

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

December 2013

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
International Exchange Mates	Sherwood
Between Steer and Steak	Achauer
Exercise is the Drug	Cooper
No Rep, No Coach	Sherwood
Build a CrossFit Snowman	Hubbard
Way Down in the Hole	Shankle
Fran to Teach Phys. Ed.	Staff
Prodigal Son Returns Less Fit	Sherwood
A Christmas Lump of Coal	Martin
Big Easy Does It	Cecil
Weak for a Week?	Warkentin
CrossFit Risk Retention Group: 2013 Update	Reingen
2013: Beloved Suffering	Achauer

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

International Exchange Mates

Globetrotting Pat Sherwood explains how trainers can explore the world via the CrossFit affiliate network.

By Pat Sherwood

December 2013



I remember being at a CrossFit seminar years ago. Coach Greg Glassman had just finished addressing the crowd and opened the floor to questions. A woman raised her hand and made a very strong case about the need for a CrossFit specialty course focused on the unique training/coaching needs of athletes who are senior citizens.

Coach Glassman listened to her every word. When she finished speaking, he said he completely agreed with her and asked if she would be willing to spearhead the effort. The answer to that question was, "No." She simply wanted to present the idea but hoped someone else would do the actual work.

This is an extremely common occurrence. Coach has said he's frequently approached by people with great ideas that "need to happen." However, when the challenge of actually doing the work is presented, people usually lose their enthusiasm quickly, and nothing comes of the great idea that once seemed so critical.

I've encountered something quite similar during our 100-plus-day journey through the Latin American CrossFit community. First, I heard murmurs and ideas in Mexico. Then I heard the same suggestions as we pushed south through Central America. As we made our way through country after country in South America, we heard the same idea presented over and over again.

The idea? There should be an exchange program, both nationally and internationally, for CrossFit trainers.



Sherwood's trip has taken him to a host of affiliates, including CrossFit Unidos in Argentina (top) and CrossFit 72700 in Mexico (bottom).

All photos: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the community has a huge amount interest in such a program. And why wouldn't it? Imagine how cool it could be to have the ability to spend a week, a month, six months, or a year or more in any city across the globe that has at least one CrossFit affiliate. You could meet tons of new people, experience a new culture, learn a new language, put some stamps in your passport, and get a different perspective on life, coaching and so on.

Maybe you currently coach at an affiliate in Chicago, Ill., and winter is wearing you down a bit. How wonderful would it be if you could easily investigate the opportunity to coach for a month in Hawaii? Or vice versa. Perhaps a Level 1 trainer from Hawaii has always wanted to spend the winter in Park City, Utah, learning to ski between coaching classes.

As I'm writing this article in a corner coffee shop in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I'm acutely aware of how much fun someone could have doing a trainer exchange in Latin America. Want to blow the dust off of that high-school Español? Pick your favorite Spanish-speaking country, pack your bags and go. Don't overthink it or make a pros/cons list. Just go. I guarantee you will not regret the decision.

The opportunities are limitless. Go to the [Affiliate Finder Map](#) on CrossFit.com and browse through the affiliates spread across the globe. But look at the map in a new way: see each city or town with an affiliate as a place you truly have the ability to experience.

Istanbul? Yeah, you can find boxes there.

Okinawa? Of course.

France, Ireland, Italy? Easy day.

India. Check.

China. Yup.

CrossFit is worldwide, and more affiliates are being added each day.

But here comes the cool part: you would show up in a foreign country, and instead of it being a potentially scary or intimidating experience because you don't know a soul, you would be greeted by family—your CrossFit Family. You would show up to a job and a work schedule you had agreed to. You would have a place to work out, and you would be in the company of local CrossFit athletes looking to help you enjoy their country to the fullest. You wouldn't have to stumble and learn things on your own, and you would have a support network in place. It would almost be cheating!



Road warriors: Diego Ortiz (right) of Argentina is using CrossFit to recover from a motorcycle wreck.

Pretty cool, right?

Do you want something like this to exist? Me too—and it pretty much does. The Affiliate Finder Map is already in place, so you have only to take some initiative. I'm going to do what Coach did and tell you to take your great idea and make it happen. Pull up the map, click on someplace sexy, reach out to an affiliate somewhere, and know before you hit send that the email is going to a friend, a member of the community. Start the process. Set something up. Make arrangements and plans and prepare for a great adventure in another country.

As Hunter S. Thompson used to say, "Buy the ticket, take the ride."

Good luck.



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

Between Steer and Steak

You buy locally sourced grass-fed beef. But where is it processed, and how far does it travel before it hits your grill? Hilary Achauer explores how the slaughterhouse can affect our environment and our health.

By Hilary Achauer

December 2013



All: Jake Krekorian

James Holtslag is working up a sweat.

Wearing a chain-mail apron and his signature flat cap, he stands before a crowd with the hindquarter of a steer on the table in front of him.

1 of 10

Wielding a cheap, flexible knife, Holtslag begins disconnecting the muscle from the connective tissue. He describes what he's doing as he works, pausing to wipe the perspiration accumulating on his forehead.

It's a Thursday night in August. A crowd of about 70 is hanging on his every word and snapping photos with their phones while he works. As Holtslag carves up the steer, the cuts of meat are rushed to the kitchen, where they are being turned into a six-course dinner, paired with beer from Societe Brewing Company, a local craft brewer in San Diego.

The man who raised the steer, John "Dey Dey" de Bruin, of Dey Dey's Best Beef Ever Ranch, is on hand to talk about his grass-fed beef and free-range chickens. The demonstration is part of an evening titled *The Rancher, The Butcher, The Brewer and The Chef*, held at Alchemy Restaurant in San Diego, Calif. Holtslag and Trey Nichols, who are opening San Diego's first whole-animal butcher shop—*The Heart and Trotter*—organized the event.

But before anyone can eat, Holtslag has to finish carving up the steer.

"Whole-animal butchery is very physical," Holtslag says. "There's lots of bone. You really have to get in there."

That sterile-looking meat in the grocery store? It might not be as safe as you think.

This experience is a far cry from the sterile, plastic-wrapped cuts of meat found in the grocery store. It's evident that our dinner tonight came from an animal. Not only is everyone in the room perfectly fine with this, but they are



Most meat found in the supermarket is cut with a band saw, leaving behind several tasty cuts that can only be extracted by hand.



The crowd watches Holtslag carve the meat that will be their dinner.

also eagerly watching the butchering process, crowding close to get a better view.

The hindquarter in front of us has a faint, earthy odor. Holtslag leans his whole body into the steer, but the process is almost silent as he carefully separates meat from bone.

Consumers have typically been shielded from the slaughtering and butchering as processors break the link between the living, breathing animal in the field and the piece of meat sizzling on the barbecue. But where and how an animal is killed can impact the health and safety of the meat.

And that sterile-looking meat in the grocery store? It might not be as safe as you think.

A Matter of Scale

When livestock leaves the farm, it must go to a USDA-certified slaughterhouse, unless the farm has its own slaughterhouse on site. The only way around this is if an individual buys an entire animal and doesn't resell any of the meat.



Whole-animal butchery requires strength and dexterity, plus a thorough understanding of the animal's anatomy.

Much like all farms are not the same, all slaughterhouses are not created equal. While most of us have read about and can picture animals on a farm, many people don't have any idea what happens after animals leave the corral. Up until recently, the butchering and slaughtering process was considered to be an out-of-sight, out-of-mind affair: the less we know about it, the better.

As we learn more about the process, it's clear that slaughterhouses are a critical link in the food chain and a potential cause of contamination.

In an interview for the TV show *Frontline*, Eric Schlosser, the author of *Fast Food Nation*, said slaughterhouses have an impact on food safety.

"It's that speed of production that can lead to food-safety problems. When workers are working very quickly, they may make mistakes. It's during the evisceration of the

animal, or the removal of the hide, that manure can get on the meat. And when manure gets on some meat, and then that meat is ground up with lots of other meat, the whole lot of it can be contaminated," Schlosser told *Frontline*.

There's also the issue that slaughterhouses aren't found on every corner, so many farmers have to transport their animals long distances for processing.

"In my opinion, the lack of independent (slaughterhouses) and cut-and-wrap facilities across the country is the largest hurdle preventing the spread and commercialization of niche and sustainably produced meats," Rebecca Thistlethwaite wrote on her blog, *Honest Meat*. Thistlethwaite is the author of *Farms With a Future: Creating and Growing a Sustainable Farm Business*.



A cut of meat on its way to the kitchen.

So how do you find out more about where your meat is processed? If you buy the meat directly from the farmer, just ask.

Chris Fuller is very familiar with the challenges facing small farms when it's time to get their animals slaughtered. He was the general manager of Alleghany Meats in Virginia, a small-scale slaughterhouse serving farmers in the Alleghany Mountains region of Virginia and West Virginia. He's made a career out of connecting farmers with the right slaughterhouse and helping small farms open their own facilities.

"There are different scales of slaughterhouses," Fuller said. "There's different regulations involved. Some small slaughterhouses don't do contract work. It's just for their business—their farm—only. Some places have high standards and focus on humane treatment and sanitation. Not everyone is so worried about high quality."

When Fuller lived in Colorado, he would go to a farmer's market with six farms selling their grass-fed, antibiotic- and hormone-free meat. Five of the six farms got their meat processed at a small slaughterhouse nearby.

To save money, the sixth farmer drove about eight hours to Swift & Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of JBS S.A., a Brazilian company that is the world's largest processor of fresh beef and pork, with more than US\$40 billion in annual sales as of 2012. It is also the largest beef processor in Australia.

In 2009, Swift & Company was linked to multiple E. coli outbreaks.

The farmer who used Swift & Company had better marketing, more attractive signs and better prices than his competitors, so he frequently outsold the other five meat purveyors. Odds are the meat the consumers were buying at that farmer's market was fine, but Fuller feels consumers should be informed of the slaughtering practices of their favorite farms.

So how do you find out more about where your meat is processed? If you buy the meat directly from the farmer, just ask. Fuller thinks consumers should educate themselves about where the meat is processed.

"Talk to the farmers. Pay attention," he said.

John Morosani is the co-founder of Laurel Ridge Farm Grass Fed Beef in Litchfield, Conn. "I've been raising cows for 10 years. We started with seven cows. Now we have 180 cows. We slaughtered two cows the first year, and this year we slaughtered about 43 cows. Not too many businesses are growing 30 to 40 percent (in that time period)," he said.

He feels the biggest problem with the current USDA regulations governing slaughterhouses is that they are the same for all slaughterhouses, regardless of the size. The same rules are applied to both a 1,500-square-foot plant that processes 15 animals a day and a 25,000-square-foot plant with animals on an assembly line.

"The assembly line doesn't slow down," Morosani said, which he thinks makes it harder for the inspector to keep up with the slaughtering process.

"A USDA inspector has to be present (at the slaughterhouse). But the big plants are processing 1,000 animals a day, and a guy can't be everywhere at all times," Morosani



John "Dey Dey" de Bruin (left), a former physicist for Hughes Aircraft, bought a cattle farm at 55 and started a second career as a rancher.



The crowd at Alchemy enjoys craft beer while a chef rushes to prepare the freshly butchered meat.

feels things can easily slip through the cracks of large-scale industrial processing.

Morosani believes small slaughterhouses should have different USDA requirements than the big facilities.

“Our slaughterhouse has three to four employees. It’s not one-size-fits-all. It’s like having the same rules for a GM plant as an autobody shop,” he said.

He feels if the rules were different for smaller slaughterhouses, it might encourage people to open smaller facilities to serve the smaller farms.

“It (should not) be as difficult to open a smaller operation; it does not need to be as complicated ... as the others,” Morosani said.

Supply and Demand

San Diego County has more small farms than any other county in the U.S., but there is not one slaughterhouse in the entire region. Eric Larson, executive director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, said there are approximately 6,000 farmers in San Diego County. They serve the San Diego region as well as nearby Orange County and Los Angeles County.

Despite the large number of farms, locally raised livestock in San Diego have to travel out of the area to be slaughtered and processed.

**Farmers who raise
livestock can’t take the meat
directly from their farm to
farmer’s markets.**

“There are no local sources,” Larson said. The situation in San Diego is an example of the gap in the chain that is developing due to the lack of available slaughterhouses. There is an explosion of local farms fueled by an increased interest in organic, locally grown food. In the case of produce, farmers find it easy to reach customers through farmer’s markets.

"It's easy to get into farmer's markets," Larson said. "(The markets) give farmers immediate access to their customers, and there is a very low barrier to entry. Whole Foods also needs a pat on the back. They are teaching local farmers to be more sophisticated, and they are always looking for local products."

Farmers who raise livestock, however, can't take the meat directly from their farm to farmer's markets. They have to have their animals slaughtered first. And in San Diego, as in many other places in the country, there are not enough slaughterhouses to meet the demand. This forces San Diego farmers to travel long distances just to get their animals slaughtered.

Krys Cook and her husband, Mike Cook, run Cook Pigs Ranch, located in Julian, Calif., about an hour outside of the city of San Diego. Cook Pigs Ranch is a farm-to-table operation that focuses on heritage pigs. The Cooks drive nine hours each way to get their pigs slaughtered and processed.

"It is very costly to bring the pigs up (to slaughter)," Krys said. A mobile slaughterhouse, or one that is closer to her farm, would make a big difference in their business, both from a financial and environmental perspective.

Larson said he's not sure why there are no slaughterhouses serving the smaller farms of San Diego.

"It's a chicken-and-the-egg situation," Larson said. The demand continues to grow, but so far the demand has not been enough for someone to take the risk, he said.

"It may be we just don't have the accumulation of enough business (for the slaughterhouse), or someone would have done it," he said. "That may change as the interest in locally grown food increases."

It also may be that opening a slaughterhouse is neither easy nor particularly glamorous. Fuller said that most slaughterhouses are either slammed with work or barely making it.

"There's a time of year when grass-fed animals are ready," Fuller said. "Everybody is trying to get the same slaughter dates."

He said the problem could be solved if the farmers communicated with the slaughterhouses.

"They could rotate the herd so the animals finish earlier," he said.

