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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## An NFL Reporter at the CrossFit Games

Sports reporter Julie Buehler has been to Super Bowls and NBA All-Star Games, but she's never seen anything like the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

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By Julie Buehler

October 2011

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

I've been covering sports for more than a decade.

I've witnessed the spectacle of the Super Bowl, seen the groupies converge for the NBA All-Star weekend, been in locker rooms, smelled the grass at baseball diamonds and navigated countless tailgate parties. But I have never been to a sporting event where the spectators are as impressive as the performing athletes and the atmosphere makes you feel like you're attending a family reunion.

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1 of 5



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*Despite the cash on the line, the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games were characterized by great camaraderie between teams and individual competitors.*

Yet on the biggest stage for one of the most dynamic sports on the planet—the CrossFit Games—that was precisely what happened

And I got some killer tan lines.

### **Great Athletes, Great People**

After a sun-drenched weekend in Carson, Calif., Rich Froning Jr. and Annie Thorisdottir snagged a quarter-million dollars in prize money as the top finishers—or three times what a Super Bowl winner earns for that victory.

Now, you'd be right to think a check for \$250,000 could motivate competitors and create incentive to achieve pinnacles and endure pain previously unknown. And typically, with that much money on the line (which equates to a little less than the league minimum for an entire season of service in the NFL), the competition would bring out the worst in people.

Instead, at the CrossFit Games competitors root for one another to finish, and the crowd gives standing ovations for the guy who finishes dead last because he still finished. Can you imagine the crowds standing in approval of a guy who swung and missed on Strike 3 in the bottom of the ninth?

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But for CrossFit fans, spectators and competitors, more than money is on the line, and something more than a sporting event is happening. CrossFit culture is about family and friends, community and conscientiousness. The athletes who compete are not only incredible juggernauts of muscle and endurance, but the ones I met are also just good people: inspiring and humble. Far from the typical selfish, money-driven professional athlete prolific in sports, the CrossFit "pro" just wants to do three things:

1. Finish
2. Improve
3. Make the community proud.

### A New Kind of Sport

At the Games, I was expecting a sporting event much like what I've experienced covering sports professionally: athletes displaying grace, power, intelligence and strategy while fans watch in awe of impossible feats and get in plenty of drinking.

When covering football, you brace for violent collisions and watch the human body sustain forces nature never intended it to absorb. With basketball, you anticipate grace and fluidity from massive forms. Watching baseball creates an appreciation for the intuitive desire to buck failure and pursue success.

As a journalist who's covered numerous mainstream sporting events, I was shocked at the CrossFit Games. It had the sheer ferocity of a football game, the grace of basketball, and the dissolving of failure baseball fans thoroughly appreciate. In short, it was a fascinating blend of jaw-dropping athleticism colliding with unbridled competition.

But unlike the major sports I generally cover, I found myself in an atmosphere of support and encouragement, not derision and dehumanizing objectification.

And it might be true that the CrossFit Games represent the only place you can get a plate of sliced turkey at a sporting event. Interestingly, there was no lack of beer, just the bellies.

The whole thing was entirely refreshing, but watching the competition unfold only told half the story of the CrossFit culture that permeated every aspect of the Games.

The spectators were as impressive as the athletes, both in stature and dedication.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

*Fittest spectators on Earth?*



Staff/CrossFit Journal

*Julie Buehler noted not one beer belly in this crowd of cavepeople.*

The first day I was at the Games, I met "Josh from New Jersey." He worked for the CrossFit Foundation and was in charge of using an iPad to sign people up for Fight Gone Bad 6 and increase participation in one of CrossFit's most successful charity events. Having participated in Fight Gone Bad in 2010, I volunteered to help Josh scour the stands for willing participants. It also gave me a chance to meet and greet CrossFitters from across the country and hear the stories of how they got started and what kept them going.

We met kids from Utah, businessmen from New Zealand, moms from Florida, and people who camped in their cars on a trip from Oregon to California to get to the Games and enjoy the CrossFit culture. Many of the spectators had muscles packed on muscles, all tanning in the strong Southern California sun. The eye candy was ever present, as were the smiles and the instant kinship felt among strangers thanks to shared passion.

