

# HOW MUCH YA BENCH?

Often forgotten in favor of push presses or jerks, the bench press can add variety to CrossFit workouts.

BY HILARY ACHAUER





Many don't know it, but the Girl workout Lynne has no time constraints. Feel free to rest as needed and charge up for big sets.

On April 22, 2004, Lynne Pitts followed her normal routine. She woke up and logged onto CrossFit.com to see the workout of the day.

The **day's workout** was 5 rounds for max reps of body-weight bench presses and pull-ups.

When she saw the workout, Pitts knew she'd do well.

A competitive powerlifter in the late '80s and early '90s, Pitts discovered CrossFit in 2003. She started doing the workouts in her garage gym in New Hampshire and began posting her results. Back then only about five to 10 people posted each day. Two of her favorite movements were the bench press—she once had a double-body-weight bench press—and the pull-up.

"It was wake up, hop on the computer and find the workout," she said. "I was like, 'Holy cow, it's perfect!'" Pitts said.

"Body-weight bench press—I'm a really good bench presser," she said. "And pull-ups ... and I'm a really good puller-upper."

Pitts did the workout that day and posted a score of 77 bench presses at 115 lb. and 95 pull-ups, hitting a PR of 30 pull-ups in a row in the first round.

Pitts posted her score at 5:13 p.m., and at 8:11 p.m. Greg Glassman, Founder and CEO of CrossFit Inc., commented under the name "Coach": "Congratulations, Lynne! This workout will bear your name from here on!"

"I smiled from ear to ear, did a happy dance around. It was so cool," said Pitts, who has worked for CrossFit Inc. since 2004.

"It's got two of my favorite things, and the best thing of all—and this leads to a later controversy—no time component," Pitts said.

She said what she calls the "Santa Cruz Lynne" is different.

"There's a video with **Brendan Gilliam** doing Lynne as a couplet. As much rest as you wanted between couplets, but back-to-back bench press and pull-ups. And then, because it was a video, that became doctrinal. And there was actually debate—and there might still be debate—whether you have to do Lynne as a couplet," she said.

The bench press is sometimes used for strength work in CrossFit, but it's less frequently programmed as part of a conditioning workout. One of the biggest reasons is space and equipment: A class of 20 people would require 20 benches and 20 places to rack the bar. (As you'll see below, several clever affiliates have gotten around this by using the bench press as part of a partner workout.)

The other reason bench press is less common in CrossFit is because the focus on functional movement leads many gyms to emphasize the push press, press, jerk and dip. As Bill Starr

pointed out in "**The Role of Bench Press in Strength Training**," Olympic lifters have historically avoided benching because pectoral muscles don't play much of a role in overhead lifting. He also noted it was generally accepted that bench pressing could decrease shoulder flexibility, which is key to weightlifting. However, as Starr argued in the article, the bench works the deltoids and the triceps, both of which are used in pressing and jerking.

Pitts said another advantage of the bench press is it's familiar to people coming from other sports and athletic backgrounds.

"It's like a known standard metric, but the way we do it is still non-traditional, like body weight for high reps. You don't see that in weight-training bodybuilding football-type workouts," said Pitts, who is now CrossFit's Senior Operations Manager.

If you rarely bench press in your CrossFit training, grab a bench, lower the J-hooks, and give one of these workouts a try.

## 10 Bench Press Workouts

Starting with Lynne, here are 10 great options for incorporating the bench press in a workout.

### 1. **Lynne**

5 rounds for max reps of:

Body-weight bench presses

Pull-ups

(No time limit. Count reps for each exercise in all rounds.)

### 2. **Linda (aka 3 Bars of Death)**

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 reps for time of:

1½ body-weight deadlifts

Body-weight bench presses

¾ body-weight cleans

### 3. **Hero Workout JBo**

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeremie "JBo" "Bubba" Border, 28, of Mesquite, Texas, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), based in Torii Station, Okinawa, Japan, died Sept. 1, 2012, in Batur Village, Afghanistan, from wounds suffered when enemy forces attacked his unit with small-arms fire.

As many rounds as possible in 28 minutes of:

9 overhead squats (115 lb.)

1 15-foot legless rope climb beginning from seated

12 bench presses (115 lb.)





