

The Best of CrossFit.com—Byers Edition

In the first of a series, one enthusiastic CrossFitter highlights her favorite treasures buried throughout the immense CrossFit.com archives

Melissa Byers

“The Hard Routine”

Jason Dougherty

CFJ article published May 1, 2008

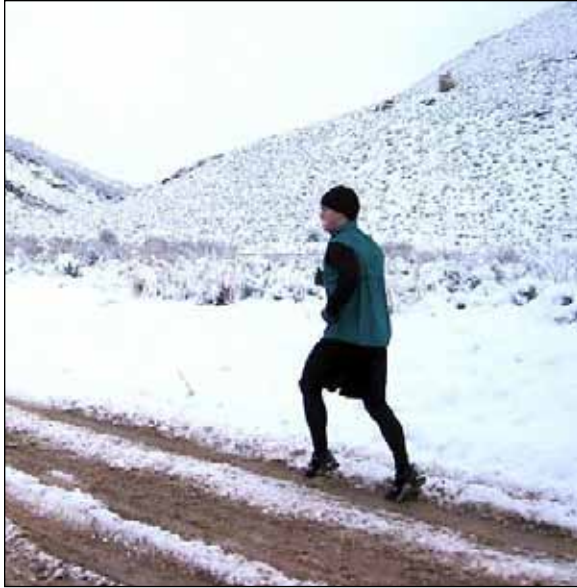


The Hard Routine is an article advocating the incorporation of a short duration “hard core” program into your regular training routine. According to the author, the Hard Routine is an exercise in mental toughness, to be used as a catalyst for positive change in daily life. The idea is that the discipline of such a program will yield measurable performance results. The article details a case study that the reader can then use to set-up his or her own program. In fact, the article inspired me to complete my own Hard Routine, and led me to an LBM (“light bulb moment”) about how my own mental toughness can best be tested.

I began planning my HR in November of 2008, in a fashion similar to that of the test subject in the article. I assumed that the self-imposed dietary restrictions (no grains, sugars, processed foods or dairy) and lack of any “cheat” meals would prove the most difficult aspect of the program. I also planned to work a heavy number of “goat” exercises—things I did not do well, or did not enjoy. Finally, my program had a strict five-day-a-week schedule, with no allowance for skipped days or make-up sessions. I braced myself for a major suck-fest and got started on day one.

At the end of four weeks, I finished my routine in a rather anticlimactic fashion. No huge sigh of relief, no celebration of success... in fact, no real sense of accomplishment, either. In retrospect, my Hard Routine was more like the “Eh, This Isn’t So Bad” Routine. So where did I go wrong? It turns out that for me, accepting dietary restrictions is easy. Forcing myself

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to work “goats” is easy. Sticking to a program without skipping days is easy. Why was all of that so *not* hard? *Because I still had full control over my training program.* Apparently, I can deal with any sort of restriction, as long as I still get to pick the exercises I do every day.

I realized that my *real* Hard Routine would have to center around working *someone else’s* programming for a few weeks. Main Page WODs—strict CrossFit, no skipping, bailing or subbing out for another day’s workout. I would HATE that. It would feel restrictive. It would give me anxiety. It would be terrifically difficult. But my workouts would be far more varied, and I’d learn new exercises, and I’d probably see gains because of it. AND it would be the most serious mental challenge I can imagine. So guess what I’ll be incorporating as the centerpiece of my next Hard Routine?

What this article taught me was more valuable than the physical benefits I gained from the program. I learned, for me, what qualifies as *true* mental toughness. And I guarantee you would learn the same about yourself. As the author states, now it’s your turn. Read the article. Be honest with yourself and identify the measures by which your program should be judged. Commit to your own Hard Routine, knowing in the end that successful completion will see you a smarter, fitter, tougher athlete.

“Intensity”—Video [wmv] [mov]

Maggie Dabe-Colby

Posted on the Main Site, August 13, 2008



Think of the last CrossFit video that moved you, resonated with you, something that stays with you to this very day. This is my video. Maggie Dabe-Colby is an amazing athlete, but her performance as a coach at this Level I Certification is what has inspired me more than any other CrossFit video I have watched. From this video, I have developed my own picture of the kind of coach Maggie might be. And I play this picture over and over again in my head, every time I set foot in the gym.

As I see it, Maggie does not ask things of you, nor does she demand them. She simply *expects* them. One more, three more, five more, she tells you. And you do it, because there is no other option *but* to do it. And when you falter in your purpose, she counts you down—three, two, one, GO. And you go. And you keep going, because if she expects it of you, she must believe that you can DO IT. And so you keep moving, and she continues to move you with her words and her intent and her focus, as if you and that barbell and her voice are the only three things that matter in that moment.

And in that moment, they are.



As I train by myself, in the middle of a Globo-Gold's, I don't have much on-site CrossFit inspiration. So in the middle of a met-con, when I get tired and frustrated, I tell myself that no one would even notice if I stopped for a minute. And then I hear Maggie say, "Three, two, one, go!". And I go. When I think I can't do any more, I hear Maggie say, "Just three more." And I think, "I can do three more," and I can, and I do. She has inspired some of my best efforts, and moved me past the point when I thought I would do no more. From 500 miles away, she has been my coach.

If I get the chance to meet Maggie at my upcoming Level I Certification, I guarantee I will have one of those dorky celebrity moments where I grin and stutter and hug her for an awkward amount of time. Then I will ask her to coach me for real. And when Maggie says, "Three, two, one, go"...

