confidence takes a small hit. He needs a quick break after the first eight push-ups, and he ends the round with 12. He alters his game plan, still believing he'll be able to finish with a score of 12.

"Easy, big fella. Back off a bit," the coach says to the ambitious new athlete.

That's when things really start to unravel. Round 4 is even tougher, and in Round 6 it's nearly impossible to hold six push-ups. Round 7 drops him to five push-ups, though he musters up two or three valiant attempts at a sixth, squirming aggressively to lock out his elbows, only to give up and dramatically plop flat on his chest. When all is said and done, his final Tabata push-up score is a meager three.

Fly-and-die fail?



Kim Bellavance

Total exhaustion hits like a ton of bricks. No amount of heart or grit will get you past pure muscle failure.



When the clock starts, it's hard to resist the temptation to burst out of the gate at top speed.

The Pace of Life

Many athletes, especially inexperienced CrossFit athletes, have no idea what their physical abilities really are. In turn, they have no idea how to pace themselves during a CrossFit workout.

Although most people would have the sense to avoid running the first 400 meters of a five-kilometer run at the same pace they'd run an all-out 400-meter sprint, when it comes to new and usually unknown CrossFit workouts, they often want to "sprint" in every single one.

The experienced CrossFit athlete, on the other hand, knows going out too hard means the workout will be much more painful than it needs to be. And generally his overall performance will be slower, as well, as he has learned that "red lining" early doesn't often lead to maximized performance results. More efficient pacing usually makes for a more efficient workout.

Learning how to pace isn't just a fitness phenomenon. A February 2013 article in the *Journal of Consumer Research*

For an elite CrossFit Games athlete, Fran is indeed a red-line affair in which athletes will literally run between movements to shave time.

suggests that life itself is more enjoyable and fulfilling when you pace it properly.

From work to sleep to decisions about what we consume, we have all learned—sometimes the hard way—that too much of a good thing can be, well, too much.

The article, [Slow Down! Insensitivity to Rate of Consumption Leads to Avoidable Satiation](#) argues that it is best to pace ourselves when it comes to consumption.

"The consequences of overly fast consumption can be seen all around us. The music lover sets a favorite album on 'repeat' only to find it less and less enjoyable each time it plays. The chocolate aficionado eats one too many chocolates and discovers that the richness of the cocoa begins to lose some of its appeal. Perhaps even the inseparable lovers who insist on sharing every moment may wonder later whether a little absence might have made their hearts grow fonder," wrote the authors of the article.

From a workout perspective, Fran, too, can be more enjoyable for the new CrossFit athlete if he doesn't senselessly red-line himself into a brick wall by doing 21 unbroken speed thrusters at a two-minute-Fran pace, all the while forgetting to breathe, getting his heart rate up to 180 beats per minute and temporarily going deaf in one ear.

When this same athlete reaches the round of 15s, his pace slows right down; he rests for a full 30 seconds, squirming

uncomfortably because he's worried about his quivering lip and concerned he might pass out. Another minute goes by and he can't string together more than two thrusters without putting the bar down, while his pull-ups are a similar story.

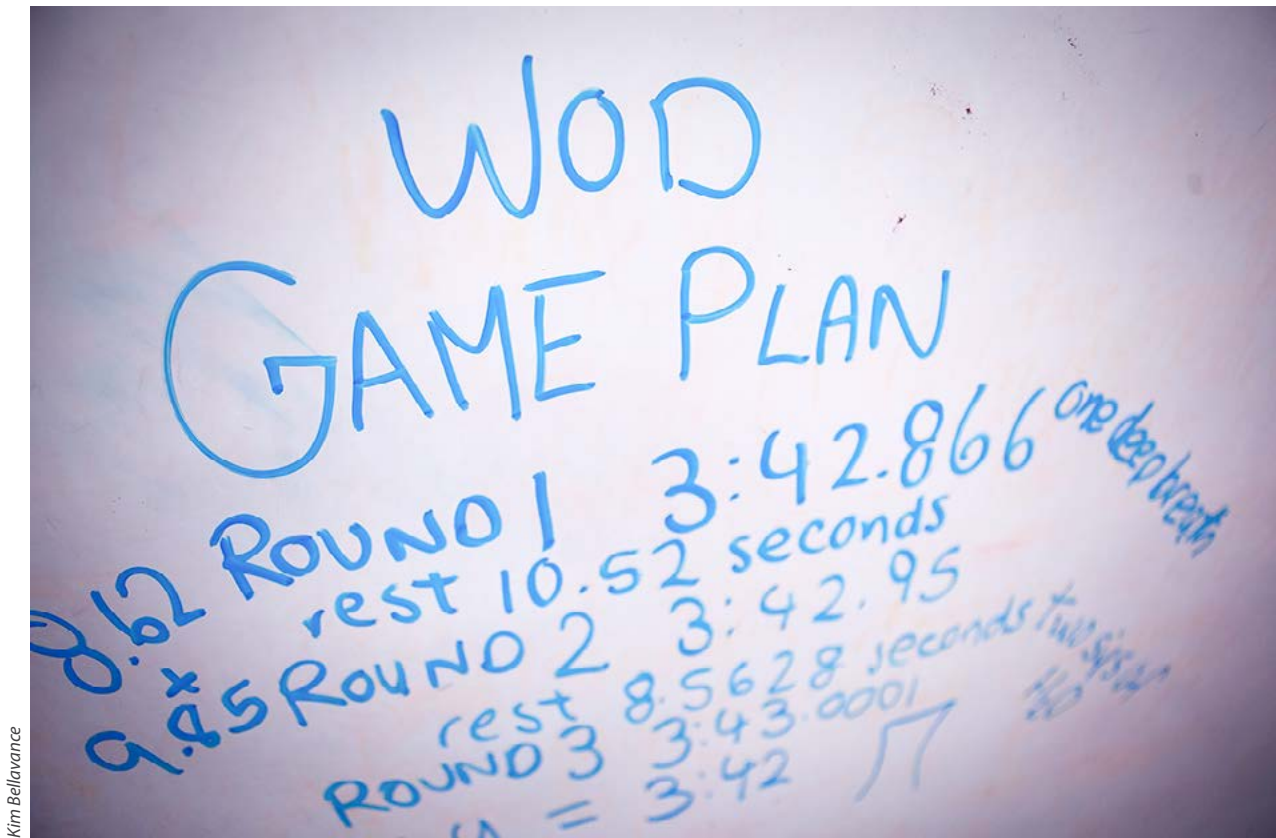
This kind of effort usually ends in disaster. While he might salvage a 7:30 Fran time, he realizes full well that a slower pace off the top could have produced a sub-five Fran—and he wouldn't feel so horrible. Instead, he's slumped over the toilet, weakened, lifeless, hopelessly defeated by nausea and burning Fran lungs.

For an elite Games athlete, Fran is indeed a red-line affair in which athletes will literally run between movements to shave time. No pacing is required when you can sustain your maximum intensity for two minutes and 90 reps. But CrossFit is about getting the most work done in the shortest amount of time, and for many athletes, that means finding the right pace and the ideal balance between work and rest.



Kim Bellavance

Experienced CrossFit athletes learn to focus on their pacing more than the clock.



Kim Bellavance

Some CrossFit athletes might want to go so far as to plan out their pacing strategies so they don't turn their brains off as soon as the workout starts.

The Body at "Red Line"

Tony Leyland is a professor in the Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. He's also a long-time CrossFit athlete.

Leyland explained that what happens in your body when you "red line" depends on the kind of workout you're doing; however, in every case, maxing out takes its toll on your central nervous system.

"If it's an endurance workout like Murph, and you really blow yourself out, what you have done is deplete your glycogen as well as build up a lot of acidity in your muscles," Leyland said. "It ends up being really hard on your central nervous system. And it will take your body multiple days to completely recover from Murph."

He explained: "(Performing) a one-rep-max clean and jerk means you've blown out your central nervous system, and you probably won't be able to do another max effort that day, but it's faster to recover from a one-rep-max clean and jerk than it is from blowing yourself out on Murph."

That said, even maxing out a deadlift can look like a "Fran red line," ultimately screwing you up more than you might expect.

"I remember judging someone at the B.C. Sectional competition in 2010, and it took him 10 seconds to lift a max deadlift. He took so long that I actually had time to think to myself, 'He's going to get it. No he's not. Yes he is.' It took so much effort, and at the end of the lift, he was basically screwed for the rest of the competition that day," Leyland said. "His central nervous system was shot."

A Time to Red Line?

Despite the consequences to your central nervous system, there can be psychological and physiological benefits to letting athletes red line from time to time, as crashing and burning are essential parts of learning your limits and pushing past them.

Jesse Ward, owner of Lynwood CrossFit/Local's Gym in Lynwood, Wash., and a member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff, believes there's a time to red line.

Although he understands the importance of teaching athletes how to pace themselves, he thinks sometimes people need to learn it on their own, and occasionally it's good to let your athletes hit walls during workouts, especially new athletes.

"Newer athletes just don't think about (pacing) or don't think it's a good idea to pace," he said.

Although Ward knows pacing properly is better for performance results, sometimes gains can be made by pushing past an athlete's limits.

"Sometimes crashing and burning might produce superior results, as long as the movement pattern doesn't completely degrade," Ward said.

He added: "I think the thing with newer athletes is to convince them that they can move great even when tired. Getting that concept nailed down and ingrained is what it takes. And I think that feels like pacing when in reality it's just moving as fast as you can as best as you can. ... And

that 'pace' is usually a bit slower than people think they should go in a timed workout.

"For some people, they have to feel it get all the way bad ... and then they'll understand what you're talking about."

—Jesse Ward

"If someone is just dying to hit 100 wall-ball (shots) with that 20-lb. ball so they can be legit and wish to forego any wisdom, planning or omen from the sky, I usually say that



Dave Re

Ward thinks finding that red line is an important experience for new CrossFit athletes.

it takes about a minute to do 25 to 30 shots, and that it should really only take them four minutes to get this done. Usually, saying that with a highly sardonic sneer gets the conversation started about how to scale or pace.”

But even that doesn’t necessarily cure the inexperienced eager beaver who overestimates his or her fitness level.

“For some people, they have to feel it get all the way bad and get a time, and then try it your way once and get a better time, and then they’ll understand what you’re talking about,” Ward said.

Physiologically speaking, Leyland agrees there are appropriate times to “red line.”

If you’re an Olympic lifter and all you have to do is snatch and clean and jerk, then competition day is time to “red line.” But when you’re competing in CrossFit and you have

more events to hit later in the day, it’s best to leave some effort in the tank.

“After truly pushing myself to the max in many CrossFit workouts, there’s no way I can come back for quite a few days,” Leyland said.

And the more you push your central nervous system, and the more micro tears and temporary damage you do to your muscles and joints, the longer you take to recover. That said, training is a different story; training for a CrossFit athlete is the time to truly test limits, Leyland explained.

“By making any system fail, the body will attempt to rebuild stronger,” Leyland said.

“It’s a bit like a pyramid of training, with technical work and sub-maximal efforts at the base of the pyramid, and higher intensity work and maximal efforts at the peak. You just don’t need to try to hit a PR very often.”

On top of potential physiological gains, Leyland said the largest gain from red lining might be psychological.

“Going to your max can give you some mental strength when the going gets rough. When you get back to that place, you’ll know you have been there, and you’ll know you can do it,” Leyland said.

Coaching New Athletes to Pace

Let’s take a movement like a wall-ball shot.

Ward’s approach: “As a coach, when working with someone new to do 100 wall-balls for time, my great preference would be to have them work some intervals prior to the workout (like weeks before) to understand the stimulus, pacing and breathing and all that. Doing sets of eight to 15 with short rests built in is great practice,” he said.

Then when it’s time to do 100, Ward will scale them right down.

“I like to get people I know can do 100 wall-ball shots to try and do them in a row with a 6-to-8-lb. ball. This is totally doable. It just burns, and it gets them to understand that it’s OK (to feel that burn) and that they should keep going,” said Ward, who admits that teaching people to pace themselves is one of the greatest challenges of coaching.

Tyson Takasaki, an individual competitor at this year’s Games and a trainer at CrossFit 204, agrees with Ward.

“I find that athletes that enter our facility with a higher athletic background have a harder time pacing workouts



Brian Sullivan

CrossFit Games athletes like Tyson Takasaki strive to push their limits further so they can work longer and faster before burning out.

because they have already been previously exposed to some sort of intensity training,” he said. “Newer athletes in general tend to take workouts more cautiously than others.”

Takasaki added: “When a workout is programmed, I try to give them a focus as to how to attack it ... The best advice I give my athletes is one I give myself: ‘Know your body and your strengths and weaknesses.’”

Like Ward, Takasaki believes sometimes it’s best to let new athletes figure it out for themselves.

“I think there is some value in letting them reach that failure, whether it’s muscle fatigue or just general decrease in performance or power output because they went too fast,” he said.

Nate Beveridge, a CrossFit Games athlete who competed at the CrossFit Games in 2012 and 2013 with his CrossFit Fraser Valley team, has a similar philosophy.

“If you don’t push to failure, then you will never learn where your limit actually is,” he said. “When you push beyond where you think the edge is, you might be surprised at how far you can go.”

**“If you don’t push to failure,
then you will never learn where
your limit actually is.”**

—Nate Beveridge



Thomas Campitelli

Nate Beveridge says managing pacing on a team is a challenge because you’re dealing with varying fitness levels.

But generally, especially when it comes to competition, you want to stop them before they overdose.

"I try to coach my athletes to stop just short of the red line. You always want to leave another rep in the tank so you can get a decent chunk on your next set," Beveridge added.

And then there's the other side of the fence.

Beveridge has noticed that for every athlete he has to try to hold back and save from overdosing, there is an athlete who is scared of the pain cave, who refuses to push even close to the red line.

"Almost as often, newbies are guilty of pacing too much and leaving a lot more in the tank," he said.

As a coach, it becomes a balancing act.

"Coaches can definitely help by going over tips and cues for pacing before the workout, and if you are nearby you can read your athlete and provide instant feedback to

encourage them to push harder or to tell them to rest when needed," he said.

"Oftentimes, new athletes stress themselves out emotionally. They get so tight and elevate their heart rates simply through nervousness. As coaches, we can help them overcome this by hammering technique and teaching them to stay calm and focused, and then we can really help them to perform their best," Beveridge said.

Competition Pace

Many experienced CrossFit athletes know all about how to pace themselves perfectly in competition.

They know exactly how much rest they need between muscle-ups to avoid failing a rep; they know exactly how fast they should row 1,000 meters during Jackie, which will allow them to maximize their thruster and pull-up efforts and ultimately get the work done in the least time. They know that failing a muscle-up or going out too hard on the row will ultimately mean a worse performance in the end.



August Sigurjonsson

Jason Khalipa showed masterful pacing during the Row 1 and Row 2 events at the CrossFit Games in 2013. He avoided burnout while winning the 2K row and then maintained his lead for another 19,097 meters to take first in both parts of the event.

Takasaki believes competition is all about pacing.

"I think it's all about knowing your body," said Takasaki, who added that this is especially true in competition when you're hit with workouts you've never seen before.

"I find that a lot of CrossFit athletes that have been around for a number of years have so much success not because they are more fit but because of the amount of time they have spent training under different kinds of stimuli," he explained.

Ultimately, this allows them to train and compete smarter.

Takasaki has incorporated a ton of interval work into his training—workouts with specific work-to-rest ratios. He said doing so has helped him discover his true capacity. And once he discovers where his capacity is for any given movement or workout, it helps him figure out when he has to back down.

Similarly, Beveridge spends a lot of time thinking about pacing. He rarely goes into a workout blindly.

"I try to look at workouts as pieces first. Is there a movement I'm particularly efficient at that could be a possible 'rest' period? Is there a movement that is particularly difficult or heavy, which will cause me to take breaks and catch my breath? I formulate a pace based on these factors and the length of the workout and rep scheme, and I try to come up with a pace that I feel I can sustain for the duration," Beveridge explained. "Then I try to go just a little quicker than that and hold on until the end."

Competing with a team, of course, changes how Beveridge approaches a workout. When you're with a team, you have to be aware of your own abilities as well as those of your teammates.

"When you're working with others and you know there's going to be a built-in rest period, sometimes it's OK to push a little further down that path if you trust your teammates to do the same, which will give you adequate time to recover for your next set," Beveridge explained.

