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# THE CrossFit LIFE

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## Rediscovering Fitness

Chris Borbas thought he had health and fitness all figured out—until he discovered CrossFit.

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By Chris Borbas

August 2012

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All images: Caitlin Flanagan

I honestly thought I was living an athletic lifestyle. I ate what I thought was a healthy diet and went to the gym regularly. Monday was chest and tri's, Tuesday was back and bi's. Sometimes I would do leg presses, but cardio was for fat old ladies.

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I read every issue of *Men's Health* magazine, trying many of the recommended workouts. Some of the workouts would have me in the gym for over two hours at a time. I ate oats, brown rice and multi-grain bread because they were the smart choices. I drank protein shakes pre-workout and took a cocktail of other supplements and stimulants. I spent hundreds of dollars each and every month for years. But all it took was a photo for me to realize that none of it was working. In September 2010, I tipped the scales at 89 kilograms (about 196 lb.).

My name is Chris Borbas. I'm 27 years old and I live in Brisbane, Australia. Like many others, I actually started my CrossFit journey at my local Globo Gym. One day, my brother told me about this site where they posted random exercise routines, called "WODs," and you just do what it says for that particular day. How hard could that be?

I had a quick look and decided I was qualified to make up my own CrossFit workout. Deadlifts (80 kilograms, or 176 lb.) and box jumps (24 inches) sounded good. Three sets of 10 reps because that was the magic formula for any successful routine. I remember taking about 10 minutes to complete it, with my mandatory rests and rehydration trips to the water cooler.

*That wasn't so hard. What's all the fuss about?* I thought afterward.

About three months later, I decided to go to an actual CrossFit box and show off my skills and athletic prowess. I had been half-assing WODs at the gym, avoiding the movements I couldn't do and customizing my routine to accommodate my strengths. The only thing constantly varied at that point was the music on my iPod.



**Borbas, pre-CrossFit.**

After a quick explanation of the workout, I was standing in front of my box, ready to smoke everyone in the room. After all, it was only three rounds of five exercises, one minute at each, as many reps as possible. I wondered why it was called Fight Gone Bad. Oh well. 3-2-1 ... Go!

Needless to say, it was a very humbling experience that cut me right down to where I needed to be. Not only did I post a less-than-average result, but I also scored the lowest number of reps in the room. Both the "fat guy" and the "old guy" beat me. I couldn't believe it!

To say this lit a fire inside me was an understatement. I started going to CrossFit five days a week, and I improved quickly. My times came down and my lifts went up. I learned new skills like front squats, muscle-ups and double-unders. This pattern continued for several months, and I even managed to drop around 12 kilograms (26 lb.) without addressing my nutrition. I looked and felt much better than I had in years.

I was enjoying CrossFit and everything it had to offer so much that I decided to enter a local competition to see if I liked it. Turns out I loved it, and I continued to enter completions all over Brisbane.

I earned my Level 1 Certificate and completed the Coaches Prep Course in the same year I started CrossFit. While my newfound skills as a coach and athlete were helping me perform better, it was only short-lived. An injury that was minor in theory but persistent in reality left me unable to train for weeks at a time. This happened on a number of occasions over 12 months. I underwent countless physical-therapy sessions and did pointless rehab exercises. The only thing prescribed was rest. By this stage, I had accumulated enough equipment at home to do most WODs there—when I wasn't injured.

There is only so much a man can take before he starts losing motivation. In my case, it was the most recent setback that started my downward spiral. Ten weeks in total. Ten weeks and the only exercise I was allowed to do was to tuck my chin into my chest 10 times a day while lying on a pillow. Not even an AMRAP?

So I started eating. I ate worse than I had in years. Nothing was off limits. I wasn't training, so what was the use of watching what I put into my body? I actually justified this train of thought so I wouldn't feel guilty about stuffing my face. As you can imagine, no exercise and excessive calorie consumption caused my weight to increase to 80 kilograms (176 lb.), decreased my strength significantly and blunted my aerobic capacity.



***Borbas after dedicating himself to eating clean and training hard.***

Finally, I decided enough was enough. My injury had backed off and I was given the all-clear to train again. This time I decided to do things a little differently.

A wise man once said, "Eat meat and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch and no sugar. Keep intake to levels that will support exercise but not body fat. Practice and train major lifts: deadlift, clean, squat, presses, clean and jerk, and snatch. Similarly, master the basics of gymnastics: pull-ups, dips, rope climb, push-ups, sit-ups, presses to handstands, pirouettes, flips, splits, and holds. Bike, run, swim, row, etc, hard and fast. Five or six days per week mix these elements in as many combinations and patterns as creativity will allow. Routine is the enemy. Keep workouts short and intense. Regularly learn and play new sports!"

For 42 days I stuck to a strict Paleo diet, following the Zone guidelines for portion control, and I trained three days on/one day off like my life depended on it. And in a way, I guess it did—the life I want anyway.

I'm not going to lie: it was a tough six weeks! There were days when I just didn't feel like training. Either I was sore from the day before or tired from working all day. But with the help of my beautiful girlfriend/training partner/coach, Caitlin, I tied my laces, rolled out my aching muscles and got on with the WOD at hand. I have come to understand that the key to forging elite fitness isn't what you want to do, or what you could have done; it's about what you actually do. Day after day. Your results are a direct reflection of the effort you apply.

I couldn't have been happier with my results. Not only has my physical appearance changed dramatically, but my strength numbers are also up and my met-con times are down as a result of dropping 9 kilograms (19 lb.). I have a newfound sense of determination when it comes to training, and I have realized that anything is possible with a little hard work and discipline.

Even though this challenge is over, it's not the end. Very little has changed with regards to my diet and exercise regime. Sure, I've had couple of beers over the last two weeks, but I firmly believe that this type of lifestyle is something I will continue for the rest of my foreseeable time. Eat clean, train hard, compete, short rest ... repeat.

Following this cycle, I am excited to find out what I can achieve in six months or 12 months or even a few years! Crossfit Games 2015, here I come.