I WILL GO.

"Where's the Girl Power?"

CrossFit Message Boards, Community section

In October 2007, a new CrossFitter posted the following message on the Boards: "I just started CrossFit this week... I completed my 4th workout today and I am absolutely HOOKED! I'm a female and as I read through some of these posts, I note that most of them are from males? Where's the Girl Power, ladies? I know that there has to be some of you out there who are as psyched about CrossFit as I am." Thus began one of the most viewed threads in the history of the message boards.

Almost 85,000 views and 184 pages later, CrossFit women are STILL throwing down the Girl Power. And not just women—there are plenty of guys reading and posting too, in support of the camaraderie, encouragement, and accomplishments going on in this thread. We've got HQ employees, affiliate owners, Army soldiers, and gymnastics coaches. We're talking about muscle-ups and birth control, deadlifts and lip gloss, Zone blocks and New Year's resolutions. We brag about our accomplishments, confess our embarrassing CrossFit mishaps and keep each other on track and motivated during tough times. Those who post offer each other the kind of assistance, advice, and friendly ear that you would expect from your closest friends. And throughout every post is one universal commonality—a love of CrossFit and our community.



The Girl Power thread is the best of what the CrossFit community represents, and is worthy of a read and your support. So pop over to the Community section of the Message Boards and introduce yourself, congratulate someone's fitness achievement, offer advice on a recent post... or just say, "Rock on, Girl Power!"



**"Man Grace"— [wmv] [mov]
CrossFit Again Faster, CrossFit Exercises and Demos
Posted on the Main Site, September 18, 2008**

I visited CrossFit Boston for the first time one Sunday in September. I was going to be at their gymnastics certification the following month, so a friend and I drove down to check out the facility and do a little training. Jon Gilson wasn't supposed to come in that day, but he did, just to say hello. He gave us a tour of the place, and then brought us back to the Olympic lifting area to warm up. It was there that I was introduced to Samantha Keough. She was small and blonde and the cutest thing I'd ever seen—and cleaning weight heavier than I could ever hope to clean in my life. I watched her throughout my entire warm-up, amazed at her strength and tenacity.

On the way out, we were about to say thank you and goodbye when I just had to tell Sam how impressed I was with her Olympic lifting. Because I don't train at an affiliate, I don't often get to see someone lifting heavy like that—never mind a girl. It was inspiring, to say the least. And then Jon told me she was just warming up, because Sam and EC (Eva Claire Synkowski) were planning to do Man Grace the very next day. ("Grace" is 30 clean and jerks, for time. Women's weight as prescribed is 85#. They were planning on using the men's prescribed weight of 135#. Holy crap.) Sam mentioned she was pretty worn-out and wasn't sure if she'd be giving it a go with EC, but to keep an eye out for the video either way.

That was the last I'd heard on the subject, until I saw the video posted on the Main Site on September 18th. When I opened up the movie file, I was psyched to see that Sam decided to give it a run. Watching her and EC move that much weight for that many reps impressed me all over again. And knowing that I was there for the pre-game made it that much more personal.

High five, ladies—and thanks for the inspiration.



Eva T's Front Squat
Picture Posted on the Main Site, [May 12, 2006](#)

Before I started CrossFit, I went to the gym with one shining goal in mind—to look better. Sure, it was nice to feel “in shape,” but really, the only reason I put myself through hours on the elliptical and hundreds of walking lunges was to ensure I’d look good naked. And in a bikini. And in skinny jeans. Thinking about it, there were an unlimited number of superficial reasons why I needed to work out for two hours a day, six days a week.

When I started exploring CrossFit in mid-2007, a friend sent me links to photos and videos of various CrossFit exercises. This picture of Eva Twardoken doing a front squat was one of the photos he included. In retrospect, he was trying to show me that strength and beauty were not mutually exclusive, and that true fitness was about so much more than just looking good. I, however, took one look at Eva and thought, damn, I want those abs. And then I closed the picture and did 100 crunches and probably ate three carrots or something.

Fast forward to a year later, in May 2008. I’d been CrossFitting for about five months, and was working my way through the big lifts. My next goal was a bodyweight front squat, so I started to do some more studying in preparation. I came across this picture again, and it floored me. I remembered it from a year ago, but this time, I wasn’t looking at her abs. I was looking at the most beautiful front squat I’d ever seen. And then I mentally calculated how much weight was on the bar, and analyzed her hand position to see how she managed to get her elbows so high, and drew lines from her knees down to her toes to see how well they tracked.

I *envied* that squat. I coveted her form. And I passed right over her six-pack abs. I burned that picture of her perfect form into memory so I could channel it the next time I got under the bar. And when I finally nailed 130lbs, I remember thinking, thanks Eva.

This picture has spent a long time as my laptop screen saver, not because I need the help with my front squat... but to remind me how much CrossFit has changed me. I no longer train to look good—although I’ve learned that if you keep improving your performance, the body *will* fall into line. No, I keep this picture because it is my direct link to the most important CrossFit lesson I’ve learned so far. Being strong, and healthy, and balanced—both physically and mentally—is what makes me feel truly beautiful.



tt*Melissa Byers is a CrossFitter and Certified Kettlebell Instructor in Tilton, NH. She plans to complete her Level I Certification in February 2009, and will be teaching kettlebells at the next NH CrossFit affiliate, opening soon. You can read more about her CrossFit adventures on her blog, [Byers Gets Diesel](#).*