

# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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Wendy Nielsen

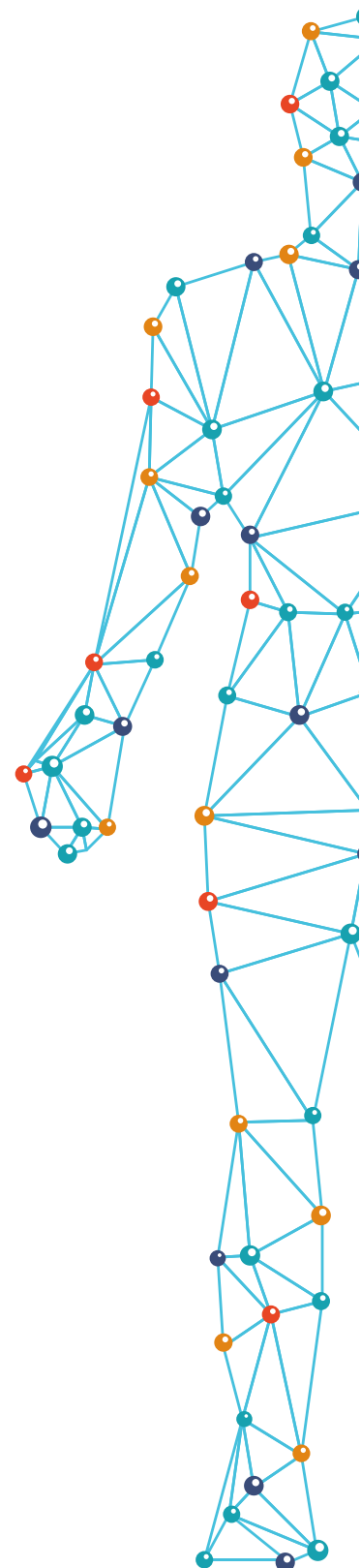
THE  
**CrossFit** JOURNAL

# CANCER, CARBS AND CONTROVERSY

Thomas Seyfried, Dr. Eugene Fine explain how cancer is affected by sugar, insulin and inflammation.

BY BRITTNEY SALINE





Accounts of deadly tumors date as far back as 3,000 B.C. in ancient Egypt.

Yet despite centuries of study, cancer is—after cardiovascular disease—the world’s **second-leading** cause of death, claiming more than **8 million lives** in 2012 alone, a number that’s expected to nearly double over the next 20 years.

Prevailing theories of most researchers and oncologists today dictate that cancer is thought of predominantly as a genetic disease, whereby damage to a cell’s nuclear DNA turns the healthy cell into a cancerous one.

But what if we’ve only been studying a piece of the puzzle for all these years? What if cancer is just as much about what we put into our bodies as the genes we were born with?

## Genetic or Metabolic?

Thomas Seyfried, a Boston College biology professor with a doctorate in genetics and biochemistry, disagrees with the idea that cancer is primarily a genetic disease.

“That’s all misinformation,” said the author of the 2012 book “Cancer as a Metabolic Disease.”

It’s not that cancer cells don’t have mutations, he said. It’s that—with a few exceptions—those mutations are not the cause of the disease but rather the effect, the result of damage to a cell’s mitochondria, the “powerhouse” responsible for converting energy from nutrients into adenosine-5′-triphosphate (ATP) through **cellular respiration**.

What’s causing the damage? In rare instances, Seyfried said, it can be genetic. However, he said mitochondrial damage is typically the result of environmental factors such as carcinogens, radiation and inflammation. While inflammation can be the result of things such as wounds or bacterial infections, it’s also the consequence of repeated spikes in blood sugar driven by excess sugar and carbohydrate intake.

“What sugar will do is cause imbalances in metabolic hormones leading to systemic inflammation, and it’s the systemic inflammation that is linked to higher risk for cancer,” he said.

“What sugar will do is cause imbalances in metabolic hormones leading to systemic inflammation, and it’s the systemic inflammation that is linked to higher risk for cancer.”  
—Thomas Seyfried

Dominic D’Agostino agreed. He’s a research partner of Seyfried’s and an assistant professor in the Department of Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology at the University of South Florida.

“Carbs in and of themselves are not dangerous, per se, but when they’re consumed in excess, especially over time, they contribute to more inflammation,” D’Agostino said. “With chronic inflammation ... you’re gradually damaging the mitochondria in the (organ) and preventing the (organ’s) ability to use the mitochondria efficiently.”

Once damaged, the mitochondria produce reactive oxygen species (ROS), cytotoxins that **damage** proteins, lipids and DNA in cells, causing mutations and setting **carcinogenesis**—cancer formation—in motion.

“So now we’re getting something coming out of the damaged mitochondria that’s facilitating further damage to the mitochondria and causing these mutations that everybody seems to be studying,” Seyfried said. “So now what are we studying? We’re studying downstream epiphenomena of the damage to the respiration.”

Unable to respire, the damaged cells revert to aerobic glycolysis, an oxygen-free fermentation process whereby cells consume enormous amounts of glucose to generate energy for unbridled growth and proliferation, a process dubbed the “**Warburg Effect**” for its discoverer, biochemist and Nobel Prize winner **Otto Warburg**.

Mitochondria damaged by inflammation can also trigger the activation of oncogenes, genes that, when activated, cause a normal healthy cell to transform into a cancer cell.

“People say cancer’s a thousand diseases, and this is the result of the gene theory,” Seyfried said. “But they’re all fermenting. They all have the same metabolic malady: They need glucose and glutamine to survive. Whether it’s a colon tumor, whether it’s a brain tumor, whether it’s a breast tumor, they’re all the same ... if you look at it from the metabolic perspective, you see a singular disease of respiration.”

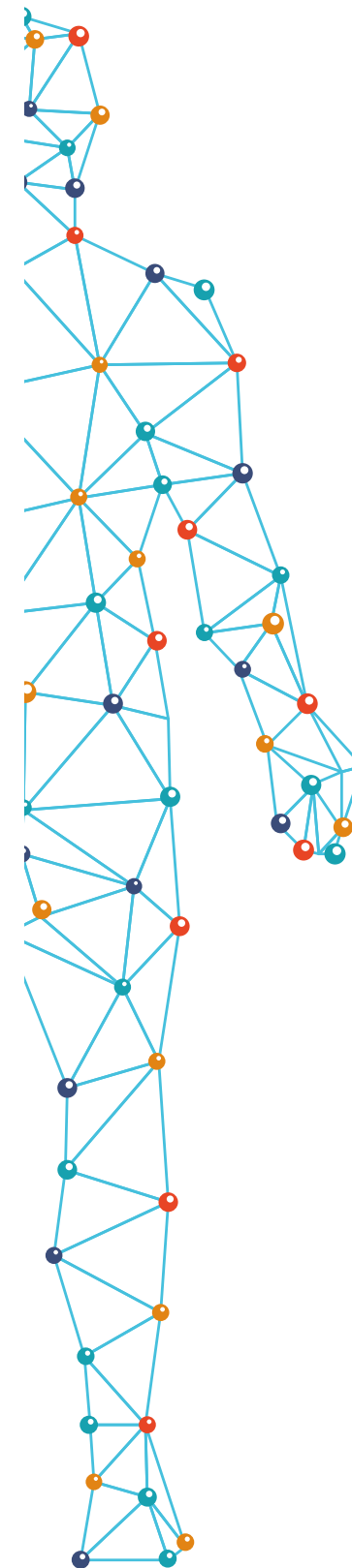
According to Seyfried, science has for decades focused on the symptom, not the cause.

“Why have we not made any major advances in cancer for the last 50 years?” he asked. “Because people are studying downstream epiphenomena. It’s not that complicated. When you think (about cancer) as a mitochondrial metabolic disease, most of the complexity goes away.”

## Weapon of Choice

So how do we fight cancer?

The current standard of care typically calls for surgery, radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy. The problem with the latter two, however, is that while they may stall the disease’s progress, the





Dominic D'Agostino



Dr. Eugene Fine

cancer tends to eventually return even stronger than before.

"Radiation causes cancer. Everybody knows this," Seyfried said. "So why do you take a patient and expose him to radiation? All because it kills the tumor cells better than it kills the normal cells. But the normal cells that survive are now put at risk for returning as a form of cancer."

Chemotherapy is well known to create a variety of adverse side effects such as depression, cardiovascular disease and digestive problems, Seyfried said.

"So what we have to ask is, 'Is there another way to treat cancer patients without poisoning and radiating them?'" he said.

According to Seyfried, the solution starts in the kitchen.

"(Cancer) uses glucose and glutamine," he said. "So if you can stop the glucose and glutamine entering into these tissues, the cells will die."

To limit the amount of available glucose and glutamine, Seyfried proposes the **ketogenic diet**, a "low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet that alters metabolism by increasing the level of ketone bodies in the blood," which has long been **accepted** by mainstream science and **medicine** as a safe and effective **treatment** for epilepsy.

Ketone bodies are an alternative fuel source **created** when low insulin levels force the body to break down fat for fuel instead of glucose. The human body will, on average, enter a state of ketosis at a carbohydrate intake level of about 50 grams per day, give or take depending on activity level.

The punch line is that while ketone bodies can **replace** glucose as fuel in healthy cells and even act as **neuroprotectors** by shielding neurons in the brain from free radicals, most tumor cells cannot use ketone bodies for energy. Ketones can also act as **anti-inflammatories**.

In 2014, Seyfried and D'Agostino tested the theory on mice inoculated with metastatic cancer. One group of rodents was given a diet of standard rodent chow for 21 days; another, the ketogenic diet. A third group was given the ketogenic diet with ketone ester supplementation, and still another was given the ketogenic diet, ketone supplementation and **hyperbaric oxygen therapy**. The increase in survival time compared to the control group was 44.6, 65.4 and 103.2 percent, respectively. Seyfried and D'Agostino's work complemented an earlier **study** in which researchers demonstrated that rodents fed a ketogenic diet with ketone ester supplementation experienced reduced tumor proliferation and increased mean survival time by up to 69 percent.

"So the ketones had changed the metabolic physiology of the animals in a way that prevented the growth and metastasis of the cancer," D'Agostino said.

D'Agostino compared the treatment to weeding a garden.

"The glucose is really like fertilizer to the soil, and you're sprinkling the soil with little pre-cancer cells, which are the seeds," he said.

"If you're on a ketogenic diet, the soil is almost devoid of the nutrients that allow the cancer cells to take root and grow. And in a way, if you produce nutritional ketosis and also lower blood glucose ... it's almost like putting an herbicide on the soil that's specific to the cancer cells."

"The glucose is really like fertilizer to the soil, and you're sprinkling the soil with little pre-cancer cells, which are the seeds."

—Dominic D'Agostino

## About Insulin

Dr. Eugene Fine, a clinical professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, New York, shares a perspective similar to Seyfried and D'Agostino's. While he, too, believes the ketogenic diet can be instrumental in the fight against cancer, Fine said it's more about inhibiting insulin than reducing blood glucose.

"Cancers are dependent on insulin signaling," he said.

If there are high levels of circulating insulin in the blood, insulin can bind to insulin receptors on cancer-cell membranes, activating signaling molecules that stimulate cell growth and proliferation.

"It sort of locks the cancer into a permanent growth mode," Fine said. "On the other hand, if you reduce the insulin signaling, at least you have the potential to slow the cancer growth somewhat."

High insulin also provokes the release of ROS, which Fine described as "chemical bombs inside of cells" that adipose tissue reacts to by "secreting toxic chemicals into the blood, ... which then go around and wreak havoc in other tissues and are associated well as a mechanism of causing mutations in cells, including cancer."

So how are insulin and insulin signaling reduced?

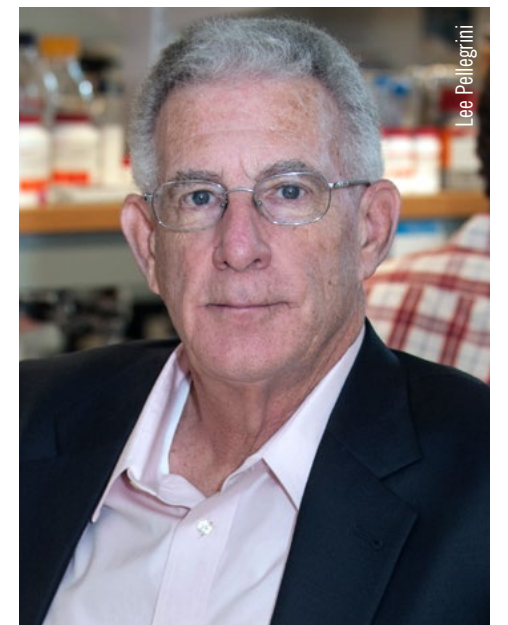
"Insulin secretion is inhibited most simply by restricting carbohydrate (CHO) ingestion, thus decreasing the dietary sources of glucose, the principal secretagogue for pancreatic insulin release," Fine et al. wrote in a 2012 **study**.

Like Seyfried, Fine also wanted to find an alternative to the standard of care.

"The problem is with all these mutations, you treat adults with toxic cocktails of five different chemical chemotherapeutic agents in order to fail treating them," he said. "What you do is you shrink



Adrienne Scheck



Thomas Seyfried







A composite image featuring three runners on a red track. A woman in a grey tank top and red shorts runs on the left. A man in a red 'INDUSTRY THREADWORKS' t-shirt runs in the center. A woman in a white tank top with a blue 'P' logo and blue shorts runs on the right. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red rectangle. The background shows a chain-link fence and a palm tree under a blue sky.

