

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit: Defending the Name

CrossFit Inc. protects its trademarks in defense of more than 7,000 affiliates worldwide.

By Dale Saran

October 2013



All: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Only selected pieces of equipment bear the CrossFit name; most of the gear is used at the CrossFit Games.

More than 7,000 affiliates license the CrossFit name worldwide, and it's the goal of CrossFit HQ to aggressively defend those affiliates, their owners, their employees and their members by ensuring the CrossFit name is used only when appropriate. By doing so, CrossFit Inc. ensures that affiliates "get what they pay for": use of a valuable trademark and the assurance that the mark's owner will stand up to protect that mark from those who might abuse it.

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This guide is intended to help our affiliates, our community, our trainers, and the businesses that have sprung up around and in support of the CrossFit brand better understand how and when they may use CrossFit Inc.'s trademarks.

CrossFit Inc. leads the fight and regularly goes to battle in court to protect its trademarks and the affiliates who license them, but members of the community can help. Often, well-intentioned but misinformed affiliate owners, trainers and supporters create problems in addition to the ones brought about by those who steal and abuse the CrossFit name with malice. This guide complements the CrossFit Affiliate Agreement and [Level 1 Trainer License Agreement](#) and presents the information in plain language.

Our goal isn't to reiterate the Lanham Act (15 USC §1051 et seq.), but we've included some references to specific language where necessary and appropriate for clarity of our position. The reader should understand the normal legal caveats: this isn't a comprehensive statement of CrossFit Inc.'s rights, nor should it be seen as a binding contract. If you think there are changes or ways to make all this work better, please do not hesitate to send an email with suggestions to legalsupport@crossfit.com.



Coach Greg Glassman has always believed free markets will reward an excellent product or service with financial success.

CrossFit Inc. leads the fight and regularly goes to battle in court to protect its trademarks and the affiliates who license them.

Affiliates

CrossFit affiliates are the cornerstone of the CrossFit movement. They are independent business owners who have met certain requirements to become licensees of the CrossFit name. Importantly, CrossFit licenses its name to individual Level 1 trainers, not to corporations, other business entities or other non-persons (with very limited exceptions)(1). As a result, we maintain a direct and personal relationship with our affiliate owners.

The license agreement sets forth under what circumstances affiliates may use the CrossFit trademarks. It is worth stating that the purpose of the entire affiliate program is to spread the CrossFit methodology while simultaneously professionalizing the trainer. Affiliates are and should be "centers of training excellence." The affiliate owner's charter is to provide high-quality, professional instruction and advice to his or her clients based upon the knowledge gained from the Level 1 Seminar, supplemented by personal experience, additional offerings from CrossFit Inc. (such as specialty seminars) and his or her own self-education.

Adhering to this charter and using the CrossFit name as set out in the CrossFit Affiliate Agreement should provide more than adequate personal and business income to anyone willing to work hard and pursue excellence.

The affiliate license is not permission to use the popularity of the CrossFit trademarks for personal business ventures under the guise of being an affiliate. To wit, if you want to be a software developer, T-shirt manufacturer, novelist, TV producer, etc., then you should create your own business with its own name. None of these entrepreneurial desires has anything to do with being an affiliate owner or using the CrossFit name for financial gain. **The license to use the CrossFit trademarks is confined to running your center of training excellence and does not extend to other business ventures.**

Please don't use CrossFit's trademark for other purposes. For avoidance of confusion, please do not try to stretch the license agreement—or your other ventures—into somehow being essential for your CrossFit affiliate.

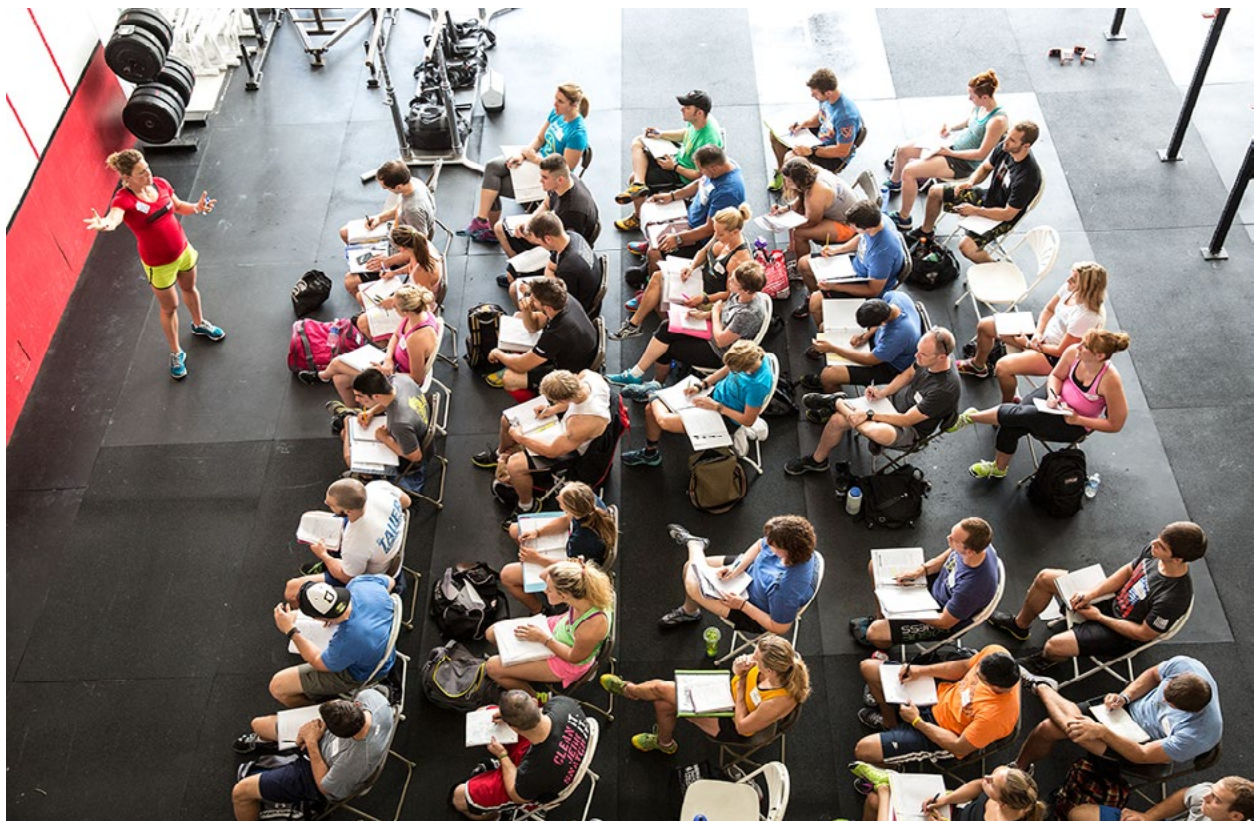
CrossFit is in the business of training, so we license the name for that purpose only and protect it to ensure it is associated with training only.

To quote Coach Glassman: "If you decide to have a barbecue on a Saturday for your affiliate and collect \$10 from everyone to defray the cost for burgers and beer, and you advertise your affiliate weekend barbecue, no

one cares. This is an essential part of being an affiliate and building your community. At the point that you are collecting \$100 and people have to call ahead for seating, you're not an affiliate anymore; you're a restaurateur."

In other words, at some point the degree of departure becomes so great that it becomes a completely different venture altogether. The litmus test might be that if you have to convince yourself you still haven't "crossed the line," you probably have. Call or email us when in doubt. In this case, asking permission is way better than trying to ask for forgiveness. You don't want to breach or completely void your agreement over the "CrossFit Affiliate X Hamburger Stand" at your box.

CrossFit is not in the business of supplements, food, equipment and so on. We are in the business of training, so we license the name for that purpose only and protect it to ensure it is associated with training only. In that manner, all affiliates benefit from the value of the trademark.



CrossFit is in the business of professionalizing the trainer, and Level 1 Seminars are one part of that effort.



Ultimately, CrossFit is about creating better movement and improving fitness.

Businesses

Hundreds of businesses have sprung up to support the needs of the CrossFit world and to service the affiliates, the athletes, the Level 1 trainers and their clients, and the CrossFit community as a whole. CrossFit Inc. ardently supports free markets and is founded upon a belief that consumers are better served when we all pursue our own ends and let markets decide whether a product is useful for the community through free exchange of goods, services, currency and capital.

As a starting point, the would-be entrepreneur in the CrossFit ecosystem should understand that if he or she has a great service or product to offer, CrossFit Inc. does not need to make it mandatory for affiliates to obtain that service or product. In fact, a request that CrossFit HQ sign some agreement whereby a particular product or service becomes the official choice for CrossFit affiliates will almost certainly be met with a resounding “no.” Such a request immediately tells us and the community that the prospective businessperson is trying to use CrossFit HQ’s status to mandate the item’s use rather than letting

affiliate owners and free markets tell us all whether the goods or services are truly desirable, properly priced and of sufficient quality in order to survive on their own merits.

CrossFit Inc. will not make your product/service the preferred item of CrossFit or CrossFit affiliates, and from this statement (and the Lanham Act) flow most of the subsequent guidelines.

For example, using the tagline for your product “made by CrossFitters for CrossFitters” is an obvious attempt to tell the consumer that you’re a member of this community and share the same values, and therefore you know and appreciate what CrossFit affiliates or athletes (i.e., consumers) need. The problem is that these kinds of uses devalue the CrossFit mark and threaten to make the mark generic.

There are a multitude of ways to make it clear to the community that you are indeed “one of us” and that you appreciate its needs. You should notice there is now an entire lexicon of association that infringes on no trademarks but raises the banner for all to see. Using non-trademarked

terms such as “WOD” or “box” or other vocabulary in the lingua franca of CrossFit will undoubtedly send the desired message. You simply don’t need to use the CrossFit mark to succeed if you truly have a great product or service (2).

Please understand, losing money or making very little money is not a justification to ignore trademark laws.

A few more specific points are worth emphasizing on their own.

First, it bears stating that the Lanham Act (the federal act in the United States that governs trademarks) governs the use of brands/marks in commerce, and most common law countries have similar legislation. “In commerce” is highlighted to address a few related issues that come up often enough to justify discussion: “non-profit” use and usage justified because of very low profit levels or outright losses.

The term “non-profit” is thrown around so often that most people have forgotten to what the words actually refer. Certain business entities, particularly charitable ones, are governed by §501(c) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. That section speaks of “non-profit” entities and their tax-exempt status under the Tax Code. This has nothing to do with CrossFit Inc. If your endeavor enjoys a special tax status as a result of political decisions in Congress, that does not allow you to use other people’s trademarks to generate revenue. Use of the term “non-profit” makes it sound as if you are not involved in commerce, but the Internal Revenue Service has a special status to explain why these endeavors don’t have to pay taxes on income—conclusive proof that non-profits are, in fact, in commerce. Therefore, the Lanham Act applies.

Businesses that don’t make much money or that lose money are still very much engaged in commerce, and the Lanham Act also applies. Please understand, losing money or making very little money is not a justification to ignore trademark laws.



Level 1 CrossFit trainers can list their credentials, but affiliation is required to advertise “CrossFit classes.”

Click-through ads on a web page that seek to drive traffic to it using CrossFit’s trademark are most assuredly signs that an entity is engaged in commerce. Use of CrossFit’s trademark on a site in order to score higher in search rankings and then sell an unrelated product is also trademark infringement. The de minimus amounts go only to the damages (or value of the case), but they do not remove it from the ambit of trademark infringement.

Use of “CrossFit Games” or associated logos to describe a local competition, repeated use of the word “CrossFit” to describe a product’s utility or a service’s benefits, creation of email addresses that say “Affiliate HQ” or the like and associated attempts to portray an entity as being the “official provider to affiliates” in a mass spam email, and pervasive use of the word “CrossFit” on social media supporting an unaffiliated gym all send only one message: the entity offers CrossFit training. All of the above examples are varying forms of trademark infringement.

A brief list for reference:

- Don't buy a domain name that includes CrossFit, XFit or other confusingly similar versions of the mark unless you would like to find yourself the subject of a federal lawsuit (3).
- Don't litter your website with "CrossFit"—including in tab titles, page titles, HTML code, etc. Blaming a rogue web designer or claiming "nominative use" will not justify usage.
- Don't use CrossFit as a category of goods or services; that earns an almost automatic lawsuit because it threatens the mark in two ways: as both infringement and genericide. For example, there is no such thing as "CrossFit equipment." This equipment has always been sold categorically as "fitness equipment," "gym equipment" or the like. The only equipment that is CrossFit Equipment—in capitals—will have our name on the side and will likely be used for the CrossFit Games or other specific event (for more info on sports, see below). This applies with equal force to specific items (kettlebells, ropes, etc.) and other categories including magazines, supplements, software, business seminars and so on. CrossFit is a brand of fitness service; if CrossFit decides to go into those other trademark classes, it will be clear to everyone that we are there.
- Don't use a hyphen or a space and claim it makes "Cross-Fit" a different word.
- Don't call a competing brand of fitness services "CrossFit-style" workouts. The term has no meaning other than to tell people you are trying to use the CrossFit trademark to confuse the unknowing fitness public that you have CrossFit in your gym. CrossFit workouts are free and publicly available and can be performed anywhere without permission. However, the trademarked CrossFit name protects and identifies our affiliates and our brand of fitness services. You can do Fran anywhere at any time, but only a license from CrossFit Inc. grants permission to use the name in commerce. As stated above, this is how we protect our affiliates.

CrossFit and Sport

The CrossFit Games are an athletic event, a sporting event, but CrossFit itself is a fitness program. Because CrossFit is a measurable fitness program, we can "compete" every time

we work out: using a clock, a measured load or a rep count within a time limit. The CrossFit Games are the proving grounds for any serious athlete who has a claim to being fitter than anyone else.

This topic has been covered in the April 18, 2013, *CrossFit Journal* article [What's in a Name?](#), but it warrants additional review. The CrossFit Games are the annual event at which we crown the Fittest Man, Woman and Team on Earth. The CrossFit Games are a natural outgrowth of CrossFit's unique approach to fitness. When CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman included in his program a definition of fitness that lent itself to precise and accurate measurement, the Games were an inevitable byproduct.

The "Sport of Fitness" is, in this regard, our challenge to the world to produce an athlete with a different methodology that can produce fitter humans. If that happens, we'll immediately change CrossFit. That attitude and charter should make it clear that CrossFit is not a "sport" in any traditional definition of the word. The fitness methodology and company name preceded the competition, which has its origins in the dirt of Aromas in Dave Castro's parents' backyard. Its worldwide growth has changed only its scale but not the nature of the endeavor. Nor has it changed what CrossFit is.



Vendors are encouraged to support the CrossFit community, but CrossFit Inc. will let that community determine the success or failure of a product or service.

In short, only the CrossFit Games and other events officially sanctioned by CrossFit Inc. are “CrossFit competitions.” All other events are fitness competitions, throwdowns and so on. Affiliates may certainly have inter-affiliate local competitions and events—that is all to the good—but two things about naming them: first, make it clear that they

aren’t in any way *the* CrossFit Games (or Regional competitions or the Open), and second, make it clear that they are events run by CrossFit affiliates. CrossFit affiliates’ use of the word “CrossFit” isn’t a threat to the brand because they are licensees of CrossFit Inc.; however, the use of the term “CrossFit competitions” threatens genericide over the long haul. Avoid it, affiliates, lest “CrossFit-style competitions” by outsiders take your business.

The trademarked CrossFit name protects and identifies our affiliates and our brand of fitness services.

Trainers

A final note for Level 1 trainers: you enjoy a very limited license to use the CrossFit trademark. You clicked on the agreement when you registered for the Level 1, and it is presented in plain language in the [Training Guide](#). This limited license allows you to use the CrossFit trademark as you would any other credential; that is, you may put “CrossFit Level 1 Trainer” or something similar after your name on a business card, resume, curriculum vitae or biography and qualifications page on your website. That’s it.



Hosts of companies have found ways to adhere to trademark laws while still associating themselves with the CrossFit community.



"CrossFit" defines a very specific fitness program, and CrossFit Inc. protects the mark to support more than 7,000 licensed affiliates worldwide.

The qualification does not allow you to send out flyers or advertise fitness classes "taught by CrossFit L1 Trainers." Even if this is a true statement, the initial interest you're creating in the classes is centered around an advertisement using our trademark, and if you're not a licensed affiliate, you're infringing on the brand.

Completion of the course gives one all the information needed to begin the process of training people using CrossFit's methodology or to apply for affiliation and complete all the necessary requirements to become a member of the CrossFit family of affiliates.

Only affiliation grants one the right to use the CrossFit trademark in advertising for fitness services.

Protecting Affiliates

We are constantly looking for ways to remain vigilant in protecting and growing the brand for the benefit of our affiliates and the select group of business partners to whom we license the mark. At the heart of the CrossFit revolution is the name: it is how we identify ourselves, our community and our culture, and we will protect it in the

interests of all the licensed affiliates around the world. We appreciate your help, support and leadership in doing so.

Good luck in your fitness journey, and thank you for being a part of this community.

Notes

1. CrossFit Inc. has and continues to license the name to certain non-commercial affiliates, such as military units, law-enforcement departments and universities/schools/educational institutions. In these circumstances, we may license to an entity, such as a municipality, if there is a fit with the long-term vision of CrossFit Inc.
2. We have found a virtually inverse correlation between the quality of a product and the magnitude of a business owner's claimed need to use CrossFit's intellectual property in HTML metatags and search-engine ad campaigns or elsewhere on his or her website.
3. CrossFit won a US\$100,000 court judgment against T&M Enterprises Inc. in 2011. *See CrossFit, Inc. v. Moore et al.*, Case No. 2:11-cv-01061-JLR (2011) (\$100K judgment against T&M, Inc. for buying more than 180 domains to re-sell). CrossFit has also been successful in other cybersquatting cases and UDRP actions: *see CrossFit, Inc. v. Results Plus Personal Training Inc.* (UDRP Claim Number: FA1305001498576; 2013 decision in favor of CrossFit against domain squatter who registered 113 domains containing the CrossFit mark); *CrossFit, Inc. v. Duza, LLC*, et al., (Case No. 1:13-cv-20702-JLK; 2013 permanent injunction and stipulated judgment against cybersquatter); and *CrossFit, Inc. v. Personal Power Training, et al.*, (Case No. 12-cv-01746-PHX-SRB; 2013 judgment and permanent injunction against cybersquatter).



About the Author

Dale Saran is CrossFit HQ's General Counsel. CrossFit Inc.'s Legal Team are the "Defenders of the Faithful."

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

What Really Matters to Pat Sherwood

Road warrior leaves home with seven pairs of socks and discovers one of life's great secrets.

By Pat Sherwood

October 2013



Ian Wittenber

Today is my 42nd day away from home and living on a motorcycle. Here's a rough list of everything I have:

- 7 pairs of socks
- 7 T-shirts, 2 pairs of quick-dry lightweight long pants
- 1 pair of jeans (for when I need to look fancy)
- 2 pairs of workout shorts, wrist wraps, a jump rope (broken)
- 1 thermal underwear top, 1 fleece jacket
- Mesh bag to air out dirty clothes on the bike
- Riding boots, flip-flops, Nanos 2.0
- Riding jacket with zip-out liner and rain gear
- Helmet and CrossFit ball cap
- Earplugs
- Sunglasses and hard case
- Gloves
- Toiletry kit
- Camping gear (tent, ground pad, sleeping bag, pillow)
- Folding shovel, machete, tool kit and service manual for the bikes
- Paper maps
- Digital watch and GPS (which doesn't work)
- Spare tire tubes, patch kit and air pump
- WD-40, sunscreen, bug repellent
- Macbook Air, iPad, iPhone and necessary cables and plug adapters for various countries
- Headlamp, spare batteries, Leatherman tool, spare key, two lighters
- Passport and required documents
- Wallet

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That's everything I've been using to support my life since starting this trip. Every now and then, I think about all the stuff—the tons of stuff—I have filling my house and garage at home in Santa Cruz, Calif., and how I have not needed any of it to live and be happy in recent weeks.

What the hell is the point of all the crap I own? I have wanted for nothing on this trip. (OK, well ... Ian Wittenber is great, but having a cool chick on the back of my bike would be pretty sweet.)

I think far too many of us in the U.S., myself included, are so busy working ourselves into an early grave that we don't take the time to truly live and have rich experiences. So, instead of filling our lives with experiences, we fill them with possessions and needless junk. We are concerned with getting the new car, the fancy watch, the latest iPhone, the new tile in the kitchen, etc. Those items simply distract us and give the illusion of happiness until the shine of whatever we bought wears off ... and then we'll need to go buy something else.

One cannot buy enough possessions to fill the holes in life that should be filled with experiences. The amount of money spent over the course of a year, or a lifetime, on things we don't really need is staggering. Take that money each year and go live. Go do something so cool you won't be able to stop talking about it for years to come.

Forty-two days in, I can honestly say I'm not homesick. On our worst days—when nothing has gone right, when we've been hopelessly lost, broken down in the middle of nowhere or soaked to the bone freezing to death in a cold rain—I've never wished that I was back in the comfort and security of my house. Hell, no. Don't get me wrong: I miss my friends. I wish they were here sharing these experiences with me. However, I don't miss the life I left behind.

There's a wonderful and refreshing priority shift taking place in my life. When I was back home living my "normal" life, my precious time was occupied with dumb shit.

Here's an example: we were somewhere in southern Mexico approaching Guatemala and had pulled over for a map check. I turned on my phone to double-check the paper map. Yup, we were on the right road. While I had the Internet up, I checked Twitter to see what was going on in the rest of the world. A Twitter war was raging about whether high-rep Oly lifting was the spawn of Satan or beneficial to fitness. I hate to admit this, but standing on the side of the road, iPhone in hand, I got sucked into the

battle for a few minutes. I was genuinely pissed off about some of the comments, so I wrote a comment or two, and I could feel myself getting worked up. Then I realized what I was doing, immediately stopped following the thread and shut my phone off.

The whole situation hit me like a ton of bricks. Since beginning the trip, my days have been occupied with important questions and new priorities: are we in the right country? On the right road? Where are we going to eat? Where are we going to sleep? How long can we ride without running out of gas and getting stranded? Are we in an area with a heavy drug-cartel presence? What is the kidnapping risk in the upcoming city? Is it too dangerous to ride at night? Will the psychotic traffic kill us? Why doesn't my ATM or Visa card work? Damn, I have no local currency! Try not to get swindled at border crossings. Is that rain? Shit, yes, it's rain.

Standing on that road, scanning Twitter, I immediately realized if I was back in Santa Cruz living my normal life, that particular battle likely would have occupied a decent chunk of my day. I felt like a profound loser for even giving a shit. What a terrible use of my time.

In that moment, I decided to make a concerted effort to give priority to the things in life that are actually worth my attention and effort. I highly doubt that as I lie on my deathbed I will say, "Man, I wish I had gotten more involved in that Twitter battle and spent less time outside truly living."

The list of things I thought I needed to be happy has gotten shorter over the past weeks. I am traveling lighter than I ever thought I could.

What are you carrying on your journey?



About the Author

Pat Sherwood works for CrossFit as a flowmaster and member of the Media Team. He's done just under 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Stoppage of Play

Concussions can have serious short- and long-term consequences. So why do athletes risk brain damage by returning to play too early?

By Chris Cooper

October 2013



Richard Lautens/ZUMA Press/Corbis

Members of a hockey team wear special concussion-monitoring helmets as part of a University of Toronto study.

A little knock on the head can lead to big trouble, though the exact nature of the trouble has yet to be determined. Regardless, it's clear that there are significant problems associated with slamming the brain into the skull.

At present, former athletes are coming clean about depression, memory loss, anxiety and a host of other cognitive impairments related to head trauma. There have been suicides, and family trauma goes unmeasured. Concussion stats are questionable due to under-reporting. Doctors and scientists try to determine how to diagnose and treat concussions before allowing a return to activity, but they can be foiled by athletes and coaches who say everything's fine when it's not.

The latest generation of athletes is more wary to be sure, but many regularly return to play too soon and risk long-term health issues from repeated concussions.

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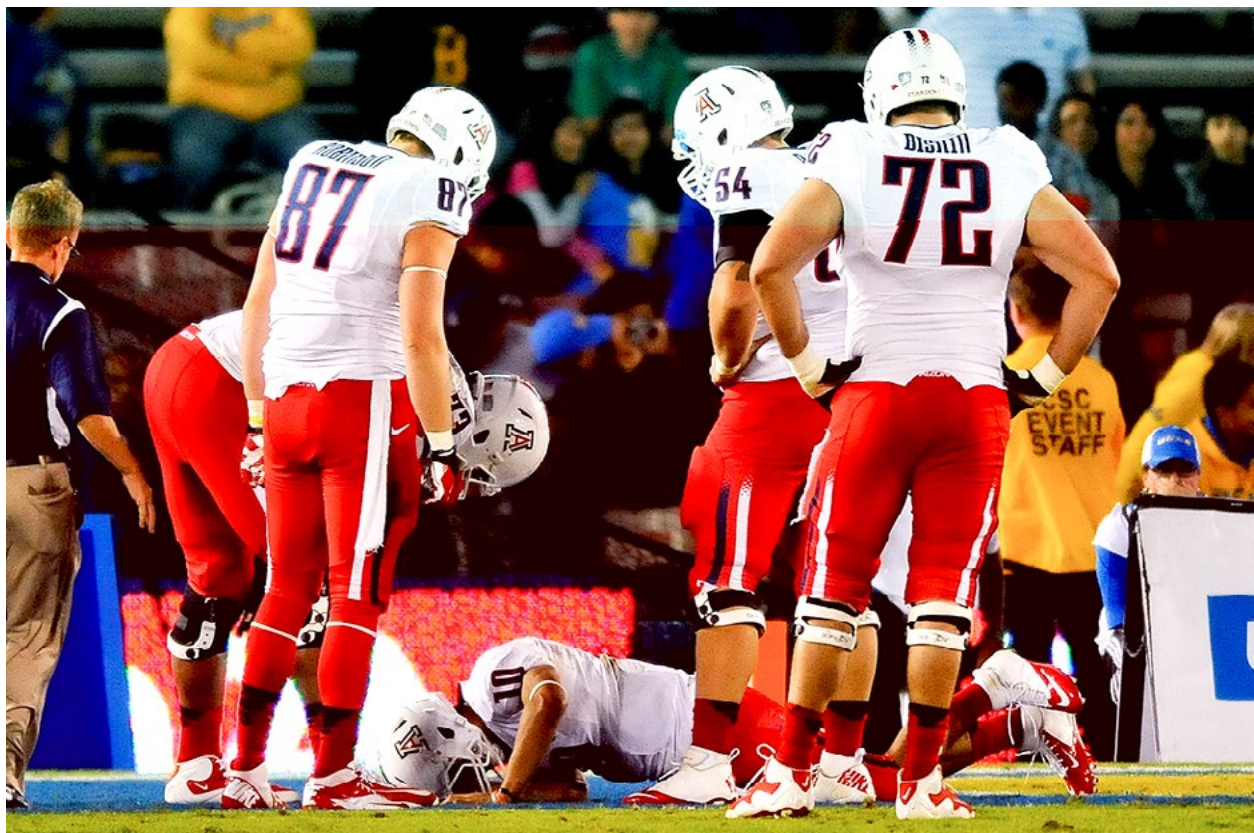
In the most prominent response to concussions in sports, the NFL received its first concussion-related lawsuit in 2011; by Jan. 31, 2012, there had been over 4,000 filings, and a judicial panel consolidated them into a class-action suit. Former players allege that the NFL deliberately concealed knowledge of links between football-related concussions and long-term neurological injuries such as dementia, depression, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

Many athletes regularly return to play too soon and risk long-term health issues from repeated concussions.