"Most people don't understand meat processing. People are surprised how expensive it is, surprised by the big lull (at certain points) during the year," Fuller said. "(The farmers) need help with regulations. It can be daunting."

Fuller said the number of small farms has grown substantially in the last 10 years.

"People are learning lessons really quickly," he said.

Boutique Butchers

Butcher shops like The Heart and Trotter don't allow farmers to avoid long drives to the slaughterhouse, but they do connect consumers with the farmer and the animal by making the process more personal and hands on.

It's this desire to connect with their food that led college friends Nichols and Holtslag to start their boutique butcher shop, a business that might seem anachronistic in 2013.

They loved grilling with friends and as foodies became frustrated that they didn't know the origin of their steaks and burgers.

"We got angry not knowing where our meat came from," Nichols said. "We started talking about having control over what goes in our bodies."

Then, about a year ago, Holtslag got laid off from his job as a construction manager. He decided it was time to do something he had always dreamed of doing: becoming a butcher.

"I grew up hunting and fishing in Virginia," Holtslag said. "We would use the entire animal. And I like working with my hands. I'm a woodworker."

Holtslag secured a three-month internship at Lindy & Grundy, a whole-animal butcher shop in Los Angeles. From there, Nichols and Holtslag began working on opening The Heart and Trotter. After a successful Kickstarter campaign and many events like the dinner at Alchemy, The Heart and Trotter now sells its meat online and is close to opening a storefront.

All its beef, lamb, pork and chicken is sourced from local, sustainable, antibiotic and hormone-free family farms within a 250-mile radius of San Diego, and every edible part of the animal is used to make sausages, pâtés, rillettes, stocks, charcuterie and dog food. At The Heart and Trotter, little goes to waste.

In starting The Heart and Trotter butcher shop, Nichols and Holtslag are hoping to bring consumers closer to their food.

While all its meat must be slaughtered at a USDA-certified facility, The Heart and Trotter only works with whole animals and has close relationships with its suppliers. This means its ground beef comes from one steer, a steer that was raised by someone the owners have met.

Compare that to the frozen hamburger patties at Costco that can have meat from many different steers in one patty.

"We buy direct from the farmers," Holtslag said. "A lot of the meat you see in the supermarket has fake farms names on the package."

Some of the names on packages sound charming, but Holtslag said the "farms" are sometimes just divisions of the country's biggest food distributors. And those distributors run into difficulties at times. For example, on July 10, 2013, reports surfaced that Sysco was under investigation for keeping turkey, bacon and other produce in **unrefrigerated sheds**. According to [NBC News](#), Sysco said it would stop using the sheds after additional employees confirmed the practices.

The Heart and Trotter is part of a growing trend of boutique butcher shops, led by Fleisher's Grass-Fed and Organic Meats in New York. Fleisher's opened in 2004 and found fame in 2009 when it was featured in Julie Powell's memoir *Cleaving*, a follow-up to her bestselling *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously*, which was turned into a movie featuring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams in 2009.

Amelia Posada and Erika Nakamura, the couple behind Lindy & Grundy, both interned at Fleisher's before opening their own shop in 2011.

In addition to being a local source for meat, boutique butcher shops also sell cuts of meat not available at the supermarket. Most large butchering operations carve the meat with a band saw. That leaves behind a number of tasty cuts—such as oyster, velvet, blade and rancher steaks—that are only accessible the old-fashioned way: via a well-trained, knife-wielding butcher.

"There are cuts that are amazing that you can't buy anywhere because they have to be cut by hand," Holtslag said. "You have to cut them muscle by muscle."



Holtslag explained that the active muscles are more flavorful but take more time to cook. Cuts from inactive muscles, such as the filet mignon, are less flavorful but much tenderer.

One of The Heart and Trotter's main sources of meat is Dey Dey's Best Beef Ever. De Bruin, its owner, said he enjoys working with small-scale butchers because they take the time to make the meat look its best. Strange as it may sound, the appearance of the meat is extremely important.

Most large butchering operations carve the meat with a band saw, but a number of tasty cuts are only accessible the old-fashioned way: via a well-trained, knife-wielding butcher.

"When I provide a product, I have control over the appearance, quality and marbeling. (Meat) is 90 percent a visual product. Choosing the right butcher is key," de Bruin said.

"They can make hamburger out of steaks. It makes my job more difficult," he said. "It's a challenge to find someone good."

"I try to create a relationship between the butcher and myself," de Bruin said. "It's a partnership."

"People are getting more involved in the source of their food," de Bruin said.

When de Bruin was told about the South American origins of the grass-fed meat available at a local grocery chain, he was dubious about its credibility.

"You can buy anything (in South America)," he said. De Bruin is suspicious that grass-fed regulations might be easy to bypass in South America and the meat may not be



From farm to table, plus beer: brewer Travis Smith, rancher John de Bruin, chef Ricardo Heredia and butcher James Holtslag (left to right).

what it claims. Indeed, the organic-food industry has had its difficulties with food that may or may not be the real deal. De Bruin also points to the environmental impact of transporting meat from continent to continent.

"The most important thing is to find a local source," de Bruin said. He urges consumers to find out how that source treats its animals. He feels the entire process should be transparent.

"If they won't return your calls, you've got a problem," he said.

Know Your Meat

Holtslag continues to butcher the steer, going faster so the chef, Ricardo Heredia, can prepare the first course: fried plantains filled with grilled flank steak, guajillo pepper, charred onion and micro cilantro.

As Holtslag works, he explains he's disconnecting the muscle from the connective tissue

"The active muscles are more flavorful but take more time to cook," Holtslag says. "It's like your legs. Those are active muscles. The inactive muscles, like the tenderloin, are the most tender cuts. They don't get used, and they don't have a lot of flavor."

That type of detail about the food we're about to eat might be off-putting in another context. But here, the crowd eagerly watches the butchering process then happily eats each of the six beef-based courses.

For years, we've put a divide between ourselves and the meat on our plate. The further removed we got from the process, the more we pretended that what we were eating never lived.

The night at Alchemy is an indication that this trend is reversing.

It all comes down to relationships. Holtslag forged a connection with Lindy & Grundy in Los Angeles, whose owners had learned from Fleisher's in New York. Holtslag and Nichols know de Bruin and believe in his farming philosophy, and de Bruin can trust that The Heart and Trotter will make his product look good.

The gap in this chain is the slaughterhouse, and as consumers get more involved in the process and more concerned with the sources of their food, the demand will increase and the slaughterhouse gap will be filled.

Until then, it's the responsibility of the consumer to ask questions and do research. Buy local. Build relationships. And get to know your meat.

Resources

[Eat Wild](#)

[Rodale News' Guide to Buying Grass-Fed Beef](#)

[American Grassfed Association](#)



About the Author

*Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary is an editor and writer for the **CrossFit Journal** and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilaryachauer.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Exercise is the Drug

New research at Duke University is studying how exercise might be used during and after cancer treatment.

By Chris Cooper

December 2013



Courtesy of Duke Marketing and Communications

Oliver Glass is a former CrossFit Games athlete, qualifying on the CrossFit Local team in 2010 and the CrossFit Raleigh team in 2011. He currently trains at CrossFit Raleigh in North Carolina in the evenings. In the daytime, he's a cancer researcher.

"I've been doing CrossFit competitively for five years," Glass said. "I've been doing cancer research since 2001. I know CrossFit has done so much for my life, and along the way I've met so many people that have been dealing with cancer treatment and finding CrossFit. They've done so well, and I thought, 'There's a conversation I'd like to start.'"

1 of 7

While working on vaccines for breast cancer at Duke University in 2008, Glass found the work of Dr. Lee Jones, who was beginning to study the clinical use of exercise on cancer patients.

"He was trying to understand what was going on biologically in these people," Glass said. "He wanted to see what kind of biological markers exercise would kick up—whether it was helpful or harmful during treatment."

Jones' work has been published in the scientific press and widely cited by popular media since 2008. While other cancer researchers were focusing on important drugs and delivery systems, Jones wondered if exercise could help a patient absorb the drugs better or survive longer after chemotherapy.

To date, research has largely focused on the remediation of problems caused by cancer treatments. For example, early mortality from heart disease is common in those who have undergone chemotherapy because the treatment is damaging to cardiac muscle. Exercise is used after

cessation of chemotherapy to rehabilitate the cardiovascular system, but it has never been studied as an adjunct to the cancer therapy itself. In other words, no one knows how soon is too soon to start exercising after a cancer diagnosis. And no one knows whether exercising during cancer treatment is helpful, harmful or neutral.

Because so much data exists for exercise related to heart disease, Glass says aerobic-type workouts are often prescribed for patients after they recover from chemotherapy. But that may not be the best solution for everyone.

"Right now we've been using therapies for cardio diseases in cancer patients," he said. "But in the future it may be proven that mixed-modal training, like CrossFit, elicits the greatest effects. We just don't know yet."

The Long Road to Understanding

Jones began his quest 10 years ago, and his research has encouraged oncologists to prescribe exercise after chemotherapy.



Glass analyzes blood samples and tumor biopsies of cancer patients who exercise during and after treatment.



Shawn Rocco

An athlete and cancer researcher, Glass decided to start researching how CrossFit might help patients undergoing treatment for cancer.

"A good analogy is the way that exercise and cardiac rehab has taken off. Fifty years ago, you have a heart attack, and it's six weeks of bed rest. They thought they'd kill you if you exercised after a heart attack. But really, you improve their risk of having a secondary event," Jones said. "That's where we are with cancer right now. Oncologists tell you to rest and take it easy. To them, exercise is counterintuitive."

The outcomes are important: the right exercise prescription at the right time could reverse damage done to organs by radiation and chemotherapy, extending a survivor's lifetime by up to 20 years. While the potential upside lends urgency to the situation, Jones said the first step was to study whether exercise is actually safe for patients undergoing radiation or chemotherapy.

"There have probably been about 85 studies that have looked at the role of exercise in those diagnosed with cancer," Jones said. "We're finally to the point where we're

publishing exercise guidelines for cancer patients. But we're not close to a point where exercise is a part of cancer rehabilitation. Part of my job is to create the evidence base to convince governments and insurance companies to cover it."

To build that case, Jones and his team will have to study both general and specific effects of exercise via several studies (see below).

"We have seven big studies on the go (at Duke), all funded by the National Institute of Health," Jones said.

Jones added: "The first thing you want to do is treat cancer, but now that the survival rate is higher, we need to be concerned about what's going to happen in 20 years' time. That's where CrossFit might be extremely beneficial: not just effective to help the side effects but lowering recurrence rates and reducing risks of noncompeting causes of mortality—a triple threat."

Glass' job is to take blood samples and tumor biopsies from the exercisers in Jones' studies and perform "translational research," taking the data from the lab bench to the patient's bedside.

The right exercise prescription at the right time could reverse damage done to organs by radiation and chemotherapy.

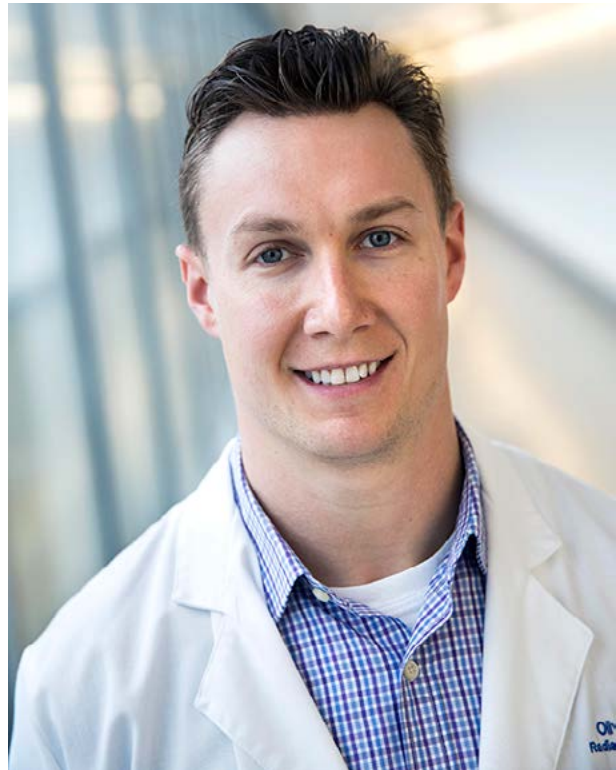
"How does a given marker correlate to better outcomes? Each could be different for those undergoing treatment or survivors or those at risk," Glass said. "In patients undergoing treatment, maybe we can just increase the delivery of chemotherapy drugs through increased blood-vessel growth. Maybe exercise can normalize blood vessels in tumors so the drugs can do their job better. Resistance training is going to elicit a different response than general fitness or endurance-type stuff. Maybe we can even tailor the exercise prescription to target the effects we need in each patient."

Jones' lab at Duke is seeking answers to the many questions with an array of clinical trials lasting from 12 weeks to five years. Though Jones will leave Duke in early 2014 to launch an exercise oncology program at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, the Duke lab will continue these investigations without him.

Six Studies on Exercise and Cancer at Duke University

1. Lungevity is a randomized, controlled trial on lung-cancer survivors who have already completed therapy. Researchers are testing for optimal types of exercise to improve peak $\dot{V}O_2$ in survivors of lung-cancer surgery. A 16-week trial comprised four groups: aerobic only, strength only, aerobic and strength combined, and control (no exercise). When aerobic and strength work are combined on the same day, the resistance component is done on stationary exercise equipment.

Many researchers choose to use weight machines instead of free weights because of replicability: Peter's leg press is the same as Paul's leg press, with a very shallow learning curve.



Oliver Glass

Courtesy of Duke Marketing and Communications



Dr. Lee Jones

Courtesy of Duke Marketing and Communications

2. Excite is a trial of 174 women who have completed therapy for early stage breast cancer. Participants are organized into three groups: 60-70 percent of baseline VO_2 consistently, 50-100 percent (interval training) of baseline VO_2 and a control.

"We take the approach we use to training athletes and apply it to cancer to get optimal improvement in fitness," Jones said. "Patients certainly enjoy it a lot more, but is it more efficacious than what we've been doing for the last 30 years?"