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# AS PRESCRIBED: SAN DIEGO

A guide to the best healthy eats, shops, bars and  
outside-the-gym workout spots in sunny San Diego.

BY HILARY ACHAUER





Point Loma Nazarene University Track: San Diego's best place to get outside the gym and sweat in the sun.

# San Diego

has the highest concentration of CrossFit boxes in any metro area, so finding a **CrossFit affiliate** in the Southern California city is easy. But at some point we need to leave the gym—or so we're told. If you find yourself in the sunny city just 18 miles from the Mexican border, we've got a guide to some of San Diego's best places for eating, drinking, shopping and outdoor fitness.

## When in Rome

San Diego is the eighth largest city in the United States and a mecca for craft beer, biotech and cutting-edge science, but it still retains a low-key beach-town vibe. For men, dressing up for dinner means wearing the fancy flip flops and your nicest pair of jeans. For women, sundresses and tank tops are acceptable attire almost everywhere. San Diego is a city of morning people, not night owls. Most people turn in early so they can get outside the next day to surf, cycle, hike or just enjoy the weather.

A word on weather: San Diegans have very little patience for less-than-perfect weather and will complain bitterly about two days of rain or a week of temperatures below 75 F. The metro area has one of the least affordable housing markets in the U.S., so San Diegans regard the weather as their reward for such steep prices.

When meeting a new person in San Diego, don't ask, "What do you do?" That question is for New York or Los Angeles. "What do you do for fun?" will be met with much more enthusiasm. Unless stationed here with the military, most people chose to live in San Diego because of the weather and laid-back lifestyle, often prioritizing location over climbing the corporate ladder. It's not that the city is filled with Spicoli-like slackers—successful entrepreneurs and brilliant scientists are everywhere. However, in this strong "work to live" culture, people make an effort to separate their work and home lives.

Even if the street is empty, wait for the light before crossing because police are very generous with their jaywalking tickets. Finally, be prepared to pick a favorite taco shop and defend its merits vigorously against all others.

## Sun's out, Guns Out-Side the Gym

The only thing San Diegans take as seriously as taco shops is surfing. Not everyone here surfs, but those who do spend hours discussing and pursuing the perfect wave. Great surfing spots dot the coast from North County to the border. If you surf, you know about them; if you don't, you don't care. Most residents have a surfer friend introduce them to their favorite break and teach them the basics of surfing, but if you're visiting, **San Diego Surf School** in



**San Diego: Sun and surf guaranteed.**

Pacific Beach offers private and group lessons for kids and adults.

### POINT LOMA NAZARENE TRACK



**Pull-ups with a view at Point Loma.**

There comes a point when you can't hide your fitness indoors any more—especially if you live in a city with almost-perfect weather. There's not a more ideal spot in San Diego for outdoor fitness than the Point Loma Nazarene University track. Tucked away in Point Loma, a community of San Diego set on a peninsula separating the San Diego Bay from the Pacific Ocean, this Christian liberal-arts school is home to a recently renovated track and old-school pull-up rig perched high above Sunset Cliffs, which fall away to one of the best surf spots in Southern California. Why stare at the walls of your gym when you can practice bar muscle-ups with a killer ocean view?

3900 Lomaland Dr., San Diego, 92106  
[Pointloma.edu](http://Pointloma.edu)

### CONVENTION CENTER STAIRS

Sure, the primary purpose of the San Diego Convention Center is to host conferences and events such the world-famous Comic-Con,





Don't worry: It will be sunny and 80 F tomorrow in San Diego. And the day after that. And the one after that.

Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

but health-conscious San Diegans have turned the wide set of 100 stairs into a year-round outdoor gym. Take the stair workout to the next level by combining it with a run along the quarter-mile Embarcadero loop, just a minute away from the Convention Center. The loop features seven exercise stations including rings, parallel bars, pull-up bars and a balance beam. If you want to go two-for-one, jog northwest along the boardwalk through Seaport Village until you get to the USS Midway. Once alongside the aircraft-carrier museum, you can hit the CrossFit Journal World of WODs challenge [Monster of the Midway](#).

111 W. Harbor Drive, San Diego, 92101  
Embarcadero fitness trail [map](#)

SEVEN BRIDGES WALK



Hilary Achauer

Spruce Street Suspension Bridge: Take a pic and try to get it on CrossFit.com.

The city of San Diego is home to about 150 canyons, a topographical quirk that's saved it from endless concrete and high rises. Where urban canyons are found, you can also find bridges that allow cross-canyon access. Instead of heading east for a hike to [Potato Chip Rock](#) and standing in line for a photo, stay in the city for a 5-mile walk—or run for time—that explores seven of these bridges, many of them historic. The walk starts at the east side of Park Boulevard and Village Place. Detailed instructions for the entire walk can be found [here](#). Highlights include the Quince Street Footbridge, a 1905-vintage wooden trestle bridge over Maple Canyon, and the Spruce Street Suspension Bridge. Suspended 70 feet over Kate Sessions Canyon, the Spruce Street bridge bounces and sways as people walk across or if a stiff wind blows. Are you brave enough to try a pistol in the center?

Additional bridge info: [San Diego Cultural Heritage Alliance](#)

SUNSET AND SAVASANA

Some people want a yoga class that's intense and challenging, but when I do yoga I'm looking for maximum relaxation. And nothing is more relaxing than holding a Warrior II pose while watching the

sun set over the Pacific and listening to the sounds of a live DJ. April through September, the WaveHouse in Mission Beach hosts Rhythm and Moves Yoga every first and third Wednesday of the month. The yoga class takes place on the Coaster Terrace, which sits in between the ocean and the Giant Dipper, a historic wooden roller coaster built in 1925. When the 75-minute class is finished, the party starts, with craft beer, wine and free samples from local coffee roasters and juice bars. The class and after-party cost \$20 per person.

3125 Ocean Front Walk, San Diego, 92109  
[Belmontpark.com](#)

Going Pro

San Diego has two major professional sports teams. The National Football League's [San Diego Chargers](#) play from September to January at Qualcomm Stadium, although the team might soon move to Los Angeles in pursuit of a more modern, up-to-date stadium. Major League Baseball's [San Diego Padres](#) play from March to the beginning of October at Petco Park, which opened in 2004 and played a major role in the revitalization of the East Village neighborhood in downtown San Diego.

How Many Blocks Is That?

BARE BACK GRILL

A transformative experience at a New Zealand burger joint called Fergburger inspired the founders of Bare Back Grill to buy Fergburger's recipes and recreate the restaurant in San Diego. The first location opened in 2005 in Pacific Beach, and two others—Raglan Public House in Ocean Beach and Queenstown Public House in Little Italy—followed. The Pacific Beach restaurant has the perfect low-key beach vibe, and it's family friendly but filled with all ages and a mix of locals and tourists. All burgers are made from grass-fed organic beef and go beyond the typical meat, cheese and bun. Sheila's cracked comes with beets, a fried egg and sweet tomato chutney, and the kiwilango features blue-cheese crumbles, jalapeños and garlic aioli. Blow a few Zone blocks by pairing with sweet-potato fries and a selection from the well-curated craft beer menu.

Bare Back Grill: 4640 Mission Blvd., San Diego, 92109  
[Barebackgrill.com](#)

Queenstown Public House:  
1557 Columbia St., San Diego, 92101  
[Queenstownpublichouse.com](#)

Raglan Public House: 1851 Bacon St., San Diego, 92107  
[Raglanpublichouse.wordpress.com](#)



QUARTYARD

There’s something very “Portlandia” about an urban park made from repurposed shipping containers. As irritatingly hipster as it may sound, Quartyard in the East Village neighborhood of downtown San Diego is a delight. This 25,000-square-foot once-vacant lot is now home to a coffee shop, dog park, restaurant, beer garden, music venue and rotating list of food trucks. The on-site restaurant, S&M Sausage & Meat, is a “meatery” serving exotic game meats, homemade sausage and bacon, and a delicious Cubano sandwich with house-brine-roasted pork shoulder. Check the calendar on the website for a list of events, including farmers markets and outdoor concerts.

1102 Market St., San Diego, 92101  
[Quartyardsd.com](#)

AMPLIFIED ALE WORKS

Burgers and fries dominate the typical menu for an ocean-view beer garden, but Amplified Ale Works offers an unexpected twist on bar food with its Mediterranean-style menu. The grilled kebab plates—choose sirloin, chicken, local vegetables, salmon or shrimp—are surprisingly healthy, especially if you choose a side salad instead of the house-cut fries. The in-house brewery turns out hoppy, West Coast-style ales, lagers and experimental batches, and the assistant brewer has celiac disease, so every beer brewed on site is gluten-reduced.

4150 Mission Blvd., Mission Beach, 92109  
[Amplifiedales.com](#)

THE MISSION

The best way to follow up a Saturday-morning workout is with a filling, nutritious breakfast. With three locations (Mission Beach, North Park and East Village), The Mission has San Diego’s breakfast and lunch needs covered. Serving a cuisine dubbed “Chino-Latino” for lunch, the restaurant really shines with its breakfast food. Go full cheat meal with blackberry pancakes, or stay in the Zone with power plato breakfast, which includes scrambled egg whites, chicken apple sausage and black beans.

**Mission Beach:** 3795 Mission Blvd., San Diego, 92109  
**North Park:** 2801 University Ave., San Diego, 92104  
**East Village:** 1250 J St., San Diego, 92101  
[Themissonsd.com](#)



Shop for Time

THE HEART & TROTTER



Jesse Bodas

The Heart & Trotter: Where protein is plentiful.

The only local, sustainable butcher shop in San Diego, **The Heart & Trotter** is the city’s best source of locally raised, hormone- and antibiotic-free meat. Its whole-animal, hand-butchered approach means the shop can sell cuts not found at most counters, and The Heart & Trotter also uses every part of the animal to make a variety of products including bone broth and raw dog food. What’s more, Trey Nichols, one of the owners of this North Park shop, is a CrossFit athlete. In addition to grass-fed and finished beef, heritage pork, and chicken, duck and eggs, the store also sells locally sourced honey, beef jerky and hot sauce. If all the delicious-looking meat whets your appetite, stay for a meal and enjoy artisan sandwiches, grass-fed burgers and house-made sausages along with a selection of some of San Diego’s finest craft beers.

2855 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, 92104  
[Theheartandtrotter.com](#)

PARADOWSKI'S SWIM AND SPORT

Swim workouts have been part of the CrossFit Games since 2011, and CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman included this important directive in “World Class Fitness in 100 Words”: “Regularly learn and play new sports.” All this means swim workouts should be part of your repertoire. The place to go in San Diego for swimming gear—from suits to goggles—is family-owned Paradowski’s Swim and Sport. The knowledgeable staff will help you find the right gear for your water-based workouts.

7962 Convoy Court, San Diego, CA, 92111  
[Paradowskiswim.com](#)

BIRD’S SURF SHED

San Diego’s best surf shop is miles away from the ocean. Bird, a San

Diego surfing legend, opened this massive Quonset hut filled with more than 1,400 boards in 2011. Bird’s sells boards, wetsuits, clothes and bathing suits, but it also hosts surf-film premieres and hands-on board-shaping clinics. The staff is knowledgeable and friendly—none of the cooler-than-thou attitude found at many of San Diego’s surf shops. The shop is worth a visit even just to marvel at the boards lining the arched ceiling. And if you have a ding in your board, bring it along to get fixed up at nearby Joe Roper’s Surfboard Repair.

1091 W. Morena Blvd., San Diego, 92110  
[Birdssurfshed.com](#)  
Joe Roper’s Surfboard Repair  
7760 Vickers Dr., San Diego, 92111  
[joeropersurfboardrepair.com](#)

SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET

Savvy San Diegans who want high-quality organic produce skip Whole Foods in favor of a more affordable choice: Sprouts Farmers Market. The chain, which now operates more than 220 stores in 13 states, started out as a San Diego fruit stand in 1943, and the stores still retain a down-home, humble vibe. In addition to great deals on organic produce, the barrels of bulk items are a wonderful source of bargains, and the vitamin and supplement section includes almost every natural remedy or herb under the sun. For eight locations in and around San Diego, visit the website below.

[Sprouts.com](#)

GRAFFITI BEACH

Sometimes life calls for something other than workout clothes. If you’ve spent most of your clothing budget on fitness attire, the South Park clothing boutique Graffiti Beach can outfit you stylishly and affordably. The store sells men’s, women’s and kid’s clothes with a hipster SoCal flair. You’ll also find accessories, décor and gifts, such as lovely white-and-gold ceramic flower pots and The Compendious Coffee Chart Print, with drawings of the various ways to make coffee—from Chemex to automatic drip.

2220 Fern St., San Diego, 92104  
[graffitibeach.com](#)

Cheat Days

PARK AND REC

Think of it as a house party without the next-day cleanup or irritated neighbors. Park and Rec is a three-bungalow hangout in University Heights where you can sip craft cocktails while playing

ping pong, shuffleboard, darts or cornhole. One of the bungalows is devoted to dancing to either live music or a DJ. The oak-tree-shaded courtyard with an outside bar, original stained-glass windows and ornate wooden doors reinforces the house-party vibe. The bar specializes in craft cocktails (go to nearby Small Bar for craft beer) including the Cabrillo, made with green chili vodka, mezcal, pineapple-gum syrup and spiced rum.

