
THE CrossFit JOURNAL K I D S

Raw Strength

CrossFit athletes—half of them teenagers—from CrossFit Brand X head to their first powerlifting meet and almost all come home with first-place medals. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

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Alfia Tellez-Hernandez

Twelve competitors.

Nearly all at their first powerlifting meet ever.

Eleven first-place medals.

Twenty-eight state records broken.

All CrossFitters.

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Alfía Tellez-Hernandez

At 17, Keegan Martin lifted 358 lb. in the deadlift.

"It obviously shows we're good at what we do," said 15-year-old Cole Dick, one of the 12 from CrossFit Brand X who competed in the Feb. 19 USA Powerlifting California State Powerlifting and Bench Press Championships in Santa Clarita, Calif.

Dick, weighing in that day at about 190 lb., won his division with impressive displays of strength:

- 276-lb. back squat
- 171-lb. bench press
- 430-lb. deadlift

Editor's note: The loads listed here have been converted from metric, with all numbers rounded to the closest pound.

Keegan Martin, a 17-year-old weighing 143 lb. that day, recorded a 303-lb. back squat and a 358-lb. deadlift. He was disqualified on his bench press.

"Those are typical numbers you see from adult CrossFitters. Adult CrossFitters would be proud of those numbers, and these kids have another 10, 15 years of development. (They) are already adult strong," Keegan's father, Jeff Martin, said about his son and Cole.

With his wife, Mikki, Jeff co-owns CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif., and is the co-founder of the CrossFit Kids program.

"Adult CrossFitters would be proud of those numbers, and these kids have another 10, 15 years of development."

—Jeff Martin

Raw Strength ... (continued)

Cole and Keegan were among six teenagers from the affiliate who competed in the meet organized by USA Powerlifting, known as USAPL.

Keegan's brother, 19-year-old Connor, placed first in his division with big lifts at 158 lb. that day:

- 375-lb. back squat
- 215-lb. bench press
- 358-lb. deadlift

"I feel great," Connor said. "I feel like I did a really, really good job."

But the teenagers didn't just have a strong performance for CrossFitters or adults; they had a great performance for powerlifters.

Powerlifter Strong

"For a 165-er I'm very impressed with that squat number," Niko Hulslander said of Connor Martin, referring to his weight class.

Hulslander is a USAPL Pennsylvania referee, former USAPL Pennsylvania chairman and a national competitor. He has been powerlifting for 17 years.

And the squat was raw. In other words: just a singlet and a weightlifting belt; no squat suit, knee wraps or even wrist wraps.

"That's very impressive for 165 lb., especially as a teenager," Hulslander said. "As a side note ... there's adult men in my gym that can't squat that."

Hulslander owns Vision Fitness in southern York County, Pa., and has his own powerlifting team called Garage Ink Power Team.

Russell McDonnell, who has been powerlifting for 21 years, said Connor's lifts were "good numbers."

"Nothing astounding, but good numbers for a teenager in that (weight) class," said McDonnell, who runs a private strength-and-conditioning facility in Lancaster County, Pa.



Alfira Tellez-Hernandez

Connor Martin, 19, has been doing CrossFit for seven years and reports no injuries to his growth plates. He can also squat 375 lb.



At only 112 lb., Alison Patenaude got 298 lb. off the floor.

**“There’s adult men in my gym
that can’t squat that.”**

—Niko Hulslander

Also of note is the fact that the meet was run by USAPL, Hulslander and McDonnell said.

The organization based in Columbia City, Ind., is known for its strict rules: back squats must be below parallel, no belly benching, no dropping the bar on deadlifts, and drug testing.

“In powerlifting, there are so many organizations, and it’s so hard to keep track of who’s who and who’s where. There are thousands of people who can claim to be national champions,” McDonnell said. “Anybody and their brother could start up an organization.”

The Adults

The CrossFit Brand X powerlifting team’s adults also performed well.

One of the highlights was Alison Patenaude, a 34-year-old middle-school physical-education teacher who weighed in on Feb. 19 at a mere 112 lb.

Her lifts:

- 193-lb. back squat
- 99-lb. bench press
- 298-lb. deadlift

**“Those are really good
numbers raw. That’s
something to talk about.”**

—Russell McDonnell

Raw Strength ... (continued)

"I felt good with the numbers I pulled," she said.

"We had a great coach and great training," she said of Jeff Martin.

Her lifts impressed both Hulslander and McDonnell.

"That's almost a double-body-weight squat, which is really good for a woman," McDonnell said.

And Patenaude was close to bench pressing her body weight.

"For women ... that's huge," Hulslander said.

Her deadlift might be the most impressive—more than two and a half times her body weight.

"I weigh 315," Hulslander said. "I'd have to deadlift—just to make it kind of equal—787 lb. My best pull is 738. So I'm kind of like 50 lb. behind her in ratio."

Patenaude received the distinction of best female lifter at the meet.

"Those are really good numbers raw," McDonnell said. "That's something to talk about."