Jones' goal in this trial is to find the optimal exercise prescription. Over 16 weeks, the first group will use the same exercise intensity without change; the second will vary the intensity between 50 and 100 percent of max VO_2 . This interval training may have secondary benefits: if patients enjoy it more, they'll be encouraged to complete their workouts.

3. In a trial involving women with metastatic breast cancer, each participant has been previously treated for cancer, and it's come back; survival outcomes are forecast at only 24-36 months.

"These women have been treated before, so now the treatment is more aggressive, and they have a tumor burden at the same time, so they're sicker," Jones said. "We've shown that exercise is safe and advantageous in early stage diagnosis. Can we exercise these individuals the same way?"

The primary outcome metric will be safety and feasibility.

"We're measuring fitness, quality of life, fatigue—but those are secondary outcomes," said Jones. "If adverse events, or side effects, happen to 20 percent or more of the women, we'll deem that exercise isn't safe in this population."



Courtesy of Duke Marketing and Communications

Jones wants to know when cancer patients can start exercising, and he believes sooner is better than later. He's currently testing his hypothesis.

Due to the risks involved, patients are free to drop out of this study at any time. As in all of Jones' research, potential risks and benefits are explained to every participant. Consent forms can be up to 15 pages long, with every minute detail explained, from the randomization process to the possible side effects.

4. A trial of 160 women newly diagnosed with breast cancer seeks to answer the question, "When should we start exercising?" Jones believes that sooner is better.

"If you talk to most oncologists, their response will be to wait until after therapy because you'll be tired," Jones said. "But I think, from some of our data, if you don't exercise during therapy, you'll take big hit to the cardiovascular system. Knowing this, I believe that if you're diagnosed with cancer, you need to start exercise right away. But that's just my belief. We have no data to back that up yet. So these women have been diagnosed and had surgery but haven't started chemotherapy yet."

**"I believe that if you're
diagnosed with cancer,
you need to start exercise
right away."**

—Dr. Lee Jones

Participants are split four ways: exercise during chemo but not afterward, no exercise during chemo but exercise immediately afterward, exercise during and after chemo, and no exercise at all (the current standard prescription).

All the exercise done in this trial is aerobic to eliminate as many potential variables as possible. Patients will remain in the study group between six and 12 months, depending on the length of their chemotherapy treatment, which varies between individuals.

5. Another trial focuses on men with early stage prostate cancer who have just completed surgery.

"What we're interested in is that their greatest risk of dying is from cardiovascular disease, not prostate cancer," Jones said. "Erectile dysfunction is an important cardiovascular

risk factor; we think it's an early marker of cardiovascular disease. We're interested in erectile function and its improvement through exercise."

Fifty men have just completed six months' exercise training after surgery for prostate cancer, and the results could alter the current prescription for hormonal supplementation typically given to prostate-cancer patients.

"Already, we have research showing that people who have had prostate cancer go into androgen deprivation, which reduces circulating testosterone to near-castrate levels," Jones said. "So you lose all the secondary effects of testosterone: preserving muscle mass, maintaining energy levels. And then you get insulin resistance and a 50 percent increase in new-onset diabetes, which develops into cardiovascular disease."

The male subjects are given three sessions of guided aerobic exercise each week, as well as two prescribed "home workouts" that are self-guided.

"Most of the men choose walking as their aerobic activity," Jones said.

This trial will last six months.

6. A sixth study is a trial on breast-cancer prevention.



Shawn Rocco

**Positive research results at Duke could mean cancer institutes
would start creating gyms for their patients.**

"We know that certain women are at a higher risk because they're overweight or have a family history. If you see abnormalities in mammography, you can do a biopsy," Jones said. "Some of the normal breast epithelial cells look atypical: now they have a fivefold higher risk of breast cancer, with no effective form of therapy. So you can do a mastectomy or lumpectomy, but that's radical because you don't know if the cells are going to be cancerous or not. They might, but it's not 100 percent certain to happen.

"So we use different types of exercise and follow them over time to see if the cells change. Can exercise reverse the characteristics of those cells? Can you take someone who's high risk and convert them to low risk? We have a study on mice that suggests there's a dose-response effect to exercise. Can we identify the dose most efficacious at modulating these cells?"

In this six-month intervention, Jones' team will compare different doses of exercise—100 minutes per week, 150 minutes per week or 300 minutes per week—in an attempt to determine if more exercise is better. Is there a dose-response relationship between breast-cancer risk and movement?

**"You go into hospitals now,
they have chain restaurants.
Soon, you're going to see
fitness centers."**

—Dr. Lee Jones

Jones is also leading pilot studies on patients with brain tumors and patients who have had bone-marrow transplantation and bladder cancer. Those trials are in the early stages.

"We're just doing exercise testing to see what they can tolerate now. We don't know those things yet," Jones said.

Cancers Are Different

Because cancer can affect so many different parts of the body, a one-size-fits-all exercise prescription for cancer patients is unlikely.

"You don't treat a breast-cancer patient like a brain-cancer patient. They're very different," Jones said. "You have to work through the logical progressions to understand what cardio is like in these individuals, then how to do the research. That's why I think exercise oncology is so interesting: every time you go to a new cancer type, it's like starting a new area of research.

"On top of that, you have new treatments coming in all the time. It's changed remarkably over the last eight years. If we showed exercise is effective using a method of chemotherapy eight years ago, it may no longer be relevant. It may no longer work with the new therapy. It's a very dynamic field, constantly changing, and that makes it very interesting and challenging."

Though the research takes time, and every angle has to be considered, Jones believes that exercise therapy is the way of the future for cancer patients.

"Over the next five to 10 years, you're going to see all big cancer institutes having fitness facilities in their institutes. You can imagine the potential for that. That's a huge network. CrossFit makes a lot of sense in that kind of partnership.

"Think of how many cancer survivors will be in North America then: 25 million by 2020. Every year adds hundreds of thousands of individuals who will need exercise rehab. The beautiful thing about this is we're talking about the beginning. Exercise isn't a part of standard care yet but coming on the horizon. It's going to be the standard of care, (with) lots of opportunities for novel partnerships. You go into hospitals now, they have chain restaurants. Soon, you're going to see fitness centers."

Upon diagnosis, the first question asked by most cancer patients is, "What can I do?" For many, feeling a lack of control over their own fate is depressing. Providing a self-guided form of treatment like exercise could help a cancer patient regain a sense of control and perhaps even hope. It might also significantly increase quality of life and health after cancer treatment.

Oncologists will no doubt be awaiting the results of the studies at Duke University to see exactly how they can use exercise to fight cancer.



About the author

Chris Cooper is a staff writer for CrossFit. His gym, CrossFit Catalyst, aims to combine various rehabilitation modalities into CrossFit programming, including for cancer patients.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

No Rep, No Coach

Pat Sherwood explains the difference between being a judge and being a coach.

By Pat Sherwood

December 2013

I have a shitty overhead position. That's old news. Fifteen years of unintelligent, unbalanced training prior to CrossFit left me with a laughable range of motion in my shoulders.

When I see a photo of myself with a barbell overhead, I'm usually barely locked out—if at all. I'm overextended in my midline with the load forward of the frontal plane. That's just how it is for me. I'm always trying to improve the position, but it still sucks.

Oh, well. I march on.

Because going overhead is not my friend, I have to make my money somewhere else, and for me that place is below parallel. If every workout involved some sort of squat, I would be a happy man. Power cleans? Nope—make 'em squat cleans. My favorite movement of all time is the thruster: light, heavy, low rep, high rep, barbell, dumbbells—I don't care. I love them all. Air squats, front squats, back squats are all friends of mine. Even though I'm not great at it, I also enjoy the overhead squat.

While in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I was recently working out at a CrossFit affiliate. I needed to touch a barbell and get in a heavy day, so I decided on 5 sets of 3 back squats. While knocking out some of my sets, I noticed I was being filmed on someone's phone. No drama. That happens frequently, and I have no problem with it. In my head, I was happy that I was being recorded going below parallel instead of going overhead.



Nega Ibarra

Pat Sherwood has never claimed to have a great overhead position, but he'll never stop working to improve it.



Sherwood says he's lost his inner sense of squat depth, so he'll be rebuilding his squat in the coming months.

I knew the video was running, so I made damn sure to bury my hip in the bottom of the squat. Obviously, I always try to bury my hip, but let's not lie to each other: if you know the camera is rolling and the video will likely go on the Internet, you have some added incentive to pursue virtuosity. I knocked out my sets at 315 lb., and I felt great. It's not monster weight, but it sure felt heavy after being on a motorcycle for 103 days.

The next day I got a Facebook notification that I had been tagged in a video. Sweet! I clicked on the video to watch my gorgeous squats. It had been quite some time since I'd seen myself squat, and what I saw was rather disappointing: three back squats captured from a perfect side angle, and not a single one of them was below parallel.

Son of a bitch!

All three of them were in that hazy gray area or slightly high by about an inch. I watched the video several more times, but doing so did not magically make the squats deeper.

I'm extremely thankful for that video because I learned I need to reset the depth meter in my head.

If you squat regularly, you know that as you are lowering the weight, you eventually hit a point where your brain says, "Yes! You are ass to grass! Perfect depth! You now have permission to stand up." I've realized that when my brain currently signals me that I'm below parallel, I'm actually in the gray area. I actually need to keep going down.

That night in the hotel, I broke out my phone and did a few air squats to what I felt was 100 percent good-to-go depth. I reviewed the video: gray area. I then filmed more squats in which I felt I was about 6 inches below parallel. The video revealed they were good on depth, 1 to 2 inches below parallel. But they felt much deeper.

So—no ego, no attitude—it's simply time to rebuild my squat.

Now let's rewind to when I did the three gray-area back squats that ended up on Facebook. Hypothetically, if you had witnessed this happen and then walked over to me and said, "Hey, those squats are a no-rep," I likely would have told you that your mother is a no-rep. I'm not in the CrossFit Games, Regionals, Open or any other competition. I'm in a gym lifting weights. I don't need a judge; I need a coach. Judges say "No rep," and coaches don't. This is a huge pet peeve of mine.

In a competition, a judge's duties are to count the repetitions and ensure the range of motion meets the standards. It is not the judge's job to coach you, motivate you, worry about your technique, improve anything you are doing or regulate your intensity. He or she is judging you, not coaching you. So, if you no-rep me during a CrossFit class, I'm going to wonder why the hell a judge is running the class instead of a coach.

I want to go below parallel on my squats. I want to improve my overhead position. I want all my movements to improve with regard to technique as I put my joints through a full range of motion. My desire for continued development in all areas of CrossFit is fueled by a desire to walk outside the gym and use my body in the real world. Using my body could involve raking leaves, hiking in Yosemite, moving bags of concrete, buying groceries, getting off the couch without assistance or riding a motorcycle from the U.S. to Argentina.

Real-world work, activities and tasks teach you life will demand you move your body through a full range of motion. That is a fact. I want to be prepared for anything



Piero Lupino

Judges are there to say, "No rep!" Coaches, on the other hand, are there to tell you how to improve your movement and meet movement standards.

life throws at me, and I want to lead an active life for a very long time; hence, I want to ensure my squats are below parallel.

If you are a judge at a competition, be a judge. But if you are a trainer running a class, be a coach. If you see someone not moving with proper technique or range of motion, go coach that athlete. Make him or her better. Try a verbal cue. If that does not work, go visual. Show the athlete what's wrong and what the correct movement looks like. Still not getting it fixed? Go with a tactile cue. Still nothing? Then try something different. Don't stick with a cue that is not producing results.

But don't just hand out a no-rep. Get involved in finding a solution. Be a coach.

Also realize that some errors will not be fixed that day, week or month, and that's OK. That's real life. But stick with it. The process will make you a better coach while dramatically improving your client's movement.



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.

Build a CrossFit Snowman

Nothing gets kids more excited than the thought of building a snowman.

By Lori Hubbard

December 2013



Equipment

You will need enough items for each team of 4-6 kids (plus a set for a model snowman). Use your imagination based on equipment availability:

- 1 10-lb. bumper plate or hula hoop (lower body)
- 1 10-lb. metal weight plate or smaller hoop (upper body)
- 6 2.5-lb. plates or cut-up pool noodles (lay 2 or 3 down flat and touching for arms)
- 1 paper cup or badminton birdie (nose)
- 2 snap-on weight collars or 2 lacrosse balls (eyes)
- 1 piece of string or a shoelace (mouth)
- 1 jump rope (scarf)
- 1 AbMat (hat)
- 3 pieces of cut-off pool noodle or toilet paper balls (buttons)
- 1 hula hoop (use for team Activity 3 or substitute)
- 1 PVC pipe (for snowman barbell fun)

Optional:

- 1 long sandbag or an assistance band (hat rim)
- 2 kettlebells or a pair of team member's shoes (feet)

Object

Each team must complete the exercises together to earn the pieces with which they can build a snowman resembling the trainer-built model. First team to complete its snowman wins.



Almost as exciting as a real snowman.

Set-up

1. Trainers build the model CrossFit snowman away from the activity area where the kids will be building theirs.
2. Place all the remaining snowman parts in the center of the activity area.
3. Divide the kids into teams of 4-6.
4. List the movements you wish the kids to perform on the whiteboard, or provide each team with their own checklist on a clipboard (see activity list), which will allow for scaling the number of reps by a team if needed.
5. Trainers explain or demonstrate the movements/activities.

Game Play

1. Start the game with, "Let it snow, let it snow, let it go!"
2. Team members must perform the number of assigned reps of one of the movements on the list.
3. Once that movement is complete, teams can retrieve the snowman item assigned to the movement they just finished from the center of the activity area.
4. Only one movement is done at a time. Teams may complete the movements in any order that they wish, and they must only retrieve the item(s) specified for each movement.

5. Place a check mark next to each movement once it has been completed.
6. All team members should be given a chance to retrieve a snowman item after completing a movement.
7. Once teams have completed all the movements and have retrieved all the snowman items, they can begin to build their snowman.
8. Teams may look at the model of the CrossFit snowman to help them build theirs. However, there is a penalty for this: one look costs each team 5 burpees and/or a run.
9. For older kids, add difficulty by placing a cap on the number of times a team is allowed to look at the model snowman. This will require strategizing and teamwork in terms of knowing who remembers what.

