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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## Bring Your A-Game

CrossFitter and 2010 regionals competitor Kevin Daigle offers a few tips to first-time competitors as competition season approaches.

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All images Staff/CrossFit Journal

Competition is the fire in which character is forged. It's also the crucible where weakness is overcome, enemies are defeated and victory is won with a resounding "how ya like me now?"

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1 of 7

As it pertains to CrossFit, competition is also the ultimate expression of our community, and it's at the heart of CrossFit and its continued growth. Since very early in my CrossFit career, it's been my view that everyone should participate on some level in competition. In a way we do, as the competitive aspects of our beloved group-training model are in large part responsible for the movement we've created.

As the details of the 2011 Games season come out, it looks like the competition will be more accessible to more athletes than ever before. Clearly, new athletes are a little nervous to compete and have a lot of questions, especially because we've all seen the quintessential CrossFit badasses in thousands of competition videos and perhaps felt intimidated. We shouldn't feel that way, though.

Here, I'll provide some insight on how to go out there and be that badass—knee socks and inappropriate T-shirt optional.

### **Why Compete?**

Why not? Be aggressive: take your newfound capacity and ability to task. Test it out.

I'm not saying that each and every one of you should be training to win the CrossFit Games. However, "forging" elite fitness and not testing its mettle on the field of sport is like building a 1,000-horsepower race car and never taking it out of the driveway. Or it's like making Megan Fox fall madly in love with you and then taking a vow of chastity.

There's also host of other reasons—some universal and some individual—why you should foist yourself upon a CrossFit event. It gives a laser focus to your training and in my opinion makes it more fun.

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**You'll also meet awesome people at a CrossFit competition, and sometimes this alone is worth the struggle.**

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*When the organizers are explaining the schedule, pay close attention. You don't want to miss your heat.*



*Standards are different in each competition, so listen carefully to the pre-event briefing.*

You'll also meet awesome people, and sometimes this alone is worth the struggle. Through this competitive environment, you'll experience a strengthening of the bond we all share as CrossFitters. You'll discover these bonds are deeper than you imagined.

In competition, you'll find yourself standing miles beyond where you believed your limits to be. You will become a better CrossFitter.

I could go on for days about this, but I'll stop here: be cognizant of the boundless benefits—and zero drawbacks—of competing in our beloved sport. Competition will not only allow you to showcase your stuff but will also show you what your A-game really is.

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### **How Do I train?**

This can be difficult to answer. What are you training for? The CrossFit Games (and the qualifiers beforehand)? A local throwdown? Do you know the events, or are they secret? All of these are important questions to ask.

Once you have the answer to your questions, talk to your coaches, if they're not already programming for you. Here at CrossFit New England, we're fortunate enough to have Ben Bergeron specifically programming for those of us who are competing. Listen to your coaches. Follow their programming; they know more than you think.

If you don't have a coach, find an affiliate whose programming fits your needs and follow it. CFNE's Games-competitor programming is posted on our blog along with our regular class WOD, and quite a few athletes outside our box follow Ben's programming.

That being said, you need to train—hard. Get after it like it touched your sister. You're in it to win it now. CrossFit your fucking face off. And trust me—this is the fun part. This isn't where most questions originate, however. Athletes generally feel comfortable pushing themselves into Chernobyl-esque meltdowns in workouts. The big questions come the week before a competition, when the shitting of yoga pants and board shorts begins.

### How Do I Prepare?

“What to do the week of? How many days do I take off? Should I do Eva and Murph the night before?”

The answer is simple: relax. I believe everyone should follow some sort of taper, but what’s optimal will be different for each athlete. You’ll have to play with this a little to get it just right. Once again, listening to your coach is paramount. Your preparation will change depending on the specific competition. Do you know the events? Are you nursing any injuries? All of these things matter.

Let me use my preparation for the 2010 New England Sectionals as an example. We knew the first three events in advance, so we had an opportunity to practice them. It’s always a good idea to know how it’s going to feel on game day. No one goes to prom night without taking the equipment for a few test drives. Here’s what I did:

**Saturday**—Rest day

**Sunday**—Skills/met-con/normal training

**Monday**—Skills/met-con/normal training

**Tuesday**—WOD 1, half of WOD 2

**Wednesday**—WOD 3

**Thursday**—Rest/mobility

**Friday**—Rest/mobility

**Saturday**—Game day

If you don’t know the events beforehand, this might look a little different. You might want to do some short met-cons in place of the practice WODs and supplement with some skills and drills to stay sharp. As I said, what’s optimal here is something you’ll have to find for yourself. Just don’t stress too much about it.