Critics of the suit argue that the risk is inherent to the sport and should be considered "part of the game." The NFL contends that a direct connection between concussion and traumatic brain injury hasn't been made. Public-health officials say that because epidemiological evidence is always uncertain, courts should follow the precautionary principle used in cases against Big Tobacco to decide settlements.

On Aug. 29, the NFL agreed to settle the suits by paying US\$765 million, with most of the money marked as compensation for retirees. A total of \$75 million was set aside for medical examinations, and \$10 million was put up for research. At press time, the settlement still had to be approved by a federal judge.

Despite the emerging evidence of serious risk, football remains the most popular sport in the United States, with participation growing at every level. USA Football reports over 1.1 million players at the high-school level last year, almost double the number in second-ranked track and



Arizona Wildcats quarterback Matt Scott suffered an apparent concussion during the third quarter of a Nov. 3, 2012, game.

triple the number in basketball. News stories and lawsuits aren't dampening enthusiasm for a sport where head-on collisions are part of the game.

While the exact cause-and-effect relationship of concussions is being determined by science, it's abundantly clear that head injuries have serious effects in the short and long term. Mystery still surrounds the diagnosis and recommended recovery from concussion, but researchers now believe the responsibility for athlete safety must rest with the player and the parents first.

Anatomy of a Brain Injury

Suspended in spinal fluid and blood, your brain doesn't touch your skull. However, when your skull changes direction rapidly—a sudden stop, start or twist—your brain crashes into bone at speed.

Upon impact, the membranes of affected brain cells become compromised, and potassium rushes out, causing depolarization of the cells. If the affected area is involved

with sight, the concussed person may see “stars.” If the affected area is involved with hearing, the concussed may experience ringing in the ears. Depolarization continues for five to six minutes, and during that time the neurons affected are unable to fire again. Connected cells shut down to protect the injured neurons, and confusion, amnesia and unconsciousness will result, depending on how widespread the damage is.

The brain needs glucose for repair, but in a protective move the body decreases blood flow to the brain by up to 50 percent to prevent stroke-like damage. Normal blood flow to the brain takes up to 10 days, on average, to resume.

Without potassium in the cell, calcium rushes in, which inhibits neuron firing. It will take a few days to clear out the calcium, which means that affected neurons won't work for the better part of the week. If a cell can't get rid of the excess calcium in that time, it dies.

None of these effects will show up in a CT scan or MRI.



Tony Quinn/ISI/Corbis

Major League Soccer player Logan Pause of the Chicago Fire has at times worn protective headgear after a header gave him a concussion in 2011.

James Borchuck/ZUMA Press/Corbis



The Riddell Speed Revolution helmet contains a series of internal air bladders, but even the best helmet can't prevent a concussion if the impact is severe.

Even without apparent skull damage, your brain could have taken a beating. Only in postmortem studies are scientists finding “holes” in the brains—large areas of cell death caused by calcium poisoning—of athletes who suffered multiple concussions. These dead zones are responsible for the dementia-like symptoms of punch-drunk boxers, rattled football players and whiplashed accident victims. ALS, early-onset Alzheimer's, depression, anxiety—research has linked a wide spectrum of traumatic brain injuries to sport-induced concussion.

In August 2013, scientists from Boston University published a link between concussion and CTE in the *Brain* article [The Spectrum of Disease in Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy](#).

Recovery from concussion, including rewiring affected areas of the brain, can take months. Reinjury during this recovery time can make the initial injury far worse: damaged cells lose more potassium, larger areas of the brain shut down and more cells die.

As stated earlier, the long- and short-term effects of concussions are not completely understood, but it's obvious that head trauma requires careful treatment.

The long- and short-term effects of concussions are not completely understood, but it's obvious that head trauma requires careful treatment.

And yet many athletes return to activity before they should. In some cases, they hide their symptoms or lie about them due to a desire to play. In other cases, team doctors might rush players back before they're ready due to pressure from an owner or coach who needs his or her best players on the field. But in other cases, both doctors and patients follow all the correct protocols and still make mistakes.

Problem No. 1: Diagnosis

"So, how smart was your kid yesterday?"

This is an impossible question for parents to answer, but it's part of the typical diagnostic procedure for child athletes with a suspected concussion. Athletes of all ages are typically asked subjective questions—"Do you feel OK?"—and sometimes given cognitive tests to determine whether a brain injury has occurred.

Without a pre-concussion baseline, doctors, coaches and parents have trouble adequately assessing the severity of an injury.

CrossFit uses established baselines, such as Girl workouts, to objectively measure fitness. If you're faster, you're fitter. If you're slower or move less weight, you're less fit. The same standard doesn't apply when it comes to diagnosing brain injuries.

If a child falls on her head, a good ER doctor will give her a post-concussion test and then try to determine the severity of the injury based on her test score. A score below a certain threshold may lead the doctor to prescribe a week away from play. The missing link: what would the child have scored before the brain injury?

Efforts to diagnose concussions faster and better are widespread and well funded. The International Olympic Committee, Federation International de Football Association and other partners adopted the [Sports Concussion Assessment Tool 3 \(SCAT3\)](#) as a diagnostic test in May 2013.

The SCAT3 is a combination of other tests: the Glasgow Coma Scale, the Maddocks score for sideline testing, the Standardized Assessment of Concussion immediate memory recall test, and some examinations for balance and hand-eye coordination.

While some parts of the test are objective—recalling digits in reverse order can't be faked—others can be interpreted depending on the assessor. Some of the answers in the How Do You Feel? section of the SCAT3 include, "In a



Lacy Atkins/San Francisco Chronicle/Cobles

Johnny Damon (right) and Damian Jackson collided in a 2003 playoff game, and Damon was knocked unconscious for several minutes.

fog," "More emotional" and "Trouble falling asleep." What teenager doesn't feel those things? The test-retest validity of some sections is also suspect. For instance, every time you try to recall the months of the year in reverse order, you get better at doing so.

Even on the best tests, scores aren't useful without a baseline for comparison. In one test for short-term memory, athletes are asked to recall words read aloud by the examiner. "Elbow, apple, carpet, saddle, bubble"—the athlete is asked to repeat the words in any order. Then the examiner moves on to a balance coordination test; afterward, the athlete is required to repeat the words again.

Without looking in the preceding paragraph, repeat the five words in any order. How many could you remember?

If an athlete can recall four out of five words, the score is four points. But what would that athlete have scored one day earlier without a concussion? What did you score? And what does a four out of five mean anyway? Is it a good number? For whom? The SCAT3 provides no cutoff score for return to play.

Dr. Christina L. Master is a pediatric-sports-medicine specialist at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Her research and clinical interests are in the area of pediatric and adolescent concussion. She is also the mother of three children, two of whom play ice hockey.

Courtesy of Scott Thornton



Concussions are far from rare at hockey rinks, where athletes travel at very high speed and collisions are part of the game.

"We've come a long way in recognizing that there are physical-exam findings that we can use to diagnose concussion," Master said. "That's what we're getting at with the SCAT3. At CHOP, we use the SCAT tests but also an oculomotor, vestibular and balance test. There are very specific eye movements that are observed when you have a concussion. Between that and the symptoms tests, you can make a diagnosis with confidence."

**Coaches aren't doctors,
and even some doctors find
themselves in unfamiliar
territory when it comes to
determining whether an athlete
is fit to play.**

The SCAT3 test was designed to be used on the sidelines, and its purpose is to help coaches decide when to remove an athlete from play. But coaches aren't doctors, and even some doctors find themselves in unfamiliar territory when it comes to determining whether an athlete is fit to play.



Courtesy of Scott Thornton

Scott Thornton, now a CrossFit affiliate owner, had several concussions in his NHL career.

Dr. Master and her colleagues have published clinical reviews on their methods, but delivering the information to physicians, coaches and parents is another matter.

"Most physicians don't know the exam or haven't performed the exam," Master said.

In June 2012, the American Academy of Neurology published a research summary to help primary-care physicians and emergency-room staff diagnose concussions. The summary listed research published before June; Master and her team published their data days later, missing the research summary.

This means many doctors—as well as athletic trainers and coaches—don't have access to the best concussion tests available.

"Most schools don't have athletic trainers. Those few who do only cover football and lacrosse. In middle school, there are none. It all comes down to volunteer coaches," Master said. "So it comes down to the athletes themselves: they have to recognize it."

Problem No. 2: Underestimating Severity

Because a brain injury isn't visible, many athletes, parents, coaches and doctors underestimate how serious it can be.

Worse, kids are unlikely to report concussion-like symptoms, Master said, because they don't know what they are and "playing through" is a sign of toughness.

"I worked with the Philadelphia Flyers, where there's pressure for pay. No one is going to say, 'I have a mild symptom and should be pulled out.' But that's a bad set of role models for kids. A kid's job is school, not sports," Master said.

"Most parents I see kind of chuckle at it," said Scott Thornton, a former NHL player (1990-2008) and owner of CrossFit Indestri in Collingwood, Ont. "If it's my kid, though, he's not playing for a couple of weeks. It is serious. You're talking about peeewee hockey in the middle of January. You're in a small town; is it really so important that your son or daughter has to play?"



Mike Warkentin

With concussion awareness increasing, many recreational players are now wearing helmets even in no-contact casual hockey games using sponge pucks.

Andy Hendel owns CrossFit Charlotte. After years of playing pro football, including a term with the Miami Dolphins, he's familiar with the symptoms of concussion and the rush to return to play.

"I fell in love with the sport because I love to hit and get hit," Hendel said. "I'm not that big—six foot, 225. There's a guy like me coming around the corner all the time. I'm playing a guy who's six-four, 245, doesn't touch a weight. But I was the guy who would run through the wall anyway. That got me in trouble."

Though undiagnosed, Hendel is sure that he suffered concussions multiple times but didn't know the danger. He's not alone: [Concussions Among University Football and Soccer Players](#), a 2001 study by McGill University, found that only 23 percent of concussed football players in their survey realized they had suffered a concussion.

"I remember having a headache for a week after one game against Clemson in college. You just think it's part of the game, because if you're in the training room, you're not playing," Hendel continued. "I remember another game where I got hit on the side of my head and don't remember anything after that, until the rest of the defense was out on the field and I was sitting on the bench by myself. I was supposed to call the huddle. They were looking for me."

Hendel's experience is not an anomaly. According to [NFLConcussionlitigation.com](#), a study of 1,094 former NFL players aged 27 to 86 revealed 61 percent had been concussed once, while 30 percent of them had been concussed three times or more. Incredibly, 73 percent said that they were not held on the sidelines after the injury.

Problem No. 3: Pressure

"If you're not Sid, you're scared someone else will take your job," Thornton said, referring to NHL superstar Sidney Crosby, who suffered a concussion in January 2011. On Jan. 1, he was hit in the head by David Steckel of the Washington Capitals and left the game before returning. On Jan. 5, he was hit by Victor Hedman of the Tampa Bay Lightning and was clearly affected by the contact, though he finished the game. He played just 63 games in the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 seasons. In late 2011, after developing a headache after a Dec. 5 game, he took and passed a concussion screen (the ImPACT Test) but held himself out of additional games nonetheless.

"The ImPACT (test) isn't everything. You've got to listen to your body on these things too," he told [media at the time](#).

As one of the top players in the NHL, Crosby perhaps has more job security and financial stability than others and can afford to be very cautious. For others with less talent, worse contracts, marginal job security and smaller bank accounts, the pressure to play on can be extreme.

"You don't want to show weakness. You're worried it will be a red flag for the rest of your career, that maybe you won't get another long-term contract. That stuff comes into play at the high levels," Thornton said.

"Because I wasn't knocked out, I didn't leave the game. I couldn't even drive home."

—Scott Thornton

The NHL requires that players pass a baseline test before being allowed to return to play after a concussion, but Crosby's decision to keep himself off the ice highlights a problem Thornton confirms.

"I have to be honest: you can pass those tests," Thornton said. "I've had three minor concussions all within about 10 days. My trainer knew, but because I wasn't knocked out, I didn't leave the game. I couldn't even drive home."

Though the tests may diagnose a concussion while the player is in the acute stages, the risk for long-term brain injury is still heightened for weeks afterward.

"When you're in the acute stage, there's no way you can cheat (the tests)," Thornton said. "Simple tasks like memory words and doing dot-to-dot are very difficult when you're concussed. But there comes a point when you can pass those tests and still shouldn't be playing."

Thornton continued: "I'm not going to say that I wouldn't do it again."

Kids aren't immune to this type of pressure either, even if they're far from the NHL.

"The first lesson they told us in the CrossFit Kids course is that we need to be the one to tell the kid not to add weight," Thornton said. "If you ask a kid, it's a loaded question: 'Do

you think you can play?" They're going to say, 'Yes.' We have to be the conscience for them and say, 'It's great that you're OK. I'm going to give you another week.'"

Athletes, even children, are often asked to self-diagnose. "Are you feeling OK? Dizzy? Sick?" The questions might come from parents, coaches or doctors, and even young athletes know that certain answers will earn a seat on the bench.

In a clinical setting, victims of more severe brain injuries are never asked to self-diagnose because the frontal lobe of the brain will disguise the brain's cognitive gaps. Those suffering from brain injury will frequently report that they have no symptoms, even if the cognitive gaps are obvious to everyone around them. With a concussion, the same may be true in a smaller sense: an athlete may attribute the foggiest to a lack of sleep or a headache to chance.

Playing injured or sick is often seen as a badge of honor, even in non-contact sports, and players who are frequently injured are sometimes saddled with derogatory terms while being abused by teammates and hardnosed coaches. Thornton believes the decision to return to play should be taken from the athlete's hands—and the hands of those with a stake in the game.

"Think about how much pressure the trainer is under to keep a guy on the ice. There's a shitload of pressure on those guys. They don't want to go tell their bosses that Sidney Crosby needs another month of rest for an injury that no one can see," Thornton said.

Master says that her own son, who knows the risks well, wouldn't likely report concussion symptoms to his own coach for fear of being branded a wimp. That means it's up to the parents to remove the decision from the child.



Courtesy of Tania Thomas

Decisions involving head injuries should be made by parents, and it's good policy to err on the side of caution. Children should not be asked to self-diagnose or decide whether or not they should continue playing.

"A concussion may be one of the first injuries a kid has," she said. "It's one of those things where a parent has to pull a kid out of school and sports."

Parents need to be observant, and they need to act, according to Master.

"If a parent suspects concussion, they should pull the kid out of the setting where they're at risk. It's like not letting someone drive drunk," Master said. "If you're one second slow in a youth ice-hockey game, that's a big second. The most important thing is to take your kid from harm."

**"If a parent suspects
concussion, they should pull
the kid out of the setting where
they're at risk."**

—Dr. Christina Master

Next, Master recommends a break from all activity, with a gradual return to cognitive tasks, light play and then full play.

"If you pulled a muscle, you wouldn't use it for a while," she said. "Then you'd test it a little and ramp up to full speed again. When you use your brain after a concussion, it hurts. So you don't ask it to do extra stuff like reading, texting or schoolwork. If your kid is bothered by their cell or television screen or smart board, keep them away from those things. After a few days, you start adding them back slowly."

What's the Answer?

Because concussions aren't completely understood, dealing with them can be very challenging. Head injuries cost the NFL three-quarters of a billion dollars. Crosby, perhaps the best player of his generation, has lost a chunk of his prime to concussions. In rinks and on fields all over the world, coaches, doctors, trainers, athletes and parents are forced to make decisions any time a head injury occurs.

How serious was the injury? Is the athlete OK or severely injured though few outward signs are present? Is the athlete lying about symptoms or is a doctor or coach ignoring them because it's a championship game?

The questions persist after the injury as well. How soon is too soon to return to activity? Are the symptoms really gone or is the brain still healing? Will another injury cause irreparable long-term damage? Is a season or even a career over?

Solutions are not easy to find in a sports world where injuries are very much a part of the game but long-term health is critically important. The best answer might be an emphasis on safety in the games and strict protocols for evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and return to activity when an injury has occurred.

Preseason baseline tests are also available in some areas. Athletes can be tested before the start of the season and can then be retested on the same criteria if a concussion is suspected. The difference between scores might make diagnosis easier for the child's physician. But even that plan isn't without flaws.

"We use ImPACT, we use Axon (baseline tests for concussion management)," Master said, "but you can't use them alone. If you do the pretest on the kid while they're with their friends, that's going to affect their score. If you're tired, hungry, have to pee or just broke up with your girlfriend, that's going to affect how you perform."

While the testing and retesting aren't perfect and won't help the athlete recover faster, they might provide clues to the child's progress.

**In the case of an adult or
adolescent, the best judge
may be the athlete, provided
he or she is willing to be honest
about symptoms.**

"One snapshot in time is all the ER doc gets. You're in an ER, it's quiet ... and you don't feel so bad. The doctor may not be the most up to date on all these tests. That's how diagnoses are missed," she said.

Courtesy of Tania Thomas



Helmets are a start, but cautious, informed parents and coaches are needed to ensure the safety of young athletes.

Anything that will give a doctor a better picture of a change in the athlete's brain function can help, but baseline testing simply isn't the whole answer.

In the case of an adult or adolescent, the best judge may be the athlete, provided he or she is willing to be honest about symptoms. Like Crosby, smart athletes would honestly tell doctors and coaches that they just aren't OK, giving their brains a chance to heal. For child athletes, parents should be watching them very closely after an injury.

"If you go back to texting, watching TV, studying, and you can't do those things, you're not right. If it's a kid, the parent has to watch them. When they feel better doing those things, they're starting to recover," Master said.

At each step, athletes should make small tests: if watching television or reading provokes a headache or dizziness, more rest is required. When those don't trigger discomfort, trying a half day at work or school may be appropriate. Then a full day. Then a jog. When light exercise doesn't

affect a player, he or she may return to a modified version of the sport without contact, ramping up to full practices.

Though the time required is different for each athlete, coaches must keep pressure to return in check. Players must also be willing to take a step backward rather than attempting to "push through" a brain injury as they might with a musculoskeletal problem.

"You have to be very aware as a parent, and give your kids a heads-up, too. Don't try to get back to playing too soon; it's not that kind of an injury. Don't push it," Master repeats.

As the NFL addresses head trauma by settling a landmark lawsuit, perhaps the best advice is the simplest: exercise extreme caution with any head injury. If you feel something isn't right with your child, your athlete or yourself, rest the brain until it's healed.



About the Author

Chris Cooper is a writer for CrossFit. His gym, CrossFit Catalyst, is one of the first to receive insurance funding for treatment of traumatic brain injury.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Three Days in Haiti Part 3: Adversity and Hope

The final part of this three-part series looks at the day-to-day lives of Haitian people and how they find happiness in a country filled with constant physical struggle and hardship.

By Emily Beers

October 2013



Courtesy of Emily Beers

About two hours away by car from McDonald, where Julie Roberts does most of her work in Haiti, is the tiny village of Jarvais. Because the village isn't close to any cities, its people don't have access to imported goods. They depend entirely on each other and the resources of the land for survival.

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"For some reason Jarvais is particularly poor, its people particularly unhealthy," Roberts explains as she jumps into her Pathfinder, a vehicle she shipped from Florida to accommodate her travel whenever she's in Haiti.

Today she's headed to Jarvais to do medical work. She knows it's going to be a long and emotional day in the relentless Haitian heat.

This isn't Roberts' first trip to Jarvais. She's been there a couple of times to provide medical treatment, and last year she funded a program that sends a nurse there twice a month.

"I'm skeptical, though. I have no idea if a nurse is actually getting out there as much as she's supposed to," Roberts says to her four CrossFit friends who are with her to help. "You never know with this country."

The Village of Jarvais

It's a smoking-hot 95 F on a Tuesday afternoon in April.

Roberts and her crew have just driven an hour inland from McDonald. The area is as rural as it gets; it feels like the middle of nowhere. To their left is a river, where a dozen or so people are scrubbing themselves clean. Women wander along the road carrying heavy loads atop their heads. Lean cows and horses graze freely.

These animals don't look anything like the plump species you see in North America; they look emaciated.

"Maybe that's what cows are supposed to look like when they're not pumped with corn and hormones," says one of Roberts' friends.

Huge rice fields cover the surrounding land. Next to the road, and sometimes spilling out onto the road, are giant tarps covered in recently cultivated rice lying out to dry out.

"Rice used to be one of their main industries," Roberts explains.

Rice is a staple food for Haitians, and prior to and during the 1980s the country was self-sufficient in its rice production. But in the 1990s, a change in trade policies meant imported rice became cheaper than domestic rice. As the demand for domestic rice declined, many Haitian farmers were displaced; the result was a nightmare for everyone involved in Haiti's rice industry.

"Now it's cheaper to buy American rice than it is for them to buy their own rice. It's just been another major obstacle Haiti has had to deal with over the years," says Roberts just



Courtesy of Emily Beers

The people of Jarvais are isolated, without access to stores, schools or medical treatment.

as she hits an unexpectedly deep pothole in the road, the painful kind that has you questioning the vehicle's suspension as well as the road's ability to handle motor vehicles.

"During the rainy season, we wouldn't even be able to drive on this road," Roberts says. "It becomes pure mud."

Because of this, even if the people of Jarvais had cars—which they don't—they'd rarely get the chance to venture outside their small village. Grocery stores, schools, hospitals, take many hours to reach by foot.

Finally, the group arrives in Jarvais. The classification “village” seems generous, as it appears to be no more than a small cluster of mud huts with grass roofs.

Roberts parks her Pathfinder and is immediately greeted by a dozen or so bright-eyed young boys and girls who swarm the vehicle. Some of them are clothed. Others are naked. Hardly anyone is wearing footwear.

“Blanc, blanc,” they yell, flailing their arms wildly with excitement. Their excitement gets louder as the five white CrossFit athletes exit the vehicle.

Roberts gets to work. Men and women—young and old—arrive from various huts eager for her help in remedying their ailments. She takes blood pressure and hands out painkillers, advice and antibiotics.

One boy who looks to be about 18 steps up to the seat that has unofficially become the patient’s chair. Roberts can’t find anything wrong with the boy, who doesn’t articulate much about his “illness.”

“Some of them just want to see what they can get from me,” Roberts says. “They like the excitement and attention.”

“Give him a little baggie of Flintstone vitamins,” she says to the Haitian nurse.

“Take one a day,” Roberts tells the young man. He grabs the plastic bag, smiles and pops a vitamin into his mouth as he walks away.

The group of children keeps growing in size as the time passes. The dozen children who originally greeted them at the Pathfinder have exploded into three dozen, each



Courtesy of Emily Beers

As in Africa, resources in Haiti are scarce, and even drinking water can be hard to find.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

Roberts does what she can with her limited medical supplies.

of them eager to touch Roberts and her white friends. They smile and laugh shyly as they stroke arms and hair and gently latch on to the pasty white hands of their new North American friends.

Roberts pats one child on the head whose hair is a copper orange color. The child looks up at her, flashes a wide grin and embraces Roberts' leg.

"This discoloring of the hair is a sign of malnutrition," Roberts says.

As in other areas of the country, many of the children of Jarvais have distended navels—from parasitic worms known as whipworms or hookworms. Roberts could choose to treat the worms, but she knows as soon as the children rid themselves of them they'll go right back to drinking the contaminated standing water. And the children will be right back to where they started.

Someone in the village mentions to Roberts she should treat a paralyzed man in a hut about 50 meters away.

"Where is he? Take me to him," Roberts says.

Two minutes later, she discovers a man no older than 30 curled up on the floor of a hut; there's just a thin sheet between him and the earth. The right side of his body has been eaten away by atrophy.

Roberts chats with the man via a translator and re-emerges.

"This man's had a stroke," she says. "It was a minor stroke as he says his bowels are still working well and he can talk perfectly, but the right side of his body is paralyzed.

"We're taking him with us and getting him to a hospital in St. Marc," she tells her friends. "This could still be treatable. If he were in Canada, we would have given him an antithrombotic and he would likely have made a full recovery."

She adds: "If we don't get him to a hospital, he'll die in that hut."

Roberts tells the man's elderly mother the plan. Unable to contain her obvious excitement at the good fortune that just came her way, she smiles the kind of smile that looks like it should be accompanied by a celebratory leap. She has no more than three teeth. Her eyes sparkle with relief.

With the help of a small army of villagers, they get the man out of his hut and load him into the back of the Pathfinder, where he can lie down. His mother hops in and props her son up against her to make him more comfortable.

"We'll just have to pay the hospital in St. Marc \$50 for him to stay there, to pay for his food, and we'll make sure he gets treated," Roberts reassures the man's mother.

As they drive away from the village, the villagers begin to fight over some scrap wood Roberts emptied from the back of her vehicle to make room for the man. In Haiti, wood of any kind is a hot commodity.