Notes

Some variations include:

1. Provide a multiplier for the number of reps for each movement, requiring teams to use math during the workout.
2. For preschoolers, build the snowman as a whole class so everyone feels a sense of accomplishment. Assign a trainer or assistant to each team to read and check off movements and count reps.



Author Bio

Lori Hubbard is a CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids trainer with a bachelor's degree in exercise science and K-12 physical education and a master's and educational specialist degree in education and educational leadership. She is a trainer at CrossFit Dahlenega and will run a CrossFit Kids program at CrossFit Dynamo in 2013. A physical-education teacher, Lori started a non-profit CrossFit Kids affiliate in the Dawson County Schools system in Georgia. She is also the owner/proprietor of Starting Block Performance and Athletic Development.

Snowman Checklist

- ☐ **Activity 1:** Circle up, knees to knees, and do _____ snowflake sit-ups.
 - *Pick up 1 10-lb. bumper plate*
- ☐ **Activity 2:** _____ single jumps each with a jump rope.
 - *Pick up 6 2.5-lb. plates or 2 cut-up pool noodles*
- ☐ **Activity 3: Circle the Circle.** Holding hands, using a hula hoop, pass the hoop around the circle _____ times without letting go of hands.
 - *Pick up 1 10-lb. metal plate*
- ☐ **Activity 4:** _____ mountain climbers.
 - *Pick up 2 bar collars*
- ☐ **Activity 5:** _____ broad jumps.
 - *Pick up 1 jump rope*
- ☐ **Activity 6:** _____ walking lunges.
 - *Pick up 3 small noodle pieces*
- ☐ **Activity 7:** _____ hand-release push-ups.
 - *Pick up 1 PVC pipe*
- ☐ **Activity 8:** _____ air squats.
 - *Pick up 1 AbMat and 1 sandbag or colored band*
- ☐ **Activity 9:** Face someone on your team in a plank and perform _____ alternating high fives .
 - *Pick up 1 string and one cup*
- ☐ **Activity 10:** Has to be done last. Group must run 400 m together and then check the model snowman.
 - *Put one of your team member's shoes as the feet*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Way Down in the Hole

Donny Shankle takes you on a guided tour of the darkest place in weightlifting and explains how to get out.

By Donny Shankle

December 2013



Coming out of a clean quickly is a trained action. You can squat all you want to get stronger, but if you are not refining your skill at the clean, then your strong legs are not being put to use.

1 of 11

When viewing a weightlifter in the bottom of a clean, you should be able to draw a line that puts the bar directly over the shoulders, hips and heels. The back must be held vertical in order for this to happen, and keeping a straight back is the weightlifter's golden rule. Once you receive the bar with a vertical back, you must stand up immediately and not waste any time. Training yourself to stand up with your cleans at once is something you patiently learn with each repetition. A great weightlifter is not just strong but also efficient with the strength he has. An efficient weightlifter does not waste any time.

There are two trained skills behind the clean that you will find useful. The first is learning to feel oscillation or bar whip, and the second is timing the stretch reflex in your legs in conjunction with the bar whip. These two actions together will actually pull you out of your cleans, and combined with strong legs they will set you up with plenty enough energy for the jerk. The moment you approach the bar, think to yourself, "Easy clean, easy jerk." Many weightlifters will put in countless hours practicing their jerk when all

along it's the clean holding them back. If you are going to dip straight on the jerk, you need to stand straight with the clean, and, if you are going to have the energy necessary to jerk quickly, your legs can't be thrashed from standing up through a grueling clean.

Bar whip is one of the last important skills a weightlifter learns because you need to be very strong to feel it, and you use it to push yourself toward new personal records. Initially, daily practice will bring you progress. Then as you get stronger, you take your progress even further with the efficiency you have developed. Later on, your style begins to shine through as your confidence builds, and this brings you more gains. Repeated competition teaches you things you can't learn in training, and this, too, pushes you toward even more personal records.

Finally, great weightlifters begin to match the skills they have learned perfectly with the strength they have, and this can be combined with a champion's mind to push their progress even further.



Cheryl Boatman / CrossFit Journal

A smooth clean will make the jerk infinitely easier. Struggle mightily with the clean, and you can usually expect an even greater fight with the jerk.

Cheryl Boatman / CrossFit Journal



Driving the bar overhead requires a great deal of leg strength, and you can conserve that strength by taking advantage of bar whip and your muscles' stretch reflex in the clean.

Rising From the Dark Place

Timing bar whip is one of those final skills learned by the weightlifter to push him to loftier heights in training. A teammate of mine once said to me, "Weightlifting is easy so long as you have strong legs and you know how to oscillate the bar." He was right, and I would only add that keeping your back straight makes it even easier.

If you happen to watch training videos of great weightlifters in action, you might notice some of them load the bar with the lightest plates first, with the heavier plates towards the end of the bar. For example, instead of loading a 160-kilo bar in the order of red, blue, yellow and green on each side, he may load it with the yellows on first and the reds at the end. By loading the bar in training opposite of how it is loaded in competition and putting the heavier plates toward the end, you increase the whip of the bar. Obviously, this does not make a 160-kilo bar feel heavier or lighter, but it does make it whip more.



Courtesy of Donny Shankle

Note the bend in the bar as the author receives the weight. Working with the oscillation of the bar makes standing up much easier.

You can also increase bar oscillation by loading 2.5-kilo collars first with your weight on top of them. This “lengthens the bar” so it whips more. By training the oscillation with a lighter weight or by putting collars on first, the weightlifter prepares himself to feel the bar whip of a heavier load, and if you learn to stand with the whip of the bar at the reception of your clean, you are actually pulled up out of the hole. You then use this same oscillation to help you jerk the bar.

Therefore, the clean and jerk, in my opinion, is more difficult to master than the snatch because it is made up of two lifts, each of which uses oscillation once the weight becomes really heavy.

The stretch reflex in your legs is the muscles lengthening and returning back to their original state. When you hit the bottom position of a deep clean with a heavy weight, the muscles in your legs are stretched, and this gives you just enough push back to normal out of the bottom of your clean so long as you keep your back vertical and the bar in line with your heels.

**Stand up with your cleans with
the doggedness of a soldier
fighting to return home to his
lover alive.**

This is just one of the reasons why it is vitally important you make your back as strong as possible. If the back rounds at the bottom of your clean and you let the bar crash on you, the stretch reflex is lost, as well as the timing of the bar whip. With enough practice over time, your body will get stronger and you will learn how to use the stretch reflex and bar whip together to pull off some beautiful heavy cleans.

Aside from spending time in the squat rack making your legs stronger, there is one more thing I need to talk about if you plan on improving your cleans. You need to yank hard at the finish of your pull. The finish of the pull is when you are completely extended with your hips through and the bar has reached its maximum height. The harder you finish, the faster you will change direction, and this speed



Michael Brian / CrossFit Journal

A perfectly upright torso allows you to use the stretch reflex in your legs at the bottom of a clean.



Agust Sigurjonsson / CrossFit Journal

Technique aside, vicious aggression and unbreakable confidence are key to lifting big weight.

will enable you to move under the bar confidently with a vertical back.

A weak finish will not move you fast enough under the bar to catch the bar whip in time. By finishing violently, you permit yourself the chance to time the whip of the bar and the stretch reflex in your legs to stand immediately. Still, speed is also a conscious effort on the part of the lifter to not waste any time. Stand up with your cleans with the doggedness of a soldier fighting to return home to his lover alive. If you can apply these three principles together at the same time in a split second during your clean, then your cleans will be much easier.

All that's left once you can do this is for you to spend hours in the squat rack.

Iron Obsession

Squats are an obsession for the great weightlifter. If you plan on pursuing this sport for many years to find out how great you can really be, then be prepared to live in the squat rack. The squat rack must be your temple where you create the long-term vision you have of yourself as a strength athlete.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

After mastering the back squat, the front squat will be your next obsession.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

The squat rack: home to every great weightlifter.

The center of your gravity is where all of your strongest muscles reside, so it only makes sense to train this area of your body diligently. The swimmer trains the lungs like the weightlifter trains the hips, the boxer beats his fists like the weightlifter beats his hips against the bar, and the archer's vision is determined and sharp like the weightlifter's attitude.

Squats in your training must become such a fixation initially that the exercise consumes you. The pyramid to getting stronger may look simple on its surface, but underneath this pyramid lies sweat, soreness and stubbornness on your part. The reason you squat so much as a weightlifter is because the nervous system takes a huge beating while snatching, cleaning and jerking. The squat is not as hard on the nervous system and allows you to keep pushing the muscles to maximum, making them stronger for when you have rested. Also, the squat teaches you about stretch reflex and bar whip on top of making your legs stronger.

All great weightlifters master the back squat first to make their bodies strong and give themselves an introduction to three elementary "musts" that need to be applied for the snatch and clean: the bar must be kept over the heels, the back must be kept straight, and the hips must be trained to move confidently below the knees. After learning the back squat, the weightlifter spends the majority of his time refining his front squat, which imitates the clean much more closely.

Get your legs and back strong and pull the bar like you are ripping the head off a god-damned lion. Practice timing your stretch reflex and bar whip to work with each other, and your cleans will no longer feel like you have been buried by the grave digger.

Training is struggle, and if you do not want to be smothered, you must have the mind of a fighter, a mind that can reach levels of nirvana like a Buddhist all in the blink of an eye.

World-record cleans look easy because they have to be. Everything must line up perfectly in the clean if you plan on nailing the jerk with the ease and precision of a surgeon at the operating table. Far too many lifters train the clean half-heartedly and wonder why it's not improving the way their snatch is. You are moving more weight during the clean, so be patient in waiting for your strength to catch up—but your patience does not allow for you to take the attitude that "it will get better one day." Aggression is everything for the weightlifter. If you can turn your aggression on when you are lifting like you turn on the lights in your

kitchen, you will always be attuned to what you could be doing better.

A Tale of the Clean

John had been struggling on his clean for years. He had been stuck at a 195-kilo clean and jerk forever, it seemed, and he did everything in the book to help him break past this comfort zone. Over the course of a year, he pushed his front squat up another 30 kilos and even increased his body weight another 20 lb. out of sheer frustration. Even with this added body weight and increase in leg strength, he was still stuck at 195. His confidence had nearly reached a breaking point, when his teammate Ethan told him to fly out to the East Coast and train with a great Russian weightlifting coach lifters called "Uncle Viktor."

"If you really want to get your cleans better, then go train with Uncle Viktor for a few weeks. A word of advice if you do decide to go, though, is make sure you do not mind being in pain."



Cheryl Bootman/CrossFit Journal

Success in moments like this is assured with thousands of reps and endless hours in training.



Michael Brian/CrossFit Journal

"All the weightlifters looked like winter was coming—or something as bleak as winter." —Donny Shankle

"What's he do differently?" John asked.

"Nothing I can get across to you in words. You will have to experience it for yourself."

John had always been jealous of the way Ethan came up so easily with his cleans. He and Ethan were in the same weight class, but Ethan was clean-and-jerking 10 kilos more than John. What was more frustrating was that John could front-squat 10 kilos more than Ethan. After the day's training session, John packed and zipped his training bag up and told his girlfriend he would be gone for a few weeks. Little did he know he was about to enter a frenzied whirlwind of shit and torture that felt much the same way his cleans had been feeling: like a black hole inhabited by demons with whips that cracked your ass if you tried to crawl out.

After getting off the plane with nothing but the clothes on his back and his gym bag thrown over his shoulder, John took a taxi to Uncle Viktor's gym. He had spoken on the phone with him only once before leaving, and the conversation consisted of polite introduction followed quickly with, "If you want to get better, then why are you not here already?"

Uncle Viktor lived in his gym, which was really a loft apartment that had the rugged look of a Scud bunker covered with dust and chalk and came with the sweet mixed smell of muscle rub and sweat. The weightlifters had this look in their eyes of death and life rolled up together into some twisted psychotic taco. Their expressions reminded him of that TV show *Game of Thrones* he had watched with his girlfriend. In it, the Northerners always commented on how winter was coming, and this attitude gave their eyes an expectant and hard look. All the weightlifters looked like winter was coming—or something as bleak as winter.

**Little did John know he was
about to enter a frenzied
whirlwind of shit and torture
that felt much the same way his
cleans had been feeling.**

John saw Uncle Viktor walking down the stairs in a jumpsuit that looked like it had seen better days. It had probably been washed too many times in blistering hot water because it was faded and snug enough around Viktor's twig and berries to throw modesty out the window. The first thing Viktor did was shake John's hand. He was always happy to see new lifters come into his gym, as all weightlifting coaches are. Then Viktor immediately gave John a pinch on his midsection and said, "What is this?"

"This fat is not good for training, my friend. This could be better."

"Thanks for helping me out with my cleans, Viktor. Ethan told me about you."

"Call me Uncle. How old are you?"

"Thirty-two."

"Thirty-two! Ah, I cannot build whorehouse with old whores, but you have good muscles, so I will try my best. Will you try your best?"

"Of course. I want to be an Olympian."

"Ha! Who doesn't?"

**"I cannot build whorehouse
with old whores, but you have
good muscles, so I will try
my best."**

—Uncle Viktor

John changed into his gym clothes and met Viktor in the gym. He was sitting in a chair positioned in the corner of the gym at just the right spot to allow him to supervise everything that went on. He walked up to Viktor and asked, "What would you like for me to do?" This immediately made a few of the other weightlifters around him quietly laugh under their breath.

"I don't know. What do you want to do?" Viktor said.

"I want to learn how to clean better."



Michael Brian/CrossFit Journal

***Waste no time in the bottom of a clean.
Stand up with purpose and move on to the jerk.***

"Then clean."

John took a few minutes to stretch and warm up with the bar, then he began his cleans from the floor with 50 kilos. He then put on 70 kilos followed with 90 kilos.

"Stop."

"Did I do something wrong?"

"Take these warming weights again, but do them from above your knee and set your back tighter."