The CrossFit Games Open workouts are a good time to learn about how to pace yourself, he added, especially because as an athlete you have a lot of time to think and scheme about how to approach each one.

During the Open in 2013, Beveridge would look at the workout and then test one round, or a piece of a round, before attempting the full workout. This would tell him how fast he could complete one round, and then he'd



One possible side effect of hitting the red line at the wrong time.

have to figure out if that pace was sustainable or not. From there, he'd decide on his game-day pace.

Sometimes, though, considering all the variables and overthinking things can drive any athlete nuts. This is why sometimes Beveridge chooses to turn his brain off and listen to teammate Mark Cassibo's advice:

"Sometimes, you just gotta go."



About the Author

Emily Beers is a CrossFit Journal staff writer.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

WINTER OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT

Mountains Into Moguls

Former and current Olympians talk about the evolution of skiing and snowboarding at the Winter Olympics. Equipment and training have changed, but the love of competition remains constant.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

Chris Klug of the United States competes in the Snowboard FIS World Championships in 2005. Three years earlier, he won a bronze medal at the Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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In Sochi, Russia, freestyle skier Keri Herman will represent the United States in her first Olympic Games. She'll compete in the slopestyle competition, and it's the first time the event will be included at the Winter Olympics.

Herman's been training hard on and off the slopes for four years, and when the competition opens, she'll perform complex tricks and jumps on innovative "twin-tipped skis" that allow her to ski facing forward or backward.

Stefan Kaelin raced in the slalom and giant-slalom events in stiff leather ski boots at the 1964 and 1968 Olympic Games. It was a much simpler time, an era before before halfpipe, ski-cross, snowboard and slopestyle events even existed. His training was seasonal and didn't include dryland sessions or the special programs used today.

Separated by decades, Herman and Kaelin both do CrossFit, as do 2002 snowboard bronze medalist Chris Klug and 2010 and 2014 snowboard Olympian Sarka Pancochova. Although winter sports and elite training have changed drastically since the 1960s, the Olympic spirit has largely remained the same.

Olympic Memory

At the age of 70, Swiss skier Kaelin doesn't think about the Olympic Games very often. It was long ago that he raced at the Games, and being a two-time Olympian is simply not something that defines his life today, even if others consider it an impressive achievement.

But when Kaelin is asked to muster up some memories—when he stops and thinks about his athletic career for a moment—he starts to remember what it was like to be 22 years old competing for Switzerland at the Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria, and Grenoble, France.

Gene Sweeney Jr./Getty Images



Keri Herman competes in a slopestyle competition in Park City, Utah, on Jan. 18. Slopestyle is one of two new freestyle-skiing events at the 2014 Olympics.

"There was no security whatsoever, I tell you . . . We carried our own skis and bags of skis and just walked into the Olympic Village. There was nobody around," Kaelin began.

And when he digs deep enough into his memory bank, he even remembers the feelings.

"The Olympic Games are the Olympic Games, and I remember I got a little nervous," Kaelin said. "That year (1968), there was a lot of snow everywhere in Europe . . . those Games were the first Games that they prepared the runs. They really watered down the runs and packed them with heavy machines, so it became really icy. And we weren't really used to those conditions."

**"The Olympic Games are
the Olympic Games, and I
remember I got a little nervous."**

—Stefan Kaelin

Pretty soon, Kaelin's even able to dust off 45 years of frost to uncover moments of the competition, including details of one of the Winter Games' most famous controversies.

The official details of the whole event are still sketchy. After Austrian Karl Schranz reportedly stopped his first run to avoid a person on the foggy course, he was allowed a second run.

"And with that second start, he came first. But then the French protested, and the Austrian ended up being disqualified, and Killy (Jean-Claude Killy) again got the gold medal," Kaelin said with sudden clarity.

Schranz was indeed disqualified by a 3-2 jury decision after it was discovered he had actually missed a gate on the course before the race official had allegedly interfered with his first run. The controversy only heated up as suspicions arose that French officials were trying to help their countryman sweep the medals. Killy did, in fact, win three gold medals in 1968, in the slalom, the giant slalom and the downhill.

Kaelin's best finish was 10th in the slalom.



Courtesy of Stefan Kaelin

***When Stefan Kaelin competed back in the '60s,
equipment was much different than the high-tech gear
used by today's Olympians.***



Courtesy of Stefan Kaelin

***Kaelin (left) with his wife, Stascha, and 2010 Olympic
giant-slam champion Carlo Janka of Switzerland.***



Herman's view of the mountain is very different than Kaelin's was in 1964.

Kaelin's Mountain

Training for ski racing in the 1960s was not what it is today.

During Kaelin's eight years with the Swiss National Team—1962-1970—most training was done alone on the hill on a seasonal basis, and the equipment was not up to today's standards.

"We didn't really have training camps like they do today. We would get together for a week or 10 days sometimes, and then you'd be back home training on your own," he said. "Most of the training we did was really on snow. There wasn't much physical preparation."

Dryland training or weightlifting didn't factor into Kaelin's preparation, although he did spend some time running

on difficult terrain in the forest to prepare his body for the uneven surfaces he would face on the snow. But for the most part, being on the Swiss National Ski Team meant training on the mountains when nature covered them with snow.

"It's totally different now. Now they are doing a lot of similar training to CrossFit training. They really specialize into strengthening their legs and their upper bodies. We didn't do anything for the upper body in my time," said Kaelin, who has been a member of Aspen CrossFit in Colorado for two-and-a-half years.

CrossFit is relatively new to Kaelin, but Aspen is not. He's been living in Colorado since 1972; it's where he raised his two children and where he opened his ski shop in 1974, a business he continues to operate today.

Retirement isn't something Kaelin is quite ready for, and he's definitely not ready to give up skiing. Even as a 70-year-old grandfather, Kaelin continues to hit the slopes every winter.

"I tell you, when I look at what we did and what they do now, we were behind the moon. It was just really very unsophisticated," he said.

**"When I look at what we did
and what they do now, we were
behind the moon. It was just
really very unsophisticated."**

—Stefan Kaelin

Kaelin said ski boots were made of stiff leather.

"They took a while to break in, and by the time you had them fitting well, the lateral stiffness of the boot—which you needed to etch your ski—broke down and you had to change to a new boot," he said with a laugh.

As for the skis, Kaelin's downhill skis in the 1960s were in the range of 2.23 m long, while his giant-slam skis were 2.12 to 2.13 m long. Today, giant-slam athletes race with skis closer to 1.95 m long, with slalom skis being shorter and downhill skis being slightly longer.

"And there was only a tiny little bit of sidecut back then, so it was actually pretty hard to turn because of the length," Kaelin said. "But we needed the length so that the ski would be as quiet as possible on the snow, so as not to have too many vibrations."

"Sidecut" refers to the arc along the side of a ski when looking at it from above; think of an hourglass shape. Skis with more sidecut allow the skier to make quicker, sharper turns. Too much sidecut and the skis become less stable at high speeds. Different skiing events today require different amounts of sidecut; a slalom ski, for example, has more sidecut than a downhill ski.

One of the other major differences with the sport of skiing in the 1960s was the lack of specialization between the different events. Killy's '68 sweep of the downhill, the slalom and the giant-slalom events—known as the Triple Crown of Alpine Skiing—has not been repeated, and only one other person, Toni Sailer of Austria, has ever done it. Sailer collected his medals in 1956.

Today, athletes cross over and compete in different ski events, but they generally have a specialty, and body type plays an undeniable role in determining which events they enter. Because of the number of sharp, quick turns slalom skiers must navigate during a race, they tend to be slither, smaller, quicker athletes, whereas downhill skiers benefit from being taller and heavier.

For example, Lindsey Vonn, gold medalist in the 2010 Olympic downhill, is reported to be close to 5 foot 9 and 160 lb., and she specializes in the downhill and super-G events that are more about speed than technical turns.

American Bode Miller is listed at 6 foot 2 and 210 lb., but in 2010 he achieved a rare measure of success by becoming one of only five male or female skiers to win Olympic medals in four different disciplines. He's the most recent member of the club, rounding out his total with bronze in the downhill, silver in the super-G and gold in the super combined (downhill and slalom) events in Vancouver. Miller is somewhat of an anomaly in recent times.

Kaelin explained: "When I raced, the size of the person didn't matter. Back then, you did everything, really. It was a totally different sport. Now it's a high-powered sport. And they train all year round. We didn't do that."

Today, top skiers often head to South America in the offseason. In Kaelin's day, he and his fellow skiers waited eagerly for the snow to arrive each year. And when it did,

it was time to make the most of it because they knew the snow—and their training and racing season—would be short lived.

Klug's Mountain

Training alongside Kaelin at Aspen CrossFit is three-time Olympic snowboarder Chris Klug. The 41-year-old spent 20 years on the World Cup circuit and managed to capture a bronze medal in the 2002 snowboard giant slalom at his second Olympic Games.

The most amazing part of Klug's career might be that he had a life-saving liver transplant in July 2000, just a year-and-a-half before he medaled in Salt Lake City.

In the early 1990s, Klug was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), which basically caused his body to destroy his bile



Al Bello/Getty Images

Klug's bronze medal on home turf was all the more impressive given he had a liver transplant about 18 months before the Games in Salt Lake City.

Courtesy of Clayton Dahlman



Klug, who trains at Aspen CrossFit, said CrossFit training is a great way for skiers and snowboarders to eliminate weaknesses and become better all-around athletes.

ducts to the point that it eventually became a plumbing issue and demanded a life-saving transplant.

Klug dreamed of being an Olympian his entire life, but when he started snowboarding as a child, the sport wasn't even an Olympic event. Something told him it would catch on, and—sure enough—snowboarding made its Olympic debut at the '98 Games in Nagano, Japan, giving Klug his first of three Olympic experiences.

After sitting out the 2006 Olympic Games, Klug was 37 years old when he competed at his third Olympics, in Vancouver in 2010.

"I was the only snowboarder there with gray hair," he laughed.

Training for Klug was much different than it was for Kaelin in the 1960s. To make it to the Games, Klug trained five or six days a week all year round, and dryland training, including weightlifting, plyometrics, spinning and core stability, was an integral part of his training program throughout his career.

Looking back, however, Klug admits you could probably find a few holes in his training.

"I always had scrawny, weak arms," he said. Klug also believes he should have done more interval training, which he does today at Aspen CrossFit.

"What I love about snowboarding is that it requires motor skills and coordination, stamina, balance, and explosive power, and those are a lot of the pillars of CrossFit," said Klug, who added that CrossFit would be a great way to prepare a skier or snowboarder for competition because it develops well-rounded athletes with less weaknesses.

Dryland training, including weightlifting, plyometrics, spinning and core stability, was an integral part of Klug's training program throughout his career.

That said, Klug is proud of his career and proud of where his sport is today.

"I started 30-plus years ago on a Burton Backhill that had no metal edges," Klug said.

Similar to Kaelin, Klug noted snowboard boots have come a long way.

"We were wearing those moon boots with lots of duct tape ... because the boots had no support," he added. "It's unfathomable to think where we are today."

From CrossFit Breckenridge to Sochi

Scott Ferguson, 44, is the owner of CrossFit Breckenridge in Colorado, about 130 miles from where Kaelin and Klug train in Aspen.

For the most part, Ferguson's gym looks like an ordinary CrossFit affiliate. And it is. But during this past Olympic cycle, Ferguson took two Olympic hopefuls under his wing: American skier Keri Herman and Czech snowboarder Sarka Pancochova.

Pancochova already knows what the Olympic Games feel like; she represented the Czech Republic and placed 14th in the halfpipe at the 2010 Games. Herman, on the other hand, has never competed at the Olympics. But after her second-place finish on Jan. 18 in the U.S. Grand Prix qualifier in Park City, Utah, Herman clinched a spot to compete for the U.S. in the slopestyle event in Sochi.

Slopestyle is a relatively new freestyle skiing event but has been very popular at the Winter X Games for many years. Slopestyle and its sister event, halfpipe, are on the Olympic roster for the first time in 2014.

Much of the dryland training Pancochova and Herman have done in the last three and four years, respectively, has centered on CrossFit and the sport-specific training Ferguson does with them.

"When I first started working with Keri, I took a look at what she was doing. There was a lot of FMS (functional movement screening), but there wasn't any exposure to Olympic weightlifting or even foundational lifting," Ferguson said.



Alex Livesey/Getty Images

Sarka Pancochova competes in the halfpipe at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. She'll become a two-time Olympian in Sochi in 2014.

The lack of weight training—especially explosive Olympic weightlifting—in Herman's program surprised Ferguson, as skiing is such an explosive sport.

When Ferguson first started working with Herman, she was in the process of rehabbing a lingering back injury that was never properly diagnosed. She was spending a lot of time dabbling on the stability ball, and Herman could tell it wasn't getting her anywhere. So he replaced the ball with kettlebell and stability work. Once Herman's back injury healed, Ferguson introduced low-weight, high-rep Olympic weightlifting to her program.

"Mostly hang cleans and power cleans ... We tried to marry explosive and dynamic work with stability work," Ferguson said. "If there is such a thing as a golden ticket, for her, this was the biggest thing. Her athleticism started to completely change."

And from there, Herman's training, and her skiing, started to take off.

Ferguson explained what a typical day at CrossFit Breckenridge looked like for Herman and Pancochova in the months leading up to their Olympic qualification.

The athletes began with some agility work and easy plyometrics before turning their attention to stability drills and eventually to more explosive lifts, typically cleans. Lifting was followed by sport-specific plyometric drills that transfer to takeoffs and landings on the snow.

"We do a lot of launch-and-drop stuff—launch and land. And misdirection drills. Sometimes I'll even put a visual distraction in front of them ... so they have to jump over whatever is in their way," Ferguson explained.

**"We can focus on teaching them
how to use their hips, how to
catch themselves, how to load
and explode through the hips."**

—Scott Ferguson

"There's nothing we can do for them in mid-air, but we can work with them a lot on takeoffs and landings," he continued. He added that midline stability has also been a big focus.

"And we can focus on teaching them how to use their hips, how to catch themselves, how to load and explode through the hips," he said.

Ferguson said Pancochova often just hits regular CrossFit group classes, in which she can let loose and work out without thinking too much.

As fun as training Olympic hopefuls has been for Ferguson, he admits it has also been a huge challenge.

Unlike lifestyle CrossFit athletes who show up to a class four days a week for the workout of the day, Olympic athletes require focus on the sport-specific side of things, and coaches must manage their training and competition volume carefully while working around racing schedules and inevitable nagging injuries.

The needs of their sports dictate that Ferguson doesn't overload them with big weight.

"They're not weightlifters, and we don't want to blow them out. They're dynamic athletes, so we're not looking for big weight gains," Ferguson said.

Ferguson said Herman and Pancochova have instead seen big gains on the mountain, and the proof is in their results: both will compete in Sochi.

"Keri thanks me every day. Both of them tell me this kind of training is making them better than the old, traditional stuff ... Instead of plodding along like they used to, they're doing more dynamic stuff," Ferguson said.

"It's foundational. It's basic. It's what works," he said.

The Feeling

When Klug took home a bronze medal at the 2002 Olympics—with 100 friends and family members cheering him on in his home country—he did a Superman leap into the crowd, saying he felt "so elated."

"That's when you realize this is the Super Bowl of winter sports," he added.

That was in 2002, and the Games looked much different than they did in 1964 and 1968, when Kaelin was a seasonal skier eagerly awaiting the first snowfall each year.

Gene Sweeney Jr./Getty Images



Herman was thrilled to be named to the United States Olympic Freeskiing Team on Jan. 18 in Utah. She trains at CrossFit Breckenridge in Colorado.

But despite the unsophisticated training techniques and equipment of the 1960s, the Olympic Games have always been the Olympic Games.

**Even with the constant
evolution of each Olympic
sport, the Olympic spirit is
always the same.**

Olympians from the 1960s and Olympians from 2010 all describe the same pride they felt as they walked into the opening ceremonies wearing their country's colors. Similarly, a medalist from the '68 Olympics might explain the podium experience the same way Klug remembers the feeling of winning Olympic bronze in 2002.

Even with the constant evolution of each Olympic sport, the Olympic spirit—the excitement and satisfaction, the relief and the pride—is always the same. What Kaelin felt in 1964 and 1968 is the same feeling Klug felt in 2002.