4612 Park Blvd., San Diego, 92116  
[Parkandrecsd.com](#)

POOL PARTIES: LAFAYETTE HOTEL AND HARD ROCK HOTEL

Your hard-earned abs shouldn’t stay hidden away in the gym. Show them off at one of San Diego’s summer pool parties. Those with an appreciation for history will enjoy the 70-year-old Lafayette Hotel’s Swim Club in North Park, which hosts pool parties with live music Saturday and Sunday all summer long around a pool designed by actor and five-time Olympic gold medal winner Johnny Weissmuller. For a bigger party scene, hit up Hard Rock Hotel’s FLOAT, with daybeds, cabanas, flat-screen TVs and live DJs at night.

Lafayette Hotel: 2223 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, 92104  
[Lafayettehotelsd.com](#)  
Hard Rock Hotel San Diego: 207 5th Ave., San Diego, 92101  
[Hardrockhotelsd.com](#)

NOBLE EXPERIMENT

The opposite of loud see-and-be-seen pool parties, Noble Experiment is a somewhat-secret speakeasy hidden within a restaurant. The sense of mystery begins when you make a reservation, which is by text only. Send a message to the number on the website, and someone will respond to let you know if there’s room at your requested date and time. The space only holds 32 people, so reservations are a must. The bar is tucked away inside Neighborhood, a wonderful little gastropub featuring craft beer and locally sourced food. To get to the speakeasy, walk into Neighborhood and head straight toward the bathrooms. Push on the wall of kegs (it’s actually a door), and you’re in. Inside you’ll find no food, just top-shelf liquor and a very small drink menu, which is merely a suggestion. For a real treat, tell the bartender the type of liquor and flavors you prefer and enjoy a cocktail created just for you. ■

777 G St., San Diego, 92101  
[Nobleexperimentsc.com](#)

**About the Author:** Hilary Achauer is a freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary writes for the CrossFit Journal. To contact her, visit [hilaryachauer.com](#).



THE  
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# DECADE OF DOMINANCE

The CrossFit Games celebrate 10 years as the ultimate proving grounds for the world's fittest athletes.

BY GREG GLASSMAN, HILARY ACHAUER, ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL AND MIKE WARKENTIN  
STATS BY CHAD SCHROEDER



Aromas, 2008: Redefining the term  
"fitness competition" for all time.





Carson, 2014: Rich Froning Jr. on his way to a record fourth consecutive CrossFit Games victory.







*In 2016, we celebrate the 10th edition of the CrossFit Games. On the pages that follow, you'll find the stories and images that explain how the Games grew from a small gathering of athletes in 2007 into an event that fills stadiums and can be watched live on ESPN. We've also provided a host of detailed stats and records that showcase the amazing accomplishments of CrossFit Games athletes.*

*In 2013, CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman provided the introduction to the "2013 Reebok CrossFit Games Program," and his words are reproduced below as a defining description of the Sport of Fitness.*

## A BETTER BEAUTIFUL

The first year of the CrossFit Games was 2007. Sure, we started in Dave Castro's mom's backyard, but it felt like Woodstock and

looked like a prison yard—just a tougher workout, a tougher crowd, and coed. Wonderfully coed.

This is not just the first major sport spawned from a peanut roaster, but a moment in physical culture, a rather audacious crowning by CrossFit Inc. of the Fittest Man and Woman on Earth from, of all things, a list of friends competing over a weekend. Our beloved Games had an auspicious beginning even if only a score of us recognized the import of what was unfolding.

It's as easy as this: If fitness can be defined and measured, then it can be tested, and we can, in turn, find the fittest. There's an inevitability to the Games that arises directly from our intellectual DNA.

Roll the clock forward a few years and we're driven from Monterey County (by its now-regretful fathers), in a stadium and on TV, and Reebok has traded the NFL for the Games. The CrossFit Games quickly became a global put-up-or-shut-up challenge that leaves

our critics and competitors gloriously silent during Games season lest they find themselves "honorary invitees" and thrust into the arena. The Games make bragging on the net dangerous. Each athlete is showcasing an approach—a successful one at that. Internet trash talk is now off center stage.

In this, our seventh year, I call your attention to the bodies. Yes, the flesh—the men, the women, the spectators and the competitors. It's not our usual intellectual focus, but I can no longer pretend not to notice. Everyone is an athlete, but many, maybe even most, are simply beautiful. This menagerie of "Franken-fitters," stadia quite literally full of them, embodies a functional aesthetic that is uniquely ours. Their bodies and our appreciation of them are a direct challenge to a host of pathological aesthetics, whether it's the 16-year-old heroin-chic anorexia of the fashion world or the grotesqueness of bodybuilding and drug-induced hypertrophy.

These athletes and spectators wear the look of enormous work

capacity across broad time and modal domains. Theirs is the look of true performance. This is what happens when form, as it should and will, follows function.

What we've made, what you'll see all around you this weekend, is a better beautiful.

Greg Glassman  
Founder and CEO  
CrossFit Inc.



# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2007

“It was the first time we got together.”

If he had to choose just one moment, it would be the barbecue on July 1, 2007.

“After Day 2, everyone just hung out at The Ranch, and we grilled hamburgers and hotdogs,” Chris Spealler said.

It was the first edition of the CrossFit Games. Anyone in the world was invited to compete in three events spread over two days at a ranch in Aromas, California, about 30 miles southeast of CrossFit’s birthplace in the Santa Cruz area. About 60 athletes showed up—some representing one of the nearly 250 affiliates in existence—to test their fitness in three events: CrossFit Total, a workout chosen by the hopper method and an off-trail run.

After the winners were crowned, people such as Dave Castro, Nicole Carroll and CrossFit Founder Greg Glassman hung out, ate some grub and drank some beer.

“(It was) probably one of the coolest experiences,” Spealler said of his most-cherished Games memory. “It was all the grassroots CrossFit (people).”

Members of the community that was born and bred online finally met face to face. From behind computer screens around North America came the people from the Message Board, the people from CrossFit.com. There was a lot of “oh, you’re Speal” and “so that’s Josh Everett.”

“It was the first time we got together in that sense,” Speal said. “It was just, like, it was so cool.”

The cookout marked the beginning of a movement.

“No one knew what it was going to be. Now it happens on this huge level,” Spealler said.

The Ranch in Aromas still belongs to Castro’s parents, and he’s

known today as Director of the CrossFit Games. Carroll has since become Director of Certification and Training. Glassman, CEO of CrossFit Inc., oversees a company with many thousands of affiliated gyms around the world. In the spirit of the 2007 Games, many people still know him simply as “Coach.”

The inaugural Games weren’t quite a family reunion “because that’s kind of cheesy,” but there was definitely a family feel, Spealler noted.

“Out of everything—especially now as it’s evolved—I think it’s important we don’t lose that,” he said. “That is, ultimately, what it’s about or what it should be about.”

Keeping perspective amidst the Games and competition “hubbub” is essential, said Spealler, who competed in every edition of the Games from 2007 to 2012, as well as in 2014. The Games find the Fittest on Earth, but they’re also a community event that showcases the joy of competition on display in every CrossFit affiliate in the world. Focusing only on the winners misses the point of the tradition set with that dusty barbecue in 2007.

“Who’s the fittest, who’s the best?—that’s when people start losing perspective on what drives the community,” said Spealler, who was honored with the Spirit of the Games Award in 2010. “(It’s about) people who just show up every day and bust their butt. It’s knowing what drives the community and celebrating when you have the best of the best throwing down.”

## WINNERS:

Men: James FitzGerald (Canada)  
Women: Jolie Gentry (now Jolie Gentry Macias) (USA)  
Team: CrossFit Santa Cruz (USA)



Aromas, 2007: Chris Spealler views the barbecue after the competition as a reminder that the CrossFit Games are a celebration of the community.





Aromas, 2007: Jolie Gentry finishes first or second in all three events to win the inaugural edition of the Games.





# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2008

“There’s no fucking way you can sit and watch.”

“What do you mean you aren’t competing?” Jamie Budding asked. “Do you want in?”

“Oh, God. I kinda do,” Brett Marshall replied, verbally wringing his hands.

After finishing second in the 2007 CrossFit Games, Marshall planned to be a spectator in 2008, but when he went to collect his pass at The Ranch, he was offered a spot in the competition.

Completely unprepared, Marshall took to the dusty hills of Aromas for a walk. His wife ultimately made the decision for him.

“There’s no fucking way you can sit and watch,” she said.

And then, in the spirit of the Games at Aromas, Budding found Dave Castro, who OK’d Marshall on the spot and rammed him into the heat list.

Despite a lack of prep, Marshall performed well throughout the competition and qualified for the final heat of the last event: 30 squat clean and jerks for time at 155 lb.

In warm-up, overall leader Chris Spealler just sat with his signature headphones on. Marshall asked him if he was going to try any lifts.

“Nope. I’m saving every rep for the event,” Spealler replied.

Marshall himself was nervous and had been doing a lot of reps. As a smaller athlete, he was hoping an efficient jerk would get him through the lifting.

Marshall said he saw a “giant of a man” in the warm-up area, someone he didn’t know. He looked strong but not necessarily fit. The guy bent over, yanked the bar to his shoulders and drove it overhead with a powerful press that looked effortless despite an absence of refined technique.

“Are you gonna jerk any of these?” Marshall asked incredulously. The giant just laughed and lifted some more.

In the event, Marshall said he hit a wall around Rep 15 and had some time to listen to the announcer’s call of the race between overall leader Spealler and Josh Everett. Suddenly, there was chaos behind him, and Marshall turned around to see the behemoth from the warm-up area jumping in the air and chest-bumping friends.

Jason Khalipa won the 2008 CrossFit Games by finishing the final event 40 seconds faster than anyone else.

Almost no one saw it happen, but within minutes everyone suddenly knew Khalipa’s name.

\* \* \*

“Once that buzzer went off, I did 30, I raised my arms and won,” recalled Khalipa, who admitted he didn’t know what weightlifting shoes were for in 2008.

And while he considered himself “amateur” compared to the rest of the field, Khalipa proved he had the relentless drive and endless pain tolerance to simply do more work faster than anyone else.

“He goes balls to the wall all the time,” Marshall said of Khalipa.

“I heard different people discuss along the way, ‘Oh, Khalipa’s going to burn out, and you can’t sustain this, and you have to periodize your programming, and you have to do all these things,’ and I’m just so happy to see him continue to get better.”

Indeed, the burly NorCal athlete has proven that 2008 was no flash in the pan. Khalipa competed as an individual in every edition of the CrossFit Games from 2008 to 2014, finishing no lower than 16th (2010), taking fifth twice, and finishing on the podium in 2013 and 2014. In 2015, he finished 10th with the NorCal CrossFit team.

“As far as I can tell,” Marshall said, “the guy is ready to compete at any time and has been that way since 2008, when he fucking won.”

## WINNERS:

Men: Jason Khalipa (USA)

Women: Caity Matter (now Caity Henniger) (USA)

Team: CrossFit Oakland (USA)

Aromas, 2008: Runner-up in 2007, firefighter Brett Marshall completes 30 clean and jerks for time.





Aromas, 2008: The Sport of Fitness is quickly building momentum, with about 300 athletes competing at the second edition of the Games.



# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2009

“The best feeling ever.”

All she had to do to win was finish the workout. She didn't even have to do well.

But Tanya Wagner was a mess.

The 27-year-old had never done so many muscle-ups. And the workout called for 10 of them in the middle of a hefty chipper that also included cleans, toes-to-bars, box jumps, push presses, double-unders, thrusters, pulls-ups, burpees and walking lunges with a bumper plate overhead.

“I knew that was my biggest workout going in,” Wagner said. “I just knew I had to get through it, but I didn't know if I could.”

Spectators at the 2009 CrossFit Games were unaware of her tribulations.

“You got this,” they kept telling her.

“Nobody knew that I didn't have muscle-ups very well,” she said.

Leading up to the final test of the two-day competition, the schoolteacher from Souderton, Pennsylvania, watched in the warm-up area as a previously unknown athlete from Iceland tried to learn how to do a muscle-up for the first time before the event began.

“Annie Thorisdottir was practicing like mad on the rings because she had never done that ever,” Wagner recounted. “I had to get outta there. I couldn't watch that.”

Seeing someone else fail at a movement she was already distressed over only worsened her nerves.

Interestingly, Thorisdottir was the only athlete who had a chance to beat Wagner for the overall title.

“I didn't even know (the movements for) the rest of the workout,” Wagner said. “My mind was just in such a bad state.”

She added: “I wanted to just cry. I probably did cry ... because I didn't know if I could do it.”

Once she finished 30 20-inch box jumps, it was time for her moment of truth.

She struggled and had 30 missed attempts.

“The whole thing was a mess,” Wagner said.

Nicole Carroll, today Director of Certification and Training, tried to help Wagner at the time as an impromptu coach. Prior to the event, Carroll had worked with Jeff Tucker of CrossFit Gymnastics to give Thorisdottir some tips in the warm-up area as well. Famously, Thorisdottir actually got her first muscle-up in front of a roaring crowd that afternoon.