John did as he was told and stripped the bar back down to 50 kilos and picked it up into his hips, set the arch in his back extra tight, lowered the weight down to right above his knees and then pulled it into his hips before cleaning it. He did this all the way up to 120 kilos, when Viktor chimed in.

"Now begin your attempts from the floor."

John's next attempt was 140 kilos, and when he did it he noticed he stood up pretty easily. All the extra attention keeping his back tight above the knee initially was carrying over as he went back to the floor. He proceeded to work all the way up to 180 kilos before looking over at Viktor and saying, "Should I keep going?"

"Keep going. It looks easy! Try 190."

John loaded the bar to 190, and he clean-and-jerked it easier than he thought he would have been able to considering he had just gotten off the plane a few hours ago. The clean was a little tough but much better than any 190 he had attempted ever before. He looked around at the other lifters and was excited to make a personal record in front of them on his first day of training in their gym, so he loaded 196 on the bar and took a seat to rest his legs. One of the lifters by the name of Timothy walked over with a cup of coffee and handed it to John. Timothy was the team's super-heavy weightlifter, and John had seen him in competition moving 220 kilos like you would lift a suitcase you thought was full but was, in fact, empty.

"Thanks," John said.

John had never been a coffee drinker before but did not want to turn down anything handed to him by the giant. After a sip, he stood up and walked to the bar. He set his

hips low, raised his eyes and pulled but was too slow moving under. The weight ended up rounding his back out and shooting his ass backwards about five feet.

"Is this as hard as you can pull?" Viktor said. "You pull too slow for all this muscle."

These words pissed John off just enough that on his next attempt he actually racked the bar across his shoulders over his heels but did not stand up right away.

"What you wait for? When you clean, you must use these chicken legs you have and stand up immediately."

On any other day John would have called his cleans there and moved on, but he remembered what his friend Ethan had said about always being in pain. This last clean felt like Jesus stomping the serpent, and John felt like the serpent. He looked over at Viktor for a second before his next attempt, and Viktor said to him laconically, "This time try lifting with both your balls instead of just one, yes."



Tai Randall/CrossFit Journal

The platform is no place for trepidation. A violent finish will allow you to pull under the weight with confidence.

That was apparently what John needed to hear because on his next attempt he cleaned the weight. It was ugly but it was the personal record he had been fighting so long to achieve. His back looked like a question mark coming up, and it was either pass out, jerk it or drop it. With a deep breath, John went after the jerk but kept dipping until he and the weight both went down together. After taking a knee, he saw Uncle's feet underneath his eyes and looked up.

"Very good, my friend."

Viktor reached his hand out and shook John's hand with a pat on the back as he helped him up. Viktor then walked behind John and grabbed him by the shoulders pulling his shoulder blades together.

"This needs to be much stronger. This back needs to be much stronger. Tiffany, come here."

**"Only a strong man and
fantastic weightlifter can squat
his best and more multiple
times. This is good training."**

—Uncle Viktor

Tiffany was the team's 53-kilo lifter. She had racked up a few consecutive national titles and world team placements training with Viktor and was now pushing to make the Olympics being held in two years. Uncle Viktor walked John over to the jerk blocks and had him put his hands on them while telling him to bend down so that his torso was parallel with the floor. He then had Tiffany sit on John's upper back, which stretched his pecs, shoulders and back, causing that poor excuse for a flat back to flatten out perfectly. John felt like a horse being broken in but didn't mind feeling Tiffany's soft ass atop him.

"We need this every day. This back must be kept much straighter for you to clean above 200 and jerk it."

John said nothing but simply did as Uncle Viktor wanted him. After he was finished having Tiffany sit on him, John was told to eat something and rest for 20 minutes before squatting. The night ended with John working up to a

front squat that was 30 kilos more than what he had just cleaned, and Viktor had him squat it for six singles, which was more work at one weight than John had ever done before.

"Any man can squat his best for one or two in one training, but only a strong man and fantastic weightlifter can squat his best and more multiple times. This is good training. Do you understand?"

"Yes," John replied.

Training went this way for a month before John was finally cleaning 200 kilos. He had lost 15 lb., which surprised him considering he was able to clean personal records. Viktor had reminded him more than once though that muscle and not fat moves weight, and muscle driven by the right mindset can move a lot of weight. Each training session began with Tiffany helping him stretch his back, and he learned to enjoy a cup of coffee with Timothy before lifting while they exchanged stories. Seeing everyone in the gym fight was the icing that topped the cake that made John push just as hard as they did.

Every warm-up set John did he made sure to set his back tight above the knee before moving to the floor, and with patience he began to learn how to use the whip of the bar and the stretch reflex in his legs to help him stand up with his cleans. A week after his first 200 clean, he successfully clean and jerked it and gave Uncle Viktor a shake of the hand.

"I guess this whore isn't that old, Viktor," John said with a smile.

"Ha!"

Make It Easy

Getting better at the clean takes persistence. Everything you try to get better at takes persistence.

The clean teases you inch by inch until you finally stand with it only to realize in your excitement you still have to jerk it. When it does come, though, it feels like a weight has been lifted. This is not just a poetic statement but also a truth. The first time I ever cleaned 195, it was a 7.5-kilo personal record for the day, and in my joyous delight I was overwhelmed instantly with a feeling of wonder. "How did I make it so easy?" I thought to myself.



Easy clean, easy jerk.

It wasn't the stars that had aligned that day, but I had finally learned how to align the bar perfectly to me. The bar was flush against my throat and seated perfectly on my clavicles, and my elbows were up. I was on my heels, and my back was straight, and as the bar whipped up I pushed hard with it. I stood up with it so easily, in fact, that I jerked it just as easily.

Once frustration begins to set in, it's amazing how you can use that frustration to help you lift better—so long as it doesn't own you. The only thing I have ever been good at in life on the platform is being stubborn, and I use that stubbornness to keep searching for new answers and to continue attacking the bar with the same joyous passion I have had since my first weightlifting practice.

That story about John is not a dramatic interpretation. Personal records do come that easy once you change your surroundings and actually go after personal records and break free of your comfort zones with the tenacity of an enraged charging bull. The first step in making personal records—on snatches, cleans or jerks—is to put the weight on the bar and go after it with the right attitude over and

over until you can say, "Job done."

Work hard to keep your back vertical during your cleans so you can strongly support any weight you put across your shoulders, and learn to feel the whip of the bar to the point you actually feel it pulling you up.

Bust your ass in the squat rack but realize strong legs are not always the missing piece to the puzzle. If you want to get better at the clean, you have to apply what Uncle Viktor said to John during that first practice: "Then clean." There is no complex overlay to the clean. You just have to catch the bounce and stand your ass up.

Easy clean, easy jerk.



About the Author

Donny Shankle is a five-time U.S. national champion in the sport of weightlifting. In 2007, he was awarded the most inspirational lifter award at the annual Arnold Classic held in Columbus, Ohio. Donny is a Marine Corps veteran and resides in Fort Mill, S.C. Today, he is in pursuit of the Rio Olympics to be held in 2016.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fran to Teach Phys. Ed.

Charter school with CrossFit as its physical-education program receives conditional approval.

By Staff

December 2013



All photos: Demi Brown

On Dec. 3, the San Diego Unified Board of Education voted 6-1 in favor of granting conditional approval to Empower Charter School, making it the first school to name CrossFit as a foundation in its petition for charter.

Empower is scheduled to open in fall 2014 and serve students in kindergarten to Grade 6, and the vote was the last step in a lengthy process that involves budget and enrollment forecasts and a host of other legal elements. The school will offer an innovative, inquiry-based academic program focusing on academics as well as fitness and health, with CrossFit at its core. About 40 green-clad supporters, including CrossFit originals Greg Amundson and Josh Everett, were in attendance.



The vote was the last step in a lengthy process and with a 6-1 vote by the San Diego Unified Board of Education, Empower Charter School will open in fall 2014.

After lead petitioner Demi Brown spoke, Trustee Scott Barnett suggested delaying a vote while Empower addressed conditions involving methods of student assessment, governance issues and other technical details. When he made a motion to push the hearing back until the conditions were met, it was defeated, and the board voted on conditional approval.

With Empower's supporters on their feet, the vote was taken. Supporters reported that the faces of several board members changed when the group rose in a show of solidarity, and when the results were tabulated, six green lights stood against one red. The room was filled with cheering and applause.

Lead petitioner Demi Brown credited the approval to the amazing support of the CrossFit community, particularly the members of CrossFit Mission Gorge and CrossFit Elysium.

"We were standing up for something we believe in," she said. "The tune of the evening immediately shifted once everyone stood. It is a moment that will be alive in my memory for a long time."

Brown said CrossFit provided the inspiration to start a school, and CrossFit Kids will be the focus of the school's physical-education program.

"Our school's educational philosophy uses a holistic approach to learning to build strong minds, strong bodies and strong characters in our students. The CrossFit Kids P.E. program will equip and empower our students for all areas of life," she said.

With conditional approval granted, Brown will now be working to meet all conditions in order to begin operation in fall of the New Year.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Prodigal Son Returns Less Fit

After four months of following the yellow line and trying to preserve his fitness, Pat Sherwood invites you to join him for one month of CrossFit.com programming to get him back on track.

By Pat Sherwood

December 2013



All photos: Staff/CrossFit Journal

It's time to pay the piper—the fitness piper, that is.

I'm cringing as I type, but this is my public commitment: I will follow the programming on CrossFit.com at least for all of January, and I will post my pathetic results in the comments each day. I'm writing this article so all of you hold me accountable, and that is just the motivation I need.

Let's take a step back so I can explain why I'm doing this.

Since beginning CrossFit training in August 2005, I have harvested workouts from many different sources. I followed CrossFit.com for my first several years, and I also hit workouts from affiliates that had a style I enjoyed. However, for the last few years I have largely programmed for myself. I love creating workouts. I find it therapeutic to go to a coffee shop, put my headphones on, listen to some beats and create page after page of nasty, beautiful workouts.

In December 2012, I decided to put my fitness through an unbiased evaluation. I wanted to find out if I had been neglecting anything. So, beginning on Jan. 1, 2013, I made a commitment to follow the three-days-on, one-day-off cycle on CrossFit.com for two or three months.

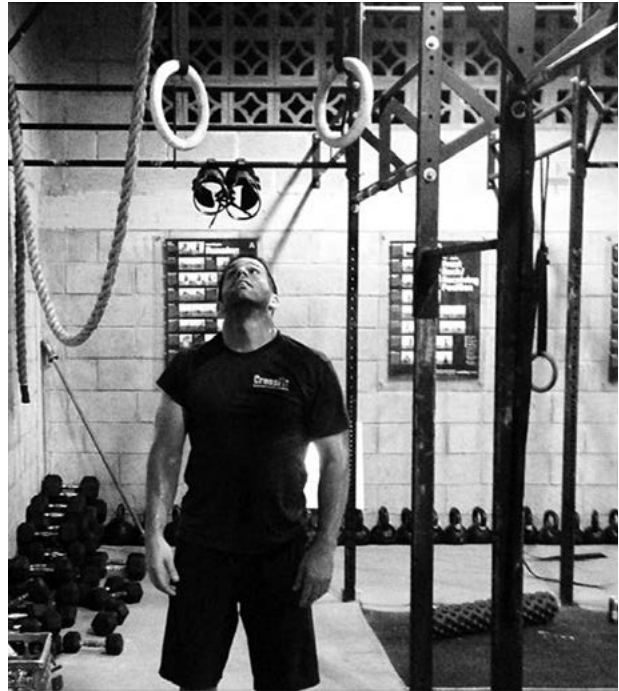
My job with CrossFit Inc. allows me to see behind the veil of mystery surrounding the programming of the workout of the day. I'm lucky enough to see the effort, thought, research and discussions that ensure the program meets its aims. The workouts that get posted on CrossFit.com play no favorites, they test all aspects of fitness in a host of time domains, and they have no regard for your preferences. If you have a weakness, it will be exposed. The goal of the program is straightforward: fitness. It has been defined and it can be measured. If you have not read [What Is Fitness?](#) in a while, I recommend you do.

Because I knew the CrossFit.com workouts would provide me with unbiased variance, I decided they would be the perfect evaluation of the programming I had been doing for myself. So how did it go? The result was that I got my ass handed to me, and I learned the hard way that I indeed had some gaping holes in my fitness.

After a few humbling months of doing the three-on, one-off cycle, my "well roundedness" returned. Following CrossFit.com again improved my general physical preparedness but also my mental toughness. Strength of mind and body is created by committing to attack whatever shows up on the screen when you nervously click on CrossFit.com each evening to see the new workout of the day. Soon, I felt like I was bulletproof, and I feared no workout.

But little by little I began programming for myself more and hitting CrossFit.com workouts less. Undoubtedly, my programming biases crept back into my life.

As I write this I'm in a markedly different situation than I was last year at this time. I'm in Santiago, Chile, and it is Day



Though Sherwood was able to visit boxes such as CrossFit PTY in Panama, his road workouts were skewed toward body-weight movements due to lack of gear.

117 of our trip through the United States and Central and South America on motorcycles. I will be back in Santa Cruz, Calif., in less than a week. As we close in on the final days of the trip, I can say with certainty my fitness and nutrition have taken some hits. I have been doing my very best to stay in shape on the road, and while I'm surviving, I'm not setting PRs all over the place. I'm keeping my head above water, but that's about it.

Truth be told, I thought my fall from fitness would have been much more severe during this adventure. While I'm not in top form at the moment, I've unquestionably maintained far more work capacity than I thought I would. Due to the nature of this trip, a heavy barbell rarely crosses our path, so I've admittedly had a bias toward body-weight movements. Hell, I even went for a run once or twice.

My diet is another area that has been—shall we say—less than ideal. However, I expected it to be much worse. I thought one of two things was going to happen: I was either going to come back skinny fat or just plain fat. Although most of the definition I had in my midline has faded away, I can still comfortably button my jeans, so I'm going to call that one a victory.



Sherwood sustains himself on fried chicken at a Chinese restaurant in Mexico. When he gets home, he'll be weighing and measuring again.