And it's likely the same feeling Pancochova and Herman will feel in Sochi.



About the Author

*Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor. She competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team, and she finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012. In 2013, she finished second in the Open in Canada West.*



THE
CrossFit JOURNAL

UNDER COVER

IN DECEMBER 2013, CROSSFIT OFFERED ITS FIRST WOMEN-ONLY LEVEL 1 SEMINAR.
IT WAS TWO DAYS IN DUBAI THAT HINTED AT REBELLION, EQUAL RIGHTS AND A MOVEMENT STILL AT ITS INFANCY.

ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL

Abeer Al Khaja walked into the gym visibly excited. With a contained smile that nearly burst, she introduced herself to CrossFit Inc. Level 1 Seminar Staff and affectionately cradled her white paper Starbucks cup to her left cheek as if it were an infant.

It's a scene that plays out thousands of times inside CrossFit affiliates the world over: Level 1 attendees arrive eager to learn and even more eager to meet the trainers they've only seen in pictures and videos on the Internet. But at Reebok CrossFit LifeSpark in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, there were some distinct differences.

For starters, Al Khaja was wearing an abaya and a sheela—the former a long-sleeved, floor-length robe and the latter a headscarf that also covers the neck. A 10-ft.-long white curtain hung between the room where attendees sat for lectures and the larger space with a pull-up rig. Just to the left of the curtain was an 8½-by-11-in. piece of white paper that had “Ladies Only” written on it in red marker.

And when the 16 women divided into two breakout groups to practice movements, they were able to move into the larger room only because the windows were mirrored, all 10 doors were locked and, of course, no man they could possibly marry was able to lay eyes upon them when their heads, legs or arms were exposed.

Centuries of tradition call for Muslim women to cover their heads—and sometimes their faces—as well as their arms and legs with loose-fitting clothing to demonstrate modesty. Not all Muslim women follow these customs, which are largely dictated by their respective country's laws governing Muslims and by their own families. On a daily basis, they typically do not mingle with men who aren't family members, much less exercise in their presence. Women-only hair salons and gyms, for example, are normal in many Muslim countries. If the environment is filled only with women—Muslim or otherwise—Muslim women can uncover and even whittle down clothing to just a sports bra and shorts, or less.

The seminar was a first for CrossFit Inc. Until then, the company had never done a private, females-only Level 1 for covered women.

“I think it's rad,” said Dave Castro, CrossFit's Director of Training and Director of the CrossFit Games. “It really shows how strong CrossFit is globally, as a global brand.”

He added: “It's not an American thing, it's not a man thing, it's not a young-man thing. This is just another glaring example of that.”

Reebok CrossFit LifeSpark owner Candice Howe, a British citizen who grew up in the UAE, said the fact this Level 1 happened was “huge.”

“It's a testament to what the women want and what the women are craving.”

A GROWING DEMAND

When Amnah Bin Bahar first put fingers to keyboard on Nov. 1, it was a shot in the dark.

She wrote “Crossfit Level 1 course for Covered Women” in the subject line and had to ambiguously address the correspondence to “Seminars Team.” Three days later, she received a response. Less than a week after that, Castro himself replied. And by Dec. 8, CrossFit had created a private registration hyperlink for the course so Bin Bahar could share it with any interested women. The course was scheduled for Dec. 22 to 23, 2013.

On the first day of the course, Bin Bahar stopped by to see the fruits of her labor. The women still were filing in. Bin Bahar had a huge smile on her face.

“There's a really great potential for courses in Dubai,” she said.

For her part, Bin Bahar does not cover in any traditional Muslim dress.

“My parents haven't really imposed it on me, and I just feel comfortable the way I am,” she later said via email.

Bin Bahar, who already has her Level 1 certificate after taking the course in late 2013, trains at CrossFit Utmost, also in Dubai. She had started CrossFit in June of the same year and explained the complications for Muslim women who want to exercise.

“In Islam, men and women don't mix or socialize. Women who are covered would not want to be seen squatting or on the floor.”



Since Bin Bahar started CrossFit in late June, an increasing number of her female friends—most of them covered Muslim women—have expressed interest in the training methodology. Unlike their American counterparts, most cannot do any more than train or coach in a females-only environment because they might have to remove their headscarves—or more—to participate in most competitions, such as those that involve swimming.

That's why Bin Bahar decided to write her email: “We might as well start somewhere.”

Al Khaja was thrilled at the opportunity. She had discovered CrossFit over the summer after doing some charity work in Dubai. During Ramadan, she volunteered to help the homeless. It was July, when average temperatures in the city range from 94 to 104 F.

“I couldn't last five minutes in the sun,” Al Khaja said.

She started going to the gym. She had heard of CrossFit and was intrigued, so she took to Instagram, of all places.

“That was a big eye-opener to get me to know about CrossFit,” Al Khaja said.

That same month, CrossFit Utmost began offering a women-only class.

“That's when I really started doing CrossFit,” she said. “I love the variety. A lot of the movements are ... a challenge.”

And once the Dubai Fitness Competition rolled around a couple of months later, Al Khaja found even more purpose for her training.

Muslim women arrive at Dubai's Grand Musalla mosque at the end of Ramadan in 2010.



Although some of the women are covered in this group photo from the women-only Level 1 Seminar, they all had workout gear on underneath.



"I decided (competing is) what I wanted to do," she said.

If she competes in this year's Dubai Fitness Competition, an annual event, she'll have to do so in a women-only venue.

As for the Level 1, it provided her with an opportunity to learn, said Al Khaja. She added that her family is "very supportive" of her athletic endeavors.

"I would like to train other people," she continued. "Being in the fitness industry is not common among women (in Dubai). ... Let's change that."

And the importance of this particular Level 1 wasn't lost on Al Khaja.

"I love it. I love that you guys are here. I love that you guys offered it," she said enthusiastically. "I'm so grateful. ... You guys believed in us."

For one 23-year-old, who asked simply to be known as Sara, CrossFit is about overcoming her fear of new things. Normally wearing an abaya and a sheela, Sara tried CrossFit in August in a mixed-sex class. She wore a hoodie, loose pants and long sleeves. It was there that she "fell in love."

of her family. Not much more is known about Sara. Like most attendees, she arrived wearing workout gear beneath her abaya—with two conspicuous differences. She was the only woman who arrived wearing sparkly sandals and accompanying earrings that dazzled. Before the seminar began both days, Sara changed into tennis shoes. And before leaving each day, she changed back into her sandals and re-did her makeup; the speculation was she took such action so as not to arouse suspicion of where she'd been.

[Shaikha Al Qassemi](#), meanwhile, was much bolder.

Clearly the rebel of the group, Al Qassemi was outspoken and enjoyed the occasional off-color comment. She was a notable contrast to the rest of the group—even those who weren't covered. Each day, her hair was pulled up in a ponytail to reveal that the bottom half of her head had seen clippers. She was not covered, though she employed a hoodie at times, and wore tank tops that revealed defined muscles.

"I do not cover my hair in general unless I walk into a mall or a crowded place with men. Then I would cover. Or during prayer, then I wear a hijab," Al Qassemi later said via email.

The 25-year-old has "been doing fitness" since she was 16.

"Cardio, gym stuff, free weights," she explained.

Al Qassemi also has tried BodyPump, kickboxing, body-building and started doing circuit training about a year ago. Early last year, a friend told her about CrossFit.

She tried some workouts under the supervision of her personal trainer and for the next two months watched videos.

"All I did was watch the CrossFit Games (and progression videos)," said Al Qassemi, whose family rules Sharjah. The emirate—one of seven—is about 40 miles north of Dubai.

Since then, she's participated in local competitions and even won a throwdown at Dunes CrossFit in Dubai on the evening after the first day of the Level 1 course.

"I'm pushing myself as much as I can for (the 2014) Open," she said.

If she qualifies for the CrossFit Games Asia Regional, she would not be the first Emirati woman to do so. In 2012, [Amna Al Haddad](#) competed on the Reebok CrossFit LifeS-park team.

Taking the Level 1 was a chance to learn, Al Qassemi said.

"I want to open a gym in the future, teach others."

"I CAN LIFT MORE THAN MOST MEN HERE."

— SHAIKHA AL QASSEMI

"Why not have more knowledge about the sport?" Sara said of taking the late-December Level 1 in Dubai.

Before the course, Sara had never done a pull-up. That changed.

"It was amazing," she said. "I'm good in cardio. Strength I'm not really good at. Yet. Hopefully I will be."

Sara added: "I have to conquer my fear. I really want to conquer my fear."

Although her mother knows she does CrossFit, she asked why Sara wanted to hang from bars "like a monkey" and lift weights like a man. Likewise, Sara doesn't frequently talk about it with her mother and not at all with the rest

And while Al Qassemi likes the idea of “people throwing stuff at me and saying, ‘Just do it,’” her parents don’t agree.

“You look like a man,” they’ve told her.

Her response: “I don’t care because I can lift more than most men here.”

CHANGES AFOOT

By some observers’ accounts, native women’s roles in the UAE are akin to what females in Western countries experienced in the 1800s. Others liken it to being a woman in medieval times.

“In the UAE, a far greater priority is placed on the traditional women’s roles,” Howe explained of native Emirati women.

However, that’s been changing.

“In recent years, their role is rapidly and exponentially expanding in all areas of society,” Howe said.

In 2013, the UAE—with a large expatriate population—ranked 40th among all countries in the [Human Development Report’s Gender Inequality Index](#). In the Arab world, only Libya ranked higher—at 36. By comparison, the United States ranked 42nd; the Netherlands was first. Of the countries ranked on the index, Yemen was at the bottom of the list at 145.

In terms of education, 77 percent of Emirati women continue from high school to higher education—24 percent more than their male counterparts, according to the country’s Washington, D.C., embassy. The country trains women as muftis, Sunni Muslim scholars who interpret Islamic law—a move that is considered progressive in the Muslim world.

Change, Howe said, also is coming from “the top down.”

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE’s prime minister and vice president, has 14 daughters, two of whom represent the country in horse riding and taekwondo.

Majid bin Mohammed bin Rashed Al Maktoum, one of the sheikh’s nine sons, is chairman of the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority. In that capacity, he’s brought about two iterations of the summer Dubai Fitness Competition, where such top CrossFit athletes as Frederik Aegidius, Ryan Fischer, Kenneth Leverich, Annie Thórisdóttir and Lindsey Valenzuela competed last year.

Still, Emirati women who wanted to compete had to do



so a month later in October at the Dubai Ladies Club and Dubai Women’s College—women-only environments.

In the UAE, multiple facilities offer women-only classes. Sharjah Ladies Club, EMD Fitness and CrossFit Utmost are three of them.

“So nothing really can stop a Muslim woman from (pursuing) her fitness goals,” wrote Lamia, who declined to give her last name, via email.

The mother of three teenagers began CrossFit in September after reading an article about Howe in a local magazine. At the time, Reebok CrossFit LifeSpark offered a women-only class. After that dissolved, Lamia came to the affiliate with her sister for private classes. She also took the women-only Level 1 in December.

A month before that, she participated in the Dubai Women’s Run, an outdoor event covering 5 and 10 km.

“The participants were all women of course, but their husbands and family were also there,” she explained. “So I ran covered with appropriate clothing.”



THE QUESTION OF OPPRESSION

Lisa Ray of CrossFit Flagstaff in Arizona has instructed hundreds of CrossFit Level 1 seminars over the course of nearly eight years.

This time, she sounded different.

As she gave the opening lecture focused on defining CrossFit, her words were marked with a noticeable intensity.

CrossFit, she explained to the 16 women, teaches you how to be quick, strong and ready for life. It gives you the ability to think, “I’ve done stuff harder than this in the gym. I’m gonna be all right,” she told the class. “Psychologically, we help you be more tolerant. We help you to be more unafraid.”

Shortly afterward, during the first break, Ray said she was struggling to find the most appropriate words for her audience. She wanted to be careful not to project an “American view that if they’re not like us, they’re wrong.” She wanted to be sure she wasn’t expressing “sympathy that is misplaced.”

What Ray stepped into was a dramatically complicated and endlessly debated issue concerning whether Muslim women are oppressed.

Like most religions, there are followers who are at either end of the spectrum and those who fall everywhere in between. Likewise, generalizing won’t necessarily provide enlightenment.

The reality is that there are countries whose laws force women to cover in some manner. The situation can be as extreme as Saudi Arabia, where Muslim women can be seen wearing burkas that cover the entire body, including the face and eyes. Or it can be as relaxed as Turkey, where many feel that even just the hijab—a veil that covers only the head and chest—is oppressive.

**“YOU SHOULD NOT IGNORE
YOUR BODY. YOU SHOULD
TAKE CARE OF IT.”**

—SALWA EISSA

That notion of a federally mandated dress code for any sex is nearly impossible for Westerners to comprehend.

Salwa Eissa explained that the attire is about modesty.

The 23-year-old grew up in Egypt and lives in San Jose, Calif., with her husband, Ahmad Ibrahim. While Ibrahim goes to CrossFit Silicon Valley, Eissa goes to Total Woman, where she can remove her hijab and work out with women only.

She noted that the notion of Muslim women either exercising or choosing to be covered—but not both—is one not only held by Westerners but by Muslims themselves. Likewise, Muslim women have not emphasized physical activity, she said.

But that’s changing.

More Muslims are beginning to understand that Islam says “your body has a right on you” and “the strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer,” Eissa said.



Dubai's modern architecture stands in contrast to centuries of tradition.

"You should not ignore your body. You should take care of it," she continued. "More people are becoming aware of this."

Abeer Amiri, who does not cover, explained it a bit differently.

"This whole covering, it's very personal. It's not seen as something that you're supposed to do," the 24-year-old said.

Amiri took the women-only Level 1 course in Dubai after not being able to get into other CrossFit Level 1 courses in the Middle East because they were sold out.

It's traditional wear—just like the sari in India, explained Amiri, a native of Abu Dhabi.

"No one is really forced into it," she said.

The question of covering came up frequently when she

attended Penn State in State College, Pa. And it still does when she finds herself in the U.S.

"Whenever I tell someone I'm Arab, I see their jaws drop and (they) ask, 'Why aren't you covered?'" she recounted. She added, "We're normal just like everyone else."

EXPECTING THE EXPECTED

Twenty-four hours before the women-only Level 1, Ray and Juria Maree didn't know what to expect. Once it got underway, they still didn't.

The interactions were different, said Maree, another member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff. She owns Reebok CrossFit Enduro in Singapore but is a native of South Africa.

When it came time for a tactile cue, she would stop short and ask, "Can I touch you?"

At first, Ray kept testing the waters.

"After the first breakout on squats, I felt much more comfortable," she said.

Then Ray realized the women were just like any other Level 1 participants—receptive and eager to learn.

Then she thought, "OK, I'm making it weird."

For Maree—who has an ability to quickly connect with people through a quirky-yet-confident style—it was about effective communication.

"At the end of the day, you're using movement as a language," she said. "And that's a leveler."

The needs are simple, Howe explained.

"The demand here is huge," she said. "It's definitely the start of a movement. All they want to do is just do CrossFit. It just takes a little bit more work to create an environment where they can." ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andréa Maria Cecil is a *CrossFit Journal* staff writer.



MOHAMMED AL-SHAIKH/AFP/Getty Images

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

WINTER OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT

The Flash of the Blade

As speed demons on skates carve up the ice in Sochi, Emily Beers explains the differences between short- and long-track speed-skating events.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



Matthew Stockman/Getty Images

In short-track racing, taking a sharp corner at 30 mph requires skill, courage and sometimes a little bit of luck.

1 of 9



One of the most famous medals of the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games was Steven Bradbury's iconic gold in the 1,000-m men's short-track event.

The Australian veteran had competed in three previous Olympic Winter Games, but he was not expected to win a medal in Salt Lake City. In fact, Bradbury only snuck out of his quarterfinal race after Canadian Marc Gagnon was disqualified for obstructing another skater.

During his semifinal, Bradbury hung out behind the other skaters because he knew he wasn't as fast. When three other top competitors crashed, Bradbury glided to the line, finishing second and earning a spot in the final.

So there he was in the final with the likes of favorite Apolo Anton Ohno. Lap after lap, Bradbury hung out behind the

pack, way off the pace of the top skaters. But with 50 m to go, all four of the other athletes collided while jostling for position, ricocheted off the boards and ended up in a four-man pileup on the ice.