A group has gathered around the wood pieces, while one woman has appointed herself to guard the pile. She's trying to stop anyone from snagging a piece. One young boy manages to sneak a large chunk of two-by-six and runs off with it.

The woman guarding the wood picks up a large stone and charges toward the boy. She hurls the stone and smokes the boy directly in the back. He drops the piece of wood, as if to say he surrenders, and runs off into the distance.

Normal life has resumed in Jarvais.

"Most of those kids have probably never left Jarvais," says Roberts, driving away. "And there's a good chance they never will."

Adversity: From Business to Haitian Life

In the July 7, 2010, *Harvard Business Review* article "[When Adversity Strikes, What Do You Do?](#)" Paul G. Stoltz, Ph.D., asked the reader to answer questions about adversity.



The coastal village of McDonald.

"How often do you use adversity to achieve gains you could never enjoy without it? How many moments do you have when, like an alchemist, you convert adversity into fuel that propels you to a place you could never get to without it?" he asked.

Stoltz is the CEO of PEAK Learning Inc. He's the author of four internationally best-selling books. His business ideas are used within Harvard Business School's Executive Education program.

One of the themes Stoltz deals with in his books and when consulting and coaching business elites has to do with how people deal with adversity. Using adversity to become more resilient and ultimately achieve greater fulfillment and success is one of Stoltz's main goals.

"The central element in exceptional human effectiveness must have something to do with how people respond to the difficult side of life, or adversity," Stoltz wrote on Peaklearning.com.

Further, Stoltz believes "how we respond to life's 'tough stuff'—from the smallest hassles, annoyances and hindrances to the most daunting tragedies—plays an epicenter-level role in all human endeavor."

Stoltz, of course, is focused on business leadership and organizational effectiveness, but the lessons taught to Harvard MBA candidates have been learned long ago in Haiti.

In Haiti, day-to-day lives provide all the adversity in the world. Every day, many Haitians deal with both small challenges and large tragedies. Their days spent searching for food, walking miles upon miles for clean water, and battling constant illness and hunger are like a never-ending series of hero workouts strung together for years. Life is challenging, and not because the Internet is down for five minutes.

From a North American standpoint, it's easy to look at Haitian life as miserable or unhappy. If, for example, you go



Courtesy of Emily Beers

For the children of McDonald, hardship does not always mean unhappiness.

Courtesy of Carey Peterson



Gabriel Nixon, the mayor of McDonald.

to the village of Kannot—half a dozen miles from the city of St. Marc—you'll find children with worms, children with scabies, and children wandering around with infected flesh hanging out of their arms from a recent machete wound. And you'll find stressed-out parents unable to feed these children.

But you'll also see kids laughing, playing freely, skipping rope, playing soccer, enjoying being young. And you'll see a community of people who band together for support, who love each other and look after each other's children, who cook for each other, who share with each other, who help each other with any task that needs doing.

Life is hard and full of adversity for Haitians, but spending time in a village reveals it's not miserable.

"If you suffer hardship your entire life, it strengthens your character," Roberts said. "They're able to find happiness in small things, in small victories. They're not told they need all this stuff to be happy."

She added: "The fabric of their culture is based on community. And in order to overcome their constant adversity, the survival of the individual depends on their community, and the thing that allows them to be happy is the strength of their social community. That's what makes them good people, too."

Difficult, Not Unhappy

Roberts and her crew experienced many First World problems while in Haiti.

Gabriel Nixon, the mayor of McDonald and one of Roberts' dear friends, did everything he could to ensure his guests were treated properly.

Not only did he have two women from the village cook them authentic Haitian meals of rice and beans—and sometimes chicken or fish—each day, but he also spent four days catering to all their other North American needs.

In a village where most people don't have electricity, he managed to acquire a fan for their house so they

could sleep more comfortably. And when the electricity decided to stop working in McDonald, he hunted down a gas-operated generator to make their lives easier. And when Roberts locked herself out of her own house, Nixon spent three hours finding a way to get her back inside.

Nixon had bigger problems he could have been trying to solve.

He runs what he calls “a house for old,” an old-aged home where half a dozen elderly men and women of McDonald live. Most of the “elders,” who haven’t even reached the age of 60, are sick or injured. Nixon ensures they’re as comfortable as possible in their weakened state.

And he runs the local school, where he does his best to give malnourished children an education. On top of this, he has his own family—including an adopted child—to look after and feed.

On Roberts’ final night in Haiti, yet another problem arises, and Nixon doesn’t hesitate.

“We don’t even have enough gas to get back to the airport tomorrow,” Roberts says. “There was no gas at the gas station.”

“I know. You see, in Haiti, sometimes ... no gas,” Nixon explains.

“When is the gas arriving?” Roberts asks.

“Um, gas is supposed to arrive Friday,” Nixon responds.

It’s currently Wednesday afternoon.

“So there’s no gas? Not even in St. Marc?” she asks.

“No, no gas. Not in St. Marc. No gas in Port-au-Prince,” Nixon says.

Roberts looks worried.

“I will find some gas for you, Julie,” Nixon reassures.

And just like that, he takes off in search of gas in a country that is allegedly bone dry of gasoline.

One hour goes by. Then two, three, four.

It’s dark out now, and Roberts is at home wondering how she’s going to get out of McDonald in the morning. There has been no word from Nixon.

Finally, at 9 p.m., after an entire evening searching for gasoline, Nixon emerges with a large smile.

“I found you little gas,” he says beaming.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

In rural Haiti, proper medical care is seldom available, and small problems can become large in short order.

He never mentions how or where he found the gas, but Roberts and her friends get the feeling he went door-to-door begging anyone with any kind of gas-operated machine to donate a liter to the cause.

“Thank you so much, Gabriel,” Roberts says, gratefully. “Thank you so much.”

Nixon doesn’t hear her. He feels it’s time for him to give thanks instead.

“I understand that Haiti isn’t a good place to visit. So I’m so happy when people visit Haiti,” he says to the group. “Thank you, all of you. I will never forget your visit to McDonald. You bring us hope. We know you are thinking about our community.”

He scans the room, making eye contact with each person.

“Thank you for your help,” he adds.

Courtesy of Carey Peterson



A difficult life does not have to be an unhappy one.

"No, thank you. Thank you for your help," Roberts says, emphasizing the word "your." The group nods in agreement.

Roberts and her friends start asking Nixon about his own upbringing in St. Marc. They're trying to wrap their heads around how he ended up being such a giving person in such a torn country.

"As a boy, life was very difficult. Very, very difficult," Nixon says. "Sometimes, I couldn't buy food."

He pauses.

"But I could always help people. I'm happy when I can help people," he continues. "Life is difficult for so many people. Life is difficult for children. More than anything, they need love. And I can do that. I can give them embrace."

He carries on for a few minutes about the struggles his people must face.

"Last year, no rain. No rain, no food. Now it's difficult for people," he says.

Despite the hardships, Nixon never mentions words such as "depressed" or "unhappy" or "miserable."

Life isn't unhappy for Nixon; it's simply difficult. Life challenges his resolve; it tests his character, his resilience. But overcoming the challenges brings satisfaction. And happiness.

"I will come say goodbye in the morning before you leave," Nixon says.

He presses his hands together and smiles.

"Thank you, Julie. I'm so happy," he says. "So happy, Julie."



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

Ice, Ice, Maybe?

Some athletes and experts swear by ice baths, while others say they're useless or even detrimental. Hilary Achauer investigates the potential end of the Ice Age.

By Hilary Achauer

October 2013



All: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Maybe CrossFit athletes have a thing for pain.

The event is over, they've survived whatever crushing test was put before them, and instead of finding the nearest chair, many competitive CrossFit athletes decide to prolong the agony by submerging themselves in a tub filled with ice water.

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But why do they do this to themselves? Are ice baths helping recovery or hindering it? Is jumping into the tub just an old habit or the habit of smart athletes? Most importantly, what does the latest research say about subjecting the body to extreme cold after competition?

Dr. Bill Porath, a sports-injury specialist who treats CrossFit athletes, thinks ice baths should only be used in the case of overheating.

Porath says ice baths made sense in Pomona, the site of the 2012 SoCal Regional competition, where athletes competed outside on a black surface. Many competitors overheated, and ice baths helped bring down their core temperatures. However, in 2013, the SoCal Regional competition was held in a covered venue in breezy, coastal Del Mar.

"There was no need for ice baths there," Porath said.

But not everyone is ready to give up the icy plunge.

"(The players) use ice and hot-water submersion every single day," said Ron Porterfield, head athletic trainer for the Tampa Bay Rays of Major League Baseball. He estimates about 70 to 75 percent of the players on his team use a combination of hot- and cold-water therapy, with many of them taking the plunge both before and after games and practice.

The Case for Ice

Porterfield has been in his current position with the Rays for 11 seasons. He's been involved in professional baseball for 27 seasons, including time with the Houston Astros. As far as recovery, Porterfield said the biggest challenge for professional baseball players is the unforgiving playing surface.

"With the Astros, it was the old, synthetic turf. The Rays have the new turf, but no matter what the turf is made of, there's concrete under it. Day in, day out, it's intense on their legs," he said.



Competitors will go to great lengths to recover in time for the next event, but many now question whether an ice bath is anything but a placebo.

Once in season, baseball players compete almost continuously. During spring training, the Rays play 30 games in 42 days. In the regular season they play 162 games in 180 days. Quick recovery is essential, and icing has been a part of baseball lore since [Sandy Koufax](#) soaked his left arm in an ice bath after each game.

Modern athletes use a combination of hot- and cold-water tubs to combat muscle fatigue and improve recovery, Porterfield said.

"We have two dunk tanks," he said. "The hot one is 106 degrees (F), and the cold one is 55 degrees. We also have small whirlpools we can raise up and down so they can put their elbows in."

This means players don't have to submerge the entire body if they are only experiencing pain or soreness in an arm or elbow.

"Now we do (water immersion) before and after a game," he said.

If an athlete is using the tanks before a game, Porterfield has him start in the hot water and end in the hot water, alternating about two minutes in the hot tank and one minute in the cold tank, about four or five times in each. Following a game, the athletes begin and end in the cold water but spend two minutes in the cold and one minute in the hot tank, again using each tank about four or five times.

In addition to the physiological benefits, there may also be a psychological advantage to an ice bath.

Porterfield thinks much of the benefit of cold-water immersion comes from the pressure of the water.

Think about diving deep under water and the feeling of pressure that builds in the head. The same thing is happening in a water tank, to a lesser degree. Porterfield thinks even minor water pressure aids recovery.



Effective or not, ice baths are assuredly uncomfortable until you go numb.

"When you get into water, you get pressure," he said. "It's pushing blood to the extremities. The contrast (between the hot and cold water) is good for pumping. The hot water creates new flow, and the cold shuts everything down."

On top of the water pressure, Porterfield feels the ripple effect of the water on the skin helps fire the lymphatic system.

"It's like a real light massage," he said.

A number of studies have tried to prove the efficacy of using ice baths for recovery. In the study [Effect of Post-exercise Hydrotherapy Water Temperature on Subsequent Exhaustive Running Performance in Normothermic Conditions](#), by the department of physiology at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, nine endurance-trained men completed two submaximal exhaustive running bouts and then immersed themselves in cold water for 15 minutes between exercising.

"Intestinal temperature, blood lactate and heart rate were recorded throughout and VO(2), running economy and exercise times were recorded during the running sessions.



Aja Barto uses ice baths for recovery, even though his coach advises against it.

"These data indicate that ... cold water immersion applied between repeated exhaustive exercise bouts significantly reduces intestinal temperature and enhances post-immersion running performance in normothermic conditions," the study reported.

In another study, [Influence of Postexercise Cooling on Muscle Oxygenation and Blood Volume Changes](#), nine participants put one leg in a cold-water bath, while the other leg remained outside the bath. They did this after 30 minutes of continuous running at 70 percent of their maximal treadmill velocity followed by 10 bouts of interval sprints.

According to the study, the total hemoglobin volume was significantly lower in the leg that was immersed in the cold water. Tissue oxygenation index was also higher in the cold-water leg. The lower hemoglobin volume is not an improvement on its own, but the increased tissue oxygenation index resulting from cold-water immersion is a positive sign for improved recovery. Oxygen is required



Masters competitor Bryan Wadkins decided to forgo ice baths during the CrossFit Games in 2013, using other recovery methods instead.

to metabolize lactic acid and replenish ATP, both of which are produced during strenuous exercise.

The study reported that, "Postexercise cooling decreased microvascular perfusion (the process of delivery of blood to a capillary bed in the biological tissue) and muscle metabolic activity. These findings are consistent with the suggested mechanisms by which CWI (cold water immersion) is hypothesized to improve local muscle recovery."

In addition to the physiological benefits, there may also be a psychological advantage to an ice bath.

For baseball players, the psychological aspect is extremely important. Once a baseball player feels something works, he's loath to change.

"Baseball players are creatures of habit," Porterfield said. "They are both traditional and superstitious. If they do this a certain way, they are going to keep it that way."

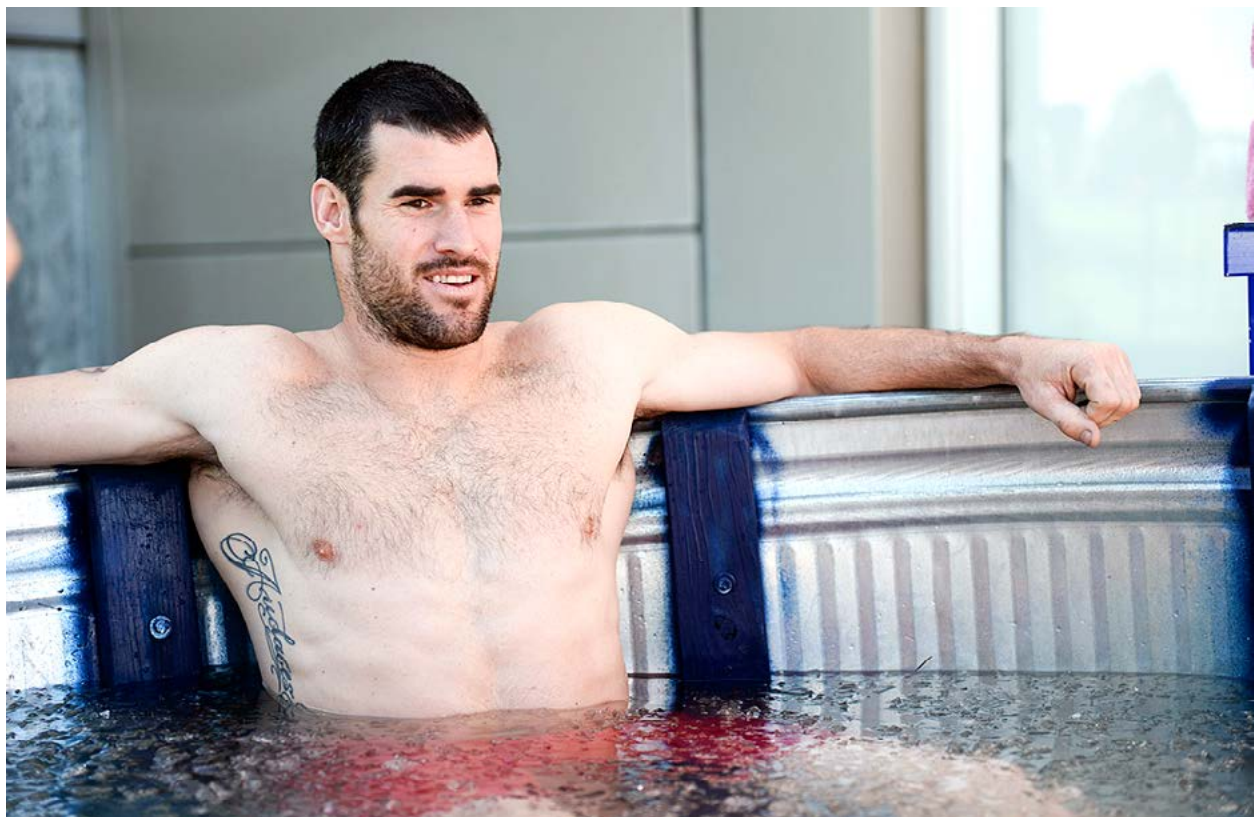
Kenneth Leverich, a two-time CrossFit Games competitor who placed 28th at the Games in 2013, relies on ice baths for recovery.

In 2013, Leverich reclined in an ice bath after the last event of the Games on Sunday, looking dazed and relieved after four days of competition. The ice baths around him were empty except for a pink rubber ducky floating in the tub next to him.

"(Ice baths) help flush out the lactic acid," Leverich said. "It helps promote recovery, and the swelling goes down. It's a similar feeling to a massage."

Leverich said he wasn't able to use the ice bath as much as he would have liked at the Games in 2013 because the events were so close together. He likes to have at least three hours between his ice bath and the next event.

Aja Barto, another experienced Games competitor, also relies on ice baths for recovery. He does this even though his coach, CrossFit Invictus' C.J. Martin, doesn't believe they are effective.



Utah athlete Tommy Hackenbruck looks very much at home in a giant ice tub.

"I use them in between events, only at competitions," Barto said. "They work for me, even if the benefits are psychological. I feel like they flush my musculature and wash away lactic acid."

Barto said he especially relies on ice baths at the CrossFit Games, where recovery is essential.

"They work for me. I feel better afterward," he said.

Barto, of course, was at one point a baseball player in the Texas Rangers organization.

The New Approach to Recovery

Porath used to be a proponent of ice baths.

"They were a big part of rehab," he said, "a cornerstone of conventional, acute recovery. We'd just slap ice on it right away."

That all changed about a year ago.

"I started seeing stuff through Kelly Starrett (founder of San Francisco CrossFit, who also runs the CrossFit Movement and Mobility Trainer Course) and others who were coming out against (ice baths). It thoroughly changed my mind," Porath said.

Starrett's position is presented on MobilityWOD.com.

Porath now feels that icing for recovery actually inhibits healing.

Dr. Porath says plunging the body into ice creates congestion and interferes with the influx of nutrient-filled blood.

"When you undergo a big max-effort workout and go 100 percent, your cells make metabolic waste, or garbage," Porath said. "What you want to do is increase circulation to get rid of that 'garbage.' Ice creates stasis and inhibits circulation."

He says plunging the body into ice creates congestion and interferes with the influx of nutrient-filled blood.



CrossFit Games athletes are faced with a host of challenges over many days, so some, like Kenneth Leverich, use ice baths in hopes of faster recovery between events.



Porath said it's "better to jump on a (stationary) bike" than to ice.

"Inflammation is the first step of the healing process, and it's a vital component," he said. "We've evolved over thousands of years to heal in a certain way. Just look at athletes when they get out of an ice bath. They move like 90-year-old men and women."

Porath says icing in the event of an injury, to numb the pain, is a different issue.

"If you want to ice so you can numb the area and then go play tennis, that's one thing," he said. He also recommends using ice to avoid overheating and to bring down the athlete's core temperature.

However, he doesn't think athletes should use ice baths as a way to recover for the next event or workout.

"The lymphatic system has no pump," Porath said, "it's circulated by muscle activity. Our bodies weren't designed to be immobilized. Movement is required."

Porath advocates gentle movement—like rowing or cycling—or an electrical muscle-simulation device, like the MarcPro, to move deoxygenated blood away from the fatigued muscles.

In the 2009 study [Effects of Cold-Water Immersion on Physical Performance Between Successive Matches in High-Performance Junior Male Soccer Players](#), scientists studied the effects of ice baths on 20 high-level junior male soccer players over four days. They found cold-water immersion did not affect performance, but it did reduce the perception of general fatigue and leg soreness between matches in tournaments.

The 2012 study [Water Immersion as a Recovery Aid From Intermittent Shuttle Running Exercise](#), published in the *European Journal of Sport Science*, tested 40 male athletes and found ice baths did not improve an athlete's perception of pain, nor did they have positive effects on biochemical markers related to damage in muscle cells.



Those who are against ice baths feel athletes should keep moving after an event to optimize recovery.

Bryan Wadkins competed at the CrossFit Games in 2013 in the Masters 40-44 Division, placing seventh overall. Masters athletes are particularly invested in recovery, as the ability to bounce back after crushing workouts suffers as we age.

As a former wrestler and CrossFit Games Regional competitor, Wadkins was accustomed to using ice baths for recovery but decided to forgo icing at his first CrossFit Games on the advice of Porath. Even though he was committed to avoiding the ice baths, Wadkins did admit to a moment of doubt.

"I did the 21-15-9 heavy-deadlift and box-jump (event)," Wadkins said, "and I have a previous back injury."

Wadkins' back was feeling sore and tight after that event, and when he walked past all the athletes in ice baths, he wavered for a minute.

"I asked Dr. Bill, 'Are you sure I shouldn't ice?'" he said. "I thought maybe I should ice, because it's a subject that's still developing."

However, he stuck with the advice of Porath and instead got massage therapy, used heat and did some stretching.



Kinnick happily gave up ice baths when Starrett came out against them.

"I was able to come back the following day (and compete)," Wadkins said. He said he believes avoiding the ice bath helped him continue to in the competition.

"The cold restricts blood flow," Wadkins said. "Massage and heat promote blood flow. We've been ingrained to ice it, ice it, ice it. It's like we used to say, 'Advil, Advil, Advil.' Now, we're thinking, 'Hey, that's probably not the best thing.'"

"I've always thought (ice baths) sucked. Nobody enjoys getting into them. If there's no benefit, I'd rather not do it."

—Jeremy Kinnick

Jeremy Kinnick, a four-time Games competitor, has never really used ice baths to recover.

"I've only used an ice bath a handful of times in my life," Kinnick said.

One of those times he remembers very clearly.

"I was playing baseball in college, and I guess I stayed in the bath for too long—or it was too cold—and I got a mild case of hypothermia," Kinnick said. "I was jacked up for days."

Kinnick has used ice baths for recovery during the CrossFit Games but said he does not notice a benefit from them.

"I've always thought they sucked," Kinnick said. "Nobody enjoys getting into them. If there's no benefit, I'd rather not do it."

When Kinnick heard Starrett come out against ice baths, he said he breathed a sigh of relief. It was another reason for him to avoid the icy plunge.

"They are painful and horrible," Kinnick said.

"If someone said, 'Drink this water. It will help you recover,' I might consider it," Kinnick said, but he added that he has no desire to immerse himself in an ice-cold tub unnecessarily.

Instead of ice baths, Kinnick prefers to cool down by going for a walk or taking a light jog. The length of his cool-down depends on the length of the event. Then he follows up with light stretching and rolling out to create blood flow.

Unlike those who are strongly against ice baths, Kinnick says for him it's just a personal choice. He thinks athletes should try out different methods and see if they notice improved recovery.

"It's all about preference—whatever gives you that mental edge," Kinnick said.

The Debate Continues

Each side of the ice-bath debate holds strong opinions, but so far no study has offered definitive proof either way.

Proponents of ice baths offer anecdotal evidence and say they just feel better after an ice bath. And even if the

benefit is only psychological, that's still significant. Any mental edge, no matter how small, makes a difference.

Those against ice baths for recovery say we're icing just because that's what we've always done, and many suggest the practice actually hinders recovery.

Improving recovery time is important for CrossFit athletes. Faster recovery means more time to train hard, and in competition it means increased performance in events on the same day or on subsequent days of competition. As Barto said after wrapping up the 2013 Games, "This is who can take the biggest beating and recover."

In attempts to reduce down time, athletes rely on a variety of methods including physio tape, compression gear and fancy supplements—many of which run the line between legitimate aid and placebo.

At present, ice baths are still in question, with more science needed to determine their efficacy.

Additional Reading

[Two Studies Back Benefits of Ice Baths](#)

[Bathing in Ice After Intense Exercise "Does Not Work," Says New Report](#)

[Evaluation of Hydrotherapy, Using Passive Tests and Power Tests, for Recovery Across a Cyclic Week of Competitive Rugby Union](#)

[Cold-Water Immersion \(Cryotherapy\) for Preventing and Treating Muscle Soreness After Exercise \(Review\)](#)

[Really? The Claim: An Ice Bath Can Soothe Sore Muscles](#)



About the Author

Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor with a background in marketing and communications. An amateur-boxer-turned-CrossFit athlete, Hilary specializes in health and wellness content, focusing on emerging fitness trends. Her writing has been featured in a leading online parenting magazine as well as a number of travel and lifestyle publications. She is an editor for Frommer's travel guides and writes websites, brochures, blogs and newsletters for universities, start-ups, entrepreneurs, accounting and financial service organizations, and management consultants. She lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and spends most of her free time at CrossFit PB. To contact her, visit HilaryAchauer.com.



If ice baths don't work, at least they'll keep your drink cold.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Learning About Hope

Fourteen CrossFit-built Kenyan schools give villagers a chance to escape poverty through education.

By Chris Cooper

October 2013



All photos: Chris Cooper/CrossFit Journal

The narrow, crowded streets of Mombasa, Kenya, turn to dust tracks less than an hour away from the port on the Indian Ocean, and leaving the city is like a trip back in time.

Not far from the city of just under a million, families and animals are sheltered together under palm-frond roofs supported by mud walls. Vehicles are rare on the bumpy, twisting roads, and women washing clothes in muddy creeks confirm the absence of electricity and running water.

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If Mombasa itself is a center of trade, tourism and industry, rural Kenya is distinctly agrarian. This agriculture, however, is not the agriculture of the Industrial Revolution but rather smallholder farming mostly absent tractors and irrigation systems. The majority of Kenyans make their living by farming small patches of Sub-Saharan Africa, and most are always but one drought away from both empty pockets and empty stomachs.

The average Kenyan man earns less than US\$1.50 per day, and work is scarce even at that rate. The average woman bears seven children, and most adults are unemployed. According to 2008 estimates on CIA.gov, Kenya's unemployment rate was 40 percent. Poverty is on a different scale than in North America: kids often wear the same clothes every day for several years, and no meal is ever certain. Whereas the poorest of North America might find clean drinking water without much effort, rural Kenyans have no such security. Stats from 2005 on Ruralpovertyportal.org reveal almost 50 percent of rural Kenyans live below the poverty line.