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The second day I was waltzing through the vendors and displays when two green figures emerged around the corner, just past the steaming tractor tires. Turns out they were a couple of CrossFit fans adorned in faceless green jumpsuits. The guy wore cowboy boots and a belt, while the gal wore headbands to accessorize her otherwise-simplistic ensemble. After realizing they didn't have a pungent smell—which is what I assume of people dressed in full body suits on a hot day—I asked for a picture, and they were kind enough to stop and take one with me. I decided that when given the opportunity to take pictures with someone who can pull off a faceless green jumpsuit, I should collect multiple memories. So we got a couple of pictures and, naturally, I flexed my mirror muscles in one of them, just for good measure. I flex in pictures with NFL Hall of Famers, so why not green-suited, cowboy-boot-wearing CrossFit enthusiasts?

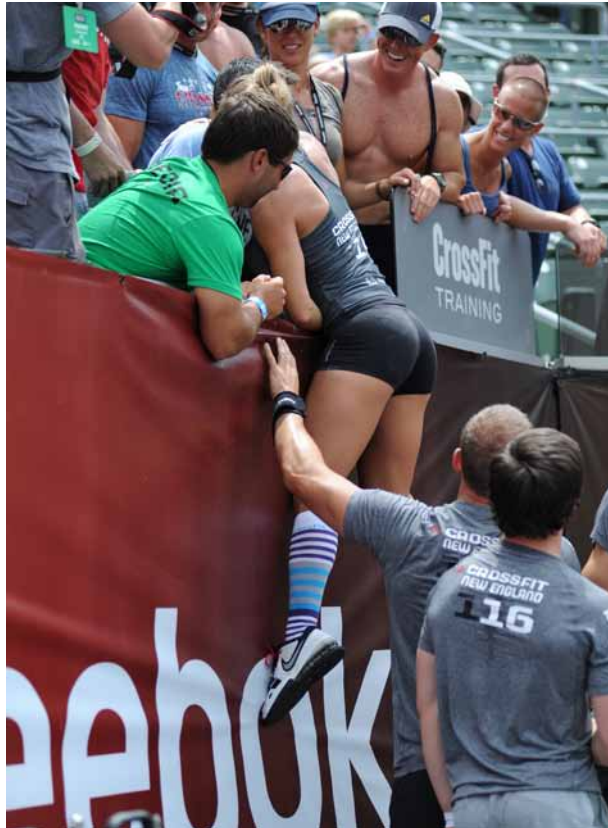
And while the numbers topped 10,000 in attendance for the finals, one man making the rounds was noticed by all. CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman could be found walking around the grounds, surveying the scene and taking in the grandeur of his CrossFit Games vision, which was born in 2007, only a few short years ago. He greeted fans, talked to vendors and listened to suggestions about how things could improve. It's easy to understand why CrossFit's culture is based on humility and excellence when you see Glassman mingle with fans.

The Home Depot Center was also a perfect choice for the Games. First, to hold the Games at David Beckham's house is brilliant. The competitors make the British soccer star's six-pack look pillow soft, and there was enough room for everyone, from the CrossFit Sports Series display to the vendor booths to the Kids exhibition and the Masters competition. The tennis stadium that is the main competition arena was full for the main events, and the crowd knew how to make noise.



Julie Buehler

***Embedded journalist Julie Buehler  
and ... some crazy CrossFitters.***



Staff/CrossFit Journal



Courtesy of Julie Buehler

### About the Author

*Julie Buehler is a freelance writer and sports broadcaster. She's covered the NFL, NBA, MLB and college football in Southern California and Arizona for more than a decade. She's as well known for her prolific flexing as she is for her grasp on the English language. Julie has competed in Fight Gone Bad and The Marine Corp Challenge with Desert CrossFit in Palm Desert, Calif.*

***There certainly was a lot of love in the air at the Home Depot Center in late July 2011.***

Maybe you're used to the culture of CrossFit because you know CrossFit. You're drawn to it for the physical challenge but also for the community. But when you're not used to it, when you've been in stadiums of 60,000 and felt like an outsider, being at the Home Depot Center and feeling the CrossFit hospitality is something you cherish.

And I did.