Bradbury, who was 15 m behind the group, avoided the crash site and cruised to Olympic gold, while the others frantically tried to get to their feet and find their way across the line to collect the silver and bronze medals.

Bradbury's improbable victory had a lot of people shaking their heads and comparing short-track speed skating to a roller derby on ice. And many others who watch long-track races once every four years don't understand the effort required when hunched-over athletes employ giant quads to cruise around the track at speeds over 40 mph.

With both the short-track and long-track competitions in full swing in Sochi, speed-skating expert Barry Publow takes a closer look at the finer points of both disciplines, dispels the common misconceptions and talks about their connection to inline speed skating.



Jamie Squire/Getty Images

What goes around comes around: Steven Bradbury falls in the heats of the 1,500-m event in the Salt Lake City Olympics in 2002. In the 1,000 m, he won gold after the other skaters fell.

Short Track: All in the Game

Barry Publow is a speed-skating athlete and coach, as well as an exercise physiologist and the author of *Speed on Skates*, the only book in the world dedicated to both inline and ice speed skating.

Publow has worked with many Olympic speed skaters over the years, including 2010 Olympic short-track champion Olivier Jean of Canada and American long-track Olympian Jilleanne Rookard, both of whom will compete in Sochi.

Publow has been researching human movement through speed skating for many years. It's his passion, and he's willing to share his knowledge with anyone who wants to learn how to go fast on skates.

**"When you look at it statistically,
the crashes are very rare."**

—Barry Publow

Although his love for the sport is unmatched, Publow understands why the general public gets frustrated watching top short-track athletes take each other out in Olympic finals. He understands why many people think short track involves too much luck. But Publow explained that such collisions—and the Bradbury story in particular—are not always representative of the sport.

"Bradbury was half a lap behind and wasn't in contention at all. That situation is pretty rare," Publow said.

What's more common is for evenly matched skaters to bunch up, so the race becomes incredibly tight and victory is up for grabs. It's these tight races that lead to high-speed jostling for position, disqualifications and collisions.

"It's not uncommon for the lead skater to crash, and the worst part is because they're so close in speed, when someone falls, they almost always take out someone else," he said. "But when you think about it, considering how many laps they do in training, plus heats, semis and finals, when you look at it statistically, the crashes are very rare."

In fact, Publow believes collisions are more frustrating for confused viewers than they are for the skaters competing.

SHORT TRACK VS. LONG TRACK

EVENTS

Short-track individual events at the Olympics range from 500 to 1,500 m, while long-track events are 500 to 10,000 m long for the men. The longest women's event is 5,000 m. Short track also includes a 5,000-m relay event for the men and a 3,000-m relay event for the women, while long track has a pursuit event, in which three athletes work together as a team, much as they do in pursuit races in cycling.

FORMAT

In short-track events, four to six athletes race head-to-head, jostling for position and often bumping into each other on tight corners. Athletes advance from heats to quarterfinals, semifinals and finals based on their placing in each race. In a long-track race, on the other hand, only two athletes race at a time, and each athlete skates in his or her own lane. The 500-m winner is decided by adding the times from two races, while all other individual distances do not involve heats. The pursuit races involve quarterfinals, semifinals and finals.

TRACK

Short-track takes racing place on an international-size hockey rink. The circumference of the track is 111 m, while the long track is a 400-m oval.

ATHLETES

Generally speaking, short-track athletes tend to be smaller and more compact because a larger mass can be a disadvantage when going around tight corners. On the oval, long-track sprinters often look like large, muscular rowers, while middle- and long-distance skaters benefit from being taller, longer and leaner.

BLADES

Exact blade length depends on the athlete, but most Olympic long-track blades are between 17 and 17.5 inches long, while short-track blades are up to 18 inches long. Long-track blades are also slightly thinner. The biggest difference is that short-track blades are fixed to the skate at both the toe and heel, while long-track athletes wear "clap blades," which allow the athlete's heel to rise while the blade remains on the ice. This allows the athlete to more efficiently transfer power.

Matthew Stockman/Getty Images



With athletes evenly matched in most races, tight packs of skaters jostle for position. One mistake can drop you from first to last or send you tumbling out of the race.

"It's frustrating if the crash is a result of someone doing something high risk, but when you're going around a corner at a tight radius at 30 mph, even the best skaters in the world, a tiny little imperfection in the ice and—boom—they're down or get taken down ... It's just part of the sport," he said.

Another thing that's just part of the sport is being disqualified from time to time. For all distances in short track—500, 1,000, 1,500 and 3,000 m—skaters take off in a mass start. And in most international competitions, including the Olympic Games, skaters must finish in the top two in their heat to move on to the next round. Tension tends to be high in the fast-paced sport, and positioning is everything.

There's a chief official in charge of making sure all skaters follow the rules; he's in charge of disqualifying athletes who commit passing fouls that hinder another skater. An example of a passing foul is called "charging the block," which occurs when a skater passes on the inside of a

congested area in a corner. In a race, the lead skater always has the right of way, and the skater who overtakes another is essentially responsible for any collision that occurs as a result. If a slower skater gets lapped, the chief official may signal that skater to move to the outside of the track to prevent impeding the others. If he or she is lapped again, the athlete is removed from the race.

A second faux pas for a skater is to "change lanes" at the finish, though no lane markers appear on the ice. Competitors are supposed to travel in a straight line from the final corner to the finish line. Veering off line to maintain position—cutting someone off—can result in disqualification.

Short-track relay events are even more chaotic. Watching them can make you dizzy and confused. But there's a method behind the madness of sharpened blades churning about a hockey rink at high speed.

Relays—5,000 m for men and 3,000 for women—usually involve four teams of four skaters, and each skater must take at least one turn on the track. Generally, skaters will follow a rotation that allows each a chance to maximize his or her speed before passing off to a fresh teammate.

No baton is passed between skaters; instead, the incoming skater must be tagged by the current skater before he is allowed to enter the race. Often, the incoming skater crouches and receives a push from a teammate before tackling the track. To avoid congestion at the end of the race, the final two laps must be skated by the same athlete.

As you might expect, short-track speed skating requires a ton of strength, speed and stamina training in addition to regular technical work on the ice.

Publow explained that the competitive short-track season is generally from October to March, while the late-spring and early summer months are for offseason training for strength, endurance and power. Two of the main priorities

during the offseason are maintaining and building aerobic fitness as well as anaerobic conditioning. Speed skaters—both short and long track—tend to do a lot of cycling during the offseason to build that base.

On top of this, training for speed and power is also very important. Plyometric training, Olympic weightlifting and squat work are generally incorporated into the athlete's routines.

"Lots of power clean, lots of squats, as well as squats involving lateral movement," Publow said. He explained that most of their weight training is done with free weights: barbells, dumbbells and kettlebells.

But it's not only the legs they need to work. Publow said many athletes are on year-round upper-body strength programs. Upper-body strength is required at least partially because of the physical nature of the sport, and athletes need to be able to hold their ground when they get bumped at speeds of 25 mph with sharp blades under their feet.



Jamie Squire/Getty Images

On the oval, speed skaters use precise technique to maintain speed. Their fluid, powerful movements often obscure the stress they're under as lactic acid builds up in the muscles.



Jasper Juinen/Getty Images

World record holder Cindy Klassen (right) leads Maria Lamb in the 5,000-m event at the 2010 Olympics. The race is the longest of the Olympics for the women, and it takes top athletes about seven grueling minutes.

A 10,000-M Squat

Close-quarters battles for position, collisions and multi-athlete pileups are not a part of long-track speed skating, though falls can happen on the larger ice surface, too. Long track is a simpler sport in some regards but comes with its own gross misconceptions.

Watching long-track speed skaters compete is incredibly deceiving. It looks like they're simply not trying that hard, as if they're gliding effortlessly on perfectly treated ice. But the reality is these large-legged athletes are in significant amounts of pain, with lactic acid filling their muscles for the duration of the race. While this might not sound so grueling for a 35-second 500-m sprint, long-track events of 5,000 and 10,000 m have athletes suffering in the range of six to 13 minutes.

Publow, a former high-level hockey player, said long track is the most deceiving sport he's ever participated in.

"Imagine holding a static squat and exploding, and then dropping back into the squat again and staying there for the entire race," he said.

"Imagine holding a static squat and exploding, and then dropping back into the squat again and staying there for the entire race."

—Barry Publow

What makes it so painful, Publow explained, is the fact that the body's blood vessels get completely closed off as a skater holds a squat position, so there's limited blood flow to the muscles for much of the race. That means lactic acid builds up, causing discomfort and threatening to limit performance.

"Once the lactic acid sets in, it screws up your neuromuscular coordination, and this affects balance, as well. So the best skaters are the ones who can keep their technique

and their balance ... the ones who can maintain proper alignment even when the muscles are drowning in lactic acid," he said.

"As far as localized muscle pain, there's nothing that compares," Publow said.

And the longer the race, the worse the lactic-acid burn. The world-record time for the men's 500-m sprint is just 34.03 seconds (Jeremy Wotherspoon), but the men's 10,000-m race lasts closer to 13 minutes, with a world record of 12:41.69 (Sven Kramer). The women's 500-meter world record is 36.36 seconds (Lee Sang-hwa), while the 10,000-m world record is 13:48.33 (Martina Sáblíková). The women's 10-km race is not contested at the Olympics.

Generally, athletes specialize in sprints, middle-distance or long-distance races. Body type and physiology recommend athletes to sprints or distance events much the same way a 100-m runner is clearly not suited for a 10-km race.

The challenge with getting into long-track speed skating is its relatively low accessibility compared to other sports such as basketball and soccer. While the sport is much more popular in certain countries in Europe—such as the Netherlands and Norway—long-track venues are hard to come by in North America.

There are only a handful of long-track venues in the United States today. In fact, the Netherlands alone has more facilities than all of North America. Even the oval used for long-track speed skating at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver has been repurposed for court sports, hockey and other activities.

Roller Speed Skating: The Foundation for Modern Speed Skating

In 1993, American roller speed skater K.C. Boutiette hung up his four-wheeled skates, got off the asphalt and turned his attention to the ice. He successfully made the transition from roller speed skating, also called inline skating, to ice speed skating and competed at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway.

By making the transition from wheels to blades, Boutiette essentially paved the way for other inline speed skaters to make the switch. Derek Parra, Jennifer Rodriguez and Joey Cheek—all American speed skaters—followed Boutiette's lead and got on the ice. Between the three of them, they took home five Olympic medals in long-track speed skating in Salt Lake City in 2002.



Skating expert Barry Publow works with inline athletes, but he's equally comfortable on the ice.

Courtesy of Barry Publow

After that, the trend continued, and the early 2000s saw more and more roller speed skaters quickly transitioning to the ice—and finding success. Even Olympic short-track star Ohno came from an inline-skating background. American inline skater and world-record holder Chad Hedrick saw Parra win his medal on TV and decided to make the switch as well. A few years later, he won the title at the 2004 World Allround Speed Skating Championships. He won three medals—including gold in the 5,000 m—at the Turin Olympics in 2006, and he took another two in Vancouver in 2010.

© JUAN CARLOS ULATE/Reuters/Corbis



***Athletes compete in the Central American Games in San José, Costa Rica, in 2013.
Inline skating is extremely popular in the region, especially in Colombia.***

Clearly, inline skaters could make the jump.

The sport of roller speed skating has been around for many years; world championships in the sport date back to the 1930s, but it hasn't gained huge notoriety in very many countries. One exception is Colombia.

"It's huge there. There are crowds of 10,000 at some competitions ... second to only soccer," Publow said of the South American country's love for roller speed skating.

Most major competitions for inline skaters, such as the World Championships and the Pan American Games, are races on 200-m tracks with slightly banked corners. Racing distances range from 300- and 500-m sprints to 1,000- and 1,500-m middle distances. At the far end of the spectrum, 10- and 20-km pack races feature up to 40 athletes racing at once. These pack races look very different from 300-m sprints, which are raced solo, and 500-, 1,000- and 1,500-meter races, which are raced in groups of five to seven.

There are also road races, and common distances include the 21-km half marathon and the 42-km marathon race.

Roller speed skating looks similar to ice speed skating, and in spite of some technical details, the sports are similar enough to allow athletes to find success in both.

Outside of Colombia, inline skating generally offers little funding and very few opportunities each year and bestows little prestige on great athletes, according to Publow. Ice speed skating, on the other hand, is an Olympic sport. There are greater opportunities in both short- and long-track events, more funding and more glory. Once inline skaters realized they could make the transition to the ice in just a year or two, the switch made even more sense.

Getting athletes from the asphalt to the ice is where Publow has had the greatest impact on his sport. After spending many years researching the human body and the sport of speed skating, he understands all the minor technical nuances—such as body angles—required for the sport. And he's able to distinguish the tiniest technical details in both sports.

"To the untrained eye, the technique looks identical (between inline skating and speed skating), but there are

a lot of small fine-tuning finesse things and small changes in body movements that an athlete has to learn how to make," Publow said.

"The physical mechanics of a thin, hard, flexible blade (are) very different than separated wheels on asphalt. There are small changes in timing, in body position and in balance that athletes have to learn," he added.

As more and more inline skaters tried their hand on the ice, Publow decided to share his knowledge with them. He started running weekend training camps in Lake Placid, N.Y., for athletes who wanted to make the switch.

From recreational skaters to Olympic hopefuls, Publow worked with anyone who wanted to learn. And what he found was the inline skaters had a special knack for speed skating on ice—to the point that they are often more talented than skaters who have spent 10 years in the sport.

"Inline speed skaters don't tend to specialize in sprints or long distances, but speed skaters do. So you have all these inline speed skaters coming to the sport, and instead of taking 10 years to figure out if they should be a sprinter or a long-distance athlete, they usually show that in a year or two years they know where they'll specialize," Publow said.

"They come onto the ice more well rounded than athletes who begin on the ice," he added.

There has to be some truth to Publow's theory: today, two-thirds of the top North American short- and long-track speed skaters—including many members of the U.S. Olympic Team—started out on four-wheeled inline skates.

Beyond the Olympic Oval

CrossFit athlete Jennifer Morris, 43, insists you can start speed skating in your 20s with no intention of ever going to the Olympics and still get a ton of value out of it. That's what she did.

Morris had been skating her whole life but only began ice speed skating as an adult. She attended one of Publow's camps and spent a good deal of time competing as a masters athlete in both short- and long-track speed skating.

Today, she spends her time coaching and training at CrossFit Altitude in Burlington, Canada, but her speed-skating memories are alive—especially the ones made on the long track.

"In short track, my performance was so dependent on what others around me were doing. So much was out of

my control. But in long track, it's just you and the clock and going after it yourself," Morris said.

"When you get on those skates and you realize how fast you can go, it's awesome. I love that feeling of speed," she added.

Morris is exactly the type of athlete Publow likes to work with. He has helped coach and train many Olympic ice speed skaters, but it's the masters athletes, the weekend warriors and even the athletes who never plan on competing that he enjoys training most. He can relate to those who simply love to train.

Publow treats the weekend warrior the same as an elite skater. Although they are often busy, career-oriented parents with just a little spare time to train on the weekends, their workout regimen and training plans look the same, just with less volume.

"The volume and intensity are highly scalable. But most athletes I coach want to 'train just like the pros.' So structure is identical, as is periodization . . . Most of them crosstrain—weights in the winter, cycling in the summer," Publow said of his clients, some of whom race in competitions, while others choose just to train for the physical and emotional benefits it gives them.

"It's about the process, the preparation. I love the training. I don't know whether I love training or competing more, to be honest," Publow said. "You don't have to compete to be an athlete. You just have to have a passion to be the best you can be. You don't even have to have good genetics."

He added: "You can still follow the same path that the top guys do. That's what I love about the sport."

The Olympic short-track competition runs Feb. 10-21 in Sochi, and the long-track events run Feb. 8-22. On the oval, only one distance is contested each day, with the pursuit events for teams held on the last day of competition. Exact times and a full schedule for the Olympics can be found on the [Sochi 2014 website](#).



About the Author

*Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor. She competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team, and she finished third at the Canada West Regional as an individual in 2012. In 2013, she finished second in the Open in Canada West.*



THE
CrossFit JOURNAL

For the love of COFFEE

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY E.M. BURTON

LOVE. You know it when you taste it.