CrossFit for Hope is the action arm of the CrossFit Foundation, and [Hope for Kenya](#) is the foundation's first effort outside the United States. The initiative links the CrossFit community with Kenyan villages where the local leaders decide what projects will provide the most benefit to the area. To instill ownership, CrossFit for Hope

requires a down payment of 10 percent of construction costs and a willing workforce to provide the labor for new projects. Latrines, desks and rainwater collection systems are priorities, as are the schools that provide the possibility of something better for students. Education is the best way out of rural poverty in the Developing World, and the CrossFit Foundation is providing a way for children here to create a future that doesn't involve endless hours tilling the soil before succumbing to disease or malnutrition before 60. According to the CIA, Kenya ranked 180th in estimated life expectancy by country in 2013, and a 2013 [University of Washington study](#) attributed 18.1 percent of deaths in the country to complications related to HIV/AIDS.

"In 2011, we had only 20 children at this school," said Seif Mwachanyika, head teacher at Dzendereni, site of the first CrossFit-supported school. "This year we have 300, with 29 of them qualifying for high school—16 boys and 13 girls."

Mwachanyika's speech was part of a welcome ceremony for the CrossFit for Hope team and their guests, who visited in late September. Dances and poems were offered as tribute, an elder gave his tearful thanks, and then the grand prize—a goat—was carried on the shoulders of a preteen and delivered to the guests' van. It was a celebration of success: the Dzendereni school, launched only 18 months ago, was the first CrossFit school, and it's become the home base for change in the surrounding villages.



With a cistern collecting rainwater, students at the CrossFit school in Dzendereni can be assured of clean drinking water.



Many Kenyan students still sit on rocks in schools with dirt floors, but CrossFit for Hope is making improvements with projects that provide desks and new school rooms.

The increased enrollment in Dzendereni is a huge win, and older students are beginning to penetrate higher levels of education. For many Kenyans, schooling ends at Grade 8, with only the top students qualifying for high school. Community Education Services Canada estimates only one in five Kenyans will attain a diploma for completing four years of secondary schooling. The Dzendereni school sent its first student—a young woman—to the best high school in Kenya this year, and the CrossFit Foundation covered her tuition, about \$1,200.

"It was the first time the girl had seen an apartment building or a stop sign or even margarine ... So the first semester was a huge culture shock," said Leah Njoroge, CrossFit's Kenyan host. The student is now a bright example for the next class—proof that education can equal escape.

CrossFit for Hope provides the mechanism, and CrossFit gyms worldwide drive the process.

Hope for Kenya has now built 14 schools in different villages in Kenya, and the requirement for investment and labor by the locals has residual effects: villagers who are trained to make desks, pour concrete blocks and weld frames increase their knowledge, acquiring skills that will

perhaps lead to new opportunities. CrossFit for Hope provides the mechanism, and CrossFit gyms worldwide drive the process.

Children at traditional village schools don't have much motivation to attend. Kids as young as 4 are required to carry a heavy stone to their classroom for a seat, or they sit on the dirt floor. Un-galvanized steel roofs first leak, then rust and eventually collapse. Dozens of folded houses are visible along any road. Rains turn the dirt floors of the schools to mud, and summer breezes blow dust through the room nonstop. Some teachers haven't achieved better than a fifth-grade education themselves. And the best outcome for many students? An incomplete education resulting only in a chance to sit in the shade beside an unemployed father.

CrossFit for Hope provides an alternative: a real desk in a school with solid walls, a dry roof and a cistern full of clean water. Children are more likely to attend such a school, and the dramatic increase in attendance at the Dzendereni school is proof.

The quality of their education is also much better: teachers provided by the Kenyan school authority are highly educated men and women who are drawn to the more modern school. Other agencies work with CrossFit for Hope, building gardens and farms to give the whole community a leg up.

"The first step is to set the foundation, to build the schools. The next will be to layer good nutrition and exercise habits on top," said Dallin Frampton, coordinator of CrossFit for Hope's Kenya initiative. He's known as "Ruwa" to local villagers.

Frampton has been witness to the changes in local villages since the CrossFit schools have appeared. It was Frampton who first approached CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman in February 2011 about humanitarian efforts in Africa. Coach Glassman wanted to get involved, and the initiative quickly gained momentum when he called on the global CrossFit community to support projects in Kenya.

“The school is a conduit to a better standard of living. I think that’s what CrossFit is all about.”

—Dallin Frampton

The Dzendereni school has “become a beacon of hope in the village. There’s hope to get out of poverty, to get to the next step of education or life. The school is a conduit to a better standard of living. I think that’s what CrossFit is all about,” Frampton said.

Giant CrossFit billboards appear on the outside of the schools, linking simple but incredibly valuable structures in Africa to the gym that paid for their construction: NorCal CrossFit, CrossFit Morristown, CrossFit New England and others.

It costs about \$14,000 to build a school in Kenya, and some gyms have made that commitment by themselves, with their communities raising funds to create a Kenyan legacy from a warehouse gym full of chalk and sweat. Other affiliates cover the \$3,000 price of new water cisterns and have their names painted on the tanks. Some donate the funds for a single desk, and desks are useful even in older schools. Every dollar helps.

“A poor child in North America is living a better life than these kids by an order of magnitude. They’re not comparable,” said the CrossFit Foundation’s Andy Stumpf. “We’re obligated to do something because we have the ability to do so.”

With over 7,000 gyms full of sympathetic people and a bit of disposable income, CrossFit has the leverage—and therefore the responsibility—to change the world.

“What the worst-case scenario in the U.S.?” asked Stumpf. “You still have access to the basic necessities of life: clean water, clothing and people who can help. The people in these villages are surrounded by others who have nothing to give.”

“Going from 49 to 50 pull-ups isn’t as big as going from zero to one,” said Greg Amundson, also of the CrossFit Foundation. “Back home, everyone has a head start. Here, we’re going from zero to one.”

Momentum

In Guro village, the atmosphere crackled with promise. The CrossFit for Hope van was met a mile from the school by four small children wearing baby-blue uniforms. The tykes were joined by four more, then dozens, and then hundreds of children were pulling the CrossFit representatives from the van and running, singing at the top of their voices. They were excited for school, excited to welcome their visitors.

Here, CrossFit for Hope has built two new classrooms, complete with desks, on a solid concrete foundation. Outside is another new addition: a cistern to provide clean water from roof runoff.

Some of the kids wore castoff princess dresses, the dress-up leftovers of their Western counterparts. It’s not a best dress or a special dress; it’s simply the dress, the one worn to tend the animals, to cook food, to study. They’ll wear the same dress every day for years. None complain or ask for more.

During the speeches, one student was caught fiddling beneath his desk. Eyes downward, he bore the familiar posture of the surreptitiously texting American student, with one eye out for the teacher. Further examination revealed he was weaving a straw rug, probably to sell or trade for food. He resumed his work as soon as the teacher’s back was turned.

**Kenyans are resourceful
out of necessity and quick to
learn any new skill.**



Through education, these children have a chance to escape the unemployment, poverty and sickness that affects so many Kenyans.

Village women, shy at first, were drawn in by the music and soon wrapped their visitors in gifts. Coconuts, pieces of cloth and the most valuable commodity of all—shade—were offered wholeheartedly.

Children practiced their English on the visitors: “What you name?” they asked before giving their own. “Please be welcome here,” they added.

Where technology has been introduced into their pre-industrial culture, local Kenyans have been quick to learn. The wood shop now has two planers and a band saw to cut and smooth the coarse mango tree boards. Concrete masons wearing “Happy New Year 2007!” T-shirts and sandals have borrowed a new block-maker from the federal government. Where once they could make about 120 rough, misshapen blocks per day by hand, they now aim for 800 perfect ones. The workshop wouldn’t pass any safety inspection in the Western world, but local workers appreciate it and take pride in it.

Kenyans are resourceful out of necessity and quick to learn any new skill. Music poured out of scrap metal and battered WD-40 cans, and salvaged clothing was worn proudly. Opportunities are seized, and much is made from little.

Before the Hope team moved down the road to the next school, they were entertained by poems, skits and dances lasting for hours. Though the Hope representatives didn’t know the language, they understood the message: “Thank you for your help. We’ll take it from here.”



About the Author

Chris Cooper is a writer for CrossFit. He owns CrossFit Catalyst in Sault Sainte Marie, Ont.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Live Like You're Going to Die

Pat Sherwood explains the delicate balance between pupusa and push-ups.

By Pat Sherwood

October 2013



All photos: Staff/CrossFit Journal

I wish I liked beer.

If I were presented only the following two options, my choice would be easy.

1. Live to be 100 and perfectly functional but never deviate from eating 100 percent clean, getting eight hours of REM sleep and avoiding risk at all cost.
2. Live to 75 while striking a balance between work and play, risk and reward, and eating clean and bingeing on junk food.

Give me Option 2, please. As a matter of fact, if we added a third choice of being a member of Mötley Crüe and dying at 60, I'd take that one!

I watch people enjoy an ice-cold beer on a hot day, and I'm insanely jealous. It looks so wonderful and refreshing. The expression of pleasure on their faces seems to be that of pure, genuine joy. It seems there are some events in this life that simply call for a cold beer: a backyard barbecue, a sporting event or finishing a long day of riding a motorcycle in the heat of Central America. It's at times like these that I feel I'm missing out.

The reason I don't drink beer has absolutely nothing to do with health or fitness. There's no big moral principle behind my decision; I just can't stand the taste. They say that beer is an acquired taste. Trust me, I've tried to acquire it, but it just never took. During seven years in special operations, I drank all the time because it was just what we did. Enjoying the taste was irrelevant, and not to drink with the boys would have undermined our bonding. So I drank ... plenty. But I never enjoyed a single sip.

Maybe I just haven't found the right brew. I'm open to suggestions, so feel free to post recommendations in the comments section.

On my current incredible CrossFit motorcycle adventure, I'm constantly exposed to new local food and drink at the affiliates we visit. Each country, region or town has some delicious delicacy that the local CrossFit athletes insist we try.

The overwhelming majority of the food we've been offered is not suitable for a caveman. Sure, there have been grilled steaks, chicken and seafood that even the strictest nutrition-crazy athlete would have eaten gladly. However, that's been the exception.

The bulk of the "must try" local cuisine is carb-heavy, doughy, fried, greasy food served with some sort of sugary drink.

The conversation always takes the same path. A local CrossFit athlete says, "Oh! You have to try the ... ! They are so delicious and amazing! You will love them! But they're not great for the Zone, and you're from HQ, so you probably won't eat it." They are sincere when they say this, not sarcastic.

To their shock and delight, I inform them that just because I work at CrossFit HQ doesn't mean I'm a robot programmed to be 100 percent strict and correct seven days a week. Hell yes I want to try the local delicacies, and I don't give a shit what is or isn't Zone friendly!

In San Salvador, El Salvador, we crushed *pupusa* after *pupusa* (a thick corn tortilla) until our stomachs were going to burst. We washed them all down with three-to-four bottles of the local sugary soda drink. There were several we heard were good, so naturally we tried them all.

When we thought it was all over, we slumped back in our chairs with bellies distended from overeating. Carlos and the rest of the 1389 CrossFit crew looked at us and asked whether we had room for dessert. There is only one acceptable way to answer that question, and it's in the affirmative. Not one dessert was brought out but rather several. We ate them all. Dinner finished at about 10:45 p.m. That's when they informed us they would pick us up at our hotel at 6 a.m. sharp for a 7-km run up a volcano. If you think we felt like garbage on that run, you would be right. And it was 100 percent worth it.

Delicious food and drink have a huge social aspect in every country I've visited and every culture I've ever experienced. Nutrition is also at the bottom of Coach Greg Glassman's Theoretical Hierarchy of Development because nutritious food is required to fuel athletic performance.



***Sherwood eats healthy much of the time
but allows himself to experience the culture of
Central America through local dishes.***

But life is not only about Fran PRs and looking great naked. Life is also about being out at the restaurant or bar with great friends much later than you should be, laughing loudly, and consuming food and drink that was not chosen for its nutritional value.

All the CrossFit athletes I know work hard both inside and outside the gym. But don't forget that's only half of life. The other half is playing just as hard as you work. Find the balance that works for you.



About the Author

Pat Sherwood works for CrossFit as a flowmaster and member of the Media Team. He's done just under 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Divided We Fall

Balancing the needs of competitive CrossFit athletes and general athletes can be done.
Andréa Maria Cecil surveys the community for solutions.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

October 2013



When CrossFit Dallas Central opened its doors, the CrossFit Games were in their second year. Broadcasting them on a major TV network wasn't at the forefront of most people's minds.

"When we started, the Games weren't even on the map," said Spencer Nix, of the Texas affiliate. "You didn't do CrossFit so you could competitively exercise. (You did it) so you could just go out and do other things."

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Five years later, fans can watch the Games on ESPN outlets, and a few athletes can even make careers of competing in CrossFit competitions and other throwdowns offering prize money.

That evolution, however, hasn't changed the fact that most of CrossFit Dallas Central's members are still simply trying to improve health markers and feel better about themselves, Nix noted.

"Those two things have nothing to do with athletics," he said. "I still think that's what the majority of people who come in have on their radar."

But as the competitive aspect of CrossFit continues to grow, so, too, does the conundrum: how to balance competitors' needs with those of the general population, which comprises the vast majority of affiliates' memberships.

The solution for some is to create special programming for competitors or for individuals to follow their own programming, either during group classes or in other time slots. That can create a host of obvious problems including space management and group cohesion, but it also stands in contrast to these lines from the [What Is CrossFit?](#) page on CrossFit.com:

"The needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree not kind. Our terrorist hunters, skiers, mountain bike riders and housewives have found their best fitness from the same regimen."

A Separation

At CrossFit Dallas Central, members of the competition team—which placed 10th at this year's Games—train together during group class times but separately in a different room at the 11,000-square-foot facility.

"There's no way around having to have a separate group for the (competition) team," Nix explained. "They have to do workouts together. There's no way around having to increase the volume that these guys handle—that is, if you want to perform well."

He added: "With that kind of structuring and framing, it makes it not as confusing to our members."

And because the Games are so popular now, CrossFit Dallas Central members have come to understand why competitors need different programming, said Nix, a member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff.

"It's not because they're better looking or we like them better, but because the sport demands these movements,"

he said. "It's taken maybe three years to come to a place where there's a little more healthy of a situation (at CrossFit Dallas Central)."

Nix said he and other coaches at the affiliate are careful not to make Regional- or Games-level competitors seem "like this elitist group."

Competitors are told: "Let's not lose sight that you are just a very tiny portion of this community." And community, Nix said, "is always what will trump" anything else.

Training competitors "can never take precedence over the rest of those people you are training," he emphasized.

**"Everybody needs GPP—
increased work capacity
over broad time and modal
domains. Nobody gets to
escape that."**

—Spencer Nix

CrossFit Dallas Central coaches have done such a good job of reminding competitors they are the 1 percent that now they need to remind the competitors of how much they're supported.

"Now it's like, 'How do you make those guys on the team feel special?'" he said. "It's a hard balance (to maintain)."

After the Games, team competitors return to regular group classes, providing a morale booster for the gym, Nix said.

Members realize competitors are "not assholes but the sport they do dictated (different programming)."

Roughly 240 miles south in Houston, CrossFit EaDo also has team competitors join regular group classes once a week. EaDo's Beau Schulgen described it as an "ego check."

Not only do members in the group classes give chase to competitive athletes, but they also get to experience what a tall order that is, Schulgen said.

"Their whole demeanor changes."

Kelly Levens, of CrossFit RX in Atlanta, described such situations as walking “a fine line.”

“It was more of an issue back when we would allow (athletes) to do different WODs during the class time because it was a gym divided between program A and program B,” he explained. “We quit doing that quickly.”

**“Part of the way we dealt
with people’s desires to get
better is we made our general
programming more aggressive.”**

—Kelly Levens

Today there is a competitor’s class that meets when the gym is closed so as not to disturb group classes.

“Part of the way we dealt with people’s desires to get better is we made our general programming more aggressive,” said Levens, who added that his affiliate now follows CrossFit New England’s programming.

And while Nix says team competitors need to train separately from most members, he’s quick to add that’s not necessarily the case for individual competitors.

“I might be able to swing that a different way,” he said, “have them do supplemental stuff.”

At the end of the day, though, one truth remains for Nix: “Everybody needs GPP—increased work capacity over broad time and modal domains. Nobody gets to escape that.”



John Main, a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff, thinks it's important for Games competitors to train alongside the rest of the community.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Top Games athlete Ben Smith has to train on his own due to responsibilities as a coach and owner at CrossFit Krypton, but his group programming reflects workouts he's doing himself.

Individually Speaking

At CrossFit MPH in Washington, D.C., five-time Games competitor Christy Phillips isn't sequestered in a corner, sentenced to training alone. Instead, she works out with everyone else.

"I think it's really good for our athletes to see that Christy works out with them, that she CrossFits right alongside with them," said CrossFit MPH owner Melody Feldman. "No matter how good you are at CrossFit, you're still going to have to put in the work."

The affiliate programs for elite-level athletes and then scales accordingly. That means Phillips might be doing muscle-ups while others are doing strict pull-ups.

"We focus on the stimulus," Feldman explained.

John Main, former owner of CrossFit MPH who recently became a coach at Reebok CrossFit One in Massachusetts, still creates the programming for the Washington box along with Feldman.

"We've never really bought into this idea that the needs of the competitive CrossFit athlete are different than the general population except for a couple of weeks out of the year," said Main, a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff.

"Christy will train with the group at the gym and then we'll program some specific work for her to follow."

"We've never really bought into this idea that the needs of the competitive CrossFit athlete are different than the general population except for a couple of weeks out of the year."

—John Main

That work includes skills or movements she's trying to improve and usually takes anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes a day, Feldman said.

It's key, Main said, to keep Phillips in the community.

"It's important that we don't create this caste system of competitor and then everyone else," he explained. "It's been our position from the beginning it's for the community. ... Being able to play in the group, it's important for everyone."

For competitive CrossFitters like Ben Smith and Jordan Troyan, the situation is more complicated because they also are affiliate owners and coaches. They can't train with the group if they're coaching the group.

"There's seven classes every day, and I'm there for at least five out of the seven of them," said Smith, who opened CrossFit Krypton late last year in Virginia. "I do my thing before a class might start or between classes in the middle of the day—really whenever I find time. I just find myself at the gym longer than usual."

At the moment, Smith only has one coach on staff.

"If we're there, we're coaching," he said. "We have a job to do."

But that doesn't mean he and his members don't experience the same suffering.

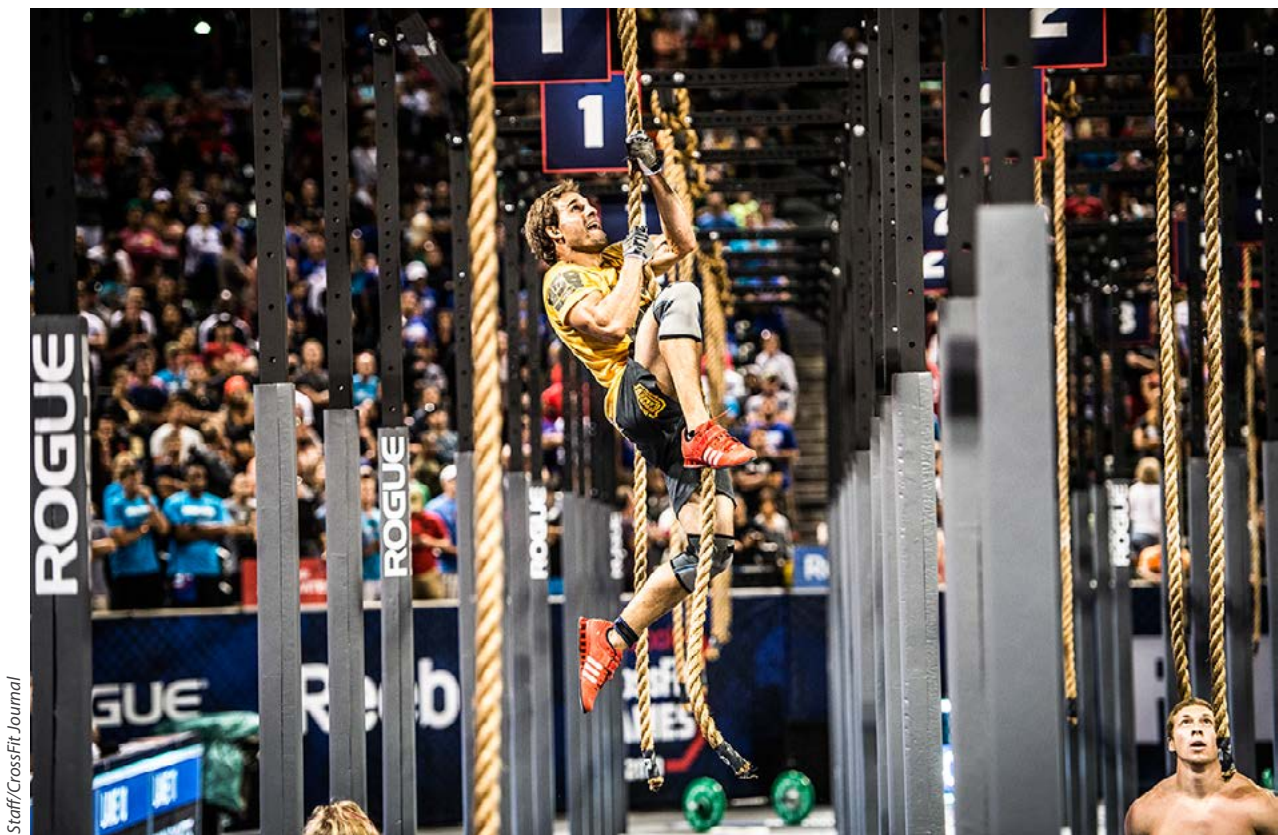
"All the programming that's at the gym ... is all my programming," Smith said. "I make up all the workouts and they're all workouts that I've done in the past or that I'm doing now."

And unlike other affiliates, he doesn't see a need for a competitor's course.

"The general programming at our gym, it's pretty tough," Smith said. "If someone wants to compete, we'll scale it up or push them at something that they're bad at that day."

He added: "That's the cool thing about CrossFit: You can be competing right next to someone who's competing at the Regional level or someone who just wants to get in shape."

Jordan Troyan, an all-American swimmer who finished 24th at his first Games this year, takes a similar approach at his affiliate in Pennsylvania.



Like Ben Smith, affiliate owner and Games athlete Jordan Troyan creates group programming based on his own workouts.

With only two other coaches who “help out,” Troyan coaches most of the classes at CrossFit Rage, which he opened last year. He’s joined the group class a total of about two or three times, he noted.

“It would definitely be nice to work out with the group class. Working out by myself, I push myself, but I know working out with someone else, I’d push harder,” Troyan said. “There’s more motivation when there’s someone else with you.”

Like Smith, he uses the programming he follows for his membership.

“I pretty much program the way I work out,” Troyan said. “I’m not really in the near future going to have a competitor’s class yet because I think my program pretty much covers everything.”

Finding Balance

Although not an affiliate owner, 2013 second-place Games finisher Lindsey Valenzuela is a coach at DogTown CrossFit in Southern California. Likewise, having her join group classes can become “a logistical nightmare,” said her coach, Dusty Hyland.

“It’s important to embrace our elite athletes, but it’s also just as important to keep everyone connected to a degree.”

—Dusty Hyland

Still, Valenzuela always has a training partner—even if it’s Hyland himself or her husband, Arsenio. And this year, the U.K.’s Sam Briggs and New Zealand’s Ruth Anderson Horrell both spent about a month at DogTown in preparation for the Games, where they competed as individuals.

“You can’t train alone in a vacuum and expect to get consistency, intensity and accuracy ...,” Hyland said. “Because they are the 1 percent of our community, most of the workouts they do our folks can’t handle. Every once

in a while, I’ll take their programming and throw it into our advanced class.”

Since DogTown opened three years ago, it has realized the importance of galvanizing the community.

“It’s important to embrace our elite athletes, but it’s also just as important to keep everyone connected to a degree,” Hyland said.

His advice: program for the middle-of-the-road athlete first.

“That way you can scale the workout in either direction based upon an athlete’s competence or inefficiencies with movements,” Hyland said. “These people are the meat and potatoes of our business and tend to get overlooked by the brand new folks and the elite athlete that needs more attention.”



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Cherie Chan (in red) said she and her husband Matt always put community ahead of competitors.

Mike Warkentin



A good coach can scale movements in a variety of ways to make them easier or more challenging.

DogTown offers classes for various ability levels, as well as specialty classes, so athletes who have general physical ability can progress to more advanced skills.

"These two feed directly into our advanced or competitors program as well or can be just for lifestyle and fun," Hyland explained.

For Matt Chan, though, finding a training partner can be a feat in and of itself.

With his wife, Cherie, and two dogs, the six-time Games competitor has been traveling the country in a diesel pick-up truck pulling an Airstream travel trailer. The Chans—both Level 1 Seminar Staff members—have been to Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah, among other states.

"Matt's currently looking for people to work out with," Cherie said. "Working out by yourself in the corner is not conducive to getting better."

So wherever they find themselves, the Chans seek out affiliates that either have open-gym time or will allow Matt to follow programming prescribed to him by his coach and fellow Level 1 Seminar Staff member Joe Alexander.

"We just really like going to affiliates, and we like ... meeting the gyms, and the people are amazing," Cherie said. "It has more to do with the community."

If the affiliate doesn't have open-gym time or requires visitors to follow its own programming, then Matt has the option to unload the equipment aboard the couple's Airstream for an outdoor workout. During Level 1 Seminars, Matt invites other L1 Seminar Staff members to join him in his training regimen.

The experience has caused the Chans to dramatically increase open-gym time at their own affiliate, CrossFit Verve in Denver, Cherie added, so visitors can continue following their own programming and so members can fine-tune skills.

Meanwhile, CrossFit Verve's competitor's program hasn't been as successful as they had wanted, Cherie added, because of conflicting schedules. But that might be OK.

"It's never ever been a priority of ours at Verve to make competitors No. 1," she said. "It's always the general populace—the people who want to get healthy—that's been our priority."