“(Nicole) just kept telling me to just wait ... walk away from the rings,” Wagner remembered. “Every time I failed, I wanted to jump back up again.”

Finally, she locked out the last of 10 muscle-ups.

“That was the best feeling ever,” she said. “That last muscle-up. That was it.”

After a medley of other movements, all that remained was 300 feet of walking lunges with a 25-lb. plate overhead.

“It just felt like a mile of plate lunges,” Wagner said. “Still, to this day, whenever I lunge, I think about that weekend.”

## WINNERS:

Men: Mikko Salo (Finland)  
Women: Tanya Wagner (USA)  
Team: Northwest CrossFit (USA)

Aromas, 2009: Tanya Wagner works through 10 muscle-ups as part of the final chipper event.





Aromas, 2009: Even with significant upgrades to The Ranch, it was clear that a new venue would be needed in 2010.





Carson, 2010: The Games go big with stadium seating and events under the lights.

Staff/CrossFit Journal

# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2010

“The professionalization of the sport.”

For three years, it took Josh Everett 20 minutes to go to the bathroom.

“(Being) an athlete at The Ranch was a little difficult,” said Everett, who competed at the CrossFit Games as an individual from 2007 through 2009.

With the Games at a ranch in Aromas, California, heeding the call of nature meant snaking his way through dense groups of spectators to finally arrive at the Port-O-Potty. And toilet paper wasn’t guaranteed.

“You had to go through the crowd to get anywhere,” Everett remembered.

Although things changed somewhat in 2009 as the Games started to grow and evolve, the competition still had the same backyard-barbecue feel, Everett said.

“It was out at The Ranch, out in the dirt,” he said.

The competition’s fourth year, however, was remarkably different. That year, 2010, the Games moved to the then-Home Depot Center in Carson, California. The venue is home to the LA Galaxy, a fact that allowed soccer star Landon Donovan to get into a low-key but very entertaining verbal altercation with a wandering Pat Sherwood of CrossFit Media.

At the venue, Games competitors had a dedicated area in the loading dock where they could relax and warm up, and a more predictable heat schedule helped them plan when to rest and refuel. The bathrooms were no longer portable, and toilet paper was plentiful.

“The athletes could really focus on the competition and be a part of the crowd as much they wanted to,” Everett said.

Instead of competing, he was a spectator that year.

“It was really exciting to me,” he said. “For me, that kind of legitimized the competition. I always thought, even in 2007, it was a legitimate competition and took it very seriously, but I think the perception of being in a stadium like that and all the things ... that went along with (that created) the professionalization of the sport.”

Things had gone to the next level, and that was perhaps never more obvious than when a pair of fighter jets roared low over the stadium to open the proceedings under the bright lights of the tennis court on Friday, July 16. With turbofan thunder still echoing, “Go!” was called and Camille Leblanc-Bazinet punctuated the special moment by opening Amanda with an unbroken set of 9 kipping muscle-ups. CrossFit Games champ Tanya Wagner had struggled through 10 muscle-ups in 2009, and the crowd was awestruck to see Leblanc-Bazinet go unbroken and announce that CrossFit athletes had moved to the next level.

Overall, the concept of the CrossFit Games was becoming more refined, Everett added: “I think (organizers) started to get more dialed in on what they wanted the CrossFit Games to be and how they wanted the events to (run).”

Gone were the days of driving stakes into the ground with sledgehammers, as at the 2009 Games, but organizers still found suitable challenges for the world’s fittest, including an event that had athletes scaling the walls of the tennis court and carrying sandbags up and down the stairs of the venue.

Despite the change of location, the spirit of the Games remained the same.

“(It’s) still fitness and who can do the most work fastest. That part hasn’t changed,” Everett said.

## WINNERS:

- Men: Graham Holmberg (USA)
- Women: Kristan Clever (USA)
- Team: CrossFit Fort Vancouver (USA)
- Masters Men: Brian Curley (USA)
- Masters Women: Laurie Carver (USA)





Carson, 2010: In a few years, the venue would actually require additional seating to handle the demand for tickets.



# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2011

“It’s just quintessential CrossFit.”

She pushed with all her might. It didn’t budge.

Really, she couldn’t be that surprised. It weighed at least 160 lb. more than she did.

As Annie Sakamoto recounted the story while sitting on a wooden plyo box outside CrossFit Santa Cruz Central, her affiliate in Soquel, California, she rolled her eyes and lightheartedly let out an exasperated grunt.

It was the seventh of 10 events at the CrossFit Games in 2011: 3 rounds for time of 30 double-unders and 10 95-lb. overhead squats, then 3 rounds for time of 10 handstand push-ups and a 40-foot sled push. The “dog sled” was loaded up with 275 lb. Sakamoto, 5 feet and 116 lb. at the time, was competing at the Games for the first time as an individual.

A CrossFit legend, Sakamoto, together with Nicole Carroll and Eva Twardokens, inspired legions of women through a CrossFit.com video in which the trio did the workout Nasty Girls at Coach Glassman’s original box in Santa Cruz. So when the sled remained stubborn, it was no surprise that Sakamoto heard the spectators inside the then-Home Depot Center erupt and urge her forward.

She gave the sled another push. It started to give.

“That was definitely one time I could sense the crowd and really felt like they gave me a charge to keep going,” said Sakamoto, who finished ninth that year and was the recipient of the Spirit of the Games Award.

But her showdown with the sled wasn’t her only difficulty at the 2011 Games. The other came a day earlier. Its name was Killer Kage.

“I struggled so hard with it,” Sakamoto said.

The event called for 3 rounds for time of 7 155-lb. front squats, 700 m on a Wattbike and a 100-foot monkey-bar traverse.

The monkey bars were “just far enough apart” to make reaching them a tall order, she said.

Then came the front squats—at nearly 40 lb. above her body weight. As Sakamoto struggled to clean the barbell for a set, other athletes gathered around.

“All the other girls were done,” she remembered. “I was struggling really hard.”

Sam Briggs and Becca Voigt were among the competitors who surrounded Sakamoto and encouraged her to keep working.

“Jenny Labaw is, like, yelling,” Sakamoto said, referencing the photo that captured the moment. “It’s just quintessential CrossFit.”

Sakamoto only beat three other women and took 32nd place in the event—but she created a classic CrossFit moment by refusing to quit.

Despite her difficulties that year, it’s the Games of which she’s most fond. And not because it started with a swim in the ocean she loves or because the community recognized her as a truly inspirational athlete, though those, too, are cherished memories.

The very reason Annie likes the 2010 Games is because they were hard.

“It’s funny how that kind of stuff can stick with you as a good memory rather than a bad memory.”

## WINNERS:

Men: Rich Froning (USA)  
Women: Annie Thorisdottir (Iceland)  
Team: CrossFit New England (USA)  
Masters Men 45-49: Scott DeTore (USA)  
Masters Women 45-49: Susan Habbe (USA)  
Masters Men 50-54: Gord Mackinnon (Canada)  
Masters Women 50-54: Mary Beth Litsheim (now Mary Beth Litsheim-Prodromides) (USA)  
Masters Men 55-59: Steve Anderson (USA)  
Masters Women 55-59: Shelley Noyce (USA)  
Masters Men 60+: Greg Walker (USA)  
Masters Women 60+: Betsy Finley (USA)



Carson, 2011: Annie Sakamoto, one of the athletes in the famous “Nasty Girls” video, leans into the dog sled.



Carson, 2011: First seen in 2010, rope climbs return to the competition, punishing athletes who did not learn from the past.



Carson, 2011: Like a night game at Wrigley Field, evening events under the lights have a special magic to them.







Camp Pendleton, 2012: In the endurance test that preceded the obstacle-course event, Julie Foucher beat all the women and 37 of the men.

# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2012

“There was so much camaraderie out there.”

What Julie Foucher remembers is what Jason Khalipa might prefer to forget: the opening event of the CrossFit Games in 2012.

While athletes thought the competition would open on Friday, the surprise swim-bike-run endurance test at Camp Pendleton was set for Wednesday and unexpectedly announced on Monday.

Athletes who thought they might be doing Fran or Grace in the friendly confines of the then-Home Depot Center were suddenly faced with a 700-m ocean swim, an 8-km bike ride across undulating terrain and soft sand, and an 11.3-km run through steep hills while negotiating 427 m of elevation gain. All male and female athletes would compete at once.

When the announcement was made at a special athletes’ dinner in Manhattan Beach, the expression on Khalipa’s face could only be described as utter shock.

“That’s a long run. That’s a gnarly run. This is gonna be a, woo,” he started telling Rory McKernan shortly after Games Director Dave Castro announced the event. “You know what I like about the CrossFit Games is that every year I come here—this is my fifth CrossFit Games—it’s just a ball check.”

Khalipa laughed as he continued: “It’s like, ‘Are you gonna step up and finish these events and get through it?’ And, uh, that’s what we’re here for, so you gotta just step up your game and make it happen.”

Remembering the event almost a year later, Khalipa described the Pendleton test as “very challenging.”

“The most grueling experience I’ve ever been through,” he said.

Foucher, meanwhile, pointed to the first Pendleton event as being among her favorites of any Games in which she’s competed. She thinks of running alongside Christy Phillips (now Adkins), one of the first people she met in the CrossFit world. Foucher, who first qualified for the Games in 2010, had spent some time training with Phillips.

“I can’t explain how awesome it was,” she said.

Phillips first caught up to Foucher with a pack of other athletes. With the harsh terrain dictating periods of brutal uphill walking, she could be heard yelling, “OK, guys, let’s run for 15 seconds.”

“I kind of joined that group of people, and eventually people dropped off and it was just me and Christy,” Foucher said.

The two women pushed each other to keep moving through the grueling terrain as they tried to keep pace with one another.

But it was Foucher who eventually pulled away, finishing before all 42 women and all but eight of the 45 men who competed. She went on to place second overall.

“I think it’s cool to be able to do events where men and women are competing together,” she said. “It’s not the same kind of pressure. There was so much camaraderie out there. We were all just sort of supporting each other.”

## WINNERS:

**Men:** Rich Froning (USA)  
**Women:** Annie Thorisdottir (Iceland)  
**Team:** Hack’s Pack Ute (USA)  
**Masters Men 45-49:** Gene LaMonica (USA)  
**Masters Women 45-49:** Lisa Mikkelsen (USA)  
**Masters Men 50-54:** Gord Mackinnon (Canada)  
**Masters Women 50-54:** Susan Habbe (USA)  
**Masters Men 55-59:** Tim Anderson (USA)  
**Masters Women 55-59:** Marnel King (USA)  
**Masters Men 60+:** Scott Olson (USA)  
**Masters Women 60+:** Mary Schwing (USA)





Carson, 2012: Far from the dusty, three-event competition of 2007, the Games are still a celebration where the community comes together.



# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2013

“I don’t know how to describe that feeling with the crowd.”

Val Voboril wasn’t sure where she stood going into the event that would close out Saturday at the CrossFit Games in 2013.

She avoids looking at the leaderboard during competitions, but even so, Voboril knew the competition had not started well for her. She placed 19th, 23rd and 23rd on the three events on Wednesday.

Voboril performed better on Friday and Saturday, taking two thirds, but the mother and full-time schoolteacher, competing at her fourth Games, needed to do well on Saturday’s final event, 2007.

This event marked the first repeat workout in Games history, and it was a flashback to the inaugural competition in 2007. That year at The Ranch in Aromas, a rusty peanut roaster borrowed from the Castros’ neighbors determined the elements of the event. The movements and reps—a 1,000-m row followed by five rounds of 25 pull-ups and 7 push jerks (135 lb./85 lb.)—were pulled out of the hopper. CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman had written about the hopper in 2002 in “What Is Fitness?” in which he stated that the fittest athletes should be able to outperform their peers on any physical challenges randomly drawn from a hopper.

After 2007 was announced in 2013, Voboril’s first reaction was simple: “Gosh, that’s a lot of pull-ups,” she remembered thinking.

“(When) I wasn’t so pleased with my results (on Wednesday), it was like, ‘Take a deep breath, learn from my mistakes,’” she said. “Tomorrow is a new day.”

The final heat of 2007 kicked off Saturday night in the Tennis Stadium, and all eyes were on Sam Briggs and Camille Leblanc-Bazinet. That was a mistake. Described by Games commentator Pat Sherwood as a “gray mist,” Voboril has a reputation for sneaking into the lead when nobody is watching.

And that’s exactly what she did.

The event kicked off and Voboril was the last in her heat to finish the 1,000-m row.

“I (looked) to my left, and everybody was off, and then I remember doing my last paddle stroke and looking to my right and going, ‘Nobody is on the rower,’” she said.

“I remember thinking to just row but not worry about going fast and keep everything else unbroken,” Voboril said.

She did the first set of 25 pull-ups unbroken and slowly began

to overtake the women around her. The workout was the same as in 2007, but Voboril had something the women at the first Games did not: a stadium full of screaming fans.

“I don’t know how to describe that feeling with the crowd, the way everyone (was) cheering,” Voboril said. “I literally closed my eyes and fed off that energy to make it through all those reps.”

More sets of 25 unbroken pull-ups and the gray mist crept into first place. In her final set of pull-ups, Voboril did 24 in a row, dropping for a short rest before she finished the work.

