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Fuck Compression Tights

Mike Warkentin believes special equipment will never take the place of practice and effort.



Uncommon Sense

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

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Kim Bellavance

I have little use for the gear debate about which shoes are better for which workout, whether tights help anything at all, which speed rope is best, what wicking system will keep my crotch drier, or whether I'll produce 2 percent more power lifting off plywood instead of stall mats.

Who the fuck has time for this?

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Kim Bellavance

Is it the shoes?

I like gear. I regularly buy things I don't need for my gym, and I love playing around with fitness equipment I don't need. Bands, chains, specialty bars, Oly blocks, kegs, cabers, old fire hoses, Atlas stones ... call it a hobby.

But deep down, I know I probably don't need to mess around with the safety-squat bar all that often. I probably just need to squat. If Louie Simmons loses his mind and invites my weak squat to Westside Barbell, I'll spend some hard time getting to know the safety squat bar. Until that happens, I'm pretty sure a standard barbell is going to be just fine for me on most days.

I also know a brand new speed rope isn't going to improve my double-unders if I don't practice with it relentlessly. The only thing I really ask of a rope is that the handles are made of a plastic that shatters when I whip the god-damn thing against the wall in the middle of a workout. Throwing a rope that creates no shrapnel provides no satisfaction.

"What shoes are you going to wear for this workout?"

Comfy ones that look bitchin'.

"What's your opinion of tights?"

I think they should be reserved for bobsleigh races and Renaissance fairs.

"Do you think you need a different rope?"

No. I think I need more practice with the one I have.

I honestly think that much of the time spent worrying about equipment could be better spent practicing, and I think any minute performance gains might be overwhelmed by simply trying harder during a workout. Could you push 2 percent harder in any workout? Probably.

Similarly, anyone who takes a sip of water during a workout of 15 minutes or less automatically loses the right to gear up. Want to improve your time? Skip the compression sleeves—and the water break. And stay away from the chalk bucket, too.

The words of Oly lifter Jon North also ring true here: "I ain't got time for percentages." By the time I'm done calculating percentages and rigging a power cage with bands, chains and a box to squat on, my buddies are done crushing 5 sets of 5 squats and are balls deep into a gnarly little couplet. They're getting fit. Meanwhile, I'm standing there pounding a chalky knuckle into the keypad of a calculator like some Neanderthal accountant who still can't squat 400.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



Kim Beilance

Find a new rope, put on some actual shoes and then get to work.

I once did a clean-and-jerk workout in a boreal forest on vacation. As I dropped each rep, the plates created depressions in the ground and subsequent pulls from a deficit. By rep 20, the deficit was significant, and I'm sure I could have calculated what that longer pull added to the workout, but who really gives a shit? I finished lifting, dug the plates out of their ruts and went fishing instead.

There is, of course, the placebo effect to consider.

Some people say compression gear just makes them feel better, as do supplements, special equipment and assorted pre-workout rituals usually involving bathroom breaks. If you believe in the placebo effect—and I don't fault you if you do—then please contact me for the ultimate workout chalk. It's pretty expensive, but it's a signature premium blend, and you will notice a huge difference in performance as soon as you start using it. Cash only, my friends, cash only.

At the most elite levels of the sport, when genetic potential is nearing max-out levels and all other options are exhausted, it might be time to gear up, and perhaps someone will shave a sixth of a second off the world-record Fran time clad head to toe in compression gear and wearing goggles, wrist wraps, a special lifting belt, and one weightlifting shoe and one ballet slipper.

That might happen, but I'd actually bet more money on a bare-chested Rich Froning wearing work boots and a skirt. Come to think of it, Froning just snatched 300 and cleaned 370 in running shoes.

I'd also bet that if compression gear actually worked at anything other than a marginal level, Stacie Tovar would trade her signature white bootie shorts for an outfit more suited to the 5,000-meter event at a World Cup speed-skating meet. I don't see that happening anytime soon. It would be bad for TV ratings anyway.

To be clear: if you spend most of Annie picking your speed rope out of the toes of your Vibrams, you've got a definite equipment problem and—I'd suggest—a fashion problem. Or if your Oly shoes are making Helen sound like 15 minutes at a clog-dancing festival, you should change your shoes for fuck's sake. If your speed rope is kinkier than the San Fernando Valley, upgrade that bitch and start practicing.

But if you're testing the sleeves of every barbell in the gym for extra resistance, calculating wind speed for an optimal attempt at Nicole, and using AutoCAD to diagram the perfect bar set-up for Linda while sipping a gourmet concoction of pre-workout supplements, I think it's time to start the clock and get on the bar.

About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the **CrossFit Journal** and the founder of **CrossFit 204**. He needs to practice double-unders more often.*