Last Name	First Name	Weight Class (lb.)	Body Weight	Age	Category	Best Squat	Best Bench Press	Best Deadlift	Total
Dick	Cole	198	190	15	Men Raw 14-15	276	171	430	877
Edelman	Dan	165	159	45	Men Raw 40-49	303	226	424	953
Martin	Connor	165	158	19	Men Raw 18-19	375	215	358	948
Martin	Jeff	165	162	51	Men Raw 50-59	254	204	408	866
Martin	Keegan	149	143	17	Men Raw 16-17	303	0	358	0
Martin	Mikki	132	128	48	Women Raw 40-49	165	110	215	490
McKay	Kyle	149	134	15	Men Raw 14-15	215	143	265	623
McKay*	John	198	198	38	Men Raw Open		364		
Patenaude	Alison	114	112	34	Women Raw Open	193	99	298	590
Rakos	Debbie	115	114	46	Women Raw 40-49	138	83	187	408
Ross	Alyssa	149	145	17	Women Raw 16-17	187	116	276	579
Ross	Matthew	165	157	14	Men Raw 14-15	254	138	303	695

*Only competed in bench press. Source: USA Powerlifting

The impressive results from the CrossFit Brand X team at the USAPL California State Powerlifting and Bench Press Championships.



Bob Guere

Cole Dick sets up for a squat attempt in the 198-lb. class.

First-Timers

It was only about a month earlier that the group decided it was assembling a team and heading more than 150 miles north to compete in Santa Clarita.

"It was just for fun, to see how we would do," Patenaude said. "We were all nervous and didn't know what to expect."

And the fact that nearly all the beginners placed first in their division speaks volumes, Hulslander said.

"First-timers stepping on the platform—that's a huge thing," he said. "The first time you step on the platform, you're just trying to get experience on the platform and trying to get lifts in."

He added: "It's a lot harder to compete in a contest versus in the gym in front of your buddies."

The meet ended up being ideal, mostly because of the powerlifting community that was there, Jeff Martin said.

"They were extremely nice to us," he said. "They took the time to go through the lifts with the kids. It was a great environment for the kids to walk into. They did a good job, made us feel welcome."

**"First-timers stepping
on the platform—
that's a huge thing."**

—Niko Hulslander

Connor Martin described the powerlifters at the meet as "super inviting to us."

He said: "My spotter on my last back squat was really encouraging. He was actually behind me saying, 'Put the bar up, put the bar up.'"

Specialization? Still for Insects

Cole, Connor and Patenaude said they'd be up for competing in another powerlifting meet.

Specializing in powerlifting, however, wasn't of interest.

"I'm a CrossFitter first," Connor said. "It's a little too much rest for me, personally, to lift once and to rest for 20 minutes and then lift again."

“If there’s lifters coming from a certain CrossFit gym that are coming up with those numbers, they’re doing something right. They know about training methodologies. There’s some credibility to what they’re doing and probably some good coaching there as well.”

—Russell McDonnell

CrossFit requires power, Cole said.

Powerlifting is “just strength,” he said. “You don’t have to move anything fast; you just have to pick it up or squat it.”

Unlike Olympic weightlifting, there isn’t as much of an influx of CrossFitters competing in powerlifting, said McDonnell, who also has been Olympic weightlifting for 10 years. He attributed that to the plethora of powerlifting organizations that can be a maze for novices.

Like Hulslander, McDonnell praised the CrossFit Brand X athletes for big lifts as first-timers.

“It’s their first meet, they’re rookies, and they’re putting up decent numbers. That tells me they had lifting in the past,” he said. “If there’s lifters coming from a certain CrossFit gym that are coming up with those numbers, they’re doing something right. They know about training methodologies. There’s some credibility to what they’re doing and probably some good coaching there as well.”

He added: “They’ve got a lot of potential.”

For teenagers, the CrossFit Brand X’s CrossFit Kids programming purposely focuses on strength, Jeff Martin said.

“We lift at least twice a week with the kids, and it showed up (at the meet),” he said.



Bob Glare



Alfonso Tellez-Hernandez

At 17, Alyssa Ross has a 187-lb. squat, while 14-year-old Matt Ross pulled a 303-lb. deadlift in the 165s.

“The general physical conditioning raised the foundation for specialty. My kids can walk into a powerlifting meet, they can walk into an Olympic weightlifting meet, they can walk into triathlons ... they have the general physical conditioning to do well.”

—Jeff Martin

Their workouts comprise four met-cons a week and two lifting days—both the Olympic lifts and powerlifts are incorporated—with a focus on form and technique, Martin said.

And leading up to the meet, not much was different, he noted.

“It was the standard teen programming. We didn’t change anything,” Martin said. “Except for the last week, we did a mock meet and we tapered off before the meet.”

It’s another testament to the effectiveness of good CrossFit programming, he said.

“The general physical conditioning raised the foundation for specialty,” he said. “My kids can walk into a powerlifting meet, they can walk into an Olympic weightlifting meet, they can walk into triathlons ... they have the general physical conditioning to do well.”

And, he said, “They are all planning on competing in the CrossFit Games.”

For a short video from the USAPL meet, click [here](#).



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil, 32, is managing editor at the *Central Penn Business Journal* in Harrisburg, Pa. Andréa is a native of New Orleans who now lives in York County, Pa. There, she’s been doing CrossFit since 2008 at [CrossFit York](#). Additionally, she dedicates three days per week to training in Olympic weightlifting at [McKenna’s Gym](#).