A great many people take their coffee very seriously; they say they love coffee and can't do without it. Some even say they have found the perfect cup, and it's at CrossFit HQ.

There are a handful of brewing methods practiced at the office, but the one that has taken hold most firmly is rooted deep in the West Coast practice of "letting it drip." As you might expect with CrossFit, a significant emphasis is placed on technique, and there's a good deal of weighing and measuring.

No one said { LOVE IS EASY. }

There are variables within variables involved in working with the pour-over method, from the quality of the water and beans to their proportion, from the size of the filter cone to the water temperature.

Different brewing techniques favor different roasts of beans; this one supports a lighter, fruitier roast. Working with this method will allow you to tweak it, finding the perfect ratio for you.

cup
roasted coffee beans
filter cone
bleached filter
filtered water
burr grinder
kettle



{ EQUIPMENT }



DIRECTIONS

1

Boil water, about twice the amount you need for a single cup.
This is the most time-consuming part of the process.

With boiled water, rinse your system:
gently flood the filter completely and heat the cup.

2



3

Transfer the remaining boiled water to a gooseneck kettle. The time this takes will allow the boiled water to cool down to the optimal temperature range—between 195 and 205 F.

4 } Dispose of the excess water in the cup.



The roaster-recommended baseline ratio of beans to water is 1:15.
Some coffee lovers at CrossFit HQ use 1:10.

5 }



6

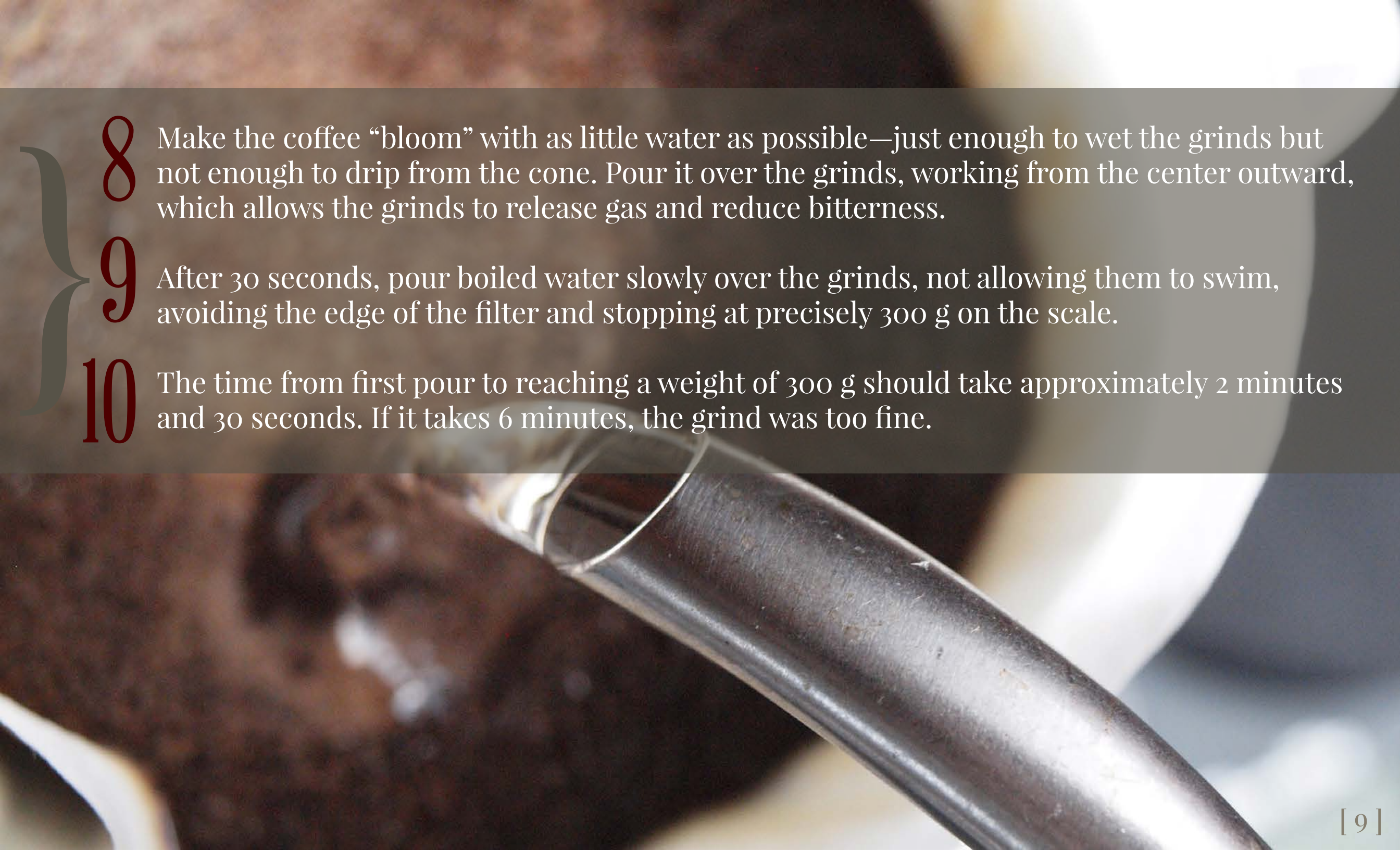


Grind 30 g of beans on the coarser side; too fine and they will clog the filter. A burr grinder is preferable to a blade grinder as it grinds the beans to a consistent size. This is critical as bitterness is related to the size of the grinds.



{ 7 }

Tare cup, filter holder, wet filter and fresh grinds to 0 g on the scale.



8 Make the coffee “bloom” with as little water as possible—just enough to wet the grinds but not enough to drip from the cone. Pour it over the grinds, working from the center outward, which allows the grinds to release gas and reduce bitterness.

9 After 30 seconds, pour boiled water slowly over the grinds, not allowing them to swim, avoiding the edge of the filter and stopping at precisely 300 g on the scale.

10 The time from first pour to reaching a weight of 300 g should take approximately 2 minutes and 30 seconds. If it takes 6 minutes, the grind was too fine.



{ Cream? Milk? Honey? That's up to you. }

Sip. Share. **LOVE.**

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Valentine's Day: Decades Vs. Decadence

Long-married couples offer relationship advice that has nothing to do with an obnoxious red teddy bear holding an I-love-you sign.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



All illustrations: Donovan Winters/CrossFit Journal

We're good at Valentine's Day.

Or at the very least, we're really on top of it. From fine chocolates and red-and-pink candies to "love-scented shampoo" and body butter, shelves are stocked with heart-shaped everything the moment Christmas ends.

Girls are good at pretending they don't want anything for Valentine's Day—almost pleading ignorance that the day even exists—and men are even better at realizing that many women actually want that stuffed dog holding the giant red heart.

Valentine's Day has been around for centuries—though perhaps not in the modern sense. Early modern customs were actually developed in England and spread through the English-speaking world in the 19th century. Today, the tradition of a “love day” has spread all over the world.

According to Wikipedia, China's version of Valentine's Day is called Qixi Festival, and it falls on the seventh day of the seventh month in the Chinese calendar: Aug. 2 in 2014. In the Middle East, Iran's Sepandarmazgan festival falls on Feb. 18 and is dedicated to affection for wives and mothers. Interestingly, Iran officially banned Valentine's Day and its symbols in 2011, though reports indicate the ban is somewhat less than effective in preventing Iranians from expressing their love through cards and gifts.

And here in North America, Feb. 14 allows flower stores to make a killing on roses and sweetheart bouquets, while restaurants enjoy one of the busiest nights of the year. Children in grade school pass around cards and candies, women feel pressure to find a date, and men are expected to pay for a lavish night.

While we're good at giving in to Valentine's Day, we're arguably less successful with actual relationships.

The obvious statistics are those that estimate about 40 or 50 percent of people who vow to love each other until death won't end up honoring their vows. And perhaps even more people suffer from commitment phobia and won't get anywhere near a ring in the first place.

But some women—women who have been married for 50-plus years—believe today's ladies are more focused on the flowers and fluffy heart pillows they receive on Valentine's Day than they are on their relationships. These great grandmothers and grandmothers also suggest modern young ladies might be more interested in planning a badass bridal shower, an overpriced engagement party and an over-the-top wedding reception than in caring for their actual marriage.

And while members of the previous generation admit they might have a few things to learn from the younger generation about celebrating Valentine's Day in modern style, these elders know a lot about how to keep a marriage alive.



Joe and June Embury

Joe and June have been married for 69 years. Although they were just teenagers when they began courting, they still remember their early dates.

Now living in Tennessee, they met while living in the small town of Camillus, N.Y. At the time, Joe had gone into the military, and he served with the U.S. Navy during World War II. June was just 16 years old when she was introduced to Joe.

“I liked him. I don't know if I fell in love with him that first date, but many dates later I sure did,” said the 87-year-old June, a grandmother of 10 and great grandmother of 19.

Joe agreed.

“I don't know if I immediately recognized that she was the one, but it sure didn't take long to convince me,” the 90-year-old said.

Those early courting days weren't easy for Joe and June. Joe was away at officer school much of the time, and they were lucky if they got to see each other on the weekends.



Courtesy of Allison Scabill

Joe and June Embury were married in 1945 and are as in love today as they were then.

But something in their hearts convinced them to fight through the constant separation.

After two years of courting, the couple was married in the summer of 1945. The wedding was very simple by today's standards. Almost seven decades later, Joe and June, whose three grown boys are all still married to their first wives, admit they are still in love. And they banter back and forth just the way you'd expect from partners of 69 years.

"I'm more and more in love with him every day," June said.

"I couldn't be any better today," Joe said.

"He always says that," June added with a laugh.

Their relationship has continued to flourish over the course of 69 years, and June said a few important reasons stand out.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's about putting each other first, and I mean before anybody else. Wouldn't you say so, Joe?" June asked her husband.

"That's right," Joe reassured.

"And we have never gone to sleep angry at each other," June added. "You should resolve your problem before you go to sleep ... it might be 2 in the morning before you go to sleep, but you shouldn't go to sleep angry."

She thought for a moment before adding: "Our other rule we have lived by is that we'd never go someplace alone unless we're sure we can kiss goodbye."

"June keeps me better fed than anyone in the neighborhood," Joe interrupted.

"I love to cook and bake. I love to entertain, although we don't entertain as much as we used to," said June, who spent many years as a 24-hour-a-day homemaker.

June admitted she and Joe do have their disagreements and challenges, but she said that's just part of life. Their faith in God has helped them work through many of the inevitable difficulties that have come up through the years.

"We've always had our faith if something was bothering us," June said. "I think that's helped us, don't you Joe?"

"Yes, it has," Joe replied. "The biggest challenge has been recognizing that you're on the same page, even though you might not always read the same words."

**"I don't think young people today
take their vows seriously enough.
We vowed to love each other until
death do us part, and we do."**

—June Embury

For Joe and June, marriage has always been something they've taken very seriously. They made vows to each other in 1945, and breaking them has never been an option. They're suspicious that today's generation doesn't feel the same way about making a promise.

"I don't think young people today take their vows seriously enough. We vowed to love each other until death do us part, and we do," June said.

"So many people today want to keep their independence, even though they're married," Joe said.

June added: "I think you do need to keep some independence, but your spouse still needs to come first."

Of course, it's easier to put each other first when you're with the right person. June warned young women to make sure they know what they're getting into. She believes people should make sure they're with the right person and avoid rushing into wedlock, while Joe thinks new spouses need to be prepared to work as partners rather than individuals who live in the same home.

"You can no longer just consider yourself when you're making decisions," Joe said.

"It's true. We have never made an important decision on our own. We've made them all together," June added.

"And finances and feelings—nothing is hidden. Make sure the spouse always knows what's going on," Joe added.

Today, Joe and June have plenty of time to keep each other in the loop with what's going on. They spend a great deal of time together and said they never get sick of it.

"We're finally getting to an age where we like to stay home," June said.

Virginia and Ron Monk

For 77-year-old Virginia and 79-year-old Ron Monk, their deep love for each other has always held their marriage together.

For Virginia, meeting Ron was almost a love-at-first-sight situation. She was a 16-year-old student in Montreal, Canada, and she rode the bus to school every day. Often, she saw Ron on the bus and was instantly attracted to him.

"So I made some inquiries about Ron, and turns out he had a girlfriend," Virginia remembered.

Pretty soon, though, Ron was single, and one night Virginia's girlfriend dared her to call him.

"So I did. I put a handkerchief over the mouthpiece and blocked my nose and called him. I didn't want him to recognize my voice," Virginia laughed at her girlish silliness. "I don't know why I thought he might recognize my voice, though."

But she didn't fool him. Ron knew exactly who she was.

"You travel on the bus and you wear a green coat," Ron said to Virginia.

After that first phone call, Ron asked Virginia on a proper date.

"In those days, things were very different. Girls didn't call guys," Virginia said. "The only reason I phoned him was because it was a dare, so I thought it was safe."

She added: "A guy didn't appreciate getting a call from a girl then. He needed to make the call. But it turned out OK. We've been married for 55 years."

Six years after that first call, Ron and Virginia finally got married.

"In those days, that's all you did. You could be a nurse or teach or maybe be a secretary—or just get married," she said.

Virginia thinks marriage might have been simpler for her generation than it is today.



"There wasn't as much for us in those days. We weren't exposed to as much. My focus in life was to get married and have a family, so it was very easy for me to fit into that pattern," she said.

"I grew up with parents, where my father was the head of the family. There were roles that were played, and Ron and I are probably two of the last of those kind of people. We have definite roles in our relationship," she said.

Ron was always the breadwinner, while Virginia looked after the house and their four children. Virginia said children were both the biggest blessing and biggest challenge in her marriage.

"We had problems with Drew, our son, when he was 16. We ended up having to kick him out of the house," she said. "Today, we have a wonderful relationship with him, but back then it was one of the biggest stresses in our lives."

She added: "It's very difficult to always track in the same direction, especially being a mother, I think. It was hard. Ron and I didn't always agree about how to parent."

Ultimately, the love and commitment behind their marriage kept them working together.

**"It was always for better
or worse—that's it.
End of story.
You make it work."**

—Virginia Monk

"We had strength behind us that held us together. The love that we had for each other to begin with helped us get through it. The love was always there, and we could always fall back on it. It was always for better or worse—that's it. End of story. You make it work. So we just weathered those storms as they came," she said.

Virginia said she doesn't often see this kind of commitment in many marriages today. Even two of her children have remarried. She believes it's a change of priorities in society today that has led to marriages falling apart.

"Today, it's so easy to walk away from a relationship," she said with a shrug.

For her, walking away was never even an option. Instead, her marriage—and her love for Ron—has only grown stronger over the years.

"It's a different kind of love now. I would say I probably love him more now, and he would say the same thing, too," Virginia said. "We appreciate each other more now than ever."

The Gift of Love

Like June and Virginia, Pat Grieve has also been married for 50-plus years. The 76-year-old met her Scottish immigrant husband Roy when she was just a teenager, and 53 years later their marriage is strong.

Courtesy of Pat Grieve



After 53 years of marriage, Pat Grieve said she believes no marriage is perfect, but that doesn't mean you should give up so easily.

"I was going to the dance with one fellow, and I had a girlfriend who needed a date, so she went with Roy. And I guess he liked me better," laughed Pat, who now lives in the small town of Peachland, Canada.

Pat doesn't believe in one secret to marriage, and she's realistic that it's never easy.

"There's no such thing as a 100 percent happy relationship between two people; I don't care who you are," Pat said. "You couldn't live with anyone for a great length of time without getting into disagreement. People who say they never argue, I don't believe them."

**"There are ups and there are
downs, but as long as there are
more ups than downs, you're OK."**

—Pat Grieve

She added: "I told this to someone the other day: There are ups and there are downs, but as long as there are more ups than downs, you're OK. Every day isn't perfect, so you find someone you want to be with, and, well, you be with them."

Pat suspects that what's missing from many marriages today is the sense of commitment that was instilled in both women and men of her generation.

"I think young ones today are too quick to call it quits after a disagreement or things not going the way they want them to," she said.

She continued: "Things were different back then... People felt they had to make it work. There was sort of a stigma attached to being divorced."