Cherie paused, then added: "What are you giving up to have 10 people be really good at CrossFit out of 300?"



About the Author

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Lifeline to Independence

Anna Woods describes workouts that showcase the creativity needed to provide functional movement skills to clients with challenges including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and paraplegia.

By Anna Woods with Emily Beers

October 2013



All: Courtesy of Anna Woods

It's almost 9:30 a.m. Cindy Scheer and Jeri Wells slowly roll into the dining room at the Disability Supports of the Great Plains building in Kansas, where they both work and attend day services.

I clear out the tables and make a large enough space for eight to 10 athletes and their wheelchairs. Cindy and Jeri are usually two of the first people to arrive.

I always divide my classes into two sessions: one session is for athletes who require wheelchairs, while the other is for those who can walk. Both Cindy and Jeri are always anxious to know when it's their turn to exercise. Today, we establish they're up in the first session. I quickly round up the rest of their classmates from their work stations and wheel them down to the dining room.

We chat about the happenings from the last few days. Cindy updates me on her ongoing desire to travel to Israel to do mission work. She is adamant that she won't let her physical limitations get in the way.

Jeri describes the newest colors of yarn she bought for the clocks she makes and sells at the local farmers market. Our conversation ends with an update on her dating status. Then, we get to business and start warming up.

I turn the iPod to some oldies rock from the '50s and '60s, and we work through some shoulder shrugs, arm circles, wrist rolls, breathing techniques and facial expressions. We puff our cheeks full of air and then make fish faces; we smile big and then purse our lips; we raise our eyebrows and squint.

For my clients, the face muscles are sometimes the only ones where they maintain motor control. And for others, facial movements are important to build better jaw strength needed for talking, eating and breathing. Working on making different facial expressions also helps with tongue control for my clients with Down syndrome, as they often struggle with tongue protrusion.

I follow this up with an ever-progressing game of "clap, snap, slap," where everyone mimics my pattern until we're all laughing so hard we can barely breathe.

Cindy hollers out, "My arms are going to fall off!" and I know we have reached the end of our warm-up.

Adaptive Programming

CrossFit for people with developmental disabilities involves adapting movements for mental and physical delays while nurturing and growing a culture that encourages improved function for day-to-day life. I usually have to adapt things such as the complexity of the movements, the length of time it takes to do the exercises, the arrangement of the class and the order in which we do the movements.

The movements I choose are key to working with my clients. When considering a class template, I plan exercises I know will fit the culture of the group in personal ways. I'll



For pull-ups, Woods ties resistance bands to an orange cone in the center of the circle. Each participant grabs a handle or two and pulls as far as his or her range of motion will allow.

use *Cupid Shuffle* and Michael Jackson dance moves and pair the movements up with workout cues that involve familiar day-to-day movements, such as cleaning the kitchen.

On top of the movements themselves, even the class structure often looks different for my clients than it does in most traditional CrossFit boxes. I have learned to keep my classes relatively short. They last about 30 to 40 minutes; many clients lose focus after that, and others simply do not have the endurance to exercise longer.

The arrangement is crucial to keeping the group engaged, too. When I coach clients who use wheelchairs, I arrange them in circle, and I stand in the center. For the group that does not use wheelchairs, we often stand in lines, and I stand in front, facing them. This has proven to be the most effective arrangement to keep class attention, as well as to allow me to be most accessible to each individual client.

In addition, most clients with developmental delays learn through experience, so repetition is key to proper movement patterns, which is why I do the same warm-up and cool-down exercises for most classes, and why we often do the same workout several times in a month.

Most clients with developmental delays learn through experience, so repetition is key to proper movement patterns.

Despite the challenges, programming for this group of individuals can be very effective, but it requires a large amount of flexibility, creative thinking and patience.

“Don’t Stop Believin”

After the warm-up, we slow things down a bit while I explain the exercises for today’s workout.

We are going to do a dumbbell series for the strength portion of the WOD. I hand out just one 2-lb. dumbbell to each participant because most only have use of one arm.

I give Jeri a chance to slowly open up her fingers on her own and then assist her by unclasp her thumb to get it all the way around the dumbbell. I do the same for Cindy, as it takes a moment for her brain to communicate and tell her hand to open up.

Once I have everyone set up to do the movements, I tell the class we are pretending to clean the kitchen today. We shoulder press as we mimic putting things on the top



Jeri (left) and Cindy improve their functional fitness as a means of living independently.

shelf in the kitchen, chest press to open and close drawers, biceps curl to carry the grocery sacks, and do internal and external rotations to open cabinet doors.

For my clients, strengthening their limited range of motion in movements they see on a day-to-day basis will further their chances of independence in life, something most of them desire. They live in a world where much assistance is needed simply to get them through each day, so even the slightest ability to gain function and independence is empowering to them.

Even the slightest ability to gain function and independence is empowering.

We end class with a short Fran-like WOD. We practice the thruster portion of the WOD with weighted PVC pipe that I fill with dry beans. I figure if the PVC pipe ever cracks, dry beans will be easier to clean up than sand, and the pipe makes a cool rhythmic sound when it gets lifted, fulfilling the auditory needs of some class participants.

Again, I help Cindy get both hands on the pipe. She has very limited range of motion in her arms so the bar literally rests against her neck and face, but she is able to press it a few inches each time.

Jeri has great motion in her left arm, so she uses it to guide her right arm with the PVC pipe. She uses a lighter weight to do her thrusters.

For the pull-ups, I tie resistance bands to an orange cone in the center of the exercise circle, and then each participant grabs one or two loose ends and pulls on them for the 45 reps of Fran. We practice the "pull-ups" a few times before we start the clock.

Cindy requests Journey's *Don't Stop Believin'* for today's workout music, so I crank it up and we start counting our way through 21 thrusters.

Everyone counts each rep out loud as we work our way through the WOD. I help transition between the thrusters

and the pull-ups mainly by re-clasping stubborn fingers around the PVC pipe and resistance-band handles.

I give very few cues during the conditioning portion of the workout because I don't want the class to slow down on the exercises to process what I'm saying. I stick to small shouts of encouragement and feedback: "Good job, Cindy," and, "Pull with your arms, Jeri."

After we finish, we clap and cheer and then cool down with the same exercises we did at the start of class.

Class ends with hugs and high-fives, and then I return everyone to their work stations for the morning.

At this point, everyone is on a high and endorphins are flowing.



The PVC pipes are weighted with dried beans, which offers resistance and makes a rhythmic sound as the pipe moves.



Like most CrossFit athletes, Heather Wedel eagerly looks forward to her workout, and is anxious to know the WOD as soon as possible.

Thriller Workout

After the non-ambulatory class, I make my way over to set up for the ambulatory class.

I assess the noise level and anxiety present in the room before I determine exactly what we will be doing today. When the noise level is high and there is a lot of commotion in the room, I choose a shorter workout and use calmer, quieter music. I do not want to feed into the anxiety and fear already present in the room by amping up the music and the heart rates.

Because it seems pretty low key today, and there is no holiday approaching, I plan to do a longer workout for this class. Many of my clients travel to see family around holidays, and even the thought of a change in routine can lead to high anxiety and increased behavior problems.

Heather Wedel is always waiting for me at the door to the day-service building to help me carry my equipment inside. She greets me with a hug, which is common for a person with Down syndrome. Then we talk about what we are going to do for that day's class; she likes to be the first to know.

Today we will do sled pushes and pulls, ball slams, and a ladder drill. I chose the ladder drill to help with coordination and balance, the ball slam for aggression training, and the sled pushes and pulls for calming.

Heather is excited because this means she will have a partner to train with. She is hopeful I will be her partner today, already asking me if there will be an even or odd number of people participating in class.

I announce that we are starting class if anyone wants to join, to which I don't get much response. So I turn on *Cupid Shuffle* on my iPod and begin to dance by myself. Heather soon joins in. One by one, people slowly make their way over to join us. I change the song over to *Wobble, Wobble*, and a few more guys and girls holler and run over to participate in the hip shaking.

**Music and movement speak
to people with developmental
delays more than anything else
I have tried.**

I've discovered that a dancing warm-up works for the culture of this group. Music and movement speak to people with developmental delays more than anything else I have tried.

After I have a good-sized group dancing, we do the hokey pokey and slowly transition into some dynamic warm-up movements such as quad pulls, knee tucks, leg kicks, arm circles, push-ups at the wall and hops in one place.

Today, I use the ladder to finish the warm-up, and then I go over the movements for today's WOD. Heather pushes her way to the front and designates herself as the leader. She demonstrates the ladder drills for me, and everyone falls in



A creative coach can find a way to modify a movement for just about anyone.

behind her. We partner up to work on the sled pushes and pulls. Instead of an actual sled, I use body weight to push and pull.

Heather stands on one side of a PVC pipe while her partner stands facing her on the other side. Heather pushes her partner, who walks backwards trying to resist Heather's pushing. They go to the other end of the room, then reverse roles and make their way back to where they started. We do this same pattern for pulling as well.

We follow up with ball slams. Time is not a motivating factor for this group, so we almost always count reps, ignoring how long they take.

To begin the WOD, everyone stands in line near his or her partner, behind one of the ladders. They work their way through ladder drills such as Fred Flintstone twinkle toes, penguin walk and zig-zag shuffles before partnering up with the PVC pipe for more sled pushes.

Michael Jackson is blaring in the background, and every once in a while Heather grabs a stray PVC pipe and begins

jamming out her version of *Thriller*. It's hard to keep her on task. This is how the class works: give and take. Although music might be distracting, it's also the motivating factor in each workout, so I allow the distraction because it means I end up with a large group of participants both rocking out and working out hard.

We wrap up class with some yoga stretches and plank holds on rubber mats before we give hugs and a quick pat on the back.

Heather helps me carry my equipment back to my truck. She figures out exactly when I'll be back, tells me she will be practicing her workout moves while I'm gone, gives me a hug and runs back inside.

Discovering They Can

For my clients, working out has changed the culture of their living environment. Exercise is no longer just another "therapy" in Cindy's or Jeri's day; it's no longer just another task to check off on their daily planner.



Many of Woods' clients have started working out on their own, doing exercises they learned in their class.

The workouts have become a part of their daily lives, and improved health is now something they're conscious of. They think about where they are going out to eat and what healthy options might be available. They request their night staff to help them work out. They ask me to buy them dumbbells for their own apartments, and they notice how much better they feel.

When I arrive each morning, Jeri usually greets me right away and tells me what she packed in her lunch that day, always asking me if it's good for her.

Jeri, who was born with cerebral palsy, wants to lose weight, so she is very concerned about what might help or hurt her efforts. This is a far cry from her previous way of life.

Living in a wheelchair used to mean very little opportunity for physical activity—or at least a kind she enjoyed. But today, Jeri has found new motivation with CrossFit.

Similarly, Cindy loves that she can actually do the workouts and feel the muscle burn just like a participant in the ambulatory class.

For so long, when it came to exercise, both Jeri and Cindy were told that they can't do this or can't do that.

But now, neither one of them believes this is the case.



About the Author

Anna Woods took her first steps into a gym when her mom taught aerobics in the '80s and since then has always felt destined to be involved in fitness. She grew up in Hutchinson, Kan., where she played high-school and collegiate sports. She earned her bachelor of science degree in exercise science from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in 2005. After graduating, she moved to Kansas and opened her own training business in 2007: Woods Wellness. Soon, she added CrossFit to her triathlon and marathon training regimen. Today, she can't imagine life without it. She earned her CrossFit Level 1 Certificate in November 2012 and is currently a trainer at CrossFit Pathos in McPherson, Kan. She also continues to run her own personal-training business.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Diamond in the Roughhousing

With MLB playoff battles raging, Mike Warkentin looks at the anatomy of the bench-clearing baseball fight.

By Mike Warkentin

October 2013



Getty Images

A precisely manicured ball field is a thing of beauty, and the best are gorgeous temples built in honor of the storied game of baseball.

1 of 9



Getty Images

In 2011, Shane Victorino was hit by a pitch and decided to take on Ramon Ramirez and the San Francisco Giants. Four were ejected, and Victorino was suspended for three games. The Phillies were up by six runs at the time of the plunking.

Painstakingly groomed dirt paths are surrounded by lush, impossibly healthy grass cut in elaborate patterns that catch both the sun and the eye. Islands of canvas are anchored at exact distances from each other, and atop the mound is placed a slab of rubber that's exactly 60 feet 6 inches from home plate, the holiest of holies.

There's a geometric elegance to the ball field, which is home to skilled specialists who run the spectrum from amazing physical specimens to freakishly talented trolls who look as athletic as a walrus but can hit a ball a country mile with a flick of the wrists. Each one has earned his place on the field, even if you might use the designated-hitter spot to shield an out-of-shape first baseman with bad knees and killer bat speed from the rigors of catching a ball once every few innings.

"In a highly skilled sport such as baseball, not all are athletes, but the good players are certainly athletic," Paul Fournier wrote in the 2010 *CrossFit Journal* article [The Marlins Go CrossFit](#). Fournier was the strength-and-conditioning coach for the Florida Marlins at the time of writing, and he noted that while older ball players might resist physical training, the new breed was less inclined to eating nachos between innings.

Still, baseball lacks the intensity of hockey or basketball. There's very limited opportunity for physical contact, and

most of the time players are separated by significant distances for the entire contest.

**Throw just one inside pitch
at the right time, and suddenly
all hell breaks loose.**

In many games, players stand immobile for innings at a time before a lazy fly ball arcs toward them, time is called and called again, and crotches are scratched with obsessive frequency while dugout snacks are stuffed in mouths by seemingly disinterested players and coaches. Consumption of tobacco products is acceptable, and there's even a specific period of the game when fans are invited to stop drinking, get off their asses and stretch a bit. All this led *Simpsons* characters Kodos and Kang to call a contest on the diamond "the most boring game in all the universe," and other commentators have done the same.

But throw just one inside pitch at the right time, and suddenly all hell breaks loose.



Getty Images

Few can determine whether this is a fight between Andre Johnson and Cortland Finnegan or merely a standard play in an NFL game.

Mild-mannered gentlemen wave bats at sulking pitchers while catchers try to deflect some of the anger. In the dugout, previously disinterested players charge up the steps and sprint to the aid of an enraged teammate who's getting choked out by a lanky hurler. The bullpen gates fly open with a clang and leak relief pitchers into the fray in a flanking movement. Coaches and managers can swell the numbers to more than 50, with but four umpires to try and keep a lid on the violence while fans scream for blood. In some cases, drunken fans get in on the action, either by throwing objects from the stands or by jumping a barrier to join the fray themselves.

It's like an episode of *Spartacus*—but so much better. In fact, it's one of the best parts of baseball.

The Brawl Games

In *Basebrawl Fever*, his excellent look at the 12 reasons

why baseball fights are so great, Bill Simmons brings up a solid point: "Let's face it: Nothing beats a lively major-league basebrawl. Think about it. They don't allow benches to clear in basketball or hockey anymore. Nothing ever happens in football fights."

Indeed, Simmons is correct.

The gridiron offers many opportunities for revenge between the whistles, though the ultra-violence that was once the province of uniformed hit men such as Jack Tatum and Jack Lambert has now been legislated out of the league for the most part via rule changes, ejections, suspensions and fines. Still, there are fights in the NFL, though it's sometimes hard to distinguish them from actual game play—perhaps why football fights aren't interesting to anyone.

Take, for example, the brief but slightly vicious 2010 tussle

between [Andre Johnson and Cortland Finnegan](#). In the two altercations shown in the video, the first just looks like football, while the second is pretty much just football until Johnson rips off Finnegan's helmet and punches him in the back of the head. Purists might still argue that this is merely just football. Rugby fans might argue that this incident is barely worth talking about because no one lost any eyes or teeth.

Basketball has its scrums, but they're also less common. Even a [top 10 list of basketball fights](#) looks more like a collection of gym-class squabbles. Tough-guy Charles Oakley and Xavier McDaniel caressing then hugging each other in 1989 was hardly a brutal fight, and the famous 1977 [Kermit Washington-Rudy Tomjanovich altercation](#) was less a fight than a one-punch knockout that threatened the latter's life and career. Sad, to be sure, but only sort of a fight, the kind of thing that ruins a UFC broadcast after some tattooed thug gets knocked out in the first 15 seconds of a fight and announcers have to fill the time before the next match is set to start.

Even some of the top "fights" in the video linked above are somewhat comical, such as the [Alonzo Mourning vs. Larry Johnson](#) whiff-fest, which featured a lack of landed punches and tiny coach Jeff Van Gundy clinging to Mourning's leg like a rabid squirrel.

In contrast to that was the 2004 [Malice at the Palace](#), in which the talented but volatile Ron Artest (now Metta World Peace) was at the center of chaos in Auburn Hills,

Mich. That tussle was most definitely a fight—perhaps a small-scale riot—but it was an odd one in that it mostly featured players punching fans rather than each other. That also might be considered normal in Detroit.

In hockey, fighting is almost too common. On the first day of the 2013 NHL season, Montreal Canadiens enforcer [George Parros got knocked out](#) during a scrap with Colton Orr of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Parros was knocked out not by a punch but rather by falling face first into the ice while entangled with Orr—but it still counts.

Fighting is such a big part of hockey that most teams employ designated thugs who handle the fisticuffs.

Fighting is such a big part of the game that most teams employ designated thugs who handle the fisticuffs, and you can expect to see a scrap in just about every NHL game. The [NHL rules](#) governing fighting are extensive and even include additional penalties for combatants who instigate a fight but don't honorably remove their face protection before throwing a punch. Preventing an opponent from being able to break your face in a brawl you started is most definitely unsportsmanlike conduct at the rink, though it's



"I went to a fight the other night, and a hockey game broke out." —Rodney Dangerfield

perfectly fine to pummel an unprotected adversary until teeth are clicking all over the ice.

No, hockey brawls are like breasts at the strip bar: they have to be pretty spectacular to have any effect on a seasoned viewer. MMA on skates, if you will.

But if rink rage is all too common, battles on the ball field are one of the most entertaining, dramatic spectacles in sport for many of the reasons Simmons noted. I'll make the

recall both the complex, nuanced origins of the First World War and the glaring melodrama of the most tortured episodes of *Melrose Place* and *Grey's Anatomy*.

With baseball playoffs in high gear and brawls sadly unlikely, take a moment to appreciate one of the oft-overlooked aspects of the game, with one example from 2013 and a short walk down memory lane in the company of the immortal Pedro Martinez.

Drama on the Diamond

Any asshole pitcher can whip a ball into the torso of a third baseman who won't take his medicine and accept a record-setting 211-game suspension. **Ryan Dempster did that to Alex Rodriguez** on Aug. 19, throwing a pitch behind A-Rod, then two more inside before plunking him on pitch four.

But when the benches cleared, no one seemed to care, as if the players all sort of agreed that A-Rod is a jerk and deserved to get hit. Even Rodriguez's teammates seemed like they were on the field for show and might have high-fived Dempster if it wouldn't have looked bad to do so. Dempster didn't even get ejected. Only New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi lost his shit, and he deserved an Academy Award for even pretending to care what happens to a guy the Yankees organization is clearly putting out to pasture.

No, that whole thing was lame—unlike this gem from earlier in the season.

Zack Greinke should have had a target painted on him when he stepped into the batter's box on June 11.

In the top of the fifth, Greinke had hit Cody Ross in the hand. Not a big deal. Ross was checking his swing on an inside pitch and took a ball to lefty. It was hardly intentional, but it set the stage for the bottom of the sixth, when Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Ian Kennedy sent a 92-mph pitch into the face of rising star Yaseil Puig.

Puig was OK, if rattled, and stayed in the game.

Kennedy led the Major Leagues with 14 hit batsmen in 2012, and only he can tell you if he plunks for pleasure or if he's just piss-poor when it comes to throwing inside.

In the top of the seventh, Greinke manned up for the payback and chucked a fairly deliberate pitch at catcher Miguel Montero's back, with hitting the catcher officially regarded as being the next best thing to hitting the other team's pitcher. The 91-mph fastball



Getty Images

The National League policy of making pitchers bat allowed Zack Greinke to feel some leather on June 11.

case that above and beyond any other reasons, ball brawls are so damn intriguing due to the subtleties involved in luring many overweight, disinterested men—often players, coaches and fans—away from their beverages and onto the field for combat.

You can sometimes trace the violence back to a single pitch, but the very best confrontations on the diamond

caught Montero right between the 2 and the 6 on his jersey as he turned away, and the benches cleared in the casual manner of baseball players who have been packing faces with sunflower seeds and chew for six innings.

Nothing much came of the posturing, but, as luck would have it, Greinke was due up in the bottom of the inning.

**The leather sailed into
Greinke's upper left shoulder,
and Kennedy added one to a
National League-leading total
of eight hit batsmen.**

Greinke—who had broken his collarbone in an April brawl after he plunked San Diego Padre Carlos Quentin—stepped into the batter's box and actually looked like he was leaning into a swing when the ball left Kennedy's hand. The pitch was very much not a strike. The leather sailed into Greinke's upper left shoulder, and Kennedy added one to a National League-leading total of eight hit batsmen that would make the fictional Duke Simpson of *Major League* very proud indeed.

Heaters near the head are serious business, and the benches cleared again, this time with real purpose. The ensuing fracas allowed Vin Scully to continue his string of legendary calls from the press box: "No sense calling out names. They're all there."

Indeed they were, including Diamondbacks coaches and throwback heroes Kirk Gibson, Steve Sax and Alan Trammell, the last of whom was tackled to the ground by Dodgers manager and old-school great Don Mattingly. Burly Mark McGwire, also on the Dodgers staff, played the schoolyard bully and got in everyone's grill while cooler heads tried to hold him back and press-box pundits tried to hold back the urge to smack a too-easy roid-rage joke over the fence.

In the aftermath, MLB handed out eight suspensions and 12 fines, including five games to D-back Eric Hinske, whose greatest offense looked to be getting punched by Puig. Kennedy got a 10-game suspension, Greinke got fined, and Montero called Greinke a "little chickenshit" in an interview after the fact.

It was high drama, indeed, and you can watch the whole proceedings [here](#).

And perhaps there's more to come as Greinke's career continues. He seems to be a modern incarnation of Pedro Martinez, who could ignite any game at any time.

Pedro Martinez vs. The World

Besides being a World Series champion, eight-time all-star and three-time Cy Young Award winner, Pedro Martinez did a lot to keep baseball interesting, and his odd beating of 72-year-old Don Zimmer in 2003 was actually about 50 years in the making.



Solo Tantrum Honor Roll

David Ortiz goes berserk

Bo Jackson bat rejection

Chris Davis knows Bo

Brian Wilson dugout rage

Carl Pavano focused fury

Russell Martin carpentry skills

Carlos Perez switch hitter



On [April 13, 1994](#), Martinez was carrying a perfect game into the eighth inning with one out. Playing for the Montreal Expos, Martinez was mowing down the Cincinnati Reds and was five outs away from perfection. Then he hit Reggie Sanders on an 0-2 pitch. Martinez had pitched him inside earlier, which was very much part of the ace's MO throughout a career that spanned almost two decades, and Sanders charged the mound while Pedro was looking skyward with arms raised, perhaps realizing he'd ruined his perfect game.



NY Daily News via Getty Images

In a rare playoff battle, Pedro Martinez threw Don Zimmer to the ground when the Red Sox fought the Yankees in the 2003 ALCS.

People have long said Sanders was foolish for thinking Martinez leathered him on purpose, but ruining a perfect game gives you infinite deniability as a headhunting hurler. The only way Martinez would have ruined a perfect game on purpose was if he wanted to hit Sanders more than he wanted perfection. That's certainly possible—and he still got to work on his no-hitter, which was eventually broken up, too. Interestingly, Martinez once retired 27 batters in a row but was denied perfection because his lame Expos teammates couldn't score a single god-damn run. The game went into extra innings and Martinez gave up a hit in the 10th.

Martinez was involved in three fights in 1994, and by the time he left Montreal in 1997, he had already developed a reputation as a headhunter.

"I'm not afraid of hitting anyone because I can put the ball where I want to," Bob Carter quoted Martinez as saying in the article [The Intimidator](#).

Indeed, Martinez had impeccable command, and when you couple that with 141 hit batsmen in a career (26th on the all-time list) and player Todd Zeile's opinion that Martinez "hit people for the effect," you've got a powder keg on the mound.

But really, what's better than having a batter step into the box wondering if he's going to get dusted?

"Don't get comfortable, dude. I'm coming up and in."

**"Don't get comfortable, dude.
I'm coming up and in."**

On Sept. 24, 1996, Martinez demonstrated the National League's ability to create tension on the diamond by drilling Greg Jefferies, causing him to leave the game. Later on, with the Phillies in the field, [Martinez came to the plate](#) and attempted a bunt. Pitcher Mike Williams had other ideas, throwing at Martinez twice before Pedro charged the mound and used his batting helmet as a projectile. Assuming both pitchers were going to get ejected following the bench-clearing brawl, one commentator called it "a good trade for the Phillies."

Martinez gets special credit for having the stones to charge the mound himself.



Getty Images

In another playoff fight, Pete Rose and Bud Harrelson set off a fracas between the New York Mets and the Cincinnati Reds in 1973.

And then came the Zimmer incident—but there's more to it than a pitcher with a penchant for inside heat sending a septuagenarian to the hospital.

Pitching for the Boston Red Sox in the 2003 American League Championship series, Martinez was matched up against Roger Clemens of the New York Yankees in Game 3, himself a somewhat noteworthy asshole on the mound. This was a meeting of archrivals with a spot in the World Series on the line, and the aces were up for both sides.

In the top of the fourth, after giving up a 2-0 lead, Martinez hit Karim Garcia in the head, though Martinez maintains his control was suffering due to a bad shoulder and the pitch actually hit Garcia's bat. When Garcia slid into second later in the inning, he took out second baseman Todd Walker and started a minor shoving match that had Clemens, Zimmer and Jorge Posada yelling from the dugout. Martinez responded by pointing to his head and then at Posada. The subtlety of the gesture was not misunderstood, especially given Martinez's reputation.