Voboril finished in 9:48.4. In 2007, the top finisher—Jolie Gentry, that year’s Games champion—finished in 16:22.

“As a long-time CrossFitter who followed OGs like Jolie Gentry, it was a rush and an honor to perform the original Hopper (event),” Voboril said.

“It was fun coming from behind and slowly but surely catching up and pushing for that finish. I felt like the turtle that beat the hare,” she said.

Voboril’s big win was enough to launch her into third place in the overall standings heading into the final day of competition, and she used fifth- and fourth-place finishes in the final two events to allow her to hold her daughter in her arms as she waved from the podium.

“I’m not having fun if I’m worried about the numbers,” she said. “If I want to be successful, I just have to go and give it my 100 percent.”

## WINNERS:

Men: Rich Froning (USA)

Women: Sam Briggs (U.K.)

Team: Hack’s Pack Ute (USA)

Masters Men 40-44: Michael Moseley (USA)

Masters Women 40-44: Amanda Allen (Australia)

Masters Men 45-49: Ron Ortiz (USA)

Masters Women 45-49: Lisa Mikkelsen (USA)

Masters Men 50-54: Craig Howard (USA)

Masters Women 50-54: Colleen Fahey (USA)

Masters Men 55-59: Hilmar Hardarson (Iceland)

Masters Women 55-59: Gabriele Schlicht (USA)

Masters Men 60+: Scott Olson (USA)

Masters Women 60+: Sharon Lapkoff (USA)

Carson, 2013: A model of consistency, Val Voboril follows up fifth in 2012 with a podium finish in 2013. She was fifth again in 2014.





Carson, 2013: Not an empty seat in the house, including in the temporary bleachers erected around the stadium.







Carson, 2014: Rich Froning becomes a legend in the Sport of Fitness with an unprecedented streak of four victories.

Will Duncan/CrossFit Journal

# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2014

“We’ll never see someone as dominant as Rich Froning again.”

He was going to lose.

After an unprecedented three consecutive years at the top of the CrossFit Games podium, the indomitable Rich Froning Jr. became an underdog.

On the second day of competition at the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games, he recorded his worst-ever finish in a Games event: 37th. He followed it up with a 15th-place finish and a 27th-place finish in the next two events. The next day he ended up 13th on one event and 15th on another.

“This is what it looks like for Rich to lose,” CrossFit Inc. Founder and CEO Greg Glassman observed at the time.

Prior to this fifth appearance at the Games, Froning had announced he would step away from individual competition. In an interview with Games analyst and commentator Pat Sherwood earlier that year, Froning had said, “It needs to end on a victory. It doesn’t have to end on a victory, but it needs to.”

As cameras broadcasted the then-27-year-old repeatedly walking—hands on his head—during the last leg of Friday morning’s Triple 3, what he needed seemed out of reach. There was collective disbelief. Even shock.

Upon finishing, Froning immediately exited the event area and proceeded directly toward the athlete tent. He was visibly upset and stone-faced as he hurried along to the ice baths—a stark contrast to his typically relaxed demeanor.

“I just turned into a wuss,” he said, explaining he felt dizzy during the run.

“I haven’t been runnin’ enough,” he added.

That evening, Froning won his heat of 21-15-9 Complex, the day’s fourth and final event, with an uncharacteristic move that saw him set the pace early and never relinquish. Onlookers wondered if it was too little too late. Two days of competition—packed with seven events, some of them unknown—remained.

But as Froning sat in the tunnel beneath the StubHub Center to watch the final men’s heat, he appeared calm.

“I’m not used to being in that third heat,” he said, looking at the TV while those ranked higher than him on the Leaderboard tackled deadlifts, cleans, snatches and ever-more-difficult versions of pull-ups.

Froning saw the clock tick past his 4:16.63, the time to beat.

“Got it.”

He stood up, nodded confidently, winked and walked away. Although the ending is known, what might not be obvious is how Froning arrived at it: acceptance.

Through his poor performances, Froning said he kept telling himself, “If it’s not meant to be, then it’s not meant to be, and it’s someone else’s time.”

On Friday night, when asked if he’d return if he didn’t win, he shook his head.

“My decision is final.”

When Sunday rolled around, Froning seemed to find his stride. He started the day with a win in Midline March and Thick ‘N’ Quick. Then it came to the final event, which would be announced seconds before it began.

With 1 minute remaining before its start, Director of the Games Dave Castro announced the closing challenge.

“Your final event for the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games is Grace, 30 clean and jerks for time,” he said, his voice resounding through the speakers in the stadium.

With 30 seconds remaining, Castro spoke again.

“This is the CrossFit Games. You’re not gonna end on Grace. You’re gonna end on Double Grace.”

Froning nodded. Acceptance.

When the beep sounded, he calmly approached the bar. With textbook form, he moved through the reps, looking tired but not winded.

After rep No. 40, he stopped to tighten the right side of his barbell. With 5 reps remaining for the defending champ, his judge’s hand went up: 56, 57, 58, 59.

He jerked the barbell for the final time, let it fall behind him and casually walked across the finish line to win the event and the Games.

It wasn’t until after he had clinched the title that he revealed he had been sick earlier in the week with headaches and stomach pains.

An unexpected dark horse was Fittest on Earth. Again. And the streak, Castro recently noted, will remain unrivaled.

“We’ll never see someone as dominant as Rich Froning again.”



## WINNERS:

Men: Rich Froning (USA)

Women: Camille Leblanc-Bazinet (Canada)

Team: CrossFit Invictus (USA)

Masters Men 40-44: Shawn Ramirez (USA)

Masters Women 40-44: Amanda Allen (Australia)

Masters Men 45-49: Jerry Hill (USA)

Masters Women 45-49: Kim Holway (USA)

Masters Men 50-54: Will Powell (USA)

Masters Women 50-54: Mary Beth Litsheim  
(now Mary Beth Litsheim-Prodromides) (USA)

Masters Men 55-59: Steve Hamming (USA)

Masters Women 55-59: Susan Clarke (Canada)

Masters Men 60+: Scott Olson (USA)

Masters Women 60+: Karen Wattier (USA)

Carson, 2014: The Push Pull event goes down under the lights, with Josh Bridges and Michele Letendre taking first place.





# CROSSFIT GAMES: 2015

“I’m going to be competing for the rest of my life.”

In the CrossFit Games’ inaugural year, about 70 athletes of all ages showed up to compete. The next year, the competition grew to roughly 300 athletes.

There was no qualification process for either the 2007 or 2008 Games. If you wanted the title “Fittest on Earth,” all you had to do was get to a dusty family ranch in Aromas, California, and prove your mettle over the course of two days.

“It was very grassroots, Woodstock-type feel to it,” remembered Becca Voigt, an eight-time Games athlete who first competed in the Games in 2008. “Everyone became friends by the end of the weekend. The stakes are not nearly as high as they are now.”

Eight years later—at the ninth edition of the Games—80 individual athletes, 40 teams, teenagers in two divisions and masters athletes in five divisions competed before a crowd of thousands at the StubHub Center outside Los Angeles. Individual athletes completed 13 events over four days. The prize purse exceeded \$2 million, with money going to the top 20 finishers, as well as the top 3 in each event.

“The competition itself has grown exponentially in that time. The gap between the top and the bottom has definitely (expanded), and it’s a lot harder to get to the top, that’s for sure,” Voigt said.

The now-35-year-old finished third at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games after winning the Southern California Regional that year. The next year, she finished 10th at the Games. In 2013, she placed 11th, and she finished in 24th in 2014—the same year organizers honored her with the Spirit of the Games Award.

“That was probably one of the most highlighted parts of my career when it comes to CrossFit. I’ve stood on that podium, I’ve been in third at the Games, and that really takes second fiddle to the Spirit of the Games Award,” Voigt said.

She explained: “I know the community I joined in 2006, and to be able to showcase that and to be able to show people in the sport that’s what I embody—that was definitely one of my shining moments at the CrossFit Games.”

In 2015, Voigt recorded her lowest Games finish: 31st. It was her least-favorite year.

“(It) was a tough year, I’m not gonna lie,” said Voigt, who in 2014 opened an affiliate, CrossFit Training Yard, in Toluca Lake, California.

The Games, she noted, are becoming “more serious.” In 2015 especially, Voigt said she felt “a lot more isolated on the competition floor.”

As the talent improves, so, too, must their tasks, she said in an interview before the California Regional in 2016.

“Dave (Castro) and his staff (have) to step it up. ... and it goes forward with this regional. This regional appears to be the hardest one yet.”

In 2016, Voigt finished sixth in the Open in the Southern California Region and second at the California Regional, becoming the only person to qualify for nine consecutive CrossFit Games.

Voigt said she has no intention of retiring from competition.

“This is my life. I’m going to be competing for the rest of my life,” she explained. “To stop completely doesn’t really make sense to my brain. ... There’s no reason to stop unless I’m stopped by something else.”

## WINNERS:

Men: Ben Smith (USA)  
Women: Katrin Tanja Davidsdottir (Iceland)  
Team: CrossFit Mayhem Freedom (USA)  
Teenage Boys 14-15: Angelo Diccico (USA)  
Teenage Girls 14-15: Sydney Sullivan (USA)  
Teenage Boys 16-17: Nicholas Paladino (USA)  
Teenage Girls 16-17: Isabella Vallejo (Australia)  
Masters Men 40-44: Shawn Ramirez (USA)  
Masters Women 40-44: Janet Black (USA)  
Masters Men 45-49: Matthew Swift (Australia)  
Masters Women 45-49: Kylie Massi (Australia)  
Masters Men 50-54: Joe Ames (USA)  
Masters Women 50-54: Cindy Kelley (USA)  
Masters Men 55-59: Will Powell (USA)  
Masters Women 55-59: Susan Clarke (Canada)  
Masters Men 60+: Steve Pollini (USA)  
Masters Women 60+: Rosalie Glenn (USA)



Carson, 2015: A competitor since 2008, Becca Voigt finishes 31st in her eighth trip to the Games.



Hermosa Beach, 2015: For the fourth year in a row, athletes prepare to swim in the first event of the CrossFit Games.

CROSSFIT GAMES PRIZE MONEY (U.S. DOLLARS)

2007—\$500 (winner) - \$1,000 (total purse)  
2008—\$1,500 - \$3,000  
2009—\$5,000 - \$10,000  
2010—\$25,000 - \$50,000  
2011—\$250,000 - \$1 million  
2012—\$250,000 - \$1 million  
2013—\$275,000 - \$1.4 million  
2014—\$275,000 - \$1.75 million  
2015—\$275,000 - \$2 million  
2016—\$275,000 - \$2.2 million  
2017—TBA - \$2.4 million  
2018—TBA - \$2.6 million  
2019—TBA - \$2.8 million  
2020—TBA - \$3 million

2016 PRIZE MONEY

Individuals (Male and Female)

1st: \$275,000  
2nd: \$90,000  
3rd: \$60,000  
4th: \$40,000

A total of \$215,000 will be awarded to finishers from fifth to 20th.

Teams

1st: \$70,000  
2nd: \$45,000  
3rd: \$25,000  
4th: \$20,000  
5th: \$15,000

Masters (Male and Female)

1st: \$10,000  
2nd: \$5,000  
3rd: \$3,000

Career Prize Money Leaders

INDIVIDUALS

Rich Froning—\$1,092,514  
Annie Thorisdottir—\$596,500  
Ben Smith—\$384,015  
Samantha Briggs—\$344,057  
Camille Leblanc-Bazinet—\$318,029  
Katrín Tanja Davíðsdóttir—\$289,000  
Mathew Fraser—\$197,015  
Jason Khalipa—\$140,500  
Josh Bridges—\$107,029  
Julie Foucher—\$107,029





## 2016 Reebok CrossFit Games Quick Facts

- Title sponsor: Reebok
- The CrossFit Games will be held at the StubHub Center in Carson, California, for the seventh consecutive year after being held at The Ranch in Aromas, California, from 2007 to 2009.
- Fans from around the world will be able to keep up through constant coverage and live streaming of the events.
- Rogue Fitness shipped 35 tractor trailers of gear containing over 500 tons (1 million lb.) of equipment. The load contains 50,000 lb. of barbells, 150,000 lb. of bumper plates and 300,000 lb. of rig components. Over 100,000 pieces of hardware are required to link 25,000 ft. of rig uprights, crossmembers and pull-up bars.
- Youngest individual male athlete: Samuel Kwant (20)
- Youngest individual female athlete: Madeline Sturt (19)
- Oldest individual male athlete: Josh Bridges (33)
- Oldest individual female athlete: Rebecca Voigt (35)
- Average age of male individual athletes: 25.6
- Average age of female individual athletes: 27.7
- Tallest individual male: Spencer Hendel (6'2")
- Tallest individual female: Rebecca Voigt (5'9")
- Shortest individual male: Josh Bridges (5'5")
- Shortest individual female: Sheila Barden (5'0")
- Average height of all individual males: 5'10"
- Average height of all individual females: 5'5"
- Heaviest individual male: Spencer Hendel (215 lb.)
- Heaviest individual female: Emily Abbott (164 lb.)
- Lightest individual male: Logan Collins (167 lb.)
- Lightest individual females: Kristi Eramo, Thuridur Erla Helgadóttir, Tia-Clair Toomey, Alethea Boon (128 lb.)
- Average weight of all individual males: 194.4 lb.
- Average weight of all individual females: 143.0 lb.
- Oldest male masters competitor: Clarke Holland (64)
- Oldest female masters competitor: Mary Schwing (64)
- Number of first-time male individual athletes: 16
- Number of first-time female individual athletes: 12 (lowest number in Open era)
- Number of individual male qualifiers: 40
- Number of individual female qualifiers: 40
- Individual with nine consecutive Games appearances: Rebecca Voigt
- Individual with eight consecutive Games appearances: Ben Smith
- Individuals with seven consecutive Games appearances: Camille LeBlanc-Bazinet (also: Jason Khalipa, 2008-2014)
- Individuals with seven non-consecutive Games appearances: Annie Thorisdóttir, Stacie Tovar, Christy Adkins (also: Chris Spealler, 2007-2012, 2014)
- Individuals with six consecutive Games appearances: Michele Letendre, Rob Forte, Lucas Parker (also: Neal Maddox, 2010-2015; Matt Chan, 2008-2013).
- Individuals with six non-consecutive Games appearances: Spencer Hendel (also: Graham Holmberg, 2009-2013, 2015; and Pat Burke, 2008-2012, 2014).

