
THE CrossFit LIFE

The Cost of CrossFit

Aaron Carr explains how 65-year-old Bruce Hughes discovers the true price of CrossFit after a year at CrossFit Cedar City.

By Aaron Carr

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All images: Susan Carr

The first thing I noticed when I met Bruce Hughes was his fantastic head of platinum hair. I was jealous of his thick mane, as my forehead seems to be getting larger and larger each year.

The second thing I noticed was the very affectionate way everyone at CrossFit Cedar City spoke about Hughes. He is part of the family and continues to build the community as he brings more people into CrossFit.

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Before he started, Hughes thought CrossFit was only for young jocks.

Health Challenges

Hughes is a mild-mannered 65-year-old accountant who moved to Cedar City, Utah, 18 years ago from California. As a tax accountant, he spends 12 to 16 hours a day sitting down at a desk. Years of this sedentary lifestyle contributed to his poor physical condition.

A year and a half ago, Hughes was diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. The doctor gave him a fourth prescription that he would have to take for the rest of his life. Hughes went to a Bod Pod, which uses air displacement to measure body composition. He found out he was obese. Hughes knew he was in trouble and needed to change something.

Hughes had tried “working out” before. He would go to the gym and spend an hour each day on the same three machines doing sets of 10 and cardio, with no results for all the effort. He knew he needed something different.

Hughes’ neighbors happened to be Erin and Dan Bennion. Dan is a trainer for Southern Utah University (SUU) football and Erin was assistant golf coach for SUU. They had both just started CrossFit. Like most people, they shared their enthusiasm with everyone around them, including Hughes.

But Hughes was not interested. From his perspective, “CrossFit is for jocks, not old farts like me.”

Even so, he could tell the difference CrossFit made. Just watching his neighbors change over a year was impressive.

“The lady got hot!” Hughes says.

So he decided to give CrossFit a try. Knowing about Hughes’ sedentary past, his office started a pool wagering how long he would last. The average bet was he wouldn’t even make it through three of the foundations classes.

In one of his first classes, Erin told him, “This gets a little addicting. You will look forward to the workouts.”

“That is such a sick statement to make,” Hughes thought.

He kept with it and won the office pool. Hughes started watching what he ate, eating more fruits and vegetables and cutting out the quart of milk and box of Ding Dongs he would eat Saturday nights.

“I really miss the Ding Dongs,” he admits.

What a Difference a Year Makes

After a year of recording workouts, Hughes has changed his life. He has gained 14 lb. of lean muscle mass and lost 39 lb. of body fat. His cholesterol is back to an acceptable range. His blood pressure is way down, and he is officially not diabetic anymore.

His doctor took him completely off two of his medications and has substantially decreased the other two.

Whenever people ask Hughes how much CrossFit costs, he tells them it is free.

"I save so much money by not being on the medications that it more than pays for CrossFit every month," he says.

Hughes' doctor says the accountant is the poster child for exercise, and he has become a rabid fan of CrossFit.

When Hughes started CrossFit, he was the oldest person there by 20 years. He has convinced many of his friends to start CrossFit. Now he's the one telling all his friends, "This gets a little addicting. You will look forward to the workouts."

When Hughes first started, his mobility and flexibility were nonexistent. Now, he's not afraid that he'll tweak his back if he picks something up. He doesn't get winded running up the stairs.

"Gardening all day is a lot easier than a WOD ... I look back on all the workouts I did when I first began, and it is startling to see how far I have come and what a difference (CrossFit) has made," Hughes says.

He adds: "My tax clients who only see me once a year are surprised to see the huge difference. Most people my age who lose that much weight do so because of a serious illness. I tell them I am doing CrossFit and they say, 'Holy cow! We can see the difference.'"

With all the aches and pains that come with aging, I have heard it said, "Growing old is not for sissies."

But CrossFit lets Hughes fight back.

"You can control the aging process and not kill yourself off," he says.

While most people his age are slowly dying and getting older and older, Hughes is feeling younger and younger.