Pat, June and Virginia all have a similar attitude when they talk about their commitments they've held onto over many decades, through all of life's ups and downs, and all three suggest the younger generation doesn't take commitment seriously. It's their opinion, but perhaps they're right. Maybe our Internet-driven, all-right-now, pay-on-credit modern society doesn't foster the kind of character and

commitment needed to sustain a relationship beyond the honeymoon phase. For many, it seems easier to replace something than to fix it.

"Today's generation is maybe too used to having all the things they want right away," Pat said.

Never is this more evident than on Valentine's Day, a day of unnecessary lavishness for many. Interestingly, neither Pat nor Virginia nor June has ever really celebrated Valentine's Day. In fact, gift-giving has never been a huge priority in any of their marriages. Things were simpler for them.

Virginia believes some people might focus so hard on things such as weddings and anniversaries because something is missing from their relationship.

"The same could be true of Valentine's Day. Maybe people need some kind of reminder that their partner cares about them in the form of a piece of jewelry or a box of flowers," she said.

"I mean, I like getting nice things, but even at Christmastime we never made a big deal about gifts. And now we have everything we want. Why would we want another bit of something we're not going to use?" she asked.

Similarly, Pat passes on presents.

"We haven't done anything for years, nor do we do much on birthdays, except for a nice card and maybe out for dinner My mother used to say, 'Actions speak louder than words,' so all the flowers and presents in the world would mean nothing if there was no trust and truth in your daily actions," she said.

June admitted, though, that Joe used to buy her chocolate on Valentine's Day.

"We used to exchange gifts, didn't we, dear? In fact, last year even he bought me some earrings, but I scolded him because we don't do that anymore. And I didn't have anything for him," she said.

"I got a kiss," Joe replied.

And that's all he wanted in return.



Author Bio

Emily Beers is a *CrossFit Journal* staff writer and an ardent proponent of Valentine's Day.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

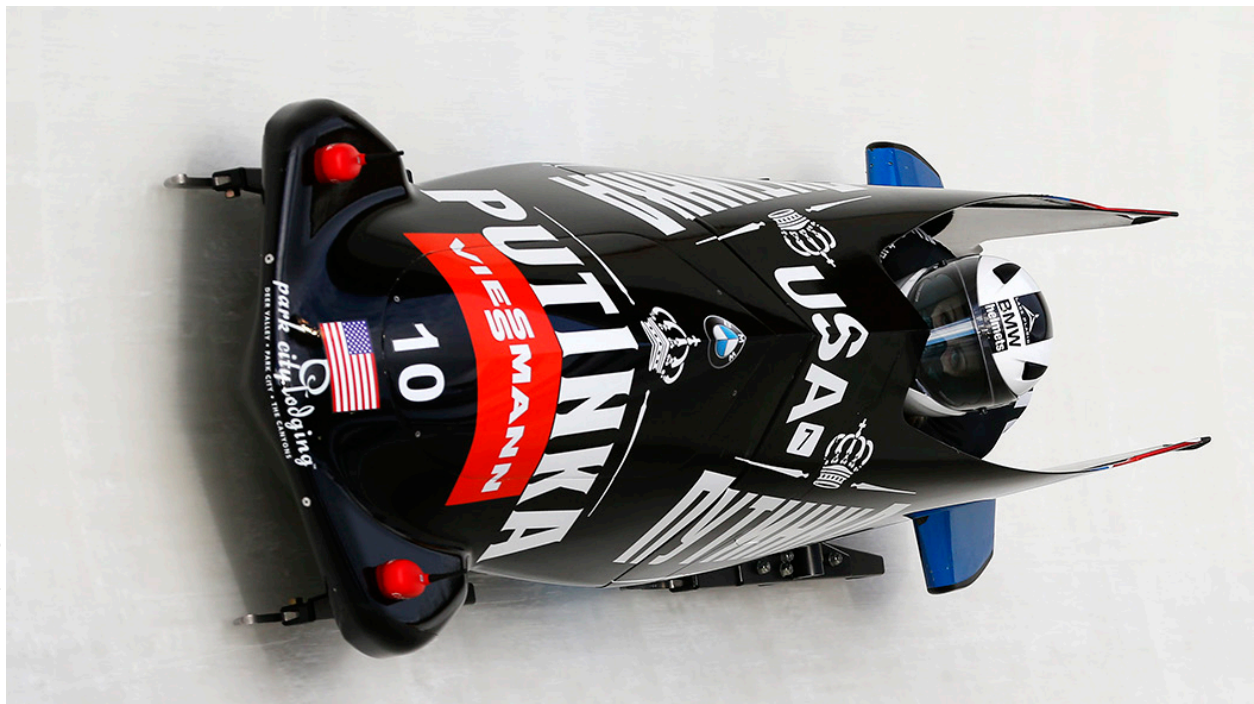
WINTER OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT

The Need for Speed

Bobsled athletes train for five seconds of raw power followed by an icy 60-second thrill ride at 90 mph.

By Emily Beers

February 2014



Todd Korol/Getty Images



Comedian Jerry Seinfeld does a stand-up routine about the Olympics and makes fun of the sports of bobsled and luge. He proposes that there is little actual skill involved in the luge event, saying, "It's just a human being hanging on for their life—this is the whole sport."

He continued: "The luge is the only sport I've ever seen that you could have people competing in it against their will and it would be exactly the same."

1 of 9

Seinfeld suggested it could be called “the involuntary luge.”

While Seinfeld’s satire would likely offend some bobsled and luge competitors, former Canadian bobsled athlete Mike McCorkell might not be so quick to judge the comedian.

McCorkell had never been in a bobsled when he was invited to Calgary in the summer of 2009 to try out for the Canadian National Team. First, he was put through a series of tests in the weight room—front squats, power cleans and bench presses—as well as sprint testing and pushing a sled in the Ice House at Canada Olympic Park.

He returned home to British Columbia after the tryouts and carried on with his life.

“And then one day, I got a message from one of the national-team pilots asking me if I could come up to Whistler for two weeks and push a sled. I was like, ‘Yep. Done,’” McCorkell said.

In McCorkell’s case, jumping in the sled was voluntary, but there’s no denying that he was more or less plucked off the streets and asked to join the national-team trials after one of the other men dropped out.

Two weeks later, McCorkell was named to the Developmental National Team.

In short, bobsled is a sport where you can wake up one morning never having raced a bobsled and go to bed that night labeled an Olympic hopeful.

The Quest for Power

Despite bobsled’s ability to create potential Olympians overnight, 2010 Olympic bobsledder and former professional football player Jesse Lumsden explained that being a bobsled athlete does, in fact, require a great deal of physical prowess.

The difference between bobsled and many other sports is that training and preparing for bobsled sometimes occurs without an athlete actually knowing he or she is training to be an Olympic bobsledder.

“Training for football and bobsleigh are quite similar in terms of the focus on power and speed. I often say, ‘I have been training for bobsleigh my whole life without knowing it,’” Lumsden said.



Mike McCorkell went through physical testing for Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton in 2009, and he soon found himself on the Developmental National Team.

A running back, Lumsden was signed as an undrafted free agent by the Seattle Seahawks in 2005 but was later released. He went on to sign with the Washington Redskins in 2006 but was also released. He played in the Canadian Football League, and when a shoulder injury ended his 2009 season, he was recruited to push a bobsled that spring. By November, Lumsden had already recorded a Europa Cup victory with pilot and two-time Olympic medalist Pierre Lueders. Lumsden went on to compete at the 2010 Olympics with Lueders, finishing fifth in both the two-man and four-man events. And in February 2013, Lumsden and pilot Lyndon Rush placed first in the overall World Cup standings. He'll push for Canada at the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi.

"Bobsleigh training is a power- and speed-based sport. You are expected to run like a sprinter, lift like an Olympic lifter and load like a gymnast," Lumsden said. "We have athletes that have a 560-lb. squat and a 375-lb. power clean and a 10.2-second 100-meter (sprint)."

Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton's testing standards are posted [here](#), and you can watch USA Bobsleigh & Skeleton's combine test [here](#).

**"We have athletes that have
a 560-lb. squat and a 375-lb.
power clean and a 10.2-second
100-meter (sprint)."**

—Jesse Lumsden

While bobsled athletes don't necessarily need cardiovascular endurance or stamina, they do need a serious amount of explosive power at the start of the race, where a tenth of a second earned during the push can become a three-tenths-of-a-second lead at the bottom of the course, according to Bobsled Canada Skeleton.

As in any other sport, max efforts take a toll on the body, so in-season training volume for bobsled athletes is considerably lower than it is in many other sports. A normal in-season week for Lumsden and his teammates might consist of just six runs—most likely two runs a day—over



Richard Heathcote/Getty Images

Pierre Lueders, Justin Kripps, Jesse Lumsden and Neville Wright push Canada 2 at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada.

the course of three days. Each run lasts just about one minute, although their max-effort sprint and push lasts in the neighborhood of five seconds as crews cover 50 meters and achieve speeds around 25 mph.

After, athletes hop in the sled and travel down the course at speeds that can top 90 mph. At that point, the pilot is really the only one doing any work—the others are simply along for the ride until the brakeman pulls a lever to stop the sled after it has crossed the finish line.

The offseason, on the other hand, is a time to log hours in the weight room getting stronger and faster, while athletes also spend time practicing their starts by pushing sleds in the indoor Ice House.

The two most important skills for bobsled athletes to develop are speed and power. In terms of strength training, the classic physical bobsled strength tests are a one-rep-max power clean, front squat and close-grip bench press. Athletes also spend time building strength and power by doing back squats and box squats, as well as power snatches, chin-ups and bent-over rows.

On top of this, prowler pushes are a staple. Although bobsled athletes vary distances, loads and intervals, they generally do 30-m prowler pushes with somewhere between 100 to 200 lb. loaded onto the sled.

In addition, much time is spent in training sessions that focus on acceleration, and athletes do technical drills to improve movement efficiency.

In the end, the bobsled athlete looks comparable to some NFL athletes in size, strength and speed, which is also

why the sport recruits so many former football players. Common competition weight for male bobsledder is between 215 and 235 lb.

One-hundredth of a second can make a difference on the track, so the sled itself plays an integral role in racing. Preparing and maintaining the sled is a huge part of the sport, and athletes are also mechanics to some degree.

"Ninety percent of our time is work on our runners—the steel we slide on—and our sleds," Lumsden said.

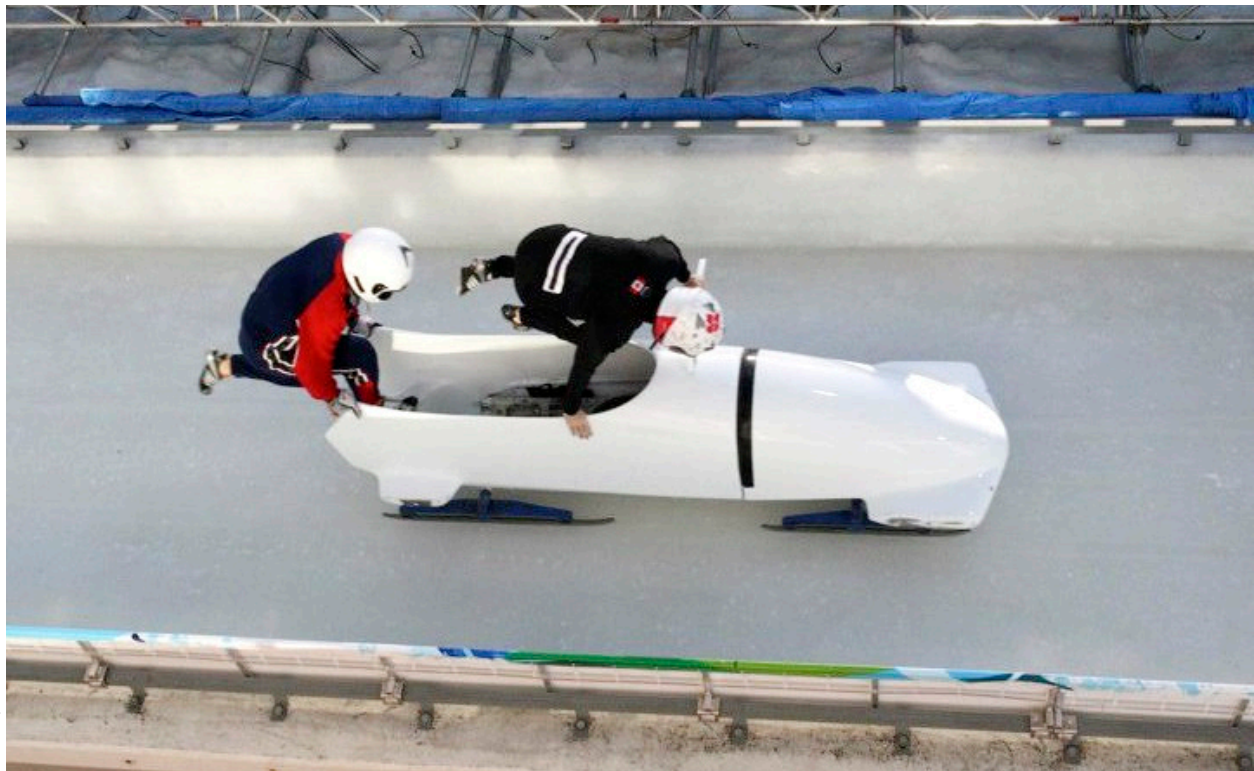
"Our runners are treated like tires for an F1 car. Different runners run better on different tracks and different conditions. They have different shapes, rock, diameters—it's a lot of work," he added.

During McCorkell's short stint with the sport, he spent many hours polishing runners.

"I remember my first race in Whistler. We got done fairly late and didn't get back to the house until 9 p.m. Our driver had gone high on one of the corners and ran over the concrete, which left a massive gouge in the sled," McCorkell said.

**"Athletes, to a large degree,
put their lives in their driver's
hands."**

—Mike McCorkell



Courtesy of Mike McCorkell

***After about five seconds of all-out effort, large, powerful athletes must nimbly load into the sled.
Any mistakes can cost valuable time or cause a crash.***

"Anything except a mirror-shine finish can take away from your time. Even if you have a little scratch the size of a hair, it would slow you down a tenth of a second . . . We were up until 3 a.m. that morning working on our sled," he said.

Usually, it's the driver who leads the crew during sled maintenance, as the driver bears all the responsibility during a race. The pilot steers the sled and has to learn about each turn on each course he tackles.

During the race, the driver hangs on to handles called D-rings, which are connected to ropes or cables attached to the steering column. The D-rings themselves are supported by bungee cords. As the driver jumps in the sled, he kicks his legs around the bungee cords, grabs on and starts steering. With between 750 and 1,390 lb. of sled and beef hurtling downhill at 90 mph, the driver struggles to find a perfect line through the twists of the track.

McCorkell explained that the driver's greatest responsibility is often earning the respect and trust of his entire crew.

"Athletes, to a large degree, put their lives in their driver's hands," he said.

USA Bobsled Training

South of border from Lumsden, USA Bobsled athlete Thomas White has found a way to incorporate CrossFit into his training.

White, who competed at the Olympic trials in October and on the world tour all fall and winter, just missed out on qualification to the Sochi Olympics. Only three countries are granted three sleds at the Olympic Games, and this year, Team USA found itself behind Canada, Germany and Russia. As a result, the American squad will comprise six athletes rather than 11.



Richard Heathcote/Getty Images

Costly crashes: Gillian Cooke and Nicola Minichiello of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are helped from Great Britain 1 after a crash at the 2010 Olympics.

Bobsled Quick Facts

1. The sport of bobsled was conceived in Switzerland in the late 1800s and made its Olympic debut at the 1924 Winter Games.
2. Both "bobsled" and "bobsleigh" are acceptable terms. The sport's governing body, the [International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Association](http://www.ibsfa.org/), has its preference but refers to the craft as a "sled." McCorkell has his own preference: "I like 'bobsled' better because a sleigh reminds me of Santa Claus."
3. Modern four-man bobsleds are as heavy as 475 lb., while women's sleds are closer to 375 lb. They may be loaded to a max weight, including crew, of 1,388.9 lb. (four man), 859.8 lb. (two man), or 749.6 lb. (two woman). There is no four-woman race at present.
4. International bobsled courses are between 1,200 and 1,600 m, and there are generally 15 to 20 turns of varying angles along the course.
5. According to Canadian Olympic bobsled athlete Justin Kripps, part of his sport's history involves athletes getting drunk before attempting a challenging bobsled course that required liquid courage. "That was before athleticism was such a big part of the sport," Kripps said.