- Total past individual Games appearances in men's field: 80
- Total past individual Games appearances in women's field: 63
- Most CrossFit Games events contested: Rebecca Voigt (81), Ben Smith (76), Camille Leblanc-Bazinet (72) and Jason Khalipa (71)
- Most CrossFit Games individual podium appearances: Rich Froning (5), Annie Thorisdóttir (4), Jason Khalipa (3) and Ben Smith (3)
- Most CrossFit Games top-five finishes: Rich Froning and Jason Khalipa (5), and four others with four each
- Most CrossFit Games top-10 finishes: Jason Khalipa (6), Rich Froning (5), Ben Smith (5) and Dan Bailey (5)
- Most CrossFit Games event wins: Rich Froning (16), Annie Thorisdóttir (12), Sam Briggs (7), Josh Bridges (7), and three others with six each
- Most CrossFit Games events in the top five: Rich Froning (35), Annie Thorisdóttir (31) and Jason Khalipa (30)
- Most CrossFit Games events in the top 10: Rich Froning (45), Ben Smith (41), Jason Khalipa (40), Annie Thorisdóttir (40) and Camille Leblanc-Bazinet (40)
- Number of teams competing: 40
- Only two teams have competed in eight consecutive Games: CrossFit Fort Vancouver and CrossFit Invictus both qualified in 2016
- Adam Neiffer of CrossFit Fort Vancouver and Nuno Costa of CrossFit Invictus will be making their eighth consecutive Games appearances as team members
- CrossFit affiliates to qualify an individual male, individual female, team and master at the same Games: Front Range CrossFit (2010) and CrossFit Active Artarmon (2015)
- CrossFit affiliates to qualify an individual male, individual female and team at the same Games: CrossFit Invictus (2014, 2016).
- Lynne Knapman is the only athlete to qualify for every single masters competition at the CrossFit Games since inception in 2010—seven consecutive years
- Number of masters qualifiers (all age divisions): 200
- Total number of competitors (barring withdrawals before the event): 560 athletes (80 individuals, 240 team members, 200 masters, 40 teens)
- Number of competitive divisions: 17
- Masters divisions (male and female): 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59 and 60+
- Teen divisions (male and female): 14-15, 16-17
- A total of 10 countries are represented by individuals
- A total of 8 countries are represented by teams
- A total of 12 countries are represented by masters
- A total of 8 countries are represented by teens
- A total of 19 countries are represented across all divisions



## CrossFit Games Quick History

- CrossFit introduced the Sport of Fitness to the world in 2007 when around 70 athletes gathered in Aromas, California, at a ranch for the inaugural CrossFit Games. CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman believed the fittest athletes should be able to handle any and every task, so one event was chosen at random. The only way to win: do more work faster than anyone else.
- From 2007 to 2008, the Games went from 70 athletes to approximately 300.
- In 2009, the Games marked the global explosion of CrossFit with regional qualifiers held in the U.S., Canada, South America, Europe, Iceland, Asia, Australia and Africa, as well as online.
- 2009 also featured 100 teams competing in the Affiliate Cup. There was a team competition in 2007 and 2008, but it was made up of the combined scores of individual athletes. Teams competed together for the first time in 2009.
- In 2010, the event grew too big for The Ranch and moved to the Home Depot Center (now StubHub Center) in Carson, California.
- For the first time in history, the 2010 Games featured male and female masters competitions, with athletes aged 50 and older.
- In 2011, the masters competition was expanded to four male and four female divisions.
- In 2011, an off-site event tested athletes in the waves at the Santa Monica Pier—a first for the Games.
- The 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games were streamed on ESPN3.com and telecast on ESPN2 in a series of episodes that aired after the event.
- In 2012, the Central East Regional featured two former CrossFit Games champions competing in the same regional for the first time. Rich Froning and Graham Holmberg also competed against 2011 Open winner Dan Bailey in an event that was streamed live on ESPN3.com.
- In 2012, Froning and Annie Thorisdottir became the first repeat champions of the CrossFit Games.
- At the Games in 2012, all events were streamed live on Games.CrossFit.com, and each day six hours of content was produced for ESPN3.com. After the Games, 17 shows were produced and aired on ESPN, ESPN2 and Canada's TSN.
- In 2013, the 40-44 Masters Division was added to the competition, and the events were held earlier in Games week.
- In 2013, the CrossFit Games repeated a workout for the first time: the triplet that opened the 2007 competition.
- In 2013, all CrossFit Games heats and events were shown on ESPN3 (or on Games.CrossFit.com for international viewers). This was also the first year events were held in the soccer stadium.
- In 2014, more than half of the individual events took place in the soccer stadium to accommodate more fans.
- In 2014, Froning won the CrossFit Games for the fourth time and announced he would not compete as an individual in 2015.
- Select events from the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games were broadcast live on ESPN platforms on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and all events were broadcast live on ESPN3 on all competition days (or on Games.CrossFit.com for international viewers).
- In 2015, CrossFit Games coverage on ESPN and ESPN2 increased to 16.5 hours, with team events featured for the first time in addition to individual competition. ESPN broadcast a total of six hours live on Friday and Saturday, and ESPN2 aired three-and-a-half hours of live competition on Sunday. All heats of all events were streamed live on ESPN3 and YouTube.
- Four teen divisions (boys and girls 14-15 and 16-17) were added in 2015.

## Spirit of the Games Award Winners

2007—Kallista Papas and Ronnie Boose  
 2008—No winner named  
 2009—Jason Khalipa  
 2010—Chris Spealler  
 2011—Annie Sakamoto  
 2012—Deborah Cordner Carson  
 2013—Kristan Clever  
 2014—Rebecca Voigt  
 2015—Dan Bailey

## Additional Resources

[History of the CrossFit Games](#)  
[2011 Reebok CrossFit Games website](#)  
[2010 CrossFit Games website](#)  
[2009 CrossFit Games website](#)  
[2008 CrossFit Games website](#)



THE **CrossFit** JOURNAL

# PRIDE AND PUSH-UPS

Adam Gonzales talks about finding acceptance in a CrossFit gym, where effort is the only thing that matters.

BY BRITTNEY SALINE





On Sunday, June 12, Omar Mateen opened fire in Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 people and injuring three others in what the New York Times has **described** as the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. Though the sudden devastation came as a shock to the world, many in the lesbian/gay/transsexual/bisexual/queer (LGTBQ) community saw it as a terrifyingly real expression of the challenges they face each day.

“It’s a daily reality for so many of us,” said Adam Gonzales, a 27-year-old gay man living in Amarillo, Texas.

Months before the shooting, Gonzales lay on the floor at CrossFit Amarillo, his chest heaving and head spinning in the aftermath of Open Workout 16.5. His boyfriend looked on from the sideline, pride etched on his face as high fives and fist bumps were passed all around. The final workout of Gonzales’ third CrossFit Games Open was cause for celebration. But first, Gonzales required a costume change.

Taking care that he didn’t match his boyfriend’s outfit too closely, Gonzales swapped his bright-purple plastic-rimmed glasses for a more conservative black pair. At the restaurant, the couple took care to leave several inches between them. In Texas, there are **no statewide protections** against employer discrimination based on sexual orientation, and as a teacher in a school district that has allegedly fired employees for their homosexuality, Gonzales’ partner needs to stay under the radar.

“If word got back to his employer, he’d lose his job,” Gonzales said.

## Finding Himself

Gonzales is an articulate speaker with a flair for comedy, cracking jokes at his own expense in an interview in late June. A CrossFit athlete of four years, he loves cleans—his max is 275 lb.—and hates sumo deadlift high pulls. His warm-up of choice is a quick dance to Beyoncé.

He’s known he was gay since age 8.

“Where most of my peers were starting to notice girls more, I was noticing boys,” he said. “There was sort of like this innocent attraction. I wanted to be around guys.”

But raised in a conservative Catholic household, Gonzales never spoke of his attraction.

“We just didn’t talk about things in my family,” he said. “We went to church, but we didn’t talk about church at home. Sometimes I feel like I was raised more by a television than by actual people.”



Adam Gonzales lives in Texas, a state in which no laws ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Angie Amphay



Angie Amphay



That was one of the reasons he never told his family that an older boy from church sexually abused him intermittently from age 5 to 15.

“Victims—” he started, “—there are so many things that go through our minds, and people these days think, ‘Why didn’t they say something?’ But to a child, when there’s a manipulation of power, they are left absolutely powerless and absolutely voiceless. We look back and think, ‘Surely there was someone he could have talked to,’ and in my life, there just really wasn’t. It was also just the fear of thinking, ‘I know this is bad, and I don’t want people to think I like this.’”

Growing up, school was his safe haven. A straight-A student, Gonzales threw himself into his studies and the school choir and theatre club.

“Being on stage was a lot of fun because I got to be someone else,” he said.

“I wanted to be the Captain America of charity. I wanted to make a difference.”  
—Adam Gonzales

After high school, he continued to bury his fears and feelings, consuming himself with the pursuit of the priesthood. A deep desire to do good in the world led to a mission to become a priest, and he worked with homeless and disadvantaged youth during his four years in seminary.

“I love helping people,” he said, “and there (are) so many hurting people and so many people needing help. I wanted to be the Captain America of charity. I wanted to make a difference.”

While in seminary, he kept his sexuality a secret.

“At the time, I thought, ‘Hey, I could live this lifestyle. I think I can be gay and just live a celibate lifestyle, and rather than have a partner to spend my life with, I’ll devote myself to others through the church and through charity ... and rather than have children, the people of the church will be my flock and the people I look after and give my life to,’” he recounted.

Four years later, the deal seemed a bit raw. After graduating from seminary in 2013, he spent a few months as a postulate

and then a novice in the monastery before calling it quits.

“I thought, ‘This isn’t right,’” he remembered. “‘This isn’t right to deny something that is such an integral part of myself and to pretend ... . There’s no way I can become the cookie-cutter person they want and maintain my own sense of dignity.’ So I left.”

## Done Hiding

It was a year and a half before Gonzales publicly came out, as many of his church friends were intolerant of homosexuals. He recalled an evening out to dinner in which table talk turned to gay bashing.

“I would sit there and think, ‘What if I was to come out to them right now, right here, right this moment? How many of these people would accept me? And how many people could I affect if they were able to put a face to these people they were spending so much energy hating?’” he said.

Unwilling to hide any longer, Gonzales came out in April 2015.

“There were people out there fighting for me, and they didn’t even know they’re fighting for me,” he said. “I was denying being a part of them, and what good was that doing? Late one night I just decided, ‘I’m done. I’m done with hiding. I’m done with denying. I’m done with pretending. I’m just done.’”

Though some of his friends were supportive, others stopped calling. His mother told him she could not support his “lifestyle choice,” and his biological father—recently released from prison, where he served a decades-long sentence for murder—said Gonzales must be possessed by demons. Just a few months ago, Gonzales was uninvited to his aunt’s wedding.

“We don’t want to have an embarrassment on our big day,” Gonzales quoted the text message. “That was an aunt I had always gotten along with, who had always been very loving and fun to be around, and to get that from her was kind of a slap in the face.”

But the biggest shock was yet to come. As a child, Gonzales had been afraid to report the sexual abuse he suffered for fear authorities would blame him. A few months after he came out, his fears were confirmed by an old seminary friend: After Gonzales reported the abuse in his early seminary years, the council of priests overseeing seminary students—including his abuser—dismissed Gonzales’ case.

“Some of them in their ignorance or stupidity said, ‘Well, Adam never took it to court, so it’s not official,’ even though I did have a restitution meeting with my (abuser) with my therapist present



“Late one night I just decided, ‘I’m done. I’m done with hiding. I’m done with denying.’”  
—Adam Gonzales

Courtesy of Adam Gonzales



“With CrossFit, it doesn’t matter if you’re male, female, black, white, gay (or) straight; at the end of the day, it’s like, ‘OK, how did you better yourself today?’ ”

—Adam Gonzales

and his therapist present ... and he admitted that he knew what he was doing and he knew what to say to control me.”

In the council’s eyes, his being gay, Gonzales said, meant no harm had been done.

