
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Never Enough CrossFit

After being among the youngest individual competitors at the regional level of the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games, 19-year-old Trevor James wants to make CrossFit his life and career. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

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On his 19th birthday, Trevor James didn't celebrate in the traditional way. He drove nearly five hours from Shrewsbury, N.J., to Canton, Mass., for the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Northeast Regional.

The teenager was one of the youngest athletes to compete at the regional level as an individual.

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But he almost didn't make it that far.

After discovering CrossFit in high school, James made his way to CrossFit Shrewsbury in the summer of 2010. There, he offered to "do anything you need" because he couldn't afford a membership. As the Open neared, he bemoaned the fact that he wouldn't be participating.

"I asked, 'What's stopping you?'" recalled Stefanie Hicks, co-owner of the affiliate in the New Jersey borough roughly 50 miles south of New York City and about a mile from the Atlantic Ocean.

"When he started comparing himself, doing these workouts, he finally realized he could do it," she said. "I don't think that in his first year he thought he was going to be in the top 60, and he was No. 60."

Infatuated With CrossFit

The summer before James' junior year at Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School, a friend introduced him to CrossFit. His buddy had a set of Rogue gymnastics rings, and the two went to a local park, where there was a pull-up bar and a 1-mile track.

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—Stefanie Hicks

His first workout: a shortened Cindy combined with a half Murph.

"It just wrecked me like no other," James said. "I couldn't get enough."

His excitement led him to dig up a jump rope in his house for double-under practice, and to program himself a 21-15-9 WOD of pull-ups, ring dips and push-ups.

"I couldn't move my arms for, like, three days," he said.

He added: "I just became infatuated with it."



Champlain Valley CrossFit

James became an intern coach at CrossFit Shrewsbury, working to earn his membership and practicing whenever he could.

In the months before he went away to college, James visited CrossFit Shrewsbury for the first time. He did a few workouts and then signed up for a membership at a local Globo Gym.

"I told Stef I didn't have money, but 'I love CrossFit. I'll do whatever I need to do. I'll run errands, whatever,'" he said.

And so James became the box's intern coach.

"He was there, like, every day, practicing," Hicks said. "We would practice stuff together, and he really became the foundation of the gym."

Not only did James train at a "real" CrossFit gym, but he also trained with an Olympic-weightlifting legend: Karyn Marshall. Marshall, who competed in the master's division at this year's Games, is the first woman to clean and jerk more than 300 lb. and was inducted into the USAW Hall of Fame at last year's Arnold Sports Festival in Columbus, Ohio.

Marshall described James as "a great athlete."



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Overall, James finished 14 places behind regional winner Austin Malleolo, the world record holder for the deadlift/box-jump workout.

"He's just got the heart. He's just got that passion. He's got the skill. And he's got the work ethic. You have all those basic building blocks—you can't teach someone that ... that comes from the inside," she said.

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—Karyn Marshall

A Birthday Present

The night before the Northeast Regional, James got his shirt with "Competitor" printed on the back.

"He sat down on the bed and really got emotional," Hicks said.

James said, "I put it on. I wanted to sit there and wear it forever."

The next day, when he stepped onto Reebok's world-headquarters campus for the regional competition, James was in awe.

"Being in the same athlete area as them and being in the same list of names as them was, like, the most unreal experience I've ever had."

—Trevor James

"I was almost living ... a dream," he said. "The athletes are all nice to each other. It's not like a high-school sports game where people are so mean to you."

There he was, rubbing elbows with elite CrossFitters he respected: Dave Lipson, Austin Malleolo, Rob Orlando.

"Being in the same athlete area as them and being in the same list of names as them was, like, the most unreal experience I've ever had," James said.

He ended the competition only 14 places behind Malleolo, the man who set the world record for the deadlift/box-jump regional workout, James noted.

"My goal was to not be last," he said about his pre-regional strategy. "I just stuck to my plan. I was going to give everything I had on every step I took on every movement I made. And wherever the chips fell, (so be it)."

Still, James was "furious" he didn't move on to the final day of competition.

He finished 15th out of 42 men.

"It gives me something to shoot for," James said in early November 2011.

