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## No Rep, No Coach

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

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By Pat Sherwood

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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.*

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

**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.*