“Someone on the council said, ‘Well, we’re pretty sure Adam’s gay, so it doesn’t matter anyway,’” Gonzales reported. “Which is essentially saying, ‘We’re pretty sure Adam’s gay, so he liked it, so it wasn’t actually abuse,’ even though there was an age disparity between (us).”

Receiving more judgment than empathy from his family, Gonzales severed ties with his mother and father, first blocking their text messages and then getting a new number. A few months after coming out, he met his now-boyfriend, a man at a gay bar who preferred deep conversation to hook-up culture vernacular.

“I sat there and talked with him for two hours and not once did he try to take me home,” Gonzales said. “He’s just very sweet. Not judgmental or egotistical ... he very much just takes me as I am.”

The pair hit it off from the start, making weekend trips to Dallas to visit friends and binge-watching Netflix shows on lazy Sunday afternoons—in short, the same things many heterosexual couples enjoy. But Gonzales and his partner are cautious in public.

“I still find myself at times censoring myself, not acting too gay,” Gonzales said. “There’s no locking arms, there’s no holding hands, there’s no having a little romantic peck on the cheek. ... And I can’t brag about him. I can’t be like, ‘Oh, my boyfriend’s the best’; I can’t do that and I can’t share this part of my life that is the best, happiest part of my life with the world.”

## “A Real Person”

It’s a different story within CrossFit walls.

A former runner, bicyclist and boxer, Gonzales began CrossFit in 2012. It fit his competitive nature perfectly, and he loved the

concept of pursuing well-rounded fitness. He remembered observing a fellow athlete at the 10-a.m. class he frequented when he first started CrossFit.

“He was a really buff guy, 6 foot 3, a beefy guy. He would lift all this crazy weight, and I’m over here trying to clean 65 lb. and trying to look macho doing it, but then when we would take off on the run, I would smoke him,” Gonzales said. “And I thought, ‘OK, I could beat (him) if I would just get a little stronger.’”

But for Gonzales, CrossFit was more than a fitness program. Before he came out, it was his escape. After, it was his safe haven.

“It’s such an equal playing field because with CrossFit it doesn’t matter if you’re male, female, black, white, gay (or) straight; at the end of the day, it’s like, ‘OK, how did you better yourself today?’” he said. “Or if you’re the competitive type, numbers don’t lie. What score went up on the whiteboard? The numbers are blind to gender or sexuality or race.”

It wasn’t just about the workouts. At the gym, Gonzales said, he and his boyfriend were free to be themselves. Though his boyfriend does not do CrossFit, Gonzales said fellow athletes often inquire after him, asking how the couple is doing and whether they’ve traveled anywhere interesting lately.

“It’s so powerful to feel that kind of support,” Gonzales said. “It makes me feel like a real person. In so many ways, our society sort of dehumanizes the LGTB community. People are allowed to just break down our lifestyle and degrade us and just make us feel subhuman, like second-class citizens. For people to ... speak to us like we’re normal people—it’s difficult to describe.”

Matthew Jackson is Gonzales’ friend and another gay athlete at CrossFit Amarillo. He’s been out for about 15 years.

“Since then, it’s just been a hiding game from not only perfect strangers but some members of my family, as well. ... Since I’ve started going to CrossFit, I can leave things like that at the door. ... (CrossFit) is one of the few places I can go where it’s completely judgment-free. Well, aside from the coach correcting form,” he joked.



At CrossFit gyms, judgment should be reserved to squat depth, lockout and other points of performance.

Angie Amplay





In Seattle, members of CrossFit Felix joined the annual Pride Parade to show their support for the LGBTQ community.

“(Matthew) and I, we’re like soul sisters,” Gonzales said. “We’re boisterous and loud and proud. We’ll joke around and slap each other on the butt and just kinda be campy. (CrossFit) is the place where we can joke around and dance to Katy Perry and sing out loud to (Lady) Gaga, and nobody judges us.”

CrossFit, Gonzales said, also serves as a platform for him to reach out to members of the LGBTQ community and break down stereotypes.

“I grew up being that sissy boy,” he said. “I grew up being joked about and made fun of as the effeminate kid, the choir queer and the tennis pansy. I was never considered one of the macho guys ... and so in the gym, it was interesting at times to go to local competitions and to come in third or fourth place, ahead of these guys.”

Recently, Gonzales deadlifted 445 lb. in a local competition while wearing a belt bedazzled with multi-colored faux jewels.

“I’d be out there with my bright purple CrossFit short shorts and my glitter headband, and come ‘3, 2, 1, go,’ none of that mat-

ters,” he said. “It doesn’t matter who you are, where you come from, who you love. It’s about what you do.”

## Fear of the Unknown

Previous persecution isn’t required for CrossFit athletes to understand what LGBTQ community members face each day, Gonzales said, speaking of the popular description of CrossFit as a cult filled with kippling Kool-Aid drinkers retching their breakfasts after each workout.

“It boils down to fear of the unknown. ... Many CrossFitters know what it feels like to be on the outside, what it feels like to be judged and mislabeled and misrepresented and misunderstood. And no matter how much we try to explain it to (others), they don’t get it, and no matter how many times we invite them to a community workout, they won’t go,” Gonzales said.

He continued: “It’s the same way in the LGTB community. No matter how many times we tell them not all of us listen to ABBA, they won’t believe us. No matter how many times we tell them we don’t bathe in glitter and not all gay men are drag queens,

no matter how many times we invite them to the gay bar just to have a drink, they won’t go. And so I invite people to remember what that’s like. Remember what it means to be misunderstood and misrepresented, and remember what it means to try to share a part of you that you love and gives you life with other people.”

A few days after the CrossFit Journal interview, Gonzales and his partner packed their bags and squeezed into Gonzales’ white Jetta and headed to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to catch a flight to Seattle, Washington, where the pair would celebrate Pridefest in the Emerald City and visit Gonzales’ partner’s family. As Amarillo disappeared behind them, Gonzales’ phone lit up with a text message from the owner of Tornado Alley CrossFit, a new affiliate set to open within the week. The owner wanted Gonzales—who has coached at and managed CrossFit affiliates on and off since 2014—to be director and general manager.

“I’m so excited,” Gonzales said.

After all, he’s always wanted to be the Captain America of helping people, and at Tornado Alley CrossFit, he’ll have the chance to sculpt his own safe haven: a place where all will be welcome, no matter what language they speak or gender they love.

“Remember what it means to be misunderstood and misrepresented, and remember what it means to try to share a part of you that you love.”

—Adam Gonzales

“One of the most important things for me in this role (will be) to ensure that it is a safe place and it is a welcoming place,” he said.

Gonzales paused, reflecting.

“I’m one of the lucky ones,” he said. “There were times in my life where I thought, ‘I’m done. I can’t take it anymore. If anything else gets thrown at me, I’m just gonna end it all.’ And fortunately there were people who were put in my path and there were avenues like CrossFit that kind of helped me work through all of the BS.

“But I know not everyone has a story like that. There are so many people who’ve lost their lives to suicide (or) to drugs, people who’ve been beaten and raped and killed, all because of the way they were.

“And if one person reads this story and is a person who may be in a gym where they feel alone because they may be the only gay person but they see that in the greater CrossFit community there are other people like them—gosh, that would make my day. That would make it all worth it.” ■

## About the Author

Brittney Saline is a freelance writer contributing to the CrossFit Journal and the CrossFit Games website. She trains at [CrossFit St. Paul](#). To contact her, visit [brittneysaline.com](#).





THE  
**CrossFit** JOURNAL

# CHRIS HINSHAW: THE RUNNING MAN

CrossFit's Aerobic Capacity Course expert explains how interval training can help you do more work faster.

BY EMILY BEERS



Long-time CrossFit athlete Tawny Sanabria used to dread box jumps.

“And wall balls,” said the 45-year-old who trains at CrossFit Bel-Red in Redmond, Washington.

“I could never get into a good rhythm, and they would make me so tired. They were so exhausting.”

All that changed for Sanabria when she made one major alteration to her training: doing interval running at the track.

Specifically, Sanabria has been diligently following endurance coach Chris Hinshaw’s Aerobic Capacity program since March 2016.

“The program I’ve been following is just twice a week—a lot of intervals and prescribed paces,” Sanabria said. As expected, her running has improved in recent months, but to her surprise, so has her muscular endurance and stamina in the gym, she said.

“We recently did a workout with wall balls, rowing and a lot of hang cleans. And I just don’t need to take as many breaks anymore. I just don’t get as taxed,” she said.

Even upper-body gymnastics movements are easier now, she said: “My pull-ups and toes-to-bar have gotten a lot better, too.”

How do running intervals improve someone’s pull-ups?

Hinshaw—the coach of CrossFit Inc.’s new **Aerobic Capacity Course**—explained: “Let’s say you’re doing ring dips. Eventually, you’ll become lactic in your muscles. The muscles start to fatigue one at a time. All that is actually happening is your body is trying to protect you.”

He added: “Eventually, the lactic acid will go down into your legs, and if your legs are developed aerobically, your ability to pull that lactate out of your system and process it as fuel has improved.”

Hinshaw revealed his elite athletes—including Rich Froning Jr., Mat Fraser, Katrin Tanja Davidsdottir and Camille Leblanc-Bazinet—have all had experiences similar to Sanabria’s.

“Camille (Leblanc-Bazinet) will tell you when she does muscle-ups and pull-ups, her work capacity goes up when her running improves,” Hinshaw said. “When your legs are developed aerobically, your ability to recover during other kinds of movements is also substantially improved.”

## What Is Aerobic Capacity?

Micah Zuhl is a professor in the Department of Health Sciences at Central Michigan University, where he teaches exercise-physiology as well as exercise-stress classes.

Zuhl said what Hinshaw and his athletes have noticed makes a lot of sense. It comes down to improved aerobic capacity,

Zuhl said, which he explained as simply a person’s ability to take in oxygen.

Specifically, when you are working at a high intensity, your body will start to emphasize non-aerobic energy systems, Zuhl explained. These systems use glycolysis to release energy and convert glucose into pyruvate, which is used for fuel in an aerobic pathway if enough oxygen is available. If oxygen is limited, pyruvate is converted to lactate.

Lactate can be used drive glucose breakdown, but only for a short time. After about 60-180 seconds of high-intensity anaerobic activity, lactate will start to build up in the muscles as a defense mechanism that increases muscle-cell acidity and prevents excessive exertion by limiting the ability to contract the muscle.

“When you’re more aerobically fit, you’ll be able to buffer the lactate (and resulting acidity) that builds up in the muscle more effectively,” Zuhl said.

In other words, you won’t become as acidic, and you’ll be able to continue to do movements such as pull-ups or ring dips longer.

Article: **“Why Does Lactic Acid Build up in Muscles?”**

Also consistent with Hinshaw’s observations, Zuhl confirmed that one of the best ways to improve aerobic capacity is through interval running: “If your aerobic system is more developed, this will help support the recovery of the muscle more effectively.”

He added: “With improved aerobic capacity comes improved recovery.”

## More Air

When it comes to the best way to build an athlete’s aerobic capacity, Zuhl laughed and said: “That’s the magic question.”

There isn’t a clear consensus in the industry, but what is clear is higher-intensity and interval training seem to build aerobic capacity more effectively than straight endurance training, he explained.

“When we look at the data and we consider low-, moderate- or high-intensity training, the best way to increase aerobic capacity is through higher-intensity exercise,” Zuhl said.

Effort is considered high intensity when an athlete is working at 75 to 80 percent of maximum capacity, Zuhl explained.

“If you exercise at just 50 percent of your peak, then you’re probably not going to increase your capacity,” he said. “So, for example, 1-mile repeats would be better than going for a 20-kilometer run if your goal is to improve capacity.”

Hinshaw’s workouts reflect this. Specifically, he places emphasis on his athletes’ 1-mile and 400-meter running times.



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

At the Aerobic Capacity Course, trainers learn how and why they should create dynamic warm-ups for their athletes.



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

An All-American swimmer in college, Hinshaw (center) has completed 10 Ironman triathlons as a professional.





The Aerobic Capacity Course focuses on running because Hinshaw believes it's the best way to develop an athlete's aerobic system.





“I use a lot of running because it’s the best way to develop aerobic capacity because it works your legs—the largest muscle group in the body. And running makes you support your own body weight more than something like rowing or swimming.”  
—Chris Hinshaw

“It’s actually not really about becoming a better runner.” —Chris Hinshaw

Don’t be mistaken. Hinshaw isn’t necessarily trying to turn CrossFit athletes into runners. He respects the CrossFit goal of creating well-rounded athletes, not specialists.

“It’s actually not really about becoming a better runner,” Hinshaw said. Instead, running is just the best tool he has found to help achieve the end goal of improved broad fitness, he added.

“I use a lot of running because it’s the best way to develop aerobic capacity because it works your legs—the largest muscle group in the body. And running makes you support your own body weight more than something like rowing or swimming,” Hinshaw explained.

Zuhl elaborated: “Aerobic capacity is about being able to deliver oxygen with the heart and to extract oxygen from the muscle. And with running, there’s both. There’s a central component that is strengthening the heart, and there’s a peripheral component—the skeletal muscles.”

Theoretically, swimming can achieve the same result as running, which is why world-class swimmers have some of the highest aerobic capacities in the world, Zuhl said. But he also said he believes running is more effective for building aerobic capacity than cycling because it works the upper body more effectively.