Looking back, he said, the regional was his birthday present.



Champlain Valley CrossFit

James clean-and-jerked 300 lb. at the Beast of the East competition for a 15-lb. PR.

Life Is CrossFit and CrossFit Is Life

At the University of Vermont in Burlington, James has immersed himself in all things CrossFit.

After his first semester, he changed his major from environmental science to exercise and movement science.

"I just realized I was too into what CrossFit was to do something so outside of CrossFit and so outside of fitness," he explained. "All the anatomical positions came really easily to me."

He added: "It just gets me through the day easier."

What also helps is his job: coaching at Champlain Valley CrossFit.

The affiliate opened two weeks after James started college in Vermont. He took the Level 1 Seminar in October and now teaches three classes a week at that box.

"I get to be part of the gym and be part of the community," he said.

"It's pretty cool that I have the same job up here as I do at home. I just kind of realize every day when people say, 'Oh my God, that's awesome,' I'm like, 'Yeah, that's pretty awesome.'"

He added: "A lot of things that fell into place are really awesome."

In early October, James competed at the Beast of the East event at the Durham, Conn., fairgrounds where he cleaned-and-jerked 300 lb.—a 15-lb. PR after running a 5K that morning.

A couple of weeks later, he participated in the 2011 Northeast Event Series of the Garage Games series—known as the New England Team Throwdown—as part of Champlain Valley CrossFit’s team at CrossFit Milford. After the last event, his box was tied with CrossFit New England’s team that included Mel Ockerby and James Hobart, both on CFNE’s team that won this year’s Games Affiliate Cup. For a tiebreaker, each team chose one person to perform a final workout: Fran. In the end, James went head-to-head with “a guy I really look up to.” Hobart **beat James by 28 seconds**.

“The second best day of my life thus far,” James said.

“I just realized I was too into what CrossFit was to do something so outside of CrossFit and so outside of fitness.”

—Trevor James

In mid-November, James finished second at the Garage Games men’s final at CrossFit Southie.

So while some of his friends might be out on the town, James spends many a weekend at CrossFit competitions and making choices that will only enhance his CrossFit performance, Hicks said.

“He gets so much crap from some of his friends ... about, ‘Oh, your life’s CrossFit. He gets so much peer pressure. He gets a hard time,’” she said.

“You would never in a million years ... think he was 19 years old. He’s very confident. He’s very motivating. ... I’ve even learned from him.”

No Future Without CrossFit

In the long-term, James said he would like to be part of CrossFit HQ’s Seminar Staff, not only to spread the CrossFit word but also to introduce people to “something that I love,” he said.



James finished second at the Garage Games men’s final in November 2011.

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"If I could make it my job, I wouldn't want anything more than that."

In the short-term, James is focused on the 2012 Games.

Despite his youth, Hicks said James won't be distracted.

"I don't think Trevor would consider anything other than CrossFit until he reached his goals in CrossFit. He loves challenges. And this is his goal right now," she said. "He's pure about it. He doesn't do anything to show off. Trevor's the kind of guy that can go into an empty gym and still give it his all. He doesn't need somebody to be watching him, to show off, to say, 'Look at what I can do.'"

Just like Lipson, Malleolo, Orlando and Chris Spealler, CrossFitters will one day know James' name, too, Hicks continued.

**"I see him, without a doubt,
being a top competitor."**

—Stefanie Hicks

"I see him, without a doubt, being a top competitor," she said. "I know he will continue forging forward until he gets to the level of competing that he wants."

And his finish at the Northeast Regional was not what he wanted, James said.

"If I was happy with 15th place, then I wouldn't try hard again. My goal is to go to the CrossFit Games. That's my goal. That's what I want to do," he said. "That's always in my head: What is going to get me there?"



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author

*Andréa Maria Cecil, 33, is a career journalist who is managing editor of the **Central Penn Business Journal** in Harrisburg, Pa. Andréa is a native of New Orleans who lives in York County, Pa. There, she's been doing CrossFit since 2008 at [CrossFit York](#). Additionally, she dedicates three days a week to training in Olympic weightlifting at [McKenna's Gym](#).*