Recall at this point that Zimmer had been hit in the head

in 1953 playing for the St. Paul Saints and nearly died. He wasn't totally conscious for 13 days and had holes drilled in his head to relieve pressure. He later made the Big Leagues and had a fastball break his cheekbone in 1956. It's safe to say Zim is not a fan of high heat, though he's said in [his memoirs](#) that modern pitchers are afraid to throw inside now and batters consequently have no idea how to get out of the way.

Be that as it may, in the bottom of the fourth, Rocket Roger worked ahead into a 1-2 count and sent a ball way up and in on crazy Manny Ramirez, who started screaming curses as the benches cleared. Zimmer made a beeline for Martinez, who calmly grabbed Zimmer's head and tossed it aside like a basketball.

Martinez was painted as an inhuman bastard, though Zimmer himself took full blame in *The Zen of Zim*: "I was the guy who charged him and threw the punch. To the people who said Pedro beat up an old man I said, 'No, an old man was dumb enough to try and beat up on Pedro.'"

The [video of all the incidents](#) is almost surreal and ends

with a Red Sox groundskeeper being escorted out of the Yankees bullpen after yet another fight broke out. Later, pitcher Jeff Nelson and Garcia—who had climbed the wall to get into the bullpen—were charged with assault and battery on Paul Williams, who was apparently cheering for the Sox while in the Yankees bullpen.

You can actually read the [police report](#) on the incident, and it's a document that deserves a special place in the Red Sox Hall of Fame. Both players later accepted community service and probation in exchange for dismissal of the case, and *Tessie* was no doubt played in bars throughout New England while fans laughed their asses off.

The Yankees went on to beat the Sox in seven games, but the Sox won the World series a year later. Zim is still working in baseball, and Martinez will be eligible for election to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2015.

He probably still throws inside in oldtimers games.

Playoff Pugilism?

The World Series will end sometime in the last week of October, and with championships on the line, there's unfortunately less margin for teams to play these games within games. Having a star pitcher ejected or suspended can end the playoffs early, and intentionally hitting a batter puts a man on base, which is fine during the 130-some meaningless games during the year but generally frowned upon in the fall contests that really count.

The high inside heat and mad charges to the mound just aren't seen that often when temperatures drop and the tricolored bunting goes up in October.

Still, who can forget the 2003 Yankees-Red Sox playoff brawl recounted above?

**Intentionally hitting a batter
puts a man on base, which is fine
during the 130-some meaningless
games during the year but
generally frowned upon in the fall.**

And what about the wonderful World Series [Roger Clemens-Mike Piazza bat-throwing incident](#)? After Piazza's broken bat flew into the field of play in the 2000 subway series, Clemens whipped a piece of shattered lumber at the star catcher, who had actually taken karate lessons in anticipation of a fight after Clemens had skulled him three months earlier. In his magnificent fashion, Clemens offered his explanation to the umpire during the incident: "I thought it was the ball."

And what of Pete Rose and Bud Harrelson, who [fought in a cloud of dirt](#) in the 1973 NLCS?

Those assorted incidents over the years bring hope that maybe, just maybe the 2013 playoffs will bring another brawl to the diamond and send a charge through two cities already amped up on the high-pressure stakes of October baseball. It would be high drama, indeed—and good for ratings.

But if the players choose to play it cool, stay in the dugout and rob us of our diamond soap opera, if we're left only to the gentlemen's game of balls and strikes and performance-enhancing-drug scandals, well, there's always hockey from now until June.



About the Author

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Son of Anarchy?

Motorcycle nomad Pat Sherwood says he understands the lure of gangs—and he's proud to be a member of the CrossFit crew.

By Pat Sherwood

October 2013



All photos: Ian Wittenber

I understand why people join gangs.

In my mind, your gang is simply the crew you share common interests with. It could be as tame as your neighborhood book club or as extreme as the local chapter of the Hells Angels.

Before anyone loses his or her shit because I've implied that I understand why someone would join a group like the Hells Angels, read my words carefully: I'm not saying that I do or do not support the activities of any particular group, crew, club or gang. I'm simply saying I get why people join various organizations. Who wouldn't want to be surrounded by likeminded individuals with whom you share a connection?

I was not sad the day I left the military. It was an amazing experience and I'm proud I served. However, anyone who has been in the military knows plenty of bullshit accompanies the good times. While I would not miss the bullshit, something about leaving the Navy scared me. I was leaving my teammates, my crew, my gang—I would no longer be surrounded by these individuals with whom I shared a common bond.

That bond was formed over days, weeks, months and years of two critical elements: suffering and laughter. We were like family. We supported each other, helped each other, quite often lived with each other, trained together, teased each other relentlessly, had each other's backs and fought together. True bonding and camaraderie are not things you find often in life. And losing them was terrifying.

I walked away from the military in 2003. I was unaware of it at the time, but I received a baptism by fire into my new gang two years later, in August of 2005, in my garage in Virginia Beach, Va. A member of my old gang in the Navy, Dave Castro, called me and said I should go to a website called CrossFit.com and start trying the workouts. Sixty minutes later, I was hyperventilating on the floor of my garage after having done Murph. I felt like I'd gotten my ass kicked. I suppose gang initiations are always a bit on the rough side—at least in the cool gangs.

From that moment forth, I was hooked.

Then, I introduced my friends to CrossFit. We began to suffer together. We began to laugh together. We bonded. We embraced challenges and supported each other. Little by little, we realized this gang was not just operating locally. This gang had members all over the world.

Do you realize how large our CrossFit family is? It stretches across the globe. A few months ago, Ian Wittenber and I left the United States on motorcycles and headed south. We are riding until our journey ends somewhere in South America. As I sit and write this, we have been through nine countries. I've never before met the majority of CrossFit athletes I've encountered. What amazes me is how quickly



Fast friends bonded by burpees.

they go from stranger to friend. Usually, it takes me a lot of time to warm up to new people; I can even be somewhat of a cold asshole in social situations. However, on this trip we are slapping each other on the back, swapping stories of our battles with WODs and laughing our asses off within 10 minutes.

I've lived long enough to know familiarity like this with people you've never met before is uncommon. Our community is simply amazing. I once again find myself a member of a brotherhood, a family (don't want to piss off the ladies). Like all families, we are a bit dysfunctional, but we are still a family. I would not have it any other way.

Sure, CrossFit has increased your physical fitness. That is the stated goal of the program, and it delivers. Perhaps after performing the workouts for a few months, you've even noticed the positive adaptations that take place between your ears. Coach Greg Glassman has stated the mental adaptations are the greatest results of the program.

But the benefits do not end there. As your physical and mental capacities increase, so does your crew—locally, nationally and globally. You have friends you've never met in every corner of the world.

Need proof? Next time you leave your local area, look up the closest CrossFit affiliate and embrace your family.



About the Author

Pat Sherwood works for CrossFit as a flowmaster and member of the Media Team. He's done just under 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Journey Behind Bars: Part 1

Canadian Karl Thorson currently resides in a California penitentiary. Emily Beers explains how he got there.

By Emily Beers

October 2013



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

The story of the convict has been told many times before.

Usually it's recounted after the fact, once the former prisoner has proven to the world that he's abandoned his old shady life and reformed himself.

1 of 10

This isn't quite that story. This is the story of a man who is still in prison today, a man who is in the process of transforming himself. After two and a half years behind bars, he still lives with crippling guilt because of the pain he knows his family endures every day.

The "Oh Fuck" Moment

The night before the day his life changed felt like another ordinary evening. And in a way, it was. He wasn't nervous. His task for the next day was simple. It was just work, after all.

Even on the airplane to Seattle the following day, Karl Thorson kept his lizard-like calmness. The thought of getting caught barely registered on his radar.

He knew what the consequences would be if he were ever caught, but he didn't let his mind go there. He needed money, and that was that.

Nov. 30, 2011, was a cold, crisp day. The sun was shining and things were going smoothly. He was on his way to pick up his rental minivan and would then head north to meet his partner in crime.

Once at the meeting spot, Thorson would transfer a suitcase into his minivan and make his way to the Canadian border. Simple as that.

Thorson knew what it meant to be caught with a suitcase loaded with 45 lb. of cocaine.

By the time he made it to the meeting spot—Everett, Wash.—it was dark outside. It was time to make the suitcase swap. With nerves of steel, Thorson casually took the suitcase of cocaine from his colleague and placed it in the back middle seat of his rental.

Suddenly, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) vehicles surrounded him; DEA agents jumped out and swarmed the minivans, guns drawn.

"Put your hands up."

"Get on the ground."



Courtesy of Lea Thorson

Karl and his sister, Erika, before he went to prison.

Thorson—in shock—complied.

As the arrest scene unfolded, Karl started to boil with anger.

Who did this to him? Was he set up by someone who was involved? By someone he knew? Who was to blame? Who made the mistake?

His next thoughts were about his family. He knew how much trouble he was in and how his actions were going to cause serious pain and embarrassment to his family and close friends.

It felt like all the poor decisions he had made throughout his life—all the mistakes—culminated in this one moment.

He knew he couldn't take it back now, and he knew what it meant to be caught with a suitcase loaded with 45 lb. of cocaine.

At 32 years old, he was going to prison. Possibly for a long time.

The first words that popped into his head were simple:

"Oh fuck."

Dreamscape Ranch

It's Easter Sunday in 2013, and Bud and Lea Thorson are enjoying the uncharacteristically sunny and relatively warm weather for the time of year in the interior of British Columbia, Canada.



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

Karl's parents run a ranch for retired horses in Knutsford, B.C.

They sit on a deck the size of a small apartment and sip tea while enjoying the beauty of the morning. Their three dogs—Abby, Missy and a golden retriever named Rika—are never far away. Their property—Dreamscape Ranch—has been the retired couple's home for 10 years. It's a quaint 160 acres in Knutsford, a ranchland area outside the city of Kamloops, B.C.

There's no sign of civilization looking out from the Thorson's deck this morning, just their grazing horses.

"We always say this is the best-kept secret, this area of the province," Lea says. "We love it here."

Although the serenity of the place is unmatched, running a ranch isn't an easy task.

"We house retired horses. So they come here to live out the rest of their days," says Lea, who has always been passionate about the animals.

The international students who live on their ranch do most of the work tending to the 33 horses, but Lea loves being involved in the day-to-day happenings. Just yesterday, a

new horse was delivered to Dreamscape. Lea's eyes light up when she talks about it.

The Thorsons wouldn't want to live anywhere else at this point in their lives; they embrace the quiet peace, the wilderness and, of course, the animals. But Bud and Lea aren't as carefree as they would like to be. Their hearts are heavy, as if they lost a child. In some ways, they have.

The day Karl was arrested, Bud and Lea were in Mexico. They didn't hear about their son's arrest right away. And Karl didn't tell them.

"Karl thought he would wait until Christmas to tell us. He didn't want to ruin our Christmas," says Lea, who, prior to living on Dreamscape, was a teacher's assistant. She worked with teens at risk at Sutherland High School in North Vancouver for many years.

But getting arrested trying to smuggle drugs across the border isn't something you can keep secret for very long, especially from your parents. A friend of Bud and Lea's phoned them after reading about Karl's arrest in *The Vancouver Sun* newspaper.

The feelings that came when they discovered their son was being detained in Seattle ran the spectrum: anger, embarrassment, sadness, regret.

"Are we angry? Yes, we are," says Lea, talking two and a half years after her son's arrest. "It has been a lot of hurt."

Getting arrested trying to smuggle drugs across the border isn't something you can keep secret for very long, especially not from your parents.

Karl was charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine, and he eventually pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 30 months in prison on June 22, 2012.

Bud and Lea don't make excuses for their son. Of course, he's their son and they love him dearly, but they're still trying to understand and come to terms with why he got involved in drug trafficking. They have their theories.

"It was purely financial," Bud says.

Karl worked in construction but was never able to save much money, and jobs were tough to come by at the time.

"He had credit-card debt. He owed money. He never was able to get ahead of the game," Bud adds.

Plus, Karl was recovering from a tough breakup.

"Karl never said it to me himself, but I know that that breakup cut him right to the marrow," Bud says.



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

Karl's mom, Lea, with one of the retired horses on her ranch.

"He was crazy about that girl," Lea adds. "It just seemed that every place he turned, everything he touched, seemed to turn badly."

A pleasant gust of wind breezes across their property. Rika lets out a subdued bark. Lea reaches down and strokes her on the head.

"Before he was arrested, he was a bit of a sad kind of guy. Kind of a lost soul," Lea says.

"I think he was motivated through desperation," Bud adds.

Bud and Lea don't think desperation is an excuse to do what their son did, but when you're retired parents living on a serene ranch with a ton of time to assess the world after your son gets arrested with 45 lb. of coke, you need to find reasons. They constantly ask themselves where things went so wrong for Karl.

Anger and confusion aside, facing others has often been one of the hardest things they've had to deal with.

"It's hard sometimes when you run into old friends. People talk about their kids, you know. They'll say things like, 'My son so-and-so has become a doctor.' And we have to say, 'Our son is in prison,'" Lea says.

"We only told good friends. It's embarrassing to say," she says, pausing for a moment while holding back tears, "to say your son is in jail for trying to smuggle drugs."

Lea adds: "Normally when people ask, 'How's Karl? Where's Karl?' I lie. I don't tell them. Sometimes I'll say things like, 'He's doing his own thing.'"

It's not as bad for the Thorsons as it used to be, though. The most stinging hurt happened when the story broke publicly. Online newspapers ran stories about Karl's arrest. Below the stories, people posted comments, often hurtful.



Courtesy of Errol Clark

Errol Clark (left) and Karl have been friends since eighth grade.

On Dec. 31, 2011, [one anonymous blogger wrote](#): “I’ve known Karl Thorson almost my whole life, and he’s been a menace his whole life. I was told about this story, and I was asked to ‘Guess who they were talking about.’ Karl was my first guess. Typical. His poor parents.”

When Bud and Lea read comments like that, it cut them deeply.

“Unless you’re a parent, you don’t know the pain,” Lea says.

“It’s a complete nightmare,” Bud adds. “It’s our worst nightmare.”

The Best Friend

Errol Clark remembers the first time he saw Karl. They were in the eighth grade, in the days when leaving the school at lunchtime was a new and exciting novelty. And McDonald’s was the happening place to go.

One day, Errol arrived at McDonald’s to see an altercation that was in the process of unfolding. An older student had allegedly said something offensive about Karl’s sister, Erika. Karl took immediate offense.

“Karl took a lunge at this guy, who was way bigger and way older than him,” Clark said, remembering the chaos that ensued. “He was fearless.”

**“Karl was always a bit of
a shit disturber.”**

—Errol Clark

“He kept telling the guy, ‘You take that back. You take back what you said about my sister ...’ I still remember. After the fight went down, the big guy ended up apologizing,” laughed Clark. “Karl was always a bit of a shit disturber.”

Clark connected with the shit disturber from Day 1.

The two friends went to Argyle Secondary in North Vancouver, a well-to-do area across the harbor from Vancouver itself. They experienced the joys and struggles of high school together—playing sports, socializing, drinking, making mistakes, just doing the things teenagers do.



Courtesy of Errol Clark

Clark (left) and Thorson (center) remained friends after high school but saw each other less often.

“We always related to each other so well. We’d always be the last ones up after a party, talking until 6 o’clock in the morning,” Clark said. “We always had the best conversations. We would talk about life—you know, real-life talks, not just the usual superficial-ness that most people talked about back then.”

He smiled, thinking about the memory.

“I swear my dad liked Karl more than he liked me. Any family event we had, whether it was someone’s birthday or Christmas, he was always welcome,” he added.

Even after high school, Karl and Errol remained close friends. They didn’t always live in the same city, and sometimes life got busy and they didn’t see each other much, but Clark still feels like the two friends know each other as well as anyone does.

“Karl is super protective of the ones he loves, super loyal. But he’s also fearless and doesn’t like authority. He’s a risk taker,” Clark explained. “And it can be a potent combination.”

Clark thinks this “potent combination” is what led Karl to some bad decisions.

“Before Karl was arrested, I could tell he was depressed. He never told me, but I didn’t need to be told. He was eating pizza all the time and living at home with his parents. And he was going through a breakup,” Clark said. “I have known him for 20 years. I didn’t need to be told he was depressed. I could see it.”

"I tried to get him into CrossFit. But he was sinking into a depression and was super out of shape at the time," said Clark, one of the principals of CrossFit Rocky Point in Coquitlam, B.C.

And then it happened: Clark caught wind that his best friend had been arrested south of the border in Washington, where drug laws are much harsher than in Canada. Karl was likely headed to prison for many years.

"When Karl was arrested, I pretty much, well, I cried like I had lost my best friend. It almost felt like he had died. I didn't think I'd see him again until I was an old man," Clark said.

"A lot of people just said, 'What an idiot.' And he was. But I was more sympathetic than that. I knew he was struggling. I knew what was really going on."

Childhood: In Karl's Words

Karl had what you would call a privileged childhood. He had two parents who stayed together, who love him dearly and who put him into all sorts of sports.

His parents are hard-working, honest people. His dad and the rest of his dad's family were respected longshoremen.

"I grew up hearing stories about uncles and family from North and West Vancouver who worked on the docks," Karl said.

Meanwhile, his mother worked part time and stayed at home looking after Karl and Erika.

"She always drove me and the other kids on my sports teams and always volunteered with all of my sports," said Karl, whose plate was often full of athletic endeavors.

At different times in his childhood and adolescence, he was involved in soccer, hockey, baseball, basketball and rugby. When it came to athletic pursuits, Karl was a coachable kid and he worked his butt off.

In school, Karl never found the subjects difficult—when he applied himself.

"But at some point, I started having disagreements with my teachers, and I started to pay less attention to studying," Karl admitted. "I obviously had serious issues with authority pretty early."



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

The wilderness of B.C. gives Karl's parents time to think about why their son went astray.

By high school, Karl started skipping classes and getting into some trouble: drinking, smoking pot and getting into the odd fight.

"I just always seemed to get myself into the middle of things. Usually I was stepping between friends trying to defend someone," Karl said. "For some reason, I just veered off course."

At the same time, though, Karl was a star basketball player. His team was one of the best in the lower mainland and qualified for and played at the AAA provincial championships, the premier high-school tournament in the province.

**"I obviously had serious issues
with authority pretty early."**

—Karl Thorson

And like many teenage boys, Karl had an interest in bodybuilding, following what essentially amounted to a "fuck the legs, let's bench" strength program that focused entirely on gaining upper-body mass.

"By then, most of my friends were involved in drugs somehow. A few of them were selling weed and cocaine as young as 15 or 16," he said. "And for some reason, I got it into my head that the answer to life's problems was making money, making easy money. I was always looking for fast money."

And he quickly discovered a way to do it. At a young age, Karl found himself making quick money.

In 2002, he was charged with trafficking in Canada, but the charges were stayed.

"I had plans to do things differently, but I went about it the wrong way and got lost," Karl said.

And on that night in November, frustrated with how his life was going at the time and driven by a craving for easy money, he decided to take a risk.

"I felt money could solve the issues in my life, so I went back to what I thought I knew," Karl said.



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

***As they wait for Karl to finish his sentence,
Bud and Lea still believe in their son.***

Solitary Confinement

Today, Karl is an inmate at Federal Correctional Institution Lompoc, a low-security facility that houses male inmates north of Los Angeles, Calif. Prior to being transferred to Lompoc, and during his trial, he spent a few months at Seattle's SeaTac, a Federal Detention Center, where he endured a month in solitary confinement.

"One month in solitary confinement doesn't necessarily sound like a long time, but time goes slowly in that room all alone," Karl explained.

Looking back more than two years later, the memory is still clear, and he sometimes goes back to that month in solitary confinement. He wrote in an e-mail:

"I break away that weak shell that is my body. I sweat away the fat in solitary confinement. I leave the mistakes behind me in that cell, and begin to rebuild from scratch.



Emily Beers/CrossFit Journal

Karl's time in solitary confinement was a stark contrast to the open spaces of his home.

This new body hasn't seen the sun yet. It hasn't breathed in the ocean's air; it hasn't felt the rain from the city that I call home."

Although Karl was allowed one book with him, there was little to do to pass the time. There were no sounds, and the only voice was the one in his head. So to avoid staying in his head every waking minute of every day, Karl started to focus on his physical self.

He began doing burpees, push-ups, squats and any other movement he could think of that required just his body and his will.

When he was released from solitary confinement, he felt like a new person. Two and a half years later, Karl reflected in an email on his first moments out of solitary:

"My new body first felt a sun that was closer to me, breathed a new ocean's air, and felt a warmer kind of rain.

I was motivated by visions of training in a CrossFit gym back home. In those visions, my body was strong; I could feel the force it was capable of; I knew its potential.

Intensity has become my preparation. Variety my trainer. Functionality my goal."

With a new body, Karl also began to transform his mind, his way of thinking.

"You start to appreciate the things you have, instead of my old life where my focus was on the things I don't have," he said.

So he focused on things like his body, his mind and simple pleasures like music.

"It's hard to describe how amazing music sounds after so long of silence," he said.

With this new perspective on life, Karl was released from solitary confinement and mentally prepared for the challenge of living two and a half years behind bars in the American prison system. He committed himself to a period of both healing and bettering himself.

The Karl They Know

More than two years later, Bud and Lea still remember exactly what Karl looked like in December 2011, when they went to Seattle to visit their son where he was being detained.

"He was all stressed out. He was all puffy. He looked awful," Lea says. "And we had to keep a certain distance from him. It felt like it wasn't really our Karl."

She takes a sip of tea and a deep breath.

"He's not a bad person. He did a stupid thing," she says, her eyes beginning to water.

She wipes a tear and continues: "He just didn't think."

**"He really wants to make a
change in his life."**

—Lea Thorson

Bud puts his hand on Lea's shoulder sympathetically.

"He just felt trapped and cornered," Bud says.

Lea adds: "He said he wants to make it up to us. He doesn't need to do that. We just want him to be happy. And to be the person we know he can be At the trial, Karl said, 'I made a horrible mistake.' Then he told us, 'I'm going to use this time as much as possible to move on and get going with my life.' He's trying to be as positive as possible."

Bud and Lea thoroughly believe their son.

"He really wants to make a change in his life," Lea explains.

"He knows what he's done," Bud says.

"I just want him home. Safe and sound," Lea says, before beginning to recount an old memory, a memory she feels represents who her son really is, who her son would like to be.

"I remember one time, when Karl was a teenager, a mom at my high school came up to me and said, 'Your son is the most fabulous kid.' And I asked why," Lea begins.

"I guess someone had been picking on her daughter—a heavyset girl—and Karl didn't even know this girl, but he knew it was wrong. And he stepped in and defended her Karl believes things happen for a reason, and I try every day to believe this. It gives us hope," she says.

Bud looks up from stroking Rika, the golden retriever, and nods.

"It's just really a sad thing. He's a decent man, so respectful to older people," he says.

"He's an old soul," Lea adds before pulling out an old picture of Karl at the age of 12.

She holds it up and beams.

"When you look at this picture—at his face, at his eyes—you can see he's a kind soul," she says. "You can just see it."

Part 2 of this story will take a look at Karl's physical and emotional journey over two and a half years at Lompoc Prison. He is set to be released in February or March of 2014.



About the Author

Emily Beers is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor. She competed in the CrossFit Games in 2011 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.

"NONE OF THIS
WOULD EXIST
WITHOUT YOU."

BY E.M. BURTON



YOU MIGHT BE
FORGIVEN FOR NOT
RECOGNIZING HIS
NAME.

Steve Hug was 16 years of age in 1968, when, in Mexico City, he became the youngest U.S. male Olympian in history. He competed again in the '72 Olympics in Munich.

Stanford University, his alma mater, describes Hug in its Hall of Fame as the "winningest" Stanford gymnast ever.

Hug was definitely a prodigy. Larry Banner, of the U.S. Gymnastics Hall of Fame, wrote that he saw Hug perform when Hug was around 12 and thought, "I suspect we're seeing a world class champion in the making." Journalist Paul Buker, covering the PAC-8 competition in 1974, commented in "You ... Choose the Time to Do Well" that Hug "is one of this country's greatest athletes." He added, "That and a buck might get him a tank of gas."

To the 10-year-old Greg Glassman who saw Hug perform, it was a revelation. Hug's performances were his inspiration, Hug his childhood hero.

Though they have a great many friends and acquaintances in common, the two had never met until the week of the CrossFit Games in 2013. When they did, Glassman, CrossFit Founder and CEO, explained the magnitude and scope of CrossFit's aims—from improved fitness for people around the world to the various charitable initiatives, the rapidly growing community of affiliate owners and the excitement of crowning the world's fittest at the Games. On parting, Glassman embraced Hug and, referring to the inspiration Hug had provided him as a youth, said: "None of this would exist without you."

THE JOY OF GYMNASTICS

The story of Hug's athletic career is astounding, but it paints a larger picture of the sad decline of men's gymnastics in the United States "to near extinction," as Coach Glassman puts it.

It used to be fun.

Hug began honing his skills as a boy with his friends, in his yard, at local parks and at the beach. The only thing on anyone's mind was having fun.

Everyone cheered each other on in the spirit of friendly competition—a sort of, "Hey, check this out!"—the whole scene overflowing with enthusiasm.

Gymnastics at that time in Southern California was, for the most part, an outdoor activity without much formal coaching. It filled a huge role in the social and cultural life of boys and youth in America throughout the century, but it exploded in the '50s and '60s, and the epicenters were the beaches, parks and schools of Los Angeles. Flying rings were the norm, in contrast to the still rings seen at the Olympics.

"It really was a way of life," Hug recalled. "We didn't even think of it as a sport the way one does today. It was a lifestyle. Gymnastics was simply fun to do, and we were all doing it for the sake of doing it—the thing in itself."

Hug added: "The competition was just for fun. You weren't qualifying for anything—it was just a fun day at the beach."

"WE WERE
ALL DOING IT
FOR THE SAKE
OF DOING IT—
THE THING IN
ITSELF."

-STEVE HUG

Cover photo: Hug on the beach in winter in 1970. The heavier clothes hid the back brace he had to wear for a year when he "couldn't work out." (Courtesy of Steve Hug)



Far left: Steve Hug at 14, on the high bar at the Santa Monica Beach meet in 1966. (Courtesy of Steve Hug)

Above: Steve Hug at 12 years of age. (Film stills, courtesy of Steve Hug)

Left: Steve Lerner on the rings in 1969, shot by Hug while also swinging, his own arm in a cast from elbow surgery (film stills).