In four months we have eaten a home-cooked meal perhaps 10 times. Every other meal was at a hotel, restaurant, gas station, mall, street vendor, etc. It has been a challenging environment to say the least. And at every stop we made, we had to try the local tasty treats offered to us by the members of the CrossFit affiliate, right? We certainly didn't want to be rude and say no to local cuisine served by new friends.

Of all the things I'm looking forward to when I get home, weighing and measuring clean food for a few months is high on the list. It is going to be a detox of sorts, and I can't wait to feel "clean" again.

Put all these factors together, and I'm expecting a rough re-entry when I rejoin my crew at the CrossFit Media office and start hitting workouts again. And I know myself: if I get back and start programming my own workouts, there will be temptation to take an easier path because I'm slightly out of shape. I would have a tendency to be nice to myself and program a bunch of movements, loads and rep schemes that play to my preferences.

However, what I like and what I need are two different things. So, once again, I find myself looking to the one source I know for a fact will be dishing out unbiased fitness in large doses: CrossFit.com.

My times are going to be slow. My lifts are going to be low. I'm going to feel like I'm wearing ankle weights on the runs. But all I need to do is stick with it. Consistency and lack of ego will be the key. Little by little, my times will come back down and my strength numbers will go back up. It's going to be a road paved with suffering, but I know the payoff is worth it. I've been there before.

I'm dragging as many people as I can into this with me. I invite you to put your own fitness to the test and join me in the January workouts. Misery loves company, right?

Here's the link to CrossFit.com. Click it, and I'll be in the comments every day starting Jan. 1. See you there.



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.

A Christmas Lump of Coal

Gift-wrapped rocks make poor presents, but they're perfect for a CrossFit Kids workout, and you can re-gift them in a special game as well.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

December 2013



All photos: Mikki Lee Martin

Workout: Box O' Rocks

7 rounds of:

5 burpees

5 push presses with presents (5-10 lb.)

Equipment

- Gift-wrapped boxes filled with rocks, safely packed and cushioned
- Cones

Set-Up

Place half as many presents as there are kids about 10 feet away from a starting line marked with cones.

WOD

1. On "Go!" the athletes must perform 5 burpees before racing for a present, which they must use to perform 5 push presses.
2. The athletes who arrive last will not have a present to use for push presses; instead, these athletes must continue doing burpees until a present becomes available.
3. Repeat until all rounds are complete.



Game: Polar Bear Express

Equipment

- Gift-wrapped boxes that were used in the workout
- Cones

Set-Up

1. Use the cones to set up a 10-meter track with presents placed at the far end.
2. Divide class into two teams.

Game Play

1. The first two kids on each team must use a polar-bear crawl to get to the presents. Once there, they pick up a gift and run back to the start line.
2. The next person in line then runs the present back to the far cone and crawls back to the start line.
3. Play continues until every team member has gone there and back.
4. The entire team must sit down as soon as last athlete returns to the line.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Big Easy Does It

CrossFit trainers everywhere struggle to keep members eating healthy during the season of ubiquitous treats and festivities galore. For coaches in New Orleans, it's nearly impossible.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

December 2013



Chris Graythen/Getty Images

*"This is a Caribbean city, an exuberant, semi-tropical city, perhaps the most hedonistic city in the United States. You see more orgies (and more nuns) in New Orleans than anywhere else in the nation." —R.W. Apple, former **New York Times** associate editor, in his 2002 book **Apple's America***

It's difficult for Tiffany Kasunich to articulate what it's like living in New Orleans, La.

1 of 5

"I can't even," she said, prematurely ending her sentence to start a new one.

"It's just unbelievable. Sometimes it's hard to put into words for people who have never been here—just the fried food, the portion sizes. The excessive alcohol that's available down here is just mind-blowing."

If it's not deep fried, it's coated in butter and salt. Sometimes it's both. And when it comes to booze, you're free to walk around the city with your poison of choice. Hell, there are even drive-thru daiquiri stands.

All the more reason, Kasunich said, to educate members of newly affiliated 4th Quarter CrossFit about nutrition. And not just that, but also to keep them from the influence of the world's most notoriously decadent city during the season of encouraged overindulgence.

"The holiday parties out here are so excessive. It's almost impossible not to go to one every weekend," noted Kasunich, business development director at Velocity

Sports Performance, which houses 4th Quarter CrossFit in Mid-City New Orleans. She moved to New Orleans from New Jersey in October.

**"The holiday parties out here
are so excessive."**

—Tiffany Kasunich

Affiliates the world over are fighting the same battle—trying to keep members away from the seductive temptations of pumpkin pie and brandied egg nog. But in a place like New Orleans, it's less a battle and more a war.



ROBYN BECK/AFP/Getty Images

Beignets are a delicious companion to a bender, but they're far from fuel for elite performance.

Louisiana was the most obese state in the country in 2012, with 34.7 percent of its adults falling into that category, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Colorado was at the opposite end of that list; only 20.5 percent of its adult residents are obese. In the New Orleans metro area, 32.6 percent of adults were obese in 2010, according to the most-recent CDC data available for America's metro areas.

A Diet Named Desire

At 4th Quarter CrossFit, which affiliated in early December, members will have a certified sports-performance nutritionist and a registered dietician on staff. To speak to the general population simply looking to become fitter, Kasunich takes to social media.

In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, she posted tips on Facebook and Twitter: "After your meal, go for a brisk 30-minute walk. The cool air and physical activity will refresh you." And, "If you wear a fitted outfit—make sure it has a zipper or buttons—your waistband will instantly remind you when you've had enough."

At CrossFit NOLA, which sits near the banks of the Mississippi River in New Orleans, nutrition is discussed weekly.

"We know people aren't going to be perfect over the holidays in New Orleans, where drinking nights are five to seven nights a week."

—Jeff Germond

As a way to break the ice during fundamentals classes for beginners, coaches ask athletes what they ate for breakfast, taking the opportunity to suggest eggs instead of beignets, for example, said affiliate owner Jeff Germond, who is originally from Michigan.

About 5 miles east, also along the windy Mississippi, Big Easy CrossFit takes a similar approach during its on-ramp classes.

"We lay it out: 'OK, guys, what did you guys have for breakfast today?'" owner Zack DiBenedetto said. "If they had a bowl of cereal, we say that's a big no-no."

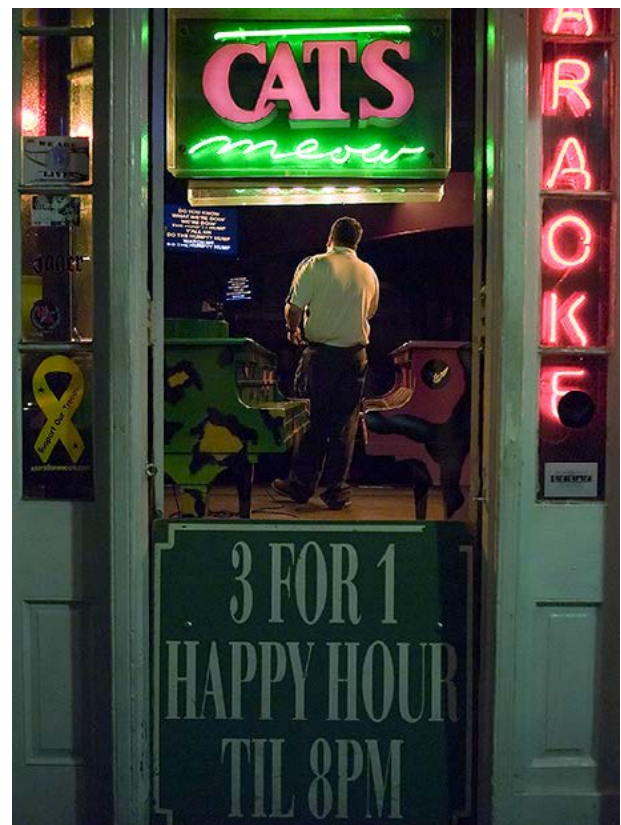
CrossFit NOLA also encourages members to participate in a nutrition challenge from September through November, and then again in January through March.

"It gives people ... bookends," Germond said, referencing the month of December.

"We know people aren't going to be perfect over the holidays in New Orleans, where drinking nights are five to seven nights a week. We're fighting an uphill battle, for sure."

The box also offers a class on Thanksgiving Day and on Christmas Day "to give people a chance to come in and work out if they're going to be eating food they shouldn't be eating," Germond added.

DiBenedetto, meanwhile, recommends small changes to his members' eating plans.



JIM WATSON/AFP/Getty Images

"Three-for-one drinks? Maybe we'll just stop in for a minute."

John Moore/Getty Images



Bigger is not always better, especially when talking about bottles of beer and fitness.

"Too much too quick gets too overwhelming and then you back out and don't go through with it," he said.

To keep athletes on the nutrition wagon this holiday season, Supra CrossFit owner Jonas Deffes has challenged those who are interested to simply not gain any weight in December.

"They have to take pictures of everything they eat," he said. And then they must post those photos in a Facebook group.

"It's good because it's short. It's not overbearing. It's not like we're doing a 12-week nutrition program. Usually when they see, 'Oh, it's gonna be like three weeks or four weeks of eating clean,' it's doable in their eyes," Deffes said.

And, he noted, the photos are a reality check.

"It brings a little self-awareness of what they're putting in their mouth," said Deffes, who opened his affiliate this month after about six years of doing CrossFit at other area affiliates.

For members headed to holiday potluck parties, Deffes is ready with Paleo-compliant recipes that are healthy, "actually taste good" and won't make them "feel awkward."

"It tastes better than stupid canned yam with marshmallows on it," he joked.

Beer Before Liquor Just Makes You Sicker

Because of the city's ingrained drinking culture, much of the nutrition discussion at New Orleans CrossFit affiliates this holiday season centers on booze.

"New Orleans is a huge drinking town. Drinking and the parties are a big deal down here, and that's a big feat for our members (to overcome)," Kasunich said.

"(Most people are) not informed on what alcohol does to the body in terms of fitness. We definitely try to touch on that because we have such a large group of people who are indulging in the alcoholic beverages on the weekend."

So much so that classes thin out as members choose local libations from Abita Brewing Co. over burpees.

"Friday night in the gym is dead," DiBenedetto said.

He noted: "People like to booze up a lot."

Same goes at CrossFit NOLA.

"We occasionally have days where Wednesday's class is 12 to 13 (people) and Thursday is, like, two," Germond said.

He added: "A lot of people work in bars and restaurants, so weekends are real busy (for them)."

The city's booming tourism industry has some spots open until 3 or 4 a.m. or later. CrossFit NOLA members who work at such establishments have been known to have a drink after work and end up staying awake until 5 or 6 a.m.

And when athletes are off celebrating at holiday parties or at one of the city's myriad music or culture festivals, he advised "making better choices."

"Instead of beer," DiBenedetto said, "stick to vodka or tequila."



About the Author

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

**"The Saturday class doesn't
necessarily work for them
because they haven't gone
to bed yet."**

—Jeff Germond

"And that's what their weekend cycle looks like," Germond said. "Basically, any physical activity doesn't get done during the weekend. The Saturday class doesn't necessarily work for them because they haven't gone to bed yet."

Talking nutrition in Deffes' hometown is difficult at best.

"In New Orleans, there's something going on every weekend. If it's not Mardi Gras, there's FoodFest, there's Jazz Fest," he said.

Indeed, changing a culture is no easy task.

That's why DiBenedetto, also a New Orleans native, said his approach is more relaxed.

"If it makes you feel more human to go out and have a beer one night a week or two nights a week, that's OK," he said.

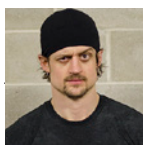
Members just need to remember how to eat, DiBenedetto stressed.

"Make sure you have your macronutrients first," he said.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Weak for a Week?

The period between Christmas and New Year's can destroy your fitness. Proceed with caution.



Uncommon Sense

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

December 2013



All: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal



The holidays: where hard training can be derailed by hard partying.

The week between Christmas and New Year's is the Death Valley of fitness.

I'd wager more pounds are gained and more fitness lost in this period than during any other eight-day stretch of the year that isn't spent on an all-inclusive cruise ship.

Many people simply stop caring about a lot of things when the mistletoe goes up, and between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 they treat their bodies like a '93 hatchback that's a week from being written off.

"Fuck it. It's Christmas," might as well be a line from *Deck the Halls* for the amount of times you hear it spoken directly before a Jell-O shooter slithers down the throat or a chunk of chocolate melts in the mouth, not in the hand.

Guilt and fear of going back to the gym are byproducts of a week of excess. Neither is good for fitness.

To be sure, many athletes have earned the right to cut loose and behave like it's Mardi Gras on Bourbon Street. A year of hard work certainly warrants a bit of time off and

a respite from a strict regimen. If Rich Froning wants to rip into a cheesecake this Christmas, I'll gladly buy it for him.

But for others, the season is just another way to validate bad behavior that was probably happening in previous weeks, if to a lesser degree. For these people, fitness is a scratch-and-claw affair in which hard workouts are balanced with hard partying, and a week off can set them back a few months or even derail them completely. Guilt and fear of going back to the gym are byproducts of a week of excess. Neither is good for fitness.

Other people have made legitimate changes over the year only to slide back into old habits during the holidays, much like a smoker who lights up with his high-school buddies "for old times' sake" and soon finds himself sucking down a pack a day once again. For these guys, the season isn't an end-of-year party but the beginning of a new fight to stay on track.

And finally, those of us who make up the fat part of the bell curve sometimes just get lazy. Or drunk. We of the 405-lb. deadlift, 20-round Cindy and sub-five-but-plus-four Fran make some bad choices, and we regret them the next day as we wonder whether we'll manage to stay on Page 6 of the Open Leaderboard this year.



Fight Gone Bad or Night Gone Bad?



Wherever you fall on that spectrum, you have a choice over the next seven days: You can choose to party like David Lee Roth circa 1984, or you can hit the gym and then party as hard as you can while still planning to hit the gym the next day.

Obviously, working out is only part of fitness, and it's supported by nutrition, rest, recovery, hydration and distinctly limited amounts of gin. But if all goes awry and you succeed only in getting to the gym over the holidays, it's better than nothing. As a bonus, if you're planning to go to the gym, chances are you'll pass on the seventh cupcake or the 12th pull on the beer bong. If you have no plans for the following morning, the chances of streaking through the neighborhood increase exponentially with each drink consumed.

