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## Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 3

Hilary Achauer explains how Matt Lodin used the Reebok CrossFit Games Open as rehab.

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By Hilary Achauer

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All images courtesy of Theodora Valovska

It happened in the middle of Nasty Girls, an infamous WOD that is 3 rounds for time of 50 squats, 7 muscle-ups and 10 135-lb. hang power cleans. Matt Lodin was at the end of the second round, coming out of a muscle-up. As he landed, he felt a sharp, eye-searing pain in his left knee and collapsed to the ground. He tried to get up and move on to the power cleans, but he couldn't straighten his leg.

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*Matt Lodin was a college lacrosse player and found CrossFit stoked dormant competitive fires.*

Matt went to the doctor the next day and got the news. He had dislocated his patella and shredded the meniscus in his left knee. The only option was surgery—disappointing news only a month before the CrossFit Games Open competition. Although new to CrossFit—he had only been doing it for a year—Matt had quickly made a name for himself locally and was looking forward to finding out where he stood in his region and the world.

### **A Lifelong Athlete**

Matt has always been an athlete. He started playing Pop Warner football at eight. At West Hills High School in San Diego, Calif., Matt played linebacker and was the captain of the varsity team. He also joined the wrestling team and ran track, throwing the shot put and discus. An exceptional

student as well as an outstanding athlete, Matt was accepted to the University of California, San Diego. UC San Diego does not have a football team, so Matt picked up lacrosse. He earned a starting position on the varsity team until he tore his ACL. It was the same knee he would later injure in 2011.

Matt graduated in 2009 with a degree in human development. He got a job teaching AP biology, biology, chemistry, anatomy and P.E. at Lutheran High School of San Diego. He also became the school's varsity football coach. Although Matt was busy with a full workload and adjusting to post-college life, he missed the challenge and competition of his high-school and college teams and looked around for a new sport.



***After discovering CrossFit, Lodin soon became a trainer.***

Matt remembers the exact day he first tried CrossFit.

"Feb. 15, 2010," he said with a smile.

Matt's friend, who was training to become a Navy SEAL, suggested that Matt join him in a workout.

"It kicked my butt," said Matt. "I was hooked."

Matt began working out at CrossFit East County, training with the owner, Paul Flores. After a few months, he switched to CrossFit Pacific Beach because it was closer to his home. He liked the gym's focus on strength and power, and soon after he joined he became a trainer, teaching classes as well as offering one-on-one training.

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**"I was going to get my surgery done when the Open started and use the six weeks of competition as my rehab."**

**—Matt Lodin**

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A month after Matt began CrossFit, he competed in the 2010 Southern California Sectional, held in Los Angeles, Calif., in mid-March. He finished 40<sup>th</sup> out of 80 competitors. In October 2010 Matt competed in and won the Coronado Games. He then went on to win the SoCal Series in December 2010. He took second place in the first event with a time of 15:00 for 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 reps of 135-lb. power cleans and 250-meter sprints. He finished first in the second event with a 200-lb. press.

"If there ever was a dark horse in the CrossFit Games, it's Matt Lodin," said Anders Varner, one of the owners of CrossFit Pacific Beach. "He is an elite athlete. This injury has held him back during the Open, but he's going to surprise a lot of people at regionals."

#### **A Kid at Heart**

After Matt injured his knee in February, he had a decision to make.

"When the doctor told me I needed surgery, I had to figure out if I was going to hold off and go through the Games without the ability to fully extend my knee or lose some conditioning and hope to be fully recovered by regionals," Matt said.

Once the CrossFit Games Open schedule was revealed as a six-week, worldwide competition, Matt made his decision:

"I was going to get my surgery done when the Open started and use the six weeks of competition as my rehab."

If something separates the dedicated athlete from the casual competitor, it is this attitude. Instead of taking a few months off or bowing out of the Games this year, Matt decided to forge ahead and rehab his knee while competing.



***Lodin had surgery the same day he completed Workout 11.1 and didn't miss a single Open event during recovery.***

"After discussing my options with the surgeon, we went with a meniscectomy to remove 70 percent of the meniscus," Matt said. "This way, I wouldn't have to wait for the repaired meniscus to heal, and I could start building up my strength right away."

Matt scheduled his surgery for the afternoon of Wednesday, March 16, the day after the first CrossFit Games Open workout was to be released. When the release of Workout 11.1 was delayed due to technical difficulties, Matt started to worry. Would the workout be released in time? Would he be able to get it in before his surgery?

The workout was released in the early morning hours of March 16 and featured as many rounds as possible in 10 minutes of 30 double-unders and 15 75-lb. power snatches. Matt showed up at the gym, picked up the jump rope and put up an impressive score of 7 rounds plus 17 double-unders. He went under the knife that afternoon.

The technical problems with the CrossFit Open website ended up working in Matt's favor. "The extra week to complete the first workout was huge for me. I think I might have had to attempt one-legged box jumps without that extension." Instead, Matt put up a score of 12 rounds for workout 11.2, a workout that included deadlifts, push-ups and box jumps.

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As the competition went on, Matt's scores improved. He finished 35<sup>th</sup> in his region for Workout 11.3, completing 31 rounds of the squat clean and jerk. In Week 5, he moved to 43<sup>rd</sup>, finishing the burpee/overhead-squat/muscle-up workout with a score of 1 round plus 27 burpees.

"I don't have confidence in my injured knee," said Matt. "I'm favoring the right knee. I definitely felt it in the box jumps (in Workout 11.2). I stopped when I (felt) a sharp pain, but other than that I've just kept going as best as I could."

Matt ended the competition 40<sup>th</sup> overall in the Southern California region after making it all the way through 18 thrusters and 18 chest-to-bar pull-ups in workout 11.6 and posting a score of 126.

When asked how he feels about the Open, he said he likes the structure and thinks it's a phenomenal way to hold a worldwide competition.

"I don't like the idea that you can redo the workouts, though," he said. "I think it should be one time and done, just like the competition."

Matt has not redone any of the workouts, partly because he doesn't want to put any additional stress on his knee, and partly because he has been putting up impressive scores every week—injured knee or not.

Not once in our conversation did Matt complain about his injury or talk about what he might have done if he hadn't hurt his knee. Before I left the gym, I asked him how he maintained such a positive attitude.

"I'm doing this for fun," he said. "When I tore my ACL in college, it was devastating. That was my first major injury, and it was awful to lose my starting position. For me, CrossFit is just a giant playground. I'm a kid at heart, so as long as I can come here and play, I'm happy."

"Whatever ever we throw at him, he demolishes," said Anders. "He doesn't stop. He has this almost superhuman ability to keep going. I can't wait to see what he does next."



### About the Author



Courtesy of Hilary Achauer

*Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor with a background in marketing and communications. An amateur-boxer-turned-CrossFitter, Hilary specializes in health and wellness content, focusing on emerging fitness trends. Her writing has been featured in a leading online parenting magazine as well as a number of travel and*

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