Before he was a bobsled athlete, White, played college football at Baylor University and signed with the Baltimore Ravens in 2009. A herniated disc cut his NFL career short, and, like Lumsden, he played in the Canadian Football League, spending the 2011 campaign with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. When he retired from football, he joined CrossFit Dallas Central, where he has been training since fall 2011.

Like White's Canadian rivals, much of his and Team USA's training is centered around squats and cleans.

"The bread and butter for most guys is numerous heavy sets of squats in the 3-to-6-(rep) range for the squats and 1 to 3 (reps) on the Olympic lifts," White explained.

Especially in the early offseason, White and his teammates spend a good deal of time accumulating volume with higher rep sets.

"Steve Langton—the best U.S. brakeman—does 20-rep sets of squats and has done so with 170 kg (375 lb.)," White said of his teammate.

Although many American bobsled athletes train in a similar manner in the weight room, there is no official

training program for the U.S. athletes. For White, much of his training has taken place at CrossFit Dallas Central, where, on top of traditional lifts and sprints, he also spends time using the Concept2 ergometer, as well as the airdyne to help build his aerobic base. White also pushes the Rogue Dog Sled "religiously," which he said has helped him replicate specific angles and positions he needs to hit while accelerating the bobsled.

Training at CrossFit Dallas Central means White's been highly influenced by CrossFit movements and athletes.

"Early in the offseason, I'll do Olympic lifts on the minute . . . I've seen Rich Froning do similar workouts, and it seemed to work well for him," White said.

Weighing In

One of the stressful things about being a bobsled athlete is the pressure of the scale. Depending on teammates' weights, as well as the weight of the sled, athletes are often asked to gain or shed pounds in a short period of time.

Sleds, including occupants, are limited in weight (see sidebar on Page 5), and if a heavier sled is pushed to the exact same speed as a lighter one, the former will carry



Elana Meyers and Aja Evans of the United States cross the finish line in first place at the Viessmann IBSF Bobsled and Skeleton World Cup event in Park City, Utah on Dec. 13, 2013.

more momentum and therefore be more resistant to forces such as friction and drag—which very much make a difference when dealing in hundredths of seconds.

Teams can add metal weights to increase the load of the sled, but that means it's heavier to push. Sometimes "adding weight" actually means hitting up McDonald's a couple of times a day.

"Sometimes your driver says, 'Hey, I need you to gain as much weight as you can in a week.' And then you start shoveling in as much as you can. That's when you'd go to McDonald's," McCorkell laughed.

"Or it could change the other way, too. If everyone is fairly heavy, then all of you have to cut weight within two days," he said.

"Not all of us are running to McDonald's, but most people don't realize how much one needs to gain to be a solid contributor to a sled," Lumsden said. "It is a gravity-based sport with minimum/maximum sled and crew weight restrictions."

**"Sometimes your driver says,
'Hey, I need you to gain as
much weight as you can
in a week.'"**

—Mike McCorkell

"This means you can either stay at your entry weight and most likely push a heavier sled or you can get bigger and faster and push a lighter sled. The second is the most efficient, I'm sure of that," said Lumsden, who competes at 234 lb.

And with the amount of sled lifting and moving, warming up, training, sliding, and weightlifting, it can be hard for a bobsled athlete to find enough calories to consume in order to maintain or gain weight.

Lumsden keeps a freezer full of game meat and freshly caught fish, which he'd prefer to eat rather than head to a fast-food joint.

"But we are all guilty of doing (McDonald's), whether it's in between training sessions in Calgary or driving 12 hours from La Plagne, France, to Winterberg, Germany," he said.

**"You can either stay at your
entry weight and most likely
push a heavier sled or you can
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a lighter sled. The second is the
most efficient."**

—Jesse Lumsden

Adrenaline on Ice

Todd Devlin is a freelance writer who worked for the Olympic News Service at the 2010 Olympics, where he covered bobsled, luge and skeleton. Spending six weeks researching and eventually covering a sport at the Olympics, he got to know the culture of sliding more than he imagined he would.

Devlin remembers the Olympic bobsled, skeleton and luge athletes as being some of the most down-to-earth, genuine athletes of the Games. Easy to talk to, more relaxed than most athletes, and always willing to chat about their obscure sport, bobsledders were the first ones to rip their shirts off and ham it up with the spectators, and the first ones to crack and chug a post-race beer, Devlin said.

But there is another side of the sport: the danger factor. Devlin was at the track at the 2010 Olympics when Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili was killed during a training run on the day of the opening ceremonies in Whistler. The tragedy became the first big international story of the Vancouver Games, tainting the experience for some.

It was quickly obvious to Devlin that the athletes he was watching, interviewing, and even getting to know on a personal level were the biggest daredevils and thrill seekers he had ever encountered.

"I remember interviewing the Brits after they crashed in the final, and the pilot did all his interviews with his completely ripped shirt and ice burn all over his body," Devlin said.

The overall experience in Whistler led Devlin to one simple conclusion about bobsled athletes: "They all have a screw loose," he joked.

Deaths are rare but not totally uncommon. Several sliders have died at Italy's Eugenio Monti track, including American James Morgan in 1981. His death was followed shortly by the death of a stuntman piloting a bobsled during the filming of the James Bond movie *For Your Eyes Only*. Most recently, German Yvonne Cernota was killed in 2004 at Königssee in her home country.

"Very few things in life are as exhilarating, and terrifying, as hopping in a runaway sled down an icy hill with three of your buddies."

—Thomas White

Crashes are part of the sport, and McCorkell has always embraced this danger element.

"It's very intense. And stressful. It's a very big mix of emotions," he began.

"The whole day you're looking forward to the run, and you only have three-to-five seconds of actual work, and then, yeah, you just sit there, but if anything goes wrong, it can go very wrong," he said.

"It starts when the driver gets set on the push bar. When he's ready, he looks back to make sure everyone is in push position, and then he turns forward. He double taps on the sled to let everyone, especially the brakeman, know that he's ready. Then the brakeman yells, "Back!" and the pilot yells, "Up!"

And then it's go time.



Courtesy of Mike McCorkell

McCorkell says crashes are terrifying, but the thrill of the ride makes it worth the risk.

In the next five seconds, the timing has to be just right. Athletes have to run as fast and push as hard as they can, and they don't have a lot of time to get everyone loaded into the sled.

Everything happens very quickly, and if anyone messes up at all—if someone accidentally clips another athlete with his shoe or doesn't jump in the sled properly—there's a good chance of crashing.

In his short career, McCorkell remembers the shocking and terrifying feeling of crashing on nine different occasions.

"It's not so different to a car crash. It's very intense: shocking and surprising. Usually, the sled gets on top of you, so you're usually under a 500-lb. sled," he said.

McCorkell can still feel the pain of one of his crashes on the Whistler course, the fastest bobsled track in the world. His team crashed at the sixth corner, and near the bottom of the track they were still going 65 mph.

Clive Mason/Getty Images



Neville Wright, Justin Kripps, Pierre Lueders and Jesse Lumsden (L-R) of Canada 2 celebrate after completing Heat 4 of the four-man bobsled competition at the 2010 Olympics.

In a weird way, the danger is part of the beauty of the sport. It makes it exhilarating and relieving when you get through a race, McCorkell explained.

"There's nothing like the feeling of a good race," he said.

White added: "The old-timers call sliding the 'Champagne of thrills,' and very few things in life are as exhilarating, and terrifying, as hopping in a runaway sled down an icy hill with three of your buddies."

Lumsden agrees: "I love the rush and the excitement. The thrill of sliding is like nothing I have ever done before."

For Lumsden, being in the bobsled helps keep him young.

"We all played growing up as kids, and we all have to stop at some point. I am trying to play for as long as I can," he said.

Lumsden will have plenty of time to play at the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, where he will compete in both the two-man and the four-man bobsled events.

He's hoping he plays well enough to stand on the podium.



About the Author

Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor. She competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team, and she finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012. In 2013, she finished second in the Open in Canada West.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

WINTER OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT

Free to Fly

CrossFit athlete A.J. Kemppainen will take to the air as freeskiing is contested for the first time at the Olympics.

By Chris Cooper

February 2014



Matthew Stockman/Getty Images

*A.J. Kemppainen competes in a World Cup halfpipe event in Park City, Utah, in 2009.
In 2014, halfpipe and slopestyle skiing events will be contested at the Olympics for the first time.*

1 of 3



A skier at 5. Twin-tip skis at 12. Sponsors at 15. Pro card at 17. CrossFit at 23. The Olympics at 24.

Freeskier A.J. Kemppainen grew up on skis. Raised in the ski-resort town of Ruka, Finland, Kemppainen has done most of his skiing under the dark sky in the wintertime. When he moved to Helsinki last summer, he found CrossFit Basement. He said CrossFit training helped prepare him physically and mentally, and he continues to do stretching and mobility work while competing.

This will be freeskiing's debut at the Winter Olympics, and Kemppainen will be front and center. Ranked among the top contenders for a medal, Kemppainen won a World Cup event in August in New Zealand. Now he's headed for Sochi, Russia.

"It's a dream come true to go there in my own sport," he said. "I'm very excited. It's so cool. I'm always watching moguls and snowboarding in the Olympics."

In addition to new events for biathletes and figure skaters, among others, the Sochi Olympics will boast two new events for freestyle skiers: slopestyle and halfpipe. Both events are extremely popular in the X Games and similar competitions, and they were added to the Sochi menu following the success of slopestyle and halfpipe snowboarding at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada.

Both competitions are judged events focusing on big air and tricks performed with "twin-tip" skis that allow the athlete to travel facing forward or backward. The slopestyle course at Sochi will be 635 m long, with rails and kickers (jumps) arranged over five descending levels. The Sochi halfpipe will feature 22-ft. walls, the largest ever in Olympic competition.

The repetitive jumping, landing and rotation in all planes is extremely taxing in both events. After bracing for takeoff, jumping as high as possible and performing complicated aerial acrobatics, athletes experience forces at landing that can be as great as those in a triple-body-weight back squat. And skiers have only seconds between tricks.

Kemppainen's CrossFit workouts have helped most with his endurance, he said.



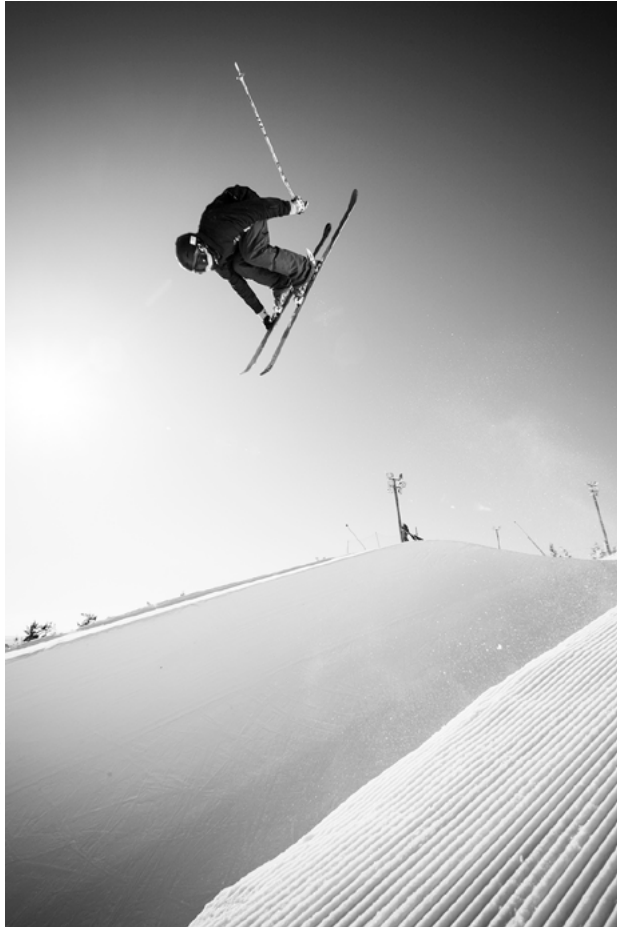
Ville-Petteri Mänttä/ville-petteri.com

Big tricks require a great deal of strength, power, agility and balance, making CrossFit an ideal training program for freestyle athletes.

"My basic endurance is better, and also I feel like the recovery time is a lot faster after skiing now," he said. "When you think of the mental side, in CrossFit you have to really push yourself, and it's sort of the same thing when you go skiing. When you have to try a trick for the first time and you're scared, it's not just physical."

Faster recovery time will help Kemppainen at the Olympics, where qualifying and final rounds occur with less rest than at World Cup events.

"Our competitions go usually two days: one for qualifying, one for final. In the Olympics, everything happens in the same day, so you have to have good endurance for that. I believe CrossFit will help me in that. I can ski the full day," he said.



Ville-Petteri Määttä/ville-petteri.com



In Sochi, Russia, Kemppainen will be take to the skies via a monster 22-ft. halfpipe.

As the world gathers around televisions to watch the world's best athletes, Kemppainen will enjoy the added support of the CrossFit community.

"Freeskiing and CrossFit are also sort of the same in that aspect: it's a very tight community. It's very important that you work out with your friends, but you go freeskiing usually with your friends, and that's the most important thing in both sports: a good group of people who push each other."

Kemppainen is set to compete on Feb. 18 in the halfpipe event. The finals will take place about three hours after the qualifying round. Exact times and a full schedule for the Olympic freeskiing competition can be found on the [Sochi Olympics website](#).



About the Author

Chris Cooper is a writer for CrossFit. He owns [CrossFit Catalyst](#) in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

World War Z

By imitating and escaping the undead, your kids will avoid becoming unfit.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

February 2014



Object

The zombies must catch the humans. The humans must escape the zombies.

Equipment

- 10-by-10-meter play area
- Sandbags, bumper plates, parallettes, crash mats, plyo boxes or any other easy-to-move objects

Set-up

1. Place the objects haphazardly around the play area. If possible, create safe spaces and structures where the humans can hide but the zombies cannot enter (e.g., a crash-mat tunnel or plyo-box mountain).
2. All the players must remove their shoes.
3. Divide class into two equal teams. One team becomes the zombies; the other becomes the humans.
4. This game can be played with four to 30 players.

Game Play

1. The zombies must try to tag the humans, but when doing so they have to walk like a zombie. At all times they have to drag one of their legs and place their same-side hand on their thigh. Their hand must remain in contact with their dragging leg and cannot move while shambling or tagging.
2. The zombies cannot climb over, under or through any of the objects in the play area.
3. The humans are free to run around or climb under, over or through any objects.
4. The humans can also hide in a safe place where zombies cannot get them, such as a crash-mat tunnel.
5. If a human is tagged, play stops and all players—both zombies and humans—must hold a plank position or complete another predetermined exercise, such as 5 push-ups or 10 squats.
6. Play resumes as soon as the exercise is complete.
7. When play resumes, the humans become the zombies, and the zombies become the humans.

Options

Advanced version:

The humans must carry a medicine ball and the zombies must carry a light dumbbell in their “dead” hand.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

WINTER OLYMPICS SUPPLEMENT

Lose the Luge?

A total of 98 events were contested at the Olympic Games, and avid viewer Emily Beers wonders if the herd should be thinned to focus on quality rather than quantity.



Beers and Shots

By Emily Beers

February 2014



© Rolf Kosecki/Corbis

Biathlon goes 10 for 10: cardiorespiratory endurance, stamina, strength, speed, power, flexibility, coordination, balance, agility and accuracy.

1 of 4



We've all had that Winter Olympics moment: you're watching the high-flying aerials or a game-winning shot in overtime. Then coverage shifts to curling, and the wind is knocked out of your sails as you start looking for something else to watch.

Some sports just don't warrant a flower at the metaphorical Olympic rose ceremony. It's nothing personal. Curling is indeed a fine pastime, hobby or leisure activity, especially if yelling at a slow-moving rock is your thing. But an Olympic sport? That's simply hard to support.

Curling feels like a step away from watching your grandparents play shuffleboard at the local community center. While a productive activity for the 70-plus crowd, an Olympic sport it is not.

And if we're going to call out curling, it's worth taking a look at the rest of the Olympic lineup for a few disciplines we could do without in four years' time.

Olympic Requirements

Defining sport is actually quite challenging, and it's easy to criticize almost any sport for its shortcomings. CrossFit—a relatively new sport—certainly has its share of critics even though it's supported by a concise definition of fitness.

