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CrossFit Curmudgeon Cares?

Pat Sherwood will start the WOD while you're in the bathroom, but deep down he really loves working out with you.

By Pat Sherwood

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I hate competing in CrossFit.

When my daily workout becomes a competition with someone other than myself, all the fun is gone for me. I do CrossFit for selfish reasons. It is my daily escape from the stresses of life. It's my hour to decompress, play my music, push myself, strengthen both body and mind, and enjoy the company of some close friends. It is a bit of a sanctuary for me. I like to keep it simple. The more moving parts involved, the less fun I have.

"Hey, we're going to do this great WOD ... you just need to find 85 percent of your 3-rep max ... blah, blah, blah."

No, I'm not breaking out a calculator to work out. I will simply choose a weight that is light, medium or heavy.

"Hey, we're going to hit three WODs today. Wanna join?"

No, no I don't.

If we have to rush warming up to work out at a specific time, it pisses me off.

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If I get warmed up and I'm ready to hit it only to find that a couple more people just showed up and now we need to fart around for another 15 minutes while they get ready, it pisses me off.

I like to show up, turn on some beats, warm up, hit the WOD, stretch my damn hip flexors, high-five whoever happened to be working out at the same time and leave the gym.

More times than I can remember at the CrossFit HQ gym, four or five of us decided to work out at a certain time. As often happens at work, it's easy to get delayed by a project and be 10 to 20 minutes late for the WOD. Many of my buddies have walked into the gym to find me already working out when this happens.

"Dude! Are you already hitting the WOD?"

"Yes, yes I am."

I did not want it to turn into a production or eat up my entire day. I showed up, warmed up, hit it, and now I'm leaving. Nothing personal. I'm just doing CrossFit the way I like to do it. And no, I don't want to do any "accessory work." CrossFit was truly designed to allow me the fitness to live my life and do whatever I want outside the gym, and that's how I use it.

I now find myself in a unique situation. It is Day 70 of a motorcycle trip through Mexico and Central and South America. The purpose of the journey is to highlight the CrossFit community in Latin America. So far, we have ridden through the U.S., Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador. In each country we've hit multiple cities, and in each city we've hit multiple CrossFit affiliates. I've met more members of our amazing community than I can even remember. We've hit WODs together, laughed together, enjoyed food and drink, visited homes, crashed on couches, met families, learned about lives, and made tons of new friends. I owe so many CrossFit athletes in Latin America so many favors I will never be able to repay. The hospitality and kindness they have shown us is truly humbling.

However, one thing has been a huge struggle for me personally: I have had to put aside all of what I wrote above.

Before we show up to an affiliate, I try to send the owners an email stating that the intent of our trip is to highlight them, not us. We want to capture business as usual and regular classes at their box. I often ask them not to do anything special for our arrival. We just want to be casual

observers. They always respond in the affirmative, and then when we arrive, the emails have been disregarded.

We have shown up to affiliates that literally had a camera crew ready to film our arrival and everything we did. This is bizarre to me and immediately makes me uncomfortable. I don't like that much attention on me. It makes me self-conscious and uneasy. In my eyes, there is no reason for it. I don't feel I've done anything that merits such attention or interest. I did not create CrossFit. I don't think I've done anything that had a revolutionary impact on the CrossFit community, nor am I an elite athlete. My life in CrossFit has simply been about helping spread the methodology, concepts and ideas of Coach Greg Glassman.

But when I take a step back, I get it. They are not super excited about "me" per se but excited about what I represent. I'm a representative of CrossFit HQ, which to their minds is all wrapped up in the same bundle as Coach Glassman, Nicole Carroll, Greg Amundson, Tony Budding and all the other OGs. However, just because I might understand it does not mean I like it or have an easy time dealing with it.

There is another part to this story.

It involves my precious daily workout. Everywhere we go, tons of people want to work out with us. My workout of the day evolves from my simple training and daily escape into a massive production with lots of different people showing up at various times to join in as text messages are sent from the gym rallying the members to join in. It's like the Bat-Signal going up in the sky, calling everyone and turning the WOD into a very big deal.

This gets me thinking about what people like Rich Froning, Jason Khalipa or Chris Spealler must have to deal with. At times it must be exhausting to be them.

Most of those who come to join in my workouts are genuinely excited and just happy to throw down. However, every now and then someone shows up with the intention of assassinating me in the workout. I'm the gringo from HQ. It seems in their eyes that I must be a superhuman athlete. Suddenly, there is a huge target on my back and I can feel them gunning for me. All eyes are on me. The sidelines of the gym are filled with people eager to film or snap hundreds of pictures on their phones as the clock ticks down. The pressure is on, I need to perform, and it's "go time."

My daily escape has now become a pressure cooker that robs me of what I enjoy about CrossFit.



Sherwood (left) overlooking Medellin with Luis Giraldo, owner of Fuerza CrossFit.

But in times like these I need to take a step back and see the big picture. If these situations are uncomfortable for me, then I need to suck it the fuck up. I'm here to make sure that members of the CrossFit community get what they want and deserve. My personal preferences should not matter. I usually do a pretty good job about pushing my anxiety into the back of my mind, hitting the WOD, and just trying to enjoy the incredible experience of being where I am and doing what I'm doing.

But I'm human. Every now and then I'm just too tired or worn out from the road, and I can't seem to put a smile on my face. I miss the simple workout I used to hit back home. When we meet new people, they don't know if we are well rested and happy or just spent 11 hours without food riding our motorcycles in the freezing rain and can barely keep our eyes open. If I happened to be at your affiliate on one of my miserable, grumpy days, I apologize.

I'm sure some people will read this dispatch and their gut reaction will be, "Wow, you have a great job and people are happy to see you—and you're complaining?"

I'm not complaining, nor am I looking for sympathy. I'm just being honest about some demands of this trip and offering a glimpse into what some of the competitors in the limelight of the CrossFit Games must face on a frequent basis.

I worked CrossFit Level 1 Seminars for many years, and I can tell you the staff is exhausted after doing a weekend seminar. During those two days, the Level 1 crew has to be 100 percent on. You put your own wants, desires and needs aside and put the needs and wants of the participants at the top of your priority list. The cost of this focused attention is a group of very tired trainers heading to the airport once the course ends.

I feel like I'm on Day 80 of a Level 1 Seminar, and every now and then I just crash and burn. But I wake up the next day with a new perspective after having met yet another amazing piece of the CrossFit community. I throw my leg over the bike once again. Rain or shine, we ride on.

I may be tired at times, but I love every minute of it—the easy days and the tough days. Just like my WODs back in the Media Office, they all serve their purpose.



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.