"THE
CELEBRATION
WAS IN
PERFORMING
AND KNOWING
IT WAS GOING
TO BE GOOD."
—STEVE HUG

The sport actually sounds more like a party at times. One fellow, Stan Gordon, installed gymnastics equipment over the swimming pool at his home in Encino.

"We'd go to the beach, then we'd go to Stan's house. He had swinging rings over the pool, a horizontal bar—which would wreck your hands—and a trampoline installed at an angle. Of course, looking back, it was so dangerous, but we just thought it was great. Stan built the pool to accommodate his equipment," Hug said.

Comments on this video of footage from that time are peppered with references to gymnastics clubs and competitions that look very different from those of today. One commenter's enthusiasm for the performances—perhaps not actually the first quad salto captured on film, as the title proclaims—was notable: "If that don't get you laid, nothing will."

It's not surprising that Muscle Beach in Santa Monica is considered to be the birthplace of the 20th-century physical-fitness boom. In reviewing *Remembering Muscle Beach*, Harold Zinkin's history of the Santa Monica Gymfest, gymnasticscoaching.com wrote:

"In 1935, the City of Santa Monica hired UCLA coach Cecil Hollingsworth to teach gymnastics at Muscle Beach. By the late 1930s, there were 50 or 60 regulars, and thousands of spectators came to see them perform on weekends. ... And eventually The Beach was known nationally and internationally. To Zinkin and the other regulars (with now-famous names like LaLanne, Gold and Tanny), its fame was irrelevant. It was, he writes, 'our education, our club, our cause. It was our youth.'"

And young boys all over the country aspired to it. Hug was there every week.

"The guys who were out there at Santa Monica, what they were doing was really kind of the purest form of it," Hug said. "When you were watching, it was like watching any other kind of performance, like a dance or seeing live music."

It was unlike Olympic and other forms of gymnastics competition: "Who won was incidental; there were no scores—it was the experience of watching. For the gymnasts who performed, we'd train for the performance and that was it. To think of scoring would have been absurd," Hug said.

"Seeing your first quad," Hug smiled, referring to four continuous aerial somersaults, "well, that was an event."



MUSCLE BEACH TO MEXICO CITY

Before the '68 Olympics, Hug's talent was already well known. Gary Klein, writing in 1999 for the *Los Angeles Times*, described seeing Hug perform as a boy in *The Best, Bar None*:

"Ten years before I graduated from high school, I saw Steve Hug of Chatsworth (High School) win the 1968 City Section all-around gymnastics championship before a capacity crowd at Cal State Los Angeles. It was a performance by a high school athlete that equals any I have witnessed in 15 years covering sports for *The Times*. ... Hug's performance was a revelation. He defeated his closest competitor by 13 points, the largest margin on record in City history."

Brief glimpses are available online of Hug's performances at the Olympics in 1968 and 1972.

Few can imagine what these experiences were like. Competing in his first Olympic Games "was a celebration for me," Hug recalled. "I was quite nervous before the first event, thinking of everything that could go wrong, something like tripping on the mat while walking up to the horizontal bar. As soon as my hands touched the bar, though, I knew I was not going to miss anything. I was so prepared and in such good shape that it was a joy to perform these routines—I felt like I was pretty good at them."

The problem of unfair scoring emerged as an issue, which might be expected given that judging was very subjective. In perhaps the most obvious example, Czech Vera Caslavka was denied gold in the balance beam when the Soviet-influenced judging panel awarded it to Natalia Kuchinskaya of the U.S.S.R. despite cries of protest from the crowd. In the floor exercise, reports indicate Caslavka's routine was clearly better, but Soviet Larisa Petrik, who had performed before Caslavka, had her score mysteriously upgraded after the fact, creating a tie for first. Not insignificantly, the Soviet Union had invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Caslavka had voiced her opposition publicly.

But the whims of the judges didn't concern the man who had trained on Muscle Beach for the love of the sport.

"I knew the scoring wasn't fair. We all did," Hug noted. "I had this palpable sense of people coming together from all over the world, to be together, to go out and perform. We, the gymnasts from all countries, appreciated and understood what was good, regardless of the score. There was no money involved at the time, no external reward. The celebration was in performing and knowing it was going to be good."

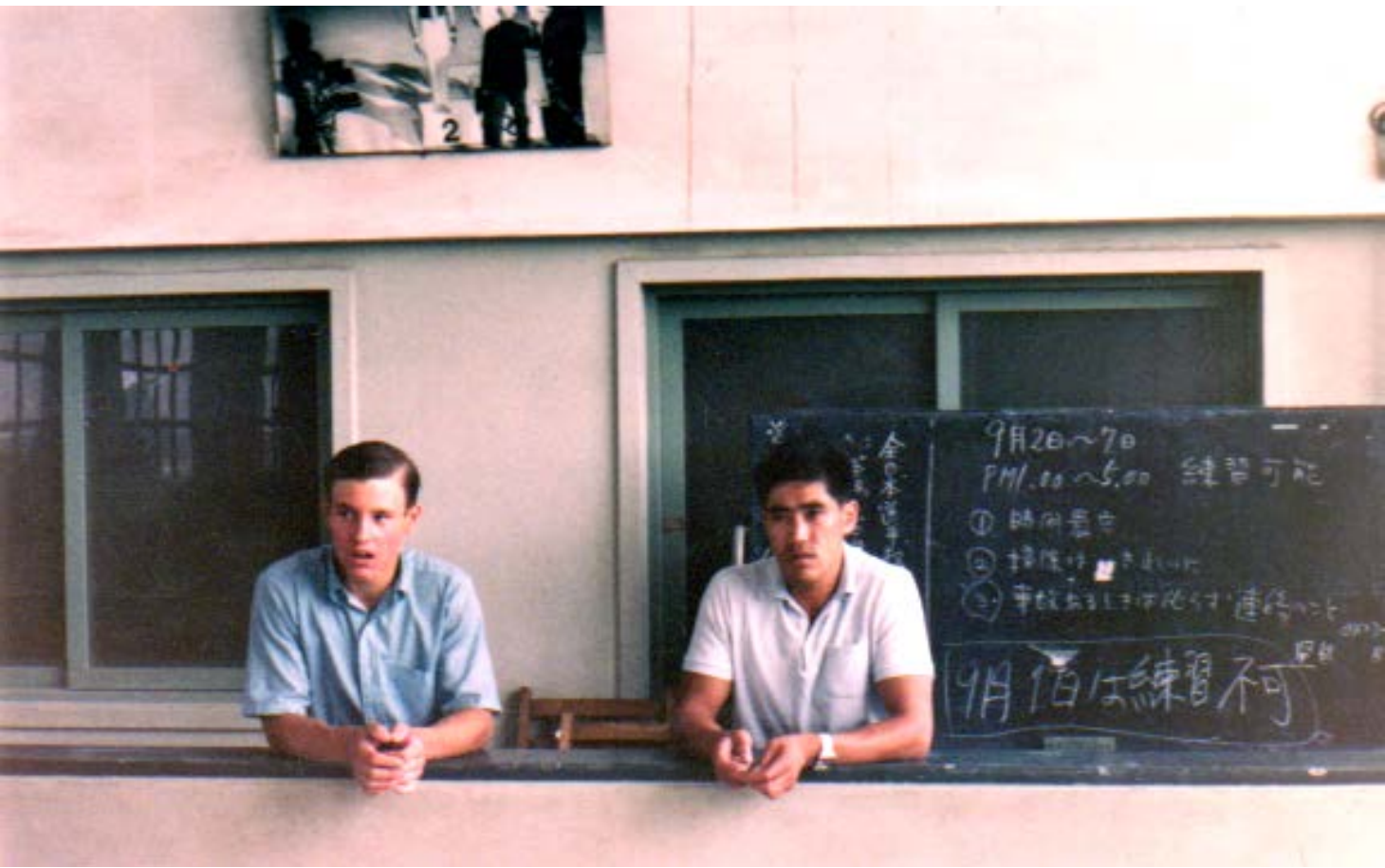
In Mexico City, Hug finished 36th in the all-around competition, putting him third of the six men on the U.S. team that finished seventh.



Opposite page: Santa Monica Beachfest. (Film stills, courtesy of Steve Hug)

Top: Souvenir postcard from the Mexico City Olympics showing the U.S. Men's Gymnastics Team members from left to right: Sid Freudenstein, Fred Roethlisberger, Steve Cohen, Richard Lloyd, Dave Thor, Steve Hug. Not pictured: Kanati Allen. The team had been asked to pose by simply standing in front of the sculpture. (Courtesy of Steve Hug)

Bottom: The sign and torchbearer from the opening ceremonies of the Mexico City Olympics. (Film stills, courtesy of Steve Hug)



Hug had found his true peers, but at first they weren't too sure about him. He was the first Caucasian to train at the facility, and it would be eight months before he saw another foreigner. They were polite, but, as Hug said, "It must have been very hard for them." He had to prove himself and what he could do. It took a couple of months of consistent demonstration of his seriousness and focus for the others to accept him and treat him as a member of the team.

When he first arrived, Hug stayed with a Japanese family who hosted American students, but after two months or so of Hug's taking the train to the university every day after school, his coaches saw that he was serious and suggested he move into the dormitory with the other athletes. As soon as he did, everything shifted.

It was close quarters: a house in which several groups of 12 young men, all of them gymnasts, lived together, trained together and took all meals collectively. They shared a common respect for the training, for themselves and for the others, and for the sport. Hug was no longer a foreigner; he was a full member of the team. He likens the experience to one depicted in the story *The Last Samurai*, in which the lead character, a complete outsider, transforms from prisoner to fellow team member: "It was the training. The training changed everything."

Hug recalled "a different spirit in Japan" that was characterized by hard work and a focus on the beauty of movement.

"I had to relearn everything, how to work more efficiently and how to focus more on aesthetics," he said.

The younger athletes always trained with an older one, a *sempai*, who would comment on everything they did—only Endo and the assistant coach, Hayata, also a gold medalist in Tokyo, were *sensei*, or teachers. For Hug, the environment was ideal.

"Nobody would dare show up with less than 110 percent. But it was more than that—the group was more important than the individual athletes. In that kind of environment, you'll try even harder."

When it came time for Hug to return to the U.S., the coaches and his fellow athletes and their family members gathered at the airport to see him off.

"Everyone came—70 people," he said with a smile.

Before he left, he was invited to his coach's house for dinner (a notable honor) and was served blowfish (an even more notable honor).

Upper left: This photo of Hug with his coach, Endo Yukio, was taken in 1969, shortly after Hug arrived in Japan. Hug recalls the time fondly. The chalkboard sign behind Endo lists the training schedule for the day with the workouts itemized, as well as a number in case of emergency. Behind the pair is a partially cropped image on the wall of Endo on top of the Olympic podium as all-around champion in 1964. At the end of each day, the athletes would scrub the gym. (Courtesy of Steve Hug)

Lower left: Great friends Kenmotsu Eizo and Steve Hug, who had worked out together in Japan two years before, were reunited at the 1972 Munich Olympics. "This shot was taken during the all-around finals. Kenmotsu was world champion at the time, and we were rotating every event together here at the finals. What an honor for me; talk about a way to celebrate," Hug said. (Courtesy of Steve Hug)

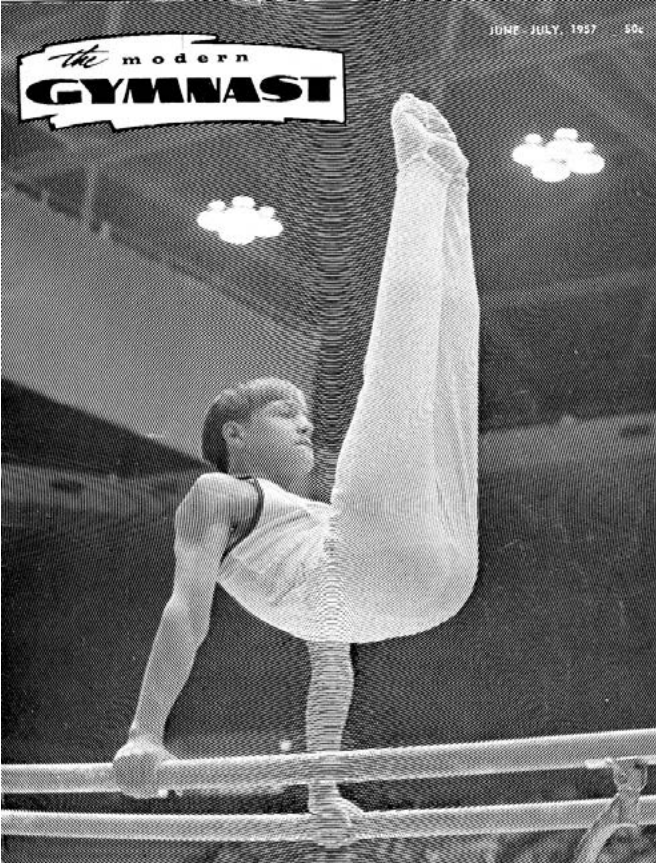
Below: Steve Hug, 14, on the cover of *The Modern Gymnast* (June/July 1967). Hug acknowledges the importance of this media to the sport: "Glenn Sundby had the only gymnastics magazine for decades, starting in 1956, and I had every issue. At the time, it was all we had to see what was going on around the country and the world in gymnastics. He took this shot at the first UCLA invitational that I was asked to participate in—I didn't know it was going to be in the magazine, let alone the cover, until I opened the mailbox." (Courtesy of *International Gymnast* magazine)

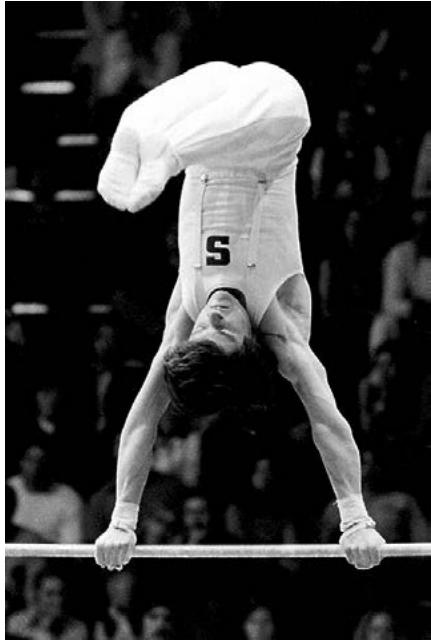


After the '68 Olympics, a meeting with Katsu Yamanaka changed his life. Thanks to Yamanaka's introduction, Hug, then 17, spent the senior year of high school training in Japan. He received rather rigorous coaching there, to put it mildly, in a remarkably different environment than he was used to; the experience of competing in the Olympics paled in comparison.

"Thanks to Katsu Yamanaka, I trained at Nichidai (Nihon University), where the head coach was Endo Yukio," Hug said. "Endo was the all-around champion at the 1964 Olympic Games and was by far the most respected person in gymnastics at that time. I attended the American School in Japan, but I would be done with school by noon every day and take the train to the gym. One day, the principal called me into his office to tell me that I wouldn't get into college by taking such a light load in my senior year. I didn't listen, of course."

Hug "felt at home in the gym, finally training with others who put out 100 percent effort. It was such a gift for me to be with such high-level athletes. The culture shock for me was in coming back to gyms in the U.S. where bringing half the effort was commonplace."





“We were really lucky to have Dave Demanty photographing the gymnasts in the Bay Area in black and white. The Bay Area was the center of black-and-white photography in the '70s, with Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, and the F64 group out of Carmel. David was a really good photographer, the only one who shot at meets in black and white, as far as I know. He was at all the Cal State v. Stanford competitions, which were usually full, if not sold out. What a cultural event it was. Dave really captured a lot of it as an art form.” —Steve Hug (Photos by Dave Demanty, all in competition at Stanford)



On his return to the States, Hug pursued undergraduate studies at Stanford. He was coached there by both Dan "Peaceful Warrior" Millman, then director of gymnastics at the university, and Sadao Hamada, a graduate of Nittaidai, the Nippon Sport Science University, who would remain at Stanford for over 30 years.

Stanford's Hall of Fame expands on the success of Hug's achievements for the school:

“His 11 All-American awards are a school record, with five of the accolades coming as individual crowns: three in the all-around and two in the parallel bars. Hug's three straight all-around wins—the first NCAA titles in Stanford gymnastics history—are tied for the second-most consecutive titles in NCAA history, while his five overall crowns are tied for third. The first of three winners of the Nissen-Emery Award to compete on the Farm, Hug participated in the 1968 and 1972 Olympic Games. Though he never medaled, Hug was still the youngest ever Olympic gymnastics team member, and the first American to compete in the finals of the all-around.”

In the '72 Olympics, Hug finished 31st in the all-around, 19 places higher than the next American male, and he was 11th on the pommel horse.

Hug competed while injured in the qualifying competition for the 1976 Olympics, which served to worsen his condition. Feeling that he had performed as well as he ever would, Hug retired from competition, went to graduate school and began a professional career.

Utterly grateful to this day for the time he spent in Japan, however, Hug has continued to coach gymnastics and give seminars, “passing it on,” as he says.

WHITHER GYMNASTICS?

Steve Hug grew up when practicing movement was fun, competition was healthy and between friends, and formal coaching was rare. It was pure play—a culture in which young people coached and encouraged even younger ones, showing them exactly how to do every move.

Klein, the *Los Angeles Times* reporter, described the heyday of U.S. men's gymnastics and the schools' programs:

“Most people today are unaware that Los Angeles schools once were regarded as the training ground for some of the nation's best gymnasts, producing numerous amateur champions and 23 Olympians.

“Los Angeles city schools incorporated gymnastics into the curriculum in 1926 and produced Olympians in every decade from the 1920s through the 1980s. The '40s and '50s were the sport's golden era in Los Angeles, with almost every school fielding a team, some with more than 100 boys in their programs.”

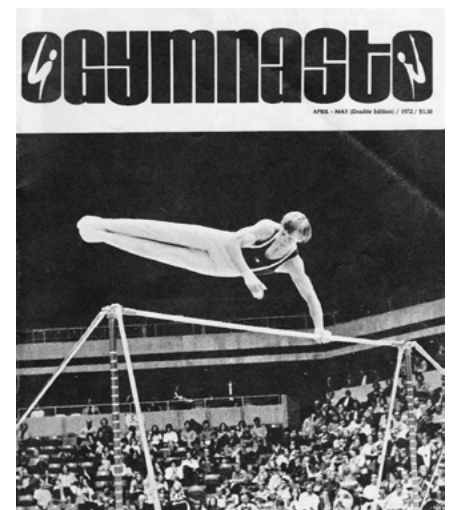
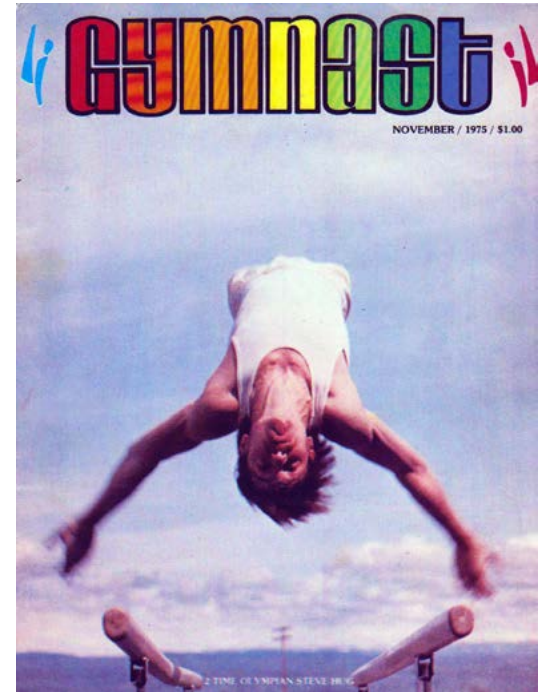
Hug can pinpoint the moment everything changed: June 6, 1978, the day Californians amended the state's constitution with Proposition 13.

“On that day, the state limited property taxes, and it was a big deal. Overnight, the schools had their sports funding cut. Every single gymnastics training program in the state was shut down,” Hug said.

The schools sold off all the equipment at fire-sale prices, and Hug recalls picking up a trampoline for \$50.

The Santa Monica Gymfest also fizzled out in the '80s. The last one was held in 1993, and, at the age of 41, Hug won the competition. The sport, however, had lost the very spirit that had attracted generations of young boys and men in the first place.

Beyond the obvious is the loss of the qualitative aspects of gymnastics—and especially the appreciation of simply doing it for its own sake, of human movement as a form of art. The now-acclaimed filmmaker Louis Schwartzberg shot a film of Hug in 1975, a collaboration between the two young men when they were both students. His footage showed the capacity of gymnastics to convey beauty and emotion. Shot on black-and-white film, with lighting designed for contrast, the work also makes use of slow-motion effects to reveal the detail of Hug's skill, and it remains as a document of his expressive potential as an artist.



Top: The cover of *Gymnast* magazine (November 1975). (Courtesy of *International Gymnast* magazine)

Bottom: The cover of *Gymnast* magazine (April/May 1972). (Courtesy of *International Gymnast* magazine)

"WHEN WE WERE
KIDS, WE KNEW
WHAT WE
WANTED TO DO.
AND WE DID IT
EVERY DAY."

-STEVE HUG



Steve Hug performs a handstand on July 28, 2013.
(Courtesy of Steve Hug)

There were other losses. When Hug was a young person, the people he was working out with were "like family. Ninety percent of it was whom you worked out with," said Hug, who remembers every single person and emphasizes that this kind of peer instruction is especially important during the early years of training.

"When we did it, it was free. If they were paid, coaches didn't earn much at all; it wasn't based on a system of exchange. Now, it's a business, and it can be big business, too. Gymnastics camps take on a thousand children at \$800 a head; it's a lot of money," Hug said.

Hug recalls junior-college drop-in nights three times a week, when people could use the equipment for free.

"Consider who's doing the sport now and why," Hug explained. "What's their motivation? Parents pay dearly for training opportunities, every competition has an entry fee, and uniforms cost about \$150. And to think, only one in a hundred of these children can do a handstand let alone hold one. One in a hundred!"

He continued: "Back then, when it was time for a competition, you didn't tell your parents—well, maybe you did, if you needed a ride. Children now have soccer on Tuesdays, gymnastics on Wednesdays, piano on Thursdays, karate on Fridays, and so on. When we were kids, we knew what we wanted to do. And we did it every day."

A NEW PLAYGROUND

Today, Steve Hug is a published landscape architect who lives and practices close to his old training grounds.

During Games week, Coach Glassman and Sevan Matossian caught up with Hug. Glassman elegantly explained CrossFit to Hug and described CrossFitters as those with "intestinal fortitude."

They compared notes on the early days, recalling friends and remembering what it was like to train in parks and on beaches, all without formal coaching. On unicycles, on stilts while others threw rocks, on all manner of jungle-gym structures for climbing and playing on, they practiced and played, over and over again. As Hug later explained, "All the schools had gyms, the parks were full of equipment, and, most importantly, it was free."

They discussed how having something great to aspire to can change a young person's life, even if the goals might seem impossible.

"How many young girls," Glassman wondered, "had posters of Mary Lou Retton on their walls? They inspired them to aspire to something. Not everyone gets to go to the Olympics, but girls will get out of it what they can."

What impressed Hug most about the CrossFit Games was the crowd, "the great vibe" of a strong community with an overall sense of positivity. The audience of athletes was the furthest thing from what Hug expected; how unlike typical sports fans we are.

"The unusual thing was the spectators all seemed to be in great shape. Athletes watching athletes—what a concept. That's how it was 50 years ago in the gymnastic community—gymnasts went to watch gymnastic competitions," Hug said.

"Remember those days? ... How it felt to be there? We're bringing it back," Glassman said with a big smile.

On his return home, Hug, now 61, was inspired to stop at Northridge Park on Reseda Boulevard, where he had hung out 50 years ago.

"There were a couple of guys out there enjoying the afternoon sun and working out on the parallel bars and rings, so I had one of them take my picture doing a handstand. The spirit lives!"

In the week following the Games, Hug began working out at CrossFit Dark Horse in Sherman Oaks and was immediately attracted to it. Unlike many of us, he didn't comment at all on just how bad the workout sucked.

"Suck? It feels like home. I want to work out with that group of people. Everybody's bringing all they've got," he smiled. "That's my group, man. ... Everyone in the room is an athlete and your 'rivals' are cheering you on!"

He can't wait for his next birthday to make his new friends do burpees.

"I really appreciate CrossFit for bringing this back into my life," Hug said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E.M. Burton is a multidisciplinary designer who divides her time between Northern and Southern California.

"REMEMBER
THOSE DAYS? "
WE'RE BRINGING
IT BACK.""

-GREG GLASSMAN



Coach Greg Glassman, skateboard legend Rodney Mullen, Dale Saran, Steve Hug and Sevan Matossian (l-r) on July 28, 2013. (E.M. Burton)

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Confessions of a Testosterone-Drunk Jackass

Pat Sherwood isn't lost in Central America and doesn't want your god-damn help.

By Pat Sherwood

October 2013



Ian Wittenber

"Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of experience comes from bad judgment." —Seen on a bathroom wall in a mom-and-pop breakfast diner in Alpine, Wyo.

1 of 3

Mistakes made and lessons learned.

As I write this, we have been living on motorcycles for 64 days and covered nearly 8,000 miles across seven U.S. states and nine countries. It has been amazing and overwhelmingly positive. I could lie to help my pride and say that we've been prepared for everything and nothing has gone wrong, but that's just not true. So, I'm going to open myself up to the Internet world of experts by being honest about some things (not everything) I've messed up.

Know When You Are in Over Your Head

On this trip, I've been lost in a city and unable to find a CrossFit affiliate or hostel even though I had the address. This has happened several times. We'd ride through a city only to find out we'd gone 20 minutes in the wrong direction. Of course, it was usually raining and all we wanted to do was find shelter from the storm. At times like those, I'm reduced to an angry child. I hate getting lost. I just want to scream, take my toys and go home. This happened just yesterday trying to find CrossFit Quito in Ecuador. I felt like a loser. How the hell can I navigate across the entire country on back roads, find the city, and then not be able to find the damn affiliate? I had to ask for help. I swallowed my pride and asked a taxi driver to guide us to the address. We followed the taxi on our motorcycles and paid him when we arrived. Worked like a champ.