Whatever your definition, few would disagree that sports should require incredible athletic ability and mental toughness—two features that are sometimes lacking in at least a handful of today's Olympic sports.

Becoming an Olympic sport is a laborious process in which the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has the final decision. To be considered for inclusion, a winter sport must be practiced in a large number of countries, but to a certain degree it comes down to politics: The sport must have an organized international federation in place, and representatives of the sport must put forth a strong campaign to convince the IOC to include the sport at the Olympics.

At times it seems almost any sport—even shuffleboard on ice and glorified tobogganing—can become part of the Olympic Games, though we've dodged some bullets when "demonstration sports" such as speed skiing (1992) and ski ballet (1988 and 1992) were not invited to become an official part of the Games.

But still, there are some duds, and I think it's time the IOC takes into account the real physical, mental and logistical components of each sport before the run is set for the 2018 Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Proposed Requirements for Olympic Sports

Seven-of-10 Rule

I propose that a minimum of seven out of CrossFit's 10 general physical skills—cardiorespiratory endurance, stamina, strength, speed, power, flexibility, coordination, balance, agility and accuracy—should be required in all Olympic sports.

Quads Before Lungs

The ratio of yelling to physical exertion must favor physical exertion. This would eliminate curling. During a curling match, the skip has a greater chance of losing his or her voice than of pulling a quad.

Mandatory Use of Posterior Chain

The majority of the sport should be done in some sort of recognized athletic stance. Sitting, let alone lying down, while performing the sport should be kept to a minimum, thus eliminating all sliding sports—bobsled, luge, skeleton—among others. Perhaps these sports could be trimmed so the competition involves only the start, in which the athletes are working hard, thereby eliminating the portions mainly showcasing the power of gravity.

No Pity Sports

Sports created to help less gifted athletes should be eliminated. Ice dance is a prime example. Ice dancers pretty much all started off as figure skaters, but when they realized they didn't have the athleticism—the speed, power or jumping ability—necessary to be elite figure skaters, they tried their hand at ice dance, in which they can "twizzle" their way to the Olympic Games.

No Made-Up Sports or Events

In Sochi, team figure skating was added for the first time, and it's essentially just a way to provide another medal opportunity for figure skaters. The two-man luge is another perfect example; it's the same as the regular luge event, except one man gets squished. And team luge relay? Really?

Objectivity Only

The winner should not be decided based on judges' opinions. Again, ice dance comes to mind. Even the expert commentators on national television admitted the gold medal in Sochi was a toss-up between Americans Charlie White and Meryl Davis and Canadians Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue. In the end, Davis and White were essentially awarded the gold based on little more than personal preference.

Judging in figure skating has been questioned on many occasions. One famous scandal marred the pairs competition at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. Russians Anton Sikharulidze and Elena Berezhnaya were originally awarded the gold, while Canadians Jamie Salé and David Pelletier won the silver, but once a judging conspiracy was exposed, both pairs were eventually—and awkwardly—given gold medals.

The scoring system was revamped after 2002, but the French paper *L'Equipe* still published allegations of collusion between the Russian and American judges in Sochi to trade gold in the team and pairs competitions for gold in the ice-dance event. After the women's event was won by Russia's Adelina Sotnikova and not Korea's Yuna

Kim, more than 2 million people signed a petition calling for an investigation into the judging. The number was still climbing at press time.

Bottom line: too many figure-skating scandals have scarred too many Olympic Games. And subjective judging always leaves room for controversy and questions in any sport.

Comparative Advantage

In economics, countries should trade where they have a comparative advantage, and the same principle should be employed when considering sports. In other words, if one gender is more entertaining to watch than the other gender, the less crowd-pleasing gender should be removed from the playing field. This would, in my opinion, eliminate women's hockey and men's figure skating.

While this might seem like a sexist suggestion, the idea here is simply to maximize entertainment value—and both men's and women's sports are on the chopping block.

Comparative advantage can also be applied to different events. After allegations of sexism when women's ski jumping was left out of the 2010 Games, the sport was contested by females at the Olympics for the first time in



© Wang Lili/xinhua Press/Corbis

Emily Beers might give curling a no-rep as a sport, but at least Wang Bingyu definitely hits depth in this mid-game squat.

© MITCHELL LAYTON/NewSport/Corbis



A 2002 Olympics judging fiasco created this awkward photo in which everybody is a winner.

Sochi; however, the better decision might have been to eliminate ski jumping all together due to the comparative advantage held by freestyle skiing. Aerial skiers—who flip and turn in the air—can do everything ski jumpers can do, and they do so in a much more entertaining manner.

What's In and What's Out

Due to violations of the criteria above, the sports to be eliminated from the Winter Olympic Games are as follows:

1. Curling
2. Two-man luge
3. Ice dance

On the flip side, the best sports of the Winter Olympic Games are as follows:

1. Downhill skiing—With its raw athleticism and pure speed, downhill skiing is both easy to understand and easy to appreciate—as well as easy to measure. A classic Olympic sport, downhill skiing is beautiful in its simplicity and isn't scarred by subjective and complicated scoring systems that govern many of the newer judged ski and snowboard events, including halfpipe and slopestyle.
2. Men's hockey—Hockey requires almost all of the 10 general physical skills. Athletes are fast, strong, powerful and highly skilled, and the nature of the sport requires athletes to think and react at high speed. Not to mention, hockey is one of the most watched sports at every Winter Olympic Games.

3. Biathlon—Biathlon is perhaps the most underappreciated Winter Olympics sport. With cross-country skiing and shooting components, it's a beautiful physical and mental challenge. The precision of shooting a rifle is balanced by the extreme physical demands of cross-country skiing, and there's nothing subjective about the sport. You either hit the targets or you don't, and the first one across the line wins. Biathlon, despite its low profile, is the quiet king of the Winter Olympic Games.



About the Author

*Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor. She competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team, and she finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012. In 2013, she finished second in the Open in Canada West.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Greek and the Games

Epictetus never did Karen or Fran, but he definitely would have understood your determination to get through the many tests of the CrossFit Games Open.

By Jane Drexler

February 2014



Cheryl Boatman

*"Let others practice lawsuits, others study problems, others syllogisms; here you practice how to die, how to be enchained, how to be racked, how to be exiled." —Epictetus, **The Discourses***

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Joseph Rodriguez



When facing 150 wall-ball shots, calm determination might be the best asset of all.

The 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games Open is here, and we are about to be tested again.

The Open has always fulfilled its promise to push us to our limits and has called on us to dig deep and overcome pain and frustration. If you need a good example, look no further than Open Workout 13.3.

As many reps as possible in 12 minutes of:

150 wall-ball shots
90 double-unders
30 muscle-ups

The days preceding that workout were riddled with anxiety for me and many others. I remember the dread I felt knowing full well how much 150 wall-ball shots would hurt. I remember my disappointment knowing that I couldn't even get to the "fun stuff"—the skill-based double-unders and muscle-ups—until I finished every single wall-ball rep. And I remember the frustration at realizing we had already suffered through this workout: 13.3 was a repeat of 12.4.

For all of us who had these and similar thoughts, 13.3 screwed with our heads.

I spent the better part of a week trying to wrap my mind around the injustice of it all. My focus was on the "why?"—on the frustration—and not on the task at hand, and my first attempt at 13.3 showed it: I didn't even finish the wall balls before time ran out.

It was only after that first attempt that I understood what 13.3 was really about. The workout's real purpose was to test whether or not you could deal with mental torture—of grueling repetition, of demoralizing muscle burn, and of frustration and despair—and stay calm, focused and self-contained as you worked through the pain.

That was the test of 13.3.

And this unstated test is what makes 13.3 the perfect workout to introduce Epictetus' philosophy of stoicism, and to illustrate how CrossFit's tests of "fitness" are really, at their root, meant to test—and cultivate—a stoic character.

A Stoic Character

Most people know what it means to describe others as “stoic.” It means they accept their circumstance without emotional protest, without railing at the wind. They remain steadfast and self-contained, even in the face of harsh struggle. We’ve seen people remain stoic: the soldier standing for her 10th hour in the rain, the mother holding her child’s hand in the hospital. To be stoic is to stay calm, focused and strong while the world is crumbling around you.

Stoicism, then, is a philosophy focused on cultivating a self that can react stoically, and its proponents came from all walks of life: a homeless man, a Roman emperor and, our main focus, Epictetus, a former tortured slave.

While Epictetus didn’t write anything down, his student did and collected Epictetus’ works into *The Discourses* (1) as well as into a little book of stoic aphorisms called *The Enchiridion* (2) (literally “little handbook”), which was designed to be carried by soldiers heading into the field.

Interestingly, Vice Adm. James Bond Stockdale famously carried the memory of his copy of *The Enchiridion* into Vietnam nearly 2,000 years later, and it sustained him for seven years as a tortured prisoner of war (3,4,5).

The starting point for Epictetus and other stoics is that nearly every damn thing is out of your control—your success, your circumstance, the person in the car behind you, earthquakes, whether you pay your bills on time, whether you get a promotion, whether you lose a finger, etc. “It’s just not up to you,” says the stoic. What’s going to happen is going to happen. And you can’t control that.

Because many of us live in a culture that is grounded on the concepts of control, autonomy and self-determination, this kind of strong fatalism may be difficult to fathom, let alone agree with. But one need not walk with Epictetus to that strongest articulation of fatalism to understand that, really, what matters to the stoic is simply that we never forget this central characteristic of our lives:

They are fragile.



Maggie Selzer

“Everything has two handles, one by which it may be borne, one by which it cannot be borne.” —Epictetus

Everything is fragile. What we have now can be lost in an instant: our jobs, our home, our loved ones, our limbs, our schedules, our plans, our ranking on the leaderboard. Lost in an instant. In our day-to-day lives, we may move through the world as if we can affect such things with our wills, but in the final analysis, that only works until it doesn't anymore—until an accident or unforeseen encounter or Dave Castro's pulling of our weakest movement out of the hopper. We cannot control these things, and that's the stoic's foundational lesson.

The goal, then, is to figure out how to move through this world of fragility—of unknowns and unknowables—with an eye on the one thing we can control: our inner self. We can control how we react. We can control how we feel. We can control our dignity and character. We can protect the integrity of our soul.

For the stoic, the central aim of our life's efforts, then, is to cultivate that inner life—our mental fortitude—so that when we are faced with situations that we cannot control or foresee, we are able to choose our response. What matters—and the more dire and tragic the circumstance, the more it matters—is our ability to respond in ways that keep our soul intact. What matters is that we find an internal compass by which we can navigate when the world seems to be falling apart and we are faced with challenge, disappointment, torture or tragedy.

CrossFit as Stoicism

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

—William Ernest Henley, *Invictus*

It is no accident that Henley's *Invictus* resonates so profoundly with many CrossFit athletes. There are too many of us who have suffered greatly. There are so many of us who strive to feel strong, capable and whole.

It is not lost on me that I am writing this after my sister lost her deepest love in a falling accident five months ago, and after my friend Susan lost her friend Glen. It is not lost on me that each Hero WOD on CrossFit.com is connected to a host of people who are grieving a fallen warrior, and that each CrossFit athlete battles different demons every day.

And it is not lost on me that I am writing of a *fitness program*—about wall-ball shots—in the context of suffering so deep that it calls into question the possibility



Cheryl Boatman

The CrossFit stoic cultivates mental strength for moments when physical strength fails.

of writing about anything real ever again. But I also believe there is some truth and meaning in the message I have seen echoed in comments to CrossFit athletes who have suffered great loss or burden:

This is what you have been training for.

CrossFit—even while it looks entirely physical—is built on the recognition that our minds matter more than our bodies.

As we face each challenge, we express our core ambition, strength and doggedness despite our physical limitations. We scale to a lower weight or modify pull-ups with a band. If our heel is injured, we do squats instead of box jumps. If our leg is broken, or our arm amputated, we figure out modifications to get our work done. Because we know what matters in those moments is not the specific movement we are doing but only that we keep moving, that we keep trying, that we keep expressing our willingness to rise to a challenge and push ourselves on.



Julie Miller

Accepting adversity is often the first step in overcoming it.

CrossFit, like Epictetus in *The Enchiridion*, recognizes “illness is an impediment of the body, but not of the will Lameness is an impediment to the leg, not of the will. ... Say this to yourself of every accident that befalls you; for you will find it an impediment to something else, not to yourself.”

So, when we say CrossFit prepares us for the unknown and unknowable, it is, of course, true that we are trying to prepare our bodies as best we can to respond effectively in physical situations. But we are also learning how to respond mentally. We are learning how to respond with mental fortitude and grace despite our inability to know what we will face.

What we learn in CrossFit directly mirrors Epictetus’ description in his *Discourses* of what made his school of stoicism different from any other educational pursuit: “Let others practice lawsuits, others study problems, others syllogisms; here you practice how to die, how to be enchained, how to be racked, how to be exiled.”

For Stockdale and other soldiers who carried Epictetus’ little handbook, this was a literal lesson: with these words and practices, you learn how to stand in the face of death or torture while maintaining the integrity of your soul.

Similarly, CrossFit offers that same literal lesson—of perseverance, steadfastness and self-containment—for many soldiers and service professionals who face their own mortal dangers each day. But it also offers to others—the mothers, doctors, construction workers, professors—the same lesson, though perhaps more metaphorically.

Each time I face a workout, especially one like 13.3, I am learning how to be racked—in pain, in disappointment—and to face the limits of my body and the anger those limits cause me. I am forced to acknowledge the limits of my mental strength and the responsibility I bear to target those mental weak spots that cause self-doubt, anger and resentment.

With each excruciating wall-ball shot, I am called on to take to heart Epictetus’ lesson that the only way to make

it through a devastating challenge without internally crumbling is to be present in it, to be focused and to remember the words, "Whatever occasion befalls you ... turn around and look into yourself to see what power you have to make use of it."

CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman himself has said, "The greatest adaptation to CrossFit takes place between the ears."

"Everything Has Two Handles"

For Epictetus, how we take on the challenges we encounter makes a big difference as to whether we are able to bear them, and it is up to us to choose the approach we can manage.

In *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus said, "Everything has two handles, one by which it may be borne, one by which it cannot be borne. If your brother has done wrong, don't grasp this by the 'wrongdoing' handle—it can't be borne by that one—but by the 'brother,' the 'brought-up-together' handle, and thereby you will be able to bear it."

It might be tempting to imagine that Epictetus is offering a practical guide. After all, CrossFit athletes are well versed in the practice of strategizing how to make workouts bearable. Consider Murph. We are always testing it out: "Can I save a minute if I do 20 rounds of Cindy, or can I get a better time by breaking up the reps another way?" Or consider Open Workout 13.3: "Should I go for max wall-ball reps in the first set or should I pace it out?"

In short, we seek the bearable handle for workouts all the time. We figure out how we will take on our burdens every time we look at the whiteboard. We know there is an angle—a handle—that will make it bearable. "There must be," we say.

I certainly do not discount the benefit of approaching workouts with strategies, but the stoic lesson helps me to see strategizing as only the smallest part of finding the right "handle."

The search for the bearable handle is not merely a practical search, not a search for a way to "make it easier." Rather, the bearable handle is internally sought by recognizing that, though there is no making it easier, there is a way to make it through—not by trying to avoid the difficulty but by accepting that it will hurt, it will be hard and it will take everything in you, including your very soul, to keep going.

Last spring, I began taking this stoic lesson to heart as I approached a second attempt at 13.3. I knew where I must look for the handle on it: I changed nothing but my mindset for my second attempt. I accepted, without trying to find a path of avoidance, that it would be monumentally difficult. And I stopped fighting against myself and the world. I only focused on making my inner self my ally.

As I dropped the medicine ball in exhaustion between each of my sets to 150 reps, I focused on these words my friend Aubrey had given me:

"Take a deep breath, organize yourself, focus, and now ... back to it."

That's the stoic lesson.

Welcome to the 2014 Open.



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About the Author

Jane Drexler is associate professor of philosophy at Salt Lake Community College and holds a CrossFit Level 1 certificate. She's published essays in several books and professional journals, primarily on political theory and ethics. At 44, her Fran time is an awesomely average 7:00. Her clean-and-jerk max hovers around 135. She scored 153 on 12.4, 134 on 13.3 (Take 1) and 165 on 13.3 (Take 2).