If you're planning to go to the gym, chances are you'll pass on the seventh cupcake or the 12th pull on the beer bong.



So make a plan for the next seven days. Pull out the calendar now, and mark off time for family and fun, as well as fitness. If you're worried about sticking to the plan, post your commitment publicly or tell a reliable friend at your affiliate so he or she can use a barbell to pry you off the couch for a workout. Lean on your coaches, especially when dizzy after a holiday Fran.

But make time to work out. Fitness waits for no man or woman, even one nursing a savage hangover.



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and the founder of [CrossFit 204](#).

From Dec. 25 to Jan. 1, success can be measured in pounds, while failure is often measured in ounces.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit Risk Retention Group: 2013 Update

Over 30 percent of CrossFit affiliates in the U.S. turn to community-owned insurance to protect their businesses.

By Eric Reingen

December 2013



Christine Galligani

Eric Reingen, assistant vice president of CrossFit Risk Retention Group Inc.

Four years ago, there was an idea to create something that would represent our strength and initiative, something that would become the backbone of our reputation and allow us to take aggressive action in defense of our affiliates and trainers: insurance by and for the CrossFit community.

In 2009, this idea turned into a massive funding effort to raise US\$500,000. The goal was met and CrossFit Risk Retention Group Inc. (CF-RRG) was formed. In three short years, CF-RRG now has more than 2,200 supporters who insure and capitalize the company, it has issued 4,000 policies, and it's growing fast.

What Is CF-RRG?

CF-RRG is a community-owned insurance company that provides all insurance requirements in affiliate licensing agreements and also fulfills CrossFit Kids requirements. CF-RRG also provides personal-trainer policies for independent Level 1 CrossFit certificate holders.

Originally, CF-RRG was designed to provide specific coverage that commercial insurance companies did not want to offer. In addition to an RRG policy, affiliates were supposed to purchase a wrap-around policy as well. While great in concept, it made the RRG uncompetitive in the marketplace. Regulatory approvals and customer confusion plagued the first year of CF-RRG's existence. This led to the first step in CF-RRG's evolution.

In January 2011, CF-RRG began fulfilling all requirements of the CrossFit Affiliate Licensing Agreement. It was a momentous shift and instantly provided a competitive

product while simplifying the process for affiliates. For membership, this meant 400 percent growth from 2010 to 2011. From 2011 to 2012, CF-RRG grew an additional 60 percent.

Success with the policy was reached in 2011, and in late 2012 CF-RRG shifted its focus to becoming the most efficient insurance company in its sector. Affiliates need things done quickly, efficiently and accurately, so a team of dedicated people set out to create a customer experience characterized by ease of use, accessibility and 48-hour response times.

The application process was revamped and taken online. Utilizing a new website, members of the community were able to receive a quote online. Additionally, CF-RRG created a customer portal where affiliates and trainers can log in, view their policy and documents, and print important information directly from the website. There is no insurance company at this time that provides this type



John Maguire

Some affiliate owners have examined the finer points of their insurance policy and found exclusions for homemade equipment such as plyo boxes.

of technology for the affiliate community, and the systems directly contribute to the streamlined onboarding of 70 affiliates per month.

By 2013, these changes had helped CF-RRG revenue grow 1,150 percent from 2009.

In three years, CrossFit RRG has achieved approximately 31 percent of the affiliate/trainer market share in the United States. When we poll affiliates, they often select the RRG's main charter as their reason for choosing CrossFit RRG: an insurance company owned by the community that acts in the best interest of its policyholders. Community ownership resonates with affiliate owners because the RRG staff understand why you made parallettes with PVC pipe, how you scrapped together the plyo box in the garage, and most importantly, what happens when a person comes in for one workout and then claims he or she got rhabdo in your box.

Community ownership resonates with affiliate owners because the RRG staff understand why you made parallettes with PVC pipe.

CF-RRG's main purpose is to defend rhabdo claims vigorously. For example, a current claim in litigation could potentially be settled under \$15,000, and CF-RRG has spent over \$50,000 in legal expenses protecting our affiliate. Other insurers might say this is financially obtuse. Why spend so much on defense when the settlement value is much lower? Because protecting members of the community when they've done nothing wrong is invaluable to the CrossFit brand.

Yes, rhabdo cases are always a headline grabber—as we've recently seen across many media outlets—but CF-RRG also handles smaller claims with urgent care and support. When an athlete is injured, his or her medical payments can be paid in short order, reducing the risk of a lawsuit and keeping the athlete happy with the affiliate. Unfortunately, we estimate that 30 to 40 percent of affiliates not insured



Paul Wagner

CF-RRG also covers garage training, which is important for many CrossFit trainers.

by CF-RRG have an “athletic participant exclusion” in their policy. It's a severe exclusion that allows the insurer to escape claims regarding athletes who are injured during workouts. With this restriction, it's likely that the insurance company won't cover the claim, and if it does, it could settle without regard to either the trainer's professional reputation or that of the wider CrossFit community.

By the end of this year, CF-RRG will have collected over \$5 million in premiums since inception. In 2013 alone, the gross written premiums will be \$2.5 million. By comparison, in 2010 CF-RRG only wrote \$200,000 in gross premiums.

While premium growth is a strong indicator of CF-RRG's success, claim payments are just as important. As expected, CF-RRG claim activity is much lower than fitness-industry standards used by insurance companies.

In 2013, incurred losses are expected to be \$350,000, while premium is expected to be \$2.5 million. This provides a loss ratio of 14 percent, which is exceptional for the insurance industry. Other risk-retention groups across the country will average loss ratios of 68.8 percent in 2013 (1).



K.C. Stallsmith

Fitness outside the gym: CF-RRG covers training at the park or the beach, giving policyholders more freedom than standard insurance policies.

Members of CF-RRG may be wondering if such success will create a dividend or lower premium rates for policyholders. "Loss experience" is the key term that defines the ability for a young insurance company to issue a dividend, and CF-RRG is two years away from the maturity needed to issue a dividend. Unknown factors including claims, loss expenses (attorney fees and other associated costs) or market conditions can have a toll on company surplus.

The same factors contribute to the ability to lower rates. Lower rates must be substantiated over a long period of time before actuarial precedent is created. CF-RRG is carefully monitoring these elements and will soon be able to prove, from an actuarial standpoint, that CrossFit has fewer claims than the rest of the fitness world.

Misconceptions

Though things have gone well for CF-RRG, a small minority of the community has not joined primarily due to misinformation. A common misconception is that CF-RRG cannot pay multiple maximum claims, which is untrue. CF-RRG,

Affiliates are encouraged to carefully examine their current coverage to make sure their lower premiums don't come at the cost of critical exclusions in coverage.

like all insurance companies, diversifies and manages its own risk through reinsurance. Reinsurance is the practice that insurance companies use to buy their own insurance. It transfers risk from one entity to another. For CF-RRG, 90 percent of risk is transferred to another insurance company whose A.M. Best rating is A with a financial-size category of over \$2 billion. Between the two entities, there is enough capital to pay a maximum claim for each affiliate, all at the same time.

Another common misconception is the price of coverage when compared to competitors in the marketplace. Insurance documents can be long, and it's sometimes hard to find what policies are actually covering. This is especially true when working with insurance agencies that don't understand CrossFit. In most policies purchased by members of our community, we can find exclusions: pesky, hidden, unwanted pages of the contract that restrict coverage for athletic competition; running outside the box; using rings, ropes and pull-up rigs; creating boxes; and the list goes on.

CF-RRG may be more expensive than these options because it does not restrict what affiliates are typically doing in a box. Affiliates are encouraged to carefully examine their current coverage to make sure their lower premiums don't come at the cost of critical exclusions in coverage.

The Future

What will CF-RRG look like in five years?

We may start to see a general "hardening" of the insurance market, which will drive up pricing for typical insurance companies. In many cases this is already taking place. Fortunately, CF-RRG is not subject to market conditions, and rates will remain constant, if not lower, with continued claim success for affiliates.



Andrew Thompson

CF-RRG policies do not restrict training age and fulfill all CrossFit Kids insurance requirements.

CF-RRG projects that 80 percent of the CrossFit community in the United States will be using its product within a few years, and a dividend will be returned when it is safe to do so.

The online system will continue to grow with the addition of digital signature capabilities and added payment options. The focus will remain ease of use for the community.

CF-RRG is unable to offer coverage outside the United States. However, a different insurance program for international affiliates is almost finished. The hope is to soon provide a similar solution for the growing international community.

Most importantly, CF-RRG—owned and led by CrossFit affiliates—will continue to protect and defend the CrossFit community.

For more information visit CrossFitRRG.com.

References

1. Powell DA. [RRGs report financially stable results at first quarter 2013](#). *The Self-Insurer*: 26-29, August 2013.



About the Author

Eric Reingen is co-owner of CrossFit 310 in Redondo Beach, Calif., assistant vice president of CrossFit RRG Inc., and vice president of Nexo Insurance Services Inc. Email him at eric@crossfitrrg.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

2013: Beloved Suffering

Dave Castro, Nicole Carroll and a host of athletes and affiliate owners recall the workouts that made an impression in the year that was.

By Hilary Achauer

December 2013



Dave Castro performs the Hotshots 19 workout alongside CrossFit Games podium finishers Lindsey Valenzuela (center) and Rich Froning (right).

Early in 2013, CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman and Dave Castro, Director of the CrossFit Games, sat outside a Starbucks in Carlsbad, Calif., brainstorming about the last workout of the 2013 Open.

The meeting over coffee resulted in [Open Workout 13.5](#), which was performed by more than 120,000 athletes. Castro revealed the combination of thrusters and pull-ups at a live event in Santa Cruz, Calif., in front of close to 2,000 spectators, and the announcement was simultaneously broadcast online to a global audience.

"That morning in Carlsbad, creating that workout with (Glassman), and that evening of announcing it are part of the reasons this is one of the most memorable workouts of the year for me," Castro said.

CrossFit athletes do hundreds of workouts a year. Most fade into a haze of sweat, pain and euphoria once the reps are finished and the time runs out. But not all are so easily forgotten.

As 2013 comes to a close, we asked people throughout the CrossFit world—from Games athletes to affiliate owners to CrossFit Inc. staff—about their favorite workout of 2013, whether it was a workout they did, programmed or just watched someone else suffer through.

Open Evolution

Castro and the CrossFit Games team had already decided on the first four Open workouts when he and Glassman met at Starbucks. Castro just needed one more.

"I had already told (Glassman) about the other Open workouts, and that this final one needed to leave a stamp on the community, and that it needed to have thrusters and pull-ups," Castro said.

"Four minutes seemed to be a good number to settle on where most good athletes would complete one and then be rewarded with the ability to do another Fran."

—Dave Castro

"We both agreed we wanted it to be unique and very similar to Fran in its layout and in its dose," he said, referring to the classic 21-15-9 workout of thrusters and pull-ups.

In 2012, the Open included a workout where the athlete was "rewarded" with the opportunity to increase the load and continue with more work once he or she completed a number of reps at a given weight.



Dave Re

Dave Castro sports a tux for the announcement of Workout 13.5 in Santa Cruz, Calif.

"We decided to do the same, but instead of increasing the loading, we decided that if you finished X amount of work, you were given the ability to do more work. What became important for us then at this junction was to make that work accomplished equivalent to Fran," Castro said.

They played with time domains, eventually deciding on four minutes as the first time cutoff.

"Four minutes seemed to be a good number to settle on where most good athletes would complete one and then be rewarded with the ability to do another Fran," Castro said.

Then Castro and Glassman played with the rep schemes, finally deciding three rounds of 15 was enough work that at some point the athlete might have to break up the thrusters or pull-ups.

"This one was never tested," Castro said. "We didn't need to. After having programmed for these events for years, you generally learn that you also have a good sense of what's possible from these guys. I played it out over and over in my head, and I was confident that the best guys could get to eight minutes (six rounds), but the best of the best would get to 12 minutes (nine rounds). I thought maybe someone would get to 16 minutes (12 rounds)."

In the end, nobody managed to live up to Castro's expectations, and many found the workout was much harder than it looked on paper. The top score for the women was Lindsay Bourdon, who got eight rounds plus 15 thrusters and one chest-to-bar pull-up. Josh Bridges had the top male score, with eight rounds plus 14 thrusters.

"The next phase of this—and the thing that made it one of the most memorable events of the year for me—was the approach of and then the actual announcement of the event live in Santa Cruz," Castro said.

"Calling the workout on the live stream was proving to be a challenge. I had to think of a way to describe it accurately and in a concise manner that was actually entertaining and had a cliff-hanger aspect to it," he said.

"The announcement went fine for me, minus the sweat that was pouring from my face. It wasn't the tuxedo ... it was the lighting that we experimented with. It was right above us, blaring down, creating so much heat."

While he was up there under the lights, Castro remembered where the workout was conceived and how a conversation over coffee resulted in thousands of people struggling to do enough work in four minutes to earn the privilege to keep suffering for four minutes more.

Testing and Execution

Rob Orlando, who runs the CrossFit Strongman Trainer Course, was also part of the early stages of a Games-related event for 2013.

Orlando was wrapping up a vacation in Hawaii with his wife. Just before he was about to head home, he got a call from Castro.

"I had spent four days drinking booze and eating way too much food in Kauai ... (Castro) called me 36 hours prior to leaving for the airport to return home and asked me to stop in Aromas to test the (workout)," Orlando said.

When Castro calls with an opportunity like that, it's hard to say no.



Nicole Bedard

Rob Orlando (squatting) tested out an early version of Event 6 of the Regionals, and the challenge was one of his favorite workouts of 2013.

Orlando diverted his flight, flew overnight and landed in San Francisco, Calif. He met Castro, drove to Aromas (the site of the first CrossFit Games in 2007) and tested the event.

The event Castro wanted Orlando to run through was Event 6 of the Regionals: 100 double-unders, 50 handstand push-ups, 40 toes-to-bars, 30 lifts from shoulders to overhead, three lifts with a 160-lb. axle, and 90 feet of walking lunges with the same axle in the front-rack position.