Perhaps the biggest near disaster caused by my amazing male pride happened on the outskirts of Cali, Colombia. After some time on a dirt road, I got a nail in my rear tire and it went flat. Ian Wittenber and I were stranded on a desolate road in a very bad area, and it was getting dark. Changing the tire in the dark with a headlamp would have taken me a couple of hours or more. The Colombian police passed by about 10 minutes later and stopped to offer us help. They said that they could get us a free tow truck and bring the bike to a tire shop in a small town about 5 km away. The shop would have it changed and we would be back on the road light years before I could have us mobile again. What did I say to the cop? "No thanks, I will do it myself."

Why would I say that? Because I'm a jackass and full of testosterone. Luckily, the cop—who knew we would likely get robbed or killed hanging out on the road for hours in the dark—refused to take no for an answer. He asked about five more times until I finally said yes. Thank God we accepted help. We were fucked and I knew it. I just did not want to admit it. We got the bike towed, and we were back riding in no time.

While I'm being honest, here's another huge mistake on my part: I did not practice changing a tire on the Kawasaki KLR-650s before we left on a 100-day trip. Yes, I know this is beyond stupid. Please feel free to remind me in the comments. The other bikes I've had used tubeless tires, so taking the actual wheel off, breaking the tire free of the rim, changing the tire, resealing the bead, etc., was something I've never done. Ready to laugh at me even more? I watched YouTube videos on how to do it before I left and said, "Well, that looks pretty straightforward. We should be fine." Truth be told, it is straightforward. But that does not mean it does not require practice to execute efficiently. I was an idiot.

Proper Gear Would Be Helpful

I knew we would be riding through a "decent" (massive understatement) amount of rain on this trip. Due to the time of year we chose to travel, it was going to be the rainy season in several countries. I'd ridden in the rain before in the U.S., so no worries, right? However, in the U.S. I usually have the opportunity to get off the highway at the next exit or easily pull over somewhere to seek shelter from the storm. Plus, I was never really that far from home or a place where I could get warm and dry.

The gear I bought was similar to what I use in the States. The riding jacket is mesh for the hot days and has a zip-in/zip-out waterproof liner. Excellent. We also got high-quality riding pants that were water repellent, which is not waterproof, but I figured we would be good to go. I've ridden bikes for years, and I love to ride with Chuck Taylors on my feet and Mechanix gloves on my hands. And yes, I know the Chucks will not help my ankles in a wreck, but they are comfy and I like them. So, I brought my Chucks and Mechanix gloves.

We've been in conditions from hot as hell in the desert of Mexico to freezing cold in the Andes at 9,000 feet or more. The relentless freezing-cold rain had us soaked to the bone in no time. The gloves offered no protection from being cold and wet. My hands lost sensation and became dead and numb, and it's tough to operate the clutch, gas and front brake when you can't use your fingers. The Chucks got soaked, and my feet turned to blocks of ice. The water found the seam where the jacket met the pants, and after an hour my lower body was soaked to the bone as if I was riding in shorts. My legs were jackhammering from the cold.



Proper gloves would have prevented frozen hands, but proper gloves are for sissies.

All of this happened day after day in the middle of nowhere. There was no exit on which to pull off. There was no shelter to seek. Often our shelter was another four or five hours away. Our only option was to ride in the cold, pouring rain. We would pull over when we lost sensation in our hands, then put our hands in our armpits until they warmed up enough again to press on.

We tried to be “tough” and rode like this for a few countries and several thousand miles, until we finally admitted one day that we could not endure it for the rest of the trip. We had hit our breaking point. It was too miserable and hard. We went to a fancy motorcycle store and bought high-quality rain gear built for torrential rain, including gloves and boots.

The next time it rained, instead of enduring it like a couple of tough guys, we put on our fancy rain suits. I thought we looked ridiculous. As I suited up the first time, I felt like we weren’t being rugged adventurers anymore. We were one step closer to being the old dude riding the Honda GoldWing with a radio and cup holder. All those feelings disappeared immediately once it began to rain and we actually stayed bone dry. Holy shit! Riding in the rain no longer reminded me of jack hammering in the cold ocean during Hell Week! It was amazing! Why did we not do this sooner? Because I’m a slow learner and pride is a bitch.

Work Smarter, Not Harder

I tend to try to run around the wall instead of through it as the days tick by on this trip. What you can endure for a couple of hours or even a couple of days might prove unbearable for a longer duration of time.

The overall lesson? Don’t wait until you crash and burn to make a necessary change. Assess your situation, look forward and make the appropriate decisions.



About the Author

Pat Sherwood works for CrossFit as a flowmaster and member of the Media Team. He’s done just under 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.

'ROID ALL THE RAGE?

FORMER WADA HEAD DICK POUND REJECTS CLAIMS SPORTS HAVE PURGED THEMSELVES OF STEROIDS AND OTHER PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS.

MIKE WARKENTIN

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY (WADA) commended Major League Baseball in August for cracking down on doping in the wake of suspensions handed out to some of the sport's best-known players.

"The MLB has approached the matter in a professional manner throughout, and we look forward to maintaining our close relationship as we move forward in our efforts to protect clean athletes and advocate doping-free sport," David Howman said in a release.



Shortly before the statement was published, and just before the Aug. 5 announcement of suspensions of Alex Rodriguez and a dozen other players implicated in the Biogenesis scandal, Christine Brennan of *USA Today* looked forward to the sanctions as proof that the sports world is changing.

“When the news comes, we’ll mark the moment as an unprecedented turning point, as a game changer, as the time baseball finally got tough on doping after decades of avoidance and deceit,” Brennan wrote on July 31 in Brennan: Crackdown Shows Tide Has Turned on MLB Dopers.

Dick Pound, who was president of WADA from its inception in 1999 to 2007, wasn’t impressed.

“HAVE BASEBALL PLAYERS STOPPED USING STEROIDS OR HGH OR WHATEVER ELSE THEY’RE USING? OF COURSE NOT.”

—DICK POUND

Pound, 71, now a member of the Foundation Board of WADA, has heard it all before from sports commissioners who deny doping in their leagues to athletes who blame failed drug tests on testosterone levels elevated supposedly due to large amounts of beer and sex. Lance Armstrong tried to get Pound removed from WADA in 2006 and called Pound’s attacks “reprehensible and indefensible.” The International Cycling Union (UCI) sued Pound in 2008 for comments about the sport’s approach to doping, though the dispute was settled out of court.

Indeed, Pound pulls no punches. In his book *Inside Dope* (John Wiley and Sons Canada Ltd., 2006), he heaped abuse on MLB policies, calling their 2004 attempts to clean up the sport “a complete joke and an insult to the intelligence of anyone with an IQ higher than room temperature.”

He called the NHL’s policy “deliberately weak” and NFL drug penalties “woefully weak,” though he allowed that the NFL had the best policies of all major sports leagues—a winner among losers, so to speak.

Pound certainly isn’t convinced baseball is clean, even if an Oct. 4 *New York Times* headline asked if Miguel Cabrera is the hero of the “post-steroid era.”

“Have baseball players stopped using steroids or HGH or whatever else they’re using? Of course not,” Pound told the *CrossFit Journal* in an interview on Oct. 9 in Toronto, Canada.

He was similarly critical of the NFL and its players, though the football league might appear to be stepping things up with testing for human growth hormone (HGH), supposedly to happen in 2013. In truth, the league and the players association agreed in principle to HGH testing in 2011, but arguing continues and HGH testing still isn’t in place. HGH testing has been part of the Olympics since 2004.

“They’ve been talking about HGH testing now for three years. ... When they start testing and do so on an out-of-competition basis—no notice—then I’ll reappraise, but so far there’s been lots of talk and not much action,” Pound said.

With reporters saying the pro leagues are finally serious about cracking down on doping, Pound’s comments suggest high-profile sports aren’t any cleaner and aren’t even particularly interested in keeping drugs out of their athletes.

“I think they’re all at risk—every single sport,” he said.

LOOSE LAWS OF THE BIG LEAGUES

“In professional sports, I have long suspected that the owners of teams have little, if any, interest in serious sanctions for drug use by their players,” Pound wrote in *Inside Dope*.

Why? Simple dollars and cents.

Most pro sports teams make money—a lot of it—and their players are the million-dollar cogs in the machine. Salaries are incredible, with players earning tens of millions of dollars per season. No owner wants a high-paid player on the shelf for a drug violation, and winning teams make more money. The spirit of sport is one thing, but billions of dollars are another, and a few chemicals in a cup of urine are of little consequence to some when home-run races are driving up viewership, attendance and revenue.



Denver Post via Getty Images

Fans are also part of the problem: do they care more about records and wins than they do about long-term health of the athlete and the ethics of sport? Some viewers care not at all what fuels heroes who routinely rush for 100 yards a game and seem invincible in stiff-arming defenders aside.

Under the World Anti-Doping Code, WADA currently bans an athlete for two years for the first doping offense, with a lifetime ban for the second. In its November congress, WADA will be looking to double the length of the ban for a first offense. Blowing a two-year hole in an athlete’s career is one thing, but a four-year suspension is basically a forced retirement for all but the youngest cheaters. These are stiff penalties meant very much as deterrents.

Conversely, MLB suspends players for 50 games for a first offense. In the NHL it’s 20 games. In the NFL, it’s four games, and it takes three offenses to warrant a one-year suspension. In the NBA, players sit out but five of 82 games for one positive test, and it would take a total of four offenses to get a two-year suspension.

In its May 2013 Report to WADA Executive Committee on Lack of Effectiveness of Testing Programs, the WADA

Working Group, which Pound chairs, offered hosts of reasons why drugs are still in sport. Though the report stayed away from the pro leagues for the most part, one line was devoted to them: “The privately-owned professional leagues have refused to adopt the Code (although, to be fair, they have increased the number and range of tests in recent years).”

While many of the world’s national Olympic committees, international federations and government-funded organizations are signatories to the World Anti-Doping Code, the pro leagues will not put pen to paper, claiming they’ve got the situation under control.

“We had a lot of trouble when we got the World Anti-Doping Code together. We said ‘Listen, here’s a tool that might be of interest to the major leagues, the professional leagues, if they really mean what they say.’ And to a league they all said, ‘Don’t bother us. We don’t have a doping problem in name-the-sport, and even though we don’t have one, we have the gold-medal testing program. Go get your own house in order and don’t bother us,’” Pound said of getting the majors to adopt the code.



Lance Armstrong beat drug tests for years before overwhelming evidence forced him to confess to cheating. Details of doping in cycling reveal intricate schemes to beat the system.

When asked about the characteristics of a doping program that doesn't really want to catch anyone, Pound highlighted a number of ways to pay lip service to the anti-doping fight while turning a blind eye to what's really happening.

"You don't test the ones that you don't want to catch, and if you're forced to test them, you let them know in advance," Pound explained. "You bobble the security, the chain of custody or the proper sealing of the samples. And you might send them to a lab where you know that they're not likely to catch them."

Pound pointed to the MLB testing that came after 2003, when congressional pressure was brought to bear on baseball after Steve Bechler died in spring training with the Baltimore Orioles. It was determined that ephedrine—banned by the NFL in 2001—was probably a factor in his death. In response, MLB finally addressed drugs in baseball and set up testing—but only for *steroids*—and it offered players a get-out-of-jail-free card if they failed the test.

"They said, 'Remember, Moose, spring training starts, you're going to get tested for *steroids*! Write this down.' And they had a deal that if you tested positive you could come back two weeks later, get retested, and if that was not positive, then it erased the first positive. It was just mind-boggling," Pound said.

Things might have improved since then, but it's hard to tell at times.

Consider the case of Milwaukee Brewer Ryan Braun. When his 2011 urine sample revealed elevated levels of testosterone, Braun was facing a suspension. He appealed the sanctions on the grounds that his sample had not been handled properly by collector Dino Laurenzi Jr.; it had been stored for several days until shipping options were available to the collector. MLB said this procedure was fine and stood behind the sample and its collection, but a three-person appeals board voted 2-1 in favor of overturning Braun's suspension.

Fast-forward to 2013, when the Biogenesis scandal broke and several MLB players were linked to the clinic that provided performance-enhancing drugs to pro athletes. Braun was implicated, and he later accepted a 65-game suspension that ended his season, admitted he used PEDs in 2011 and actually apologized to Laurenzi.

The Braun incident is proof of two things:

1. It's easier to catch athletes by detective work that reveals their suppliers than it is to catch them via blood and urine tests in a lab. The BALCO Affair from 2003 to 2005 also linked a host of high-profile athletes with PEDs provided by the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative.

2. Even when an athlete is caught, many drug policies contain enough loopholes that a clever lawyer can find a way out. Athletes should be given fair trial and every chance to clear their names, but Braun's admission and apology indicate clever cheaters with good lawyers can find ways to beat the system.

BEAT 'EM AND SMILE

You can beat a drug test in a host of ways. Lance Armstrong might be the best example.

Tested a multitude of times—the exact number is a subject of debate—Armstrong avoided detection for years and famously admitted to Oprah Winfrey in 2013 that he had taken PEDs for a good chunk of his career, including

the period when he was reeling off consecutive Tour de France wins.

“How is it, knowing what you know about your sport, knowing your riders, knowing what they're doing—you've all been involved in this sport for years, you're at the highest level—how is it possible that somebody like Lance Armstrong was out there for nine years and you never caught him? How is that possible?” Pound asked.

He provided his own answer: “My view is that he was their poster boy and they didn't want to catch him.”

Another answer is that drug testing is imperfect, either by nature or by design. Pound would suggest the latter.

“I think our science is good ... so either people know they're going to be tested or they're testing at the wrong

time,” Pound said, pointing to two main issues with failed drug programs.

WADA's *Testing* document (January 2009) puts no-notice, out-of-competition testing “at the core of effective doping control” and then lays out a rigorous system whereby athletes in a registered testing pool are required to submit their whereabouts by providing a location in a 60-minute period for every single day. That gives doping-control agents the opportunity to test an athlete at any time, and there is a penalty system in place for missed tests.

Still, the penalty is less severe than that of testing positive, and it takes three missed tests to constitute an anti-doping rule violation. Athletes who are “glowing” and suspect they will test positive can simply avoid a test and take any measures available to them to clean up before a subsequent test—and there are many measures they can take.

WADA's *Lack of Effectiveness* report confirms that this is indeed a problem: “Missed tests can be used as a technique to avoid testing without consequences, rather than refusals, which are treated as positive tests.”

**“HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT
SOMEBODY LIKE
LANCE ARMSTRONG
WAS OUT THERE FOR NINE YEARS AND YOU
NEVER CAUGHT HIM?
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?”**

—DICK POUND

WADA's system is somewhat stricter than the policies of some sport governing bodies and pro leagues, so it's probable that if its Working Group can fill 15 pages with reasons its drug testing isn't effective, the pro leagues are in the same state—or they're worse.

For instance, the United States Anti-Doping Agency's *Reasoned Decision* as part of the U.S. Postal Service Pro Cycling Team Investigation lists of a host of ways Armstrong

and his teammates avoided detection. Primarily through athlete affidavits, the USADA outlined from pages 129 to 139 a number of measures that included simple nonsense such as not answering the door when testers knocked and more complex evasion strategies involving the use of micro-dosing or masking agents. The affidavits also revealed that athletes and coaches seemed to have an excellent idea of when tests were coming and even employed surveillance techniques to track the collectors. The affidavit of Jonathan Vaughters, former pro and current team manager, said that even an hour's notice was more than enough to take measures to beat the tests.

The affidavits of the cyclists indicate glaring holes in the testing policies of other leagues.

Former NFL player Ryan Riddle pointed out a few in *An Insider's Perspective on NFL Drug Tests* on June 11, 2013.

“All the drug tests I've completed at a team facility were done without a direct witness while filling the cup with a urine sample,” he wrote.

Consider that information while viewing sites such as Quickfixurine.com and Detoxforless.com. The former offers synthetic “clean” urine, while the latter offers all manner of products including fake penises and bladders (Whizzinators), “detox drinks” and urine additives—all designed to help people beat drug tests.

In 2005, NFL running back Onterio Smith was caught with a Whizzinator and vials of dried urine but claimed they were for his cousin. In 2011, linebacker D.J. Williams, then of the Denver Broncos, managed to produce a pair of urine samples that were not of human origin, according to court documents summarized in the July 2012 article-Broncos Linebacker D.J. Williams Flunked Second Drug Test, Court Documents Say. A specimen collector also alleged Williams dropped a hidden bottle during the test and then kicked it into the locker room, where the collector was forbidden to enter.

The Internet is full of sites explaining hundreds of ways to beat tests, including injecting clean urine into a bladder. Former pro cyclist Jeff King, who wrote the *CrossFit Journal* article *Rider on the Storm*, said some racers would indeed go that far.

“Riders started catheterizing themselves with fake urine; i.e., pump fake urine up your penis into your bladder. No way you are going to get busted if you go that far to beat a test,” he said.

And then there are the situations where it appears tests are failed without consequence.



In the in-depth 2011 *New York Times* article *Derek Boogard: A Brain “Going Bad”*, deceased NHL enforcer Derek Boogard’s addiction to painkillers was detailed. According to the article, father Len Boogard was “surprised to hear from his son that he had been given four days’ notice for his next drug test.” At the time, Boogard was suffering from the effects of head trauma and was enrolled in a program to help him deal with substance abuse.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman responded by saying, “None of our teams know four days in advance when they’re being tested.”

Be that as it may, the family’s May 2013 lawsuit against the NHL documents a lengthy history of failed drug tests with no suspensions for the violations.

Boogard died in May 2011 of an accidental overdose of alcohol and painkillers. The NHL has not commented on the suit.

Despite Pound’s statements that the NFL is better than most leagues when it comes to doping, the Von Miller fiasco of 2011-2013 highlights severe flaws in the NFL’s approach to drugs.

“THE MOST POWERFUL DEFENSE AGAINST A DRUG TEST IS KNOWING WHAT THEY ARE TESTING FOR, AND WHEN AND HOW THEY ARE GOING TO TEST.”

—JEFF KING

After failing a drug test in his rookie year of 2011, Miller was tested again and first spilled a sample, then produced a sample that was diluted, according to an *NBCSports.com* report. About a month later, *ESPN.com* and other outlets reported that Miller had actually worked with the urine collector to substitute clean urine for his own sample. His plans were foiled when a second collector realized Miller was not in the city where collection had supposedly taken place.

The result of the comedy: a six-game suspension, with Miller still able to watch film with the team, attend team meetings, hang out in the locker room and work out in team facilities. According to reports on *NBCSports.com*, Miller returned to the field on Oct. 20 with an additional “16 lb. of muscle” when the Broncos faced the Indianapolis Colts.

Overall, tests can be beaten in many, many ways, and the odds of slipping through increase with every hour of advance warning.

“The most powerful defense against a drug test is knowing what they are testing for, and when and how they are going to test. If you know those three things, you can use all you want and you should never fail a test,” King explained.

If you couple that with drug codes that are far more forgiving than WADA’s and contain a host of escape hatches, you’ve got a situation where players have many opportunities to beat the system. To make matters worse, you have an industry where the financial success of players and owners is essentially tied to winning by almost any means necessary.

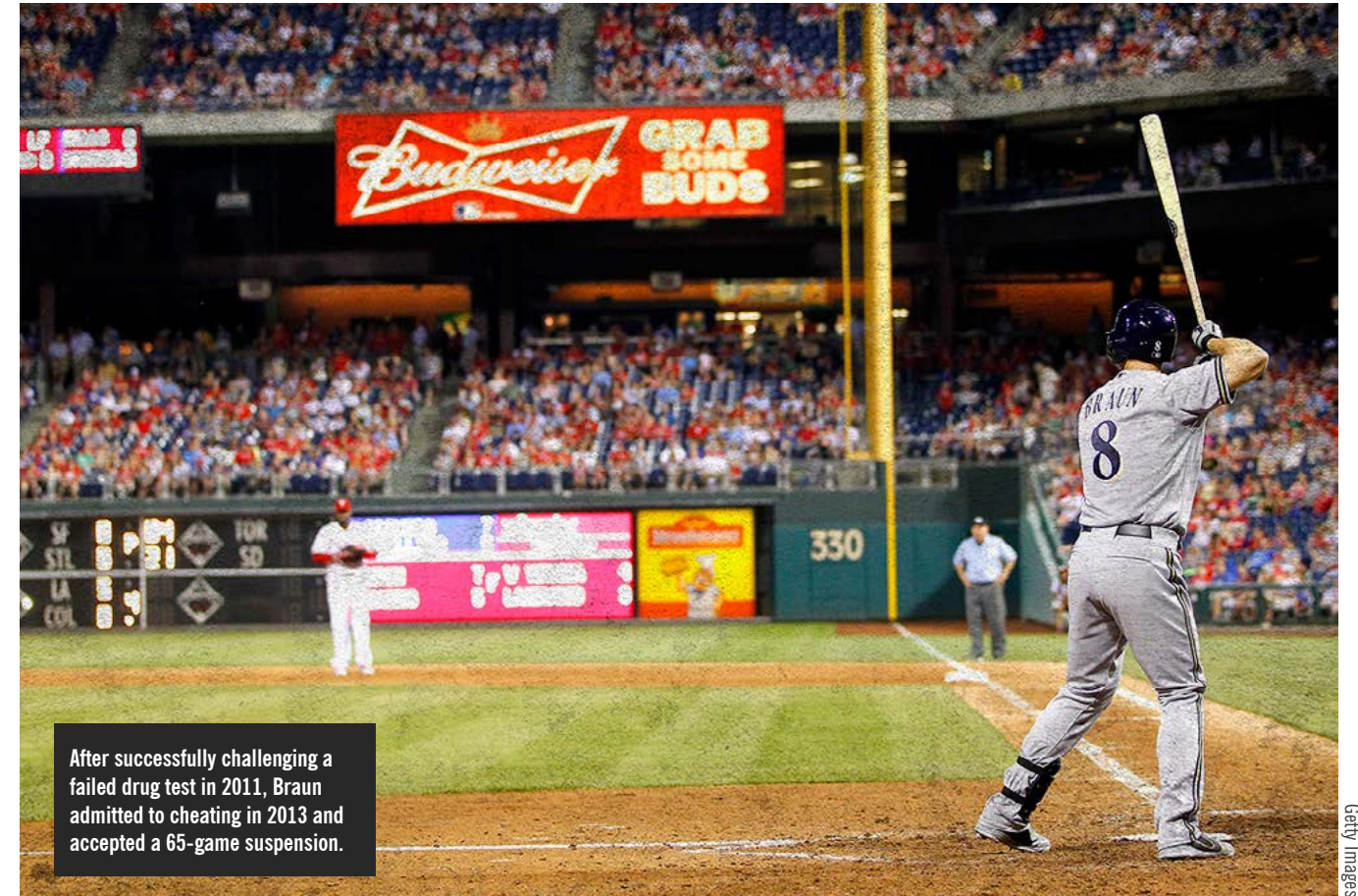
In the 2010 *North Dakota Law Review* article *American Professional Sports is a Doper’s Paradise: It’s Time We Make a Change*, Daniel Gandert and Fabian Ronisky state:

Both owners and players financially benefit from doping. Players that dope usually perform better. The better the athletes perform, the more revenue the owners make. The more revenue owners make, the more valuable players are to their owners. The more valuable players are, the higher their salaries are.

King, the former pro cyclist who’s so disillusioned with the sport that he now only bikes to and from work, agrees: “My opinion is that most sports don’t want to tear themselves apart over drugs. There is too much money at stake. European football, NFL, NBA, etc., all have too much to lose. What did cycling get for ripping itself inside out? Multiple canceled sponsorships and a public perception that the sport is a joke. Not exactly a win for cycling,” he said.

THE END OF DOPING?

It’s almost impossible to collect data on how many athletes are doping due to the nature of the problem. You simply can’t send out a questionnaire and expect honest responses from pros who are breaking the rules as part of a million-dollar gamble. Anecdotal evidence, with all its inherent flaws and potential for exaggeration, strongly suggests drugs are not out of sport at all.



And so does Dick Pound, who led the global fight against doping for almost a decade and then recently chaired a group that reported WADA “drug testing programs have been generally unsuccessful in detecting dopers/cheats.” If the world’s leader in drug-free sport determines its own testing programs aren’t working, what of the NBA and its five-game suspensions for a drug violation? What of the NHL and its lawsuit from the family of a dead enforcer who failed tests but wasn’t suspended? What of the NFL and the urine collector who apparently helped Miller not for money but because he was “star struck”?

On the other side of those questions stand the pro leagues and the fans and reporters who point to Braun, Armstrong and others as proof that their systems are working and doping isn’t an issue any more.

And maybe they’re right. Perhaps we are at the beginning of a new era in which every athlete is prepared to abide by the rules and compete free of PEDs. Perhaps pro sports are the islands of integrity the Olympics have never been

despite the best efforts of Dick Pound, WADA and the International Olympic Committee. Perhaps drug programs are working and the few who are caught are just black sheep. Perhaps sports have indeed changed and the next generation of athletes will compete on a level playing field.

Perhaps. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Warkentin is the Managing Editor of the *CrossFit Journal* and the founder of CrossFit 204.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Mummy Circle

A Halloween-themed workout? Even better than candy!

By Connor Stewart Martin CrossFit Kids

October 2013



Set-Up

Mark off a circular area large enough to fit all athletes. It should provide enough space for them to move around.

Game Play

1. Designate one player to be "the mummy."
2. On "Go," the mummy must walk without bending his or her arms or legs.
3. Players must determine who the mummy is and then leave the circle of play as fast as possible by doing walking lunges. The mummy tries to tag other players.

4. If the mummy tags another player, he or she becomes a mummy and must try to tag other players as well.
5. Repeat until all players have been converted to mummies.

Options

Other slower-paced exercises may be substituted for walking lunges, such as bear crawls or broad jumps.

This game can also be used as a warm-up.