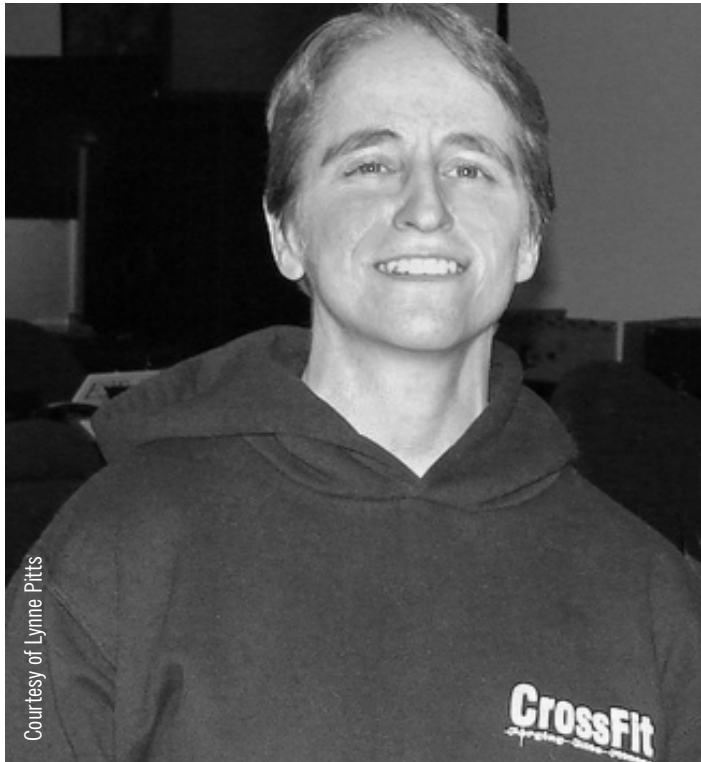
If you've gone overhead in most of your recent workouts, consider the bench. Constant variation is, after all, key to CrossFit.





Scott Brayshaw

Partner workouts are a great way to ensure you have enough benches to go around.



Courtesy of Lynne Pitts

Lynne Pitts, a former powerlifter, had a double-body-weight bench press.



Courtesy of Lynne Pitts

CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman with Pitts.

#### 4. Hero Workout **Coffey**

U.S. Marine Cpl. Keaton G. Coffey, 22, of Boring, Oregon, assigned to the 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, 1st Marine Headquarters Group, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, based in Camp Pendleton, California, was killed on May 24, 2012, while conducting combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

For time:

- Run 800 meters
- 50 back squats (135 lb.)
- 50 bench presses (135 lb.)
- Run 800 meters
- 35 back squats (135 lb.)
- 35 bench presses (135 lb.)
- Run 800 meters
- 20 back squats (135 lb.)
- 20 bench presses (135 lb.)
- Run 800 meters

1 muscle-up

#### 5. **CrossFit Krypton**—Jan. 9, 2013

5 rounds for time of:

- 5 bench presses (no weight specified)
- 50 double-unders
- 5 muscle-ups
- Rest 1 minute

#### 6. **Project Mayhem**—Dec. 12, 2013

Watch **Rich Froning** do this workout.

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 reps of:

- Bench presses (205 lb.)
- 10 pull-ups between sets of bench presses

#### 7. **Narrows CrossFit**—July 26, 2016

In teams of 2, 3 rounds for total reps of:

Run 200 meters

Max-effort strict pull-ups

Run 200 meters

Max-effort body-weight bench presses

(One partner does an entire round while the other spots and counts reps, then they switch. Each partner competes 3 entire rounds. No time element.)

#### 8. **CrossFit Linchpin**—Jan. 24, 2015

5 rounds for time of:

15 bench presses (135/85 lb.)

15 toes-to-bars

45 air squats

#### 9. **CrossFit Tribeca**—Sept. 19, 2014

5 rounds for time of:

Row 500 meters

15 bench presses (135/95 lb.)

#### 10. **Reebok CrossFit One**—July 22, 2016

Elizabeth-ish

In teams of 2, 45-30-15 reps of:

Bench presses (135/95 lb.)

Power cleans (135/95 lb.) ■

**About the Author:** Hilary Achauer is a freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary writes for the CrossFit Journal. To contact her, visit [hilaryachauer.com](http://hilaryachauer.com).