"I was the very first to do (the workout)," Orlando said. "The version that I tested was slightly different than what appeared at the Regionals, but it followed the same format. I tested it with a 10-minute time cap, and I used 185 lb. for both the overheads and the lunges.

"I was a guinea pig—and I loved it," Orlando said.

"It was not the ideal scenario, but it speaks to the power of the CrossFit way of life," Orlando said. "With no preparation, little sleep and horrible nutrition—too much great food and wine—I was still able to post up a decent score on a very difficult workout."

Back from the Breaks

Miranda Oldroyd, Level 1 Seminar Staff member and part of the CrossFit Games Media team, will never forget her experience with the first event at the 2013 Northern California Regional. The event was Jackie, a benchmark featuring a 1,000-m row, 50 45-lb. thrusters and 30 pull-ups.

"To go out and win the first workout of Regionals after the year I had had was beyond amazing. It is a moment I will truly never forget."

—Miranda Oldroyd

"This workout will be on my list of all-time highs probably forever for multiple reasons," Oldroyd said.



Thomas Campielli

Miranda Oldroyd celebrating her first-place finish in Jackie, the first event of the 2013 Northern California Regional.



Thomas Campielli

After breaking her neck in 2012, Oldroyd wasn't sure if she'd be able to compete in 2013.

"I had a hell of a year after the car accident with my injuries. When someone tells you that you have a broken neck, you start to wonder what that's going to mean for your competitive CrossFit career," she said.

In late June 2012, Oldroyd was in an accident in Laguna Hills, Calif. She was misdiagnosed only with whiplash but later found out a cervical vertebrae was broken in two places. While she was moving and training shortly after the accident, she was in pain and couldn't do a lot. When the breaks were discovered after she worked as a reporter at the CrossFit Games, she had spinal-fusion surgery.

"For months I was extremely limited in how I could train—so much so that when the Open started I was wondering if I would even qualify for Regionals. Qualifying and getting to compete with the women of NorCal after all that had happened was already emotional enough. Then, to go out and win the first workout of Regionals after the year I had had was beyond amazing. It is a moment I will truly never forget," she said.

Oldroyd's time of 6:13 put her in a tie with Deborah Corder Carson and Rebecca Voigt for the seventh best time across all regions.

Jackie was also Castro's favorite Regionals event.

"This is a benchmark, and contrary to what a lot of people thought, it was a great race and spectacle to watch," Castro said. "I really wanted to see sub-five (minutes). We will soon, though."

Jason Khalipa had the top male score worldwide, with a time of 5:04, and Elisabeth Akinwale earned the top female spot, finishing in 5:59.

Twisted Idea of Fun

One of the Games events came about almost by accident. It was born of a challenge thrown out to Nicole Carroll, CrossFit's Director of Certification and Training.

The challenge was to row 1 million meters.

"This became my WOD, or obsession if you will," Carroll said. And the challenge ended up being her favorite workout—or grueling slog—of 2013.

"The genesis of the challenge was my fiancé, Brian Chontosh, and his twisted idea of fun," Carroll said.

Chontosh, a Marine who won the Navy Cross in Iraq and can be seen in classic CrossFit videos such as [Tosh Does Grace](#), threw out the challenge in February.



Kimberly Potter

Jason Khalipa named the Burden Run at the Games as his favorite workout of 2013, even though he said flipping the Pig across the field was the hardest part of the entire competition.

"He finally goaded me into full participation in early March," she said. Eleven people started the challenge with Carroll, and only six finished.

"I felt responsible for getting everyone into (the half-marathon row), so I figured it would only be right for me to do it too."

—Nicole Carroll

"It consumed much of my efforts for the year," Carroll said. "I think this challenge not only committed me to a lengthy term level of effort but was also in a modality that was not necessarily in the wheelhouse of a short lightweight. Mentally and emotionally, it required dedication in spite of boredom, discomfort, fatigue, distraction."



Courtesy CrossFit South Philly

For CrossFit athletes, the most memorable workouts are often those that push their mental and physical boundaries.

Based on her average split times, Carroll estimated she spent roughly 75 hours (about three days) strapped into the rower.

"It seems like it absorbed so much more of my life than just that," she said.

A few months into the challenge, Carroll and Castro were discussing possibilities for Games events, and Castro told Carroll he was thinking of including a workout inspired by the rowing challenge.

Castro and Tony Budding, former director of Games media, were originally thinking of a 15,000-meter row, but Carroll chimed in with the half-marathon idea. The second event of the Games ended up being a 21,097-m row, equivalent to 13.1 miles.

"This is why I did the demo for that workout," Carroll said, "I felt responsible for getting everyone into it, so I figured it would only be right for me to do it too."

Beasts of Burden

Orlando's second favorite workout of 2013 included an element he had a hand in designing. The Pig, a flippable metal frame that made an appearance in the Burden Run at the Games, was Orlando's creation.

"The Pig was special because it was something that I sketched for close to a year," Orlando said.

"I finally got brave enough to have it built by a local fabricator, and after some preliminary testing, I posted a video to Facebook. Rogue contacted me and said they wanted to build it. While I was in Germany at Reebok CrossFit Nurnberg for a seminar, I received a phone call from (Rogue owner) Bill Henniger letting me know that Dave (Castro) loved the Pig and that it would most likely be in the Games."

Orlando said he never saw or performed the Burden Run workout prior to the Games, but he knew the Pig was going to make an appearance.

"Seeing it on the main stage and being used by the best athletes in our sport was a massive thrill," Orlando said.

"I was able to make a contribution to CrossFit. Any time I can be a part of creating something that benefits our amazing community, I consider it an honor and privilege," he said.

Orlando wasn't the only one who loved the Burden Run. It was Jason Khalipa's favorite workout of 2013 as well.



Alicia Anthony Baldwin

Although she struggled with the Burden Run, Alessandra Pichelli said she enjoyed the unexpected challenges: carrying the log and flipping the Pig.

Khalipa placed second overall at the 2013 Games and won the Burden Run event.

"It was programmed well, judging was very streamlined, and I performed well at it," Khalipa said. "The movements were an awesome complement to each other and I truly felt like it tested all-around fitness."

**"After 50 yards it felt like
a one-rep-max deadlift
every time."**

**—Jason Khalipa
on the Pig**



Alicia Anthony Baldwin

Scott Panchik working his way through Legless.

Khalipa said flipping the Pig was the hardest part of that event and of the entire Games.

"After 50 yards it felt like a one-rep-max deadlift every time," he said.

Alessandra Pichelli, who placed fourth overall at the 2013 Games, earned 11th place in the Burden Run (one of her worst finishes), but it was still her favorite workout of 2013.

"It was definitely one of the hardest workouts of the Games," Pichelli said, "as you could tell by all of the athletes collapsing after crossing the finish line. It is always fun to face new challenges, and the Burden Run had the most surprising/new elements of any (event) during the Games season."

Pichelli said the lessons she learned from the event have stuck with her throughout the year.

"I have learned my lessons from the sections I lost time in and have been working on those weaknesses in the offseason. I hope I can show off my improvements in a similar workout during the 2014 season," Pichelli said.

Scott Panchik, who placed fourth overall at the Games, said his favorite workout of 2013 was Legless. Competitors had to complete 27 thrusters at 95/65 lb. before performing four legless rope climbs. Thruster reps were reduced by six in each of the three subsequent rounds, and the climbs were reduced by one ascent in each round. Castro said Legless was also on the list of his favorites because he's wanted to put legless rope climbs in the Games for years.

For Panchik, his surroundings played a big part in his experience.

"It was under the lights in the tennis stadium, and people were going nuts," Panchik said about the event, which was the last event on Friday.

"Fireworks were going off and I remember looking left and looking right and feeling so blessed to be where I was doing what I love," he said.

Outside the Games

Not everyone's favorite workout of 2013 was Games related. Wil Vicinus, owner and head trainer at CrossFit South Philly/Fearless Athletics in Philadelphia, Pa., said his favorite workout is one they do every year.

The workout is called Fearless. It consists of four rounds for time of 10 box jumps (30/24 in.), 10 burpees, 10 chest-to-bar pull-ups, 10 ball slams (30/20 lb.), 10 wall-ball shots to a 10-ft. target (20/14 lb.), 10 thrusters (115/75 lb.), and 10 power snatches (115/75 lb.).

"We do this (workout) annually, typically in May or June, to celebrate our anniversary as a registered CrossFit affiliate," Vicinus said.

Members created Fearless as part of a contest that challenged them to come up with a workout that captured the spirit of the affiliate.

"The workout represents the progression of an athlete starting as a beginner with simpler movements (box jumps and burpees), learning to generate power and master new movements (pull-ups, ball slams, wall-ball shots), starting to work with barbells (thrusters) and finally taking on the challenge of mastering technical movements (power snatch)," Vicinus said.

"What we like most about this workout is that it's all about our community of athletes—it was created by them as a way for them to celebrate their shared journey together," he said.



Courtesy CrossFit South Philly

Members of CrossFit South Philly/Fearless Athletics created the workout Fearless to celebrate the progression of a CrossFit athlete.

Alicia Anthony Baldwin



Matt Lodin (kneeling) said his favorite workout is one that terrifies him but also lets him know how far he's come each year.

Matt Lodin, a member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff, also has a favorite workout he does every year. Like many CrossFit athletes, his definition of "favorite" is unusual.

The workout is as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of Fran (21-15-9 thrusters and pull-ups), Elizabeth (21-15-9 cleans and ring dips), Diane (21-15-9 deadlifts and

handstand push-ups) and 30 muscle-ups. Athletes use one barbell, changing their own weights.

"This is a workout programmed by Bryan Boorstein, owner of CrossFit Pacific Beach, as a once-a-year benchmark," Lodin said.

"It is a behemoth of a workout and it gives me the chills just looking at it," he said.

"Every year I can't imagine improving on my score from the last year, and every year there is a significant improvement. The feeling of validation and satisfaction I get from improving my score every year makes this my favorite workout of the year. Every time, it reaffirms for me that what we do in this CrossFit program is truly improving my fitness and continues improving it year after year. The goal for 2014: finish the muscle-ups!" Lodin said.

Honoring Others

For some CrossFit athletes, the meaning behind a workout is just as important as the workout itself.

**"It is a behemoth of a workout
and it gives me the chills just
looking at it."**

**—Matt Lodin
on his favorite workout of 2013**

On June 30, 2013, 19 members of the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew, based in Prescott, Ariz., died fighting a fire. To commemorate those who gave their lives, CrossFit held a memorial workout at Captain CrossFit in Prescott on Aug. 31, 2013. The workout was called Hotshots 19 and consisted of six rounds for time of 30 squats, 19 135-lb. power cleans, 7 strict pull-ups and a 400-meter run.

Lindsey Valenzuela took part in the memorial workout, and it was her favorite of the year "because of the impact it had on lifting the spirits of the Prescott CrossFit community and the families who lost loved ones in that tragic fire," she said.

"We had a very emotional prayer led by Dan Bailey with the families of the fallen firefighters immediately before the WOD. It brought most, if not all, in the circle to tears. It

was an honor to work out in the memory of those 19 men," Valenzuela said.

"Hotshots 19 is a Hero workout that meant so much to the community and the families of the firefighters who lost their lives," Castro said. "For me, it was memorable because I also did it side by side with the likes of (Rich) Froning, Bailey and Valenzuela."

Wayne Kim, owner of CrossFit by Overload in Murietta, Calif., was not in Arizona for the Hotshots 19 tribute, but his affiliate performed the workout on the same day as the event.

"We were with Greg (Glassman) in Montana (at the Affiliate Gathering) when he informed us about the workout and showed us the short film. It was very touching. We have several firefighters at our box that knew some of the fallen guys. Very sad," Kim said.

"We did (Hotshots 19) at our facility and opened it up to others in the community. It was an emotional story," he said.

An Everyday Challenge

Sometimes the most memorable workouts take place on an ordinary day and don't seem like anything special at the time.

George Ryan, who runs the CrossFit Striking Trainer Course, said his most memorable workout happened on a November afternoon.

"I had very little time," Ryan said, "so I did some range-of-motion exercises and ran a mile in seven minutes for a warm-up. I then gave myself three minutes to rest, and I hit a workout called Striking Alex. It's three rounds for time of a 400-meter run, 15 ring dips and 15 four-strike punching combinations on the heavy bag," he said.

"The logistical issue I had was that my rings are set up in my backyard on my patio cover, and my heavy bag is in my garage, which is located at the front of my house. I had to sprint around the side of my house to get to my garage after completing my ring dips. What made this more fun is that my dog, Snoopy, thought I wanted him to chase me, so he barked at me as I sprinted to the front of the house," Ryan said.

Mike Burgener, leader of the CrossFit Weightlifting Trainer Course, said his favorite workout is one he made up when he was training a Navy SEAL candidate.



Brian Sullivan

Lindsey Valenzuela finished second at the CrossFit Games but considers the Hotshots 19 event her favorite test of 2013.



Scott Wallace

George Ryan (kicking) said his most memorable workout took place in and around his garage in the company of a dog named Snoopy.

"We call our favorite workout The Hillary Clinton," Burgener said. A political conservative, Burgener came up with the name because he hates the workout so much. Burgener's liberal wife calls the workout The George Bush.

The workout consists of three rounds of a one-mile run in a 10-lb. weight vest over the steep hills surrounding Mike's Gym in Bonsall, Calif., 25 pull-ups, another weighted one-mile run and 25 ball slams.

"It's very evil! We can scale it down for the Geezers with an 800-meter hill run. It's still evil," Burgener said, referring to his group of 60-plus-year-old friends who work out together three times a week.

Your Favorite?

Workouts become memorable when they elicit an emotional reaction, whether it's chill-inducing fear or heart-swelling triumph. The venue doesn't seem to matter. The Games figured prominently in many people's minds, but just as important were those workouts done at the gym with friends or even at home alone.

What matters is the feeling as you complete that last rep after having done something very challenging.

Think back on 2013. What was your favorite workout—and why? Post responses to comments.



About the Author

Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary is an editor and writer for the **CrossFit Journal** and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilaryachauer.com.