### Game-Day Nutrition

So now it’s time for the big dance. You’re cocked, locked and ready to rock. You’ve trained hard, chewed concrete, worked your skills like they owed you money, and ate clean. It’s the morning of the event, and you’ve probably slept about as much as Tyler Durden. You’re wondering what to have for breakfast.

This answer is much simpler than people want to make it. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Hopefully, you’ve been eating clean, and you can just continue with that. Obviously, the timing of your meals will be dictated by the schedule of



***Once the event starts, it’s time to give it your all.***

the competition, but the substance isn’t hard to figure out. I’m going to directly quote my coach, Ben Bergeron, on this one: “Game day isn’t the time to try new things.” You don’t want to pick today to try some funky new supplement or have some fried rattlesnake (unless that’s what you’ve been wolfing down for months). Choose foods that you’re comfortable with and you know are easily digestible. Being a little “rumbly in the tumbly” before the start of a WOD is not a place you want to be.



*Between events, make sure you have the right food and drink with you to ensure you recover for the next event.*

Between events, hydrate. The importance of this can't be overstated. Make sure you take in plenty of water not only for safety but also to optimize your potential performance. Between workouts, your nutrition should refuel you and help you recover.

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Personally, I always slam a whey-protein shake after a workout. Some people like to eat grilled chicken or something else. It's up to you. Just stick with what you normally do. More important here than in your everyday training is replacing lost muscle glycogen. I love me some sweet potatoes for that, but some prefer applesauce or other foods. Just keep it familiar, light and refreshing and you'll be fine.

Your post-workout recovery meal after the final event can pound sand. Go have a cheeseburger and an ice-cream cone to celebrate. You earned it. Tell them Daigle sent you, and they won't be surprised.

### On the Clock

As the workout approaches, you're going to have to start preparing to tear the roof off. Keep in mind, there is no group or defined warm-up at a competition like there is at your box. It's up to each athlete to be warm, loose and ready to punch Godzilla in the face at the 3-2-1.

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### Listen to metal.

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There will generally be a designated warm-up area for athletes to prepare. Same thing applies here as to nutrition: keep with your routine. Get loose the same way you would back home. Stretch, practice movements, load up barbells, etc. This is also the time to get your game face on. Become

that person who destroys workouts and lays waste to all in the way. Be a "prick-face." Not to other competitors, but to the WOD. Crank up the attitude and the swagger. Listen to metal.

Now's the time to engage in some visualization. If you've never done this, you'll be shocked at how calming, focusing and effective it is. Take some time, close your eyes, and do the entire WOD in your head. See it in perfect clarity and detail. Imagine yourself performing each stride, each clean, each pull-up, etc., perfectly. Be flawless in your mind. Make peace with the pain you'll be feeling, and then it will be only an expected visitor when it arrives. Now you're ready to breath fire.

Pay attention to the scheduling and know when your heat is. As someone who's helped run a competition, I can tell you how close people come to missing their heat because they weren't paying attention or weren't there when the time came. Be early, check in with your judge and remain focused.



*Competition is one of the best parts of CrossFit. Enjoy it!*

### 3-2-1 ... Go!

This is it! Let loose the dogs of war!

Everything has led up to this moment, and now all you have to do is what you love to do: have fun. Compete with honor, and relish every second you're in the fiery maw of CrossFit competition, because I promise you will long for it when it's over.

All of us should compete in CrossFit, whether in an in-house team challenge at your box or the CrossFit Games. It's crazy to love something so intensely and not experience it fully. Self-denial never won any awards. And there are no downsides to competition. You will only gain from throwing your hat in the ring. You'll grow as a person and as a CrossFitter. It's the big payoff. This is where everyone gets what he or she is after. Yes, competition is the "third date" of training.

Participate in the open sectional qualifiers this year. Competition is more accessible than ever with the new format and looks like it will prove to be more fun than a six-pack of Four Loko and giant potato gun.

As I said before, having a deadline of competition adds a sharp focus to your workouts you can't imagine. Even if your personal goal is just to be in better shape, this will dramatically accelerate your progress. You should have no worries about not being able to do muscle-ups or clean and jerk 300 lb. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that you show up and give it bloody hell. We'll all be right there, just outside the caution tape, screaming at you to pick up that bar.

Now go do work.



### About the Author

*Kevin Daigle is a 29-year-old football player and coach turned CrossFitter from Dracut, Mass. He trains at CrossFit New England under the tutelage of Ben and Heather Bergeron and competed in both the 2010 New England Sectional and the Northeast Regional. Kevin was a roving reporter for the **CrossFit Journal** at the 2010 CrossFit Games and runs the blog [Daigle Breathes Fire](#).*