“You’re going to get the tax on the heart with running, rowing and cycling, but with running you’re going to get more stress on all the muscles of the body, which will lead to more adaptations, so you’re going to get a greater overall aerobic adaptation,” Zuhl said.

Further, running is also an easy way for coaches to assess their athletes’ relative weaknesses, Hinshaw said.

“Do you need more speed or more endurance, and to what degree do you need one more than the other?” Hinshaw said he asks when assessing his athletes.

Teaching coaches how to assess athletes is one of the main objectives of the Aerobic Capacity Course, he said.

One of the stories he likes to tell at the course is about his time working with Froning, who approached Hinshaw for help after the 2014 CrossFit Games, in which the then-three-time Games champ performed very poorly in a long event involving rowing, double-unders and running.

“Even though he won the Games, his aerobic system was terrible compared to his speed,” Hinshaw said. At the time, Fron-

ing’s 400-meter time was 60 seconds, while his 1-mile time was 6 minutes.

World-class runners tend to fatigue in the neighborhood of 6 percent for every doubling of a run’s distance, Hinshaw explained, so his goal for CrossFit athletes is to have them fatigue only 20 to 21 percent between their 400-meter and 1-mile times.

When Hinshaw started working with Froning, he discovered Froning slowed down 28.5 percent between his 400-meter and 800-meter times and another 28.5 percent between his 800-meter and 1-mile times.

“(Froning’s) mile in relation to his 400-meter was terrible. All his workouts (had been) spent focusing on speed. His weakness was unquestionably his 1-mile time. So 100 percent of my focus was on improving his mile time,” said Hinshaw, who was able to help Froning shave 19 seconds off his best 1-mile effort in 12 weeks—from 6:00 to 5:41.

Today, Froning continues to utilize interval running in his training program five days a week, Hinshaw said.

“It’s giving him a lot of value for his time.”

## Preserving the Stimulus

Once a coach knows how to assess an athlete’s strengths and weaknesses, pacing and intensity are two keys to improving aerobic capacity, Hinshaw explained.

“Each workout should have a very specific stimulus, meaning a prescribed pace and intensity. Everything I do, I prescribe very specific intensities—the intensity needed for a specific adaptation,” Hinshaw said. “So if you’re going to go for a run, I ask, ‘What’s the best use of your time for that run?’”

He added: “Coaches need to be able to explain to their clients, ‘This is the stimulus for Fran.’ Fran isn’t intended to be a 20-minute workout. So if you can’t do that, then we need to come up with a solution (to make that happen) to get the stimulus we need for this specific adaptation.”

For example, if Hinshaw were to prescribe a workout of 10 rounds of 200 meters on the rowing machine with 30 seconds of rest between pieces, the most important thing would be to get the athlete to figure out the right pace to be able to maintain the same intensity with each interval, he explained.

“Usually athletes will just get slower and slower each interval because 30 seconds isn’t enough time to recover, but they’d be much better served hitting the same speed for each one.”

Athletes and coaches who attend Hinshaw’s one-day Aerobic Capacity Course will learn all about the importance of pacing in relation to building a more robust and efficient aerobic system, Hinshaw explained. The seminar also includes lectures on topics



such as fatigue, physiology, balancing energy systems, applying aerobic-capacity training to target goals, and training protocols for speed endurance and strength endurance. Attendees will learn to assess aerobic fitness, create paced workouts and programming based on heart rate, and create dynamic warm-ups. Overall, trainers will learn how to use endurance-training methodologies to help CrossFit athletes do more work faster.

Attendees have a chance to put Hinshaw’s lectures to use during an interval running workout. At the inaugural Aerobic Capacity Course at CrossFit Humanity in San Diego, California, in May, Hinshaw put trainers through a 10-round workout of 60 seconds of running with 10 seconds of rest.

Sure enough, everyone went out too hard, Hinshaw said.

“Even people who thought they were good at pacing went out too hard and fell off their pace. All 10 intervals should have been the same distance.”

“How am I going to maximize adaptation efficiency? That’s what the course is all about.” —Chris Hinshaw

Sanabria, who was introduced to Hinshaw when he hosted a seminar at her gym in January 2016, said it took her a while—and lots of practice—to really start understanding pacing, both how to do it properly and why it’s so important.

“Focusing on the right pacing was new to me. But the program gives you a very specific pace for each workout. In some workouts, there are a variety of paces (Hinshaw) wants you to hit,” Sanabria said. “I’ve learned that I don’t just have one speed. I can speed up, slow down and speed up again.”

When both the coaches and athletes understand what the workout’s intended stimulus is, the athletes will get more bang for their buck, Hinshaw reiterated.

“How am I going to maximize adaptation efficiency? That’s what the course is all about ... ,” he said. “So, for example, if I’m only working with Camille (Leblanc-Bazinet) two days a week, then I need to make sure those workouts are targeting specific things.”

When aerobic-capacity workouts target specific aspects of training and fit well into the bigger program, then athletes are sure to see gains beyond their wildest dreams, he added.

“Small doses of proper endurance training balanced with what you’re already doing in the gym—that’s creating a level of adap-

tation with elite athletes that has never been done before.

“And if I can do that with elite athletes, then I can do it with the regular population more easily. If Mat Fraser can knock a minute off his mile time, then a lifestyle athlete can knock off 3 minutes.”

## Results in Redmond

Josh Fitchitt, one of Sanabria’s coaches, also attended Hinshaw’s seminar at CrossFit Bel-Red in January.

Fitchitt has high praise for the coaching he received from Hinshaw.

“He really helped us work with certain biases our athletes have,” Fitchitt said. “For example, as a coach, you have to ask questions like, ‘Does this athlete need to work more on speed and improve his VO<sub>2</sub> max, or is this a power athlete who needs more aerobic-threshold training?’”

Asking such questions has helped Fitchitt become a more effective coach and programmer, he said.

“We don’t necessarily run more now, but we run differently. And it is more effective for our athletes,” he said.

Sanabria’s results are a testament to Fitchitt’s implementation of Hinshaw’s program.

When Sanabria tested her 1-mile run in March, it took her 10 minutes. Now, her training pace is in the 8:40 range, she said.

“That’s a comfortable pace now for training,” Sanabria said.

She has also shed almost 20 seconds from her 400-meter time, dropping March’s 2:01 to 1:43.

Sanabria credits her gains—both on the track and inside the gym—to Hinshaw’s wisdom.

“I understand my pace. And I understand what each workout is trying to accomplish.” ■

**About the Author:** Emily Beers is a CrossFit Journal contributor and coach at [CrossFit Vancouver](#). She finished 37th at the 2014 Reebok CrossFit Games.



When athletes have well-trained aerobic systems, they’re able to work longer on box jumps, pull-ups and other movements seen in CrossFit.



Fitchitt, a former triathlete, lists his mile time as 5:11.



Tawny Sanabria said interval training helps her avoid rest breaks during workouts.





THE  
**CrossFit** JOURNAL

# AN OPEN LETTER TO CHEATERS

We all know what you're doing, and we'd like you to stop



**MIKE WARKENTIN | UNCOMMON SENSE | JULY 2016**

No one knows if your chest touched the floor on every rep—no one except you.



## Admit it: You’ve shaved a rep.

Maybe you’ve even shaved entire rounds off workouts.

You might have even lied about loads or times.

Guess what: Your coach noticed. And so did the other people in the class.

Thankfully, cheaters are relatively rare in CrossFit, perhaps because “so much of repugnant behavior is about trying to get something for nothing, and the CrossFitters inherently don’t believe that it’s possible,” as CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman said in [2009](#).

But physical suffering can erode loosely rooted morality, and we all know cheaters exist. By bending or breaking the rules, you can reduce or end the pain and perhaps take a whiteboard win, which can be very tempting when a grueling workout demands everything you have and some things you don’t. All athletes have come face to face with the moral dilemma of the 145th wall-ball shot that didn’t quite hit the line during Karen. A choice must be made at that point, and it’s sometimes hard to make the right one. But everyone in the community expects you to man and woman up by replacing the short shot with a good rep.

If you cheat, your coach noticed. You have fooled no one.

Coaches most definitely understand that sometimes you forget which round you’re in. It happens. We know that sometimes you accidentally write the wrong load or time on the whiteboard because your brain isn’t functioning correctly after a screaming match with Fran. We’re aware that you can’t always tell if you squatted below parallel exactly 300 times during Cindy. These are honest mistakes made by honest people.

But some athletes cheat. On purpose. Regularly.

And when you cheat, it is most assuredly noticed.

Maybe your dishonesty isn’t noticed right away, or maybe you

didn’t hear the discussions after you put your score on the board and walked out. But eventually your peers and your trainers figured you out. It doesn’t take too many “weren’t you ahead of him?” conversations to solve the mystery without the crime lab.

Here’s some info: Facebook hosts a group for CrossFit affiliate owners, and it’s almost 10,000 strong. In that group, trainers discuss all sorts of things, from cleaning gym mats to teaching muscle-ups. Despite the overwhelmingly large number of honest people in any gym, you usually don’t have to scroll very far to see a post like this: “An athlete at my gym is cheating, and other members and coaches are starting to complain. It’s ruining the atmosphere. What do I do?”

Let it be said again: If you cheat, your coach noticed. You have fooled no one.

How did your coach catch you? Coaches know approximately how long it takes to complete certain workouts. Coaches also know your current abilities and level of fitness. When an athlete posts a score outside the expected range, a coach notices. That score might mean an athlete suddenly had a breakthrough—like Awkward Dude’s legendary set of 50 unbroken double-unders that came from nowhere and reduced his time by a full five minutes. But in general, athlete progression follows a pattern any coach can see, and anomalies stand out. Big time.

Coaches also know how long it takes to do 21 thrusters, for example. It’s just an ability we’ve acquired after watching 5 million reps. Beyond that, we know every movement has a maximum cycle time. Even Ben Smith can only go so fast. When you’re working through 30 wall-ball shots to 10 ft. and you move on to the next movement after 35 seconds, alarm bells go off in our heads because physics won’t allow that time. We’ve also coached three classes in a row, so we know that your rest break couldn’t possibly allow you to beat the guy who went unbroken two hours ago.

We sense disturbances in The Force, young Jedi.

Further, competitive athletes always count each other’s reps, either by absentminded habit, as a spot check, or as part of an attempt to game your time and beat your ass. If you’re training at the end of the 5-p.m. class, it’s guaranteed your reps are being counted by a rival who arrived for the session at 6. Believe it,



John Maguire/CrossFit Journal

No moral gray area: Count it if it’s above the line. Don’t count it if it’s not.





Adrian "Boz" Bozman didn't see your shallow squat, but he definitely knows about it.





Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

Yes, the last inch matters a great deal.

and rest assured that someone noticed your set of 17 kettlebell swings in the final round of Helen.

Some coaches attack the problem head on and simply tell athletes their scores aren't correct. This, of course, addresses the issue but often leads to emphatic denials, arguments and bad feelings. Other coaches soft-sell it by questioning the athlete to see if the correct score was written on the board, which often leads to resentment and bad feelings. Some coaches ignore the issue because the athlete is ultimately cheating only him- or herself, but this, too, leads to bad feelings in members who note injustice on the leaderboard. Some coaches stand beside suspicious athletes and count their reps out loud, which usually leads to bad feelings and a lack of attention paid to other clients in the class.

The obvious point is that cheating causes bad feelings. You're breaking the contract that binds all members of the community: We put a number on the board, you do that many reps, then you tell us how long it took. Accept a high five and have a protein shake. Same time tomorrow.

You're breaking the contract that binds all members of the community: We put a number on the board, you do that many reps, then you tell us how long it took.

But some people cheat. They cheat because they're lazy, they cheat because they want to win, they cheat because they lack moral character and don't see the problem, they cheat because they're embarrassed about their current fitness level, and so on. The reasons are endless—and they're all bullshit.

So let it be said once more: We all notice when you cheat.

And we want you to stop. ■

**About the Author:** Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and the founder of [CrossFit 204](#).





THE **CrossFit** JOURNAL

# NO INTENSITY, NO RESULTS

To move all significant health markers in the right direction, do more work faster, trainers say.

BY ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL



The only way to know intensity is to experience it.

It is not a mythical creature born of grunting loudest, sweating most or cheering excitedly. It is also not a matter of opinion. It's physics. Scientifically speaking, intensity is **defined** as power: force multiplied by distance, then divided by time. Simply put: Intensity is doing more work faster.

"You have to teach people how to do it," said Chris Spealler, a member of CrossFit Inc.'s Seminar Staff and a seven-time CrossFit Games athlete who owns CrossFit Park City in Utah.

Fran, for example, is a workout most of the general population should be able to finish in roughly 7 minutes or less, he explained. The workout calls for 21-15-9 reps of thrusters and pull-ups. For an athlete who is trying to break into that time domain, Spealler provides the road map: Do the 21 thrusters and 21 pull-ups in no more than 2 sets each, and the break can be no longer than 5 seconds. At the end of that round, the clock should read "2:00" or "3:00."

"Giving people targets is hugely helpful, and I think that's where a lot of affiliate owners miss it in the application," Spealler said.

He continued: "Really, intensity is being comfortable with being uncomfortable."

That discomfort—doing 5 more reps when all you want to do is stop—is how you become fitter.

"Intensity is the independent variable most commonly associated with maximizing favorable adaptation to exercise," CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman wrote in April 2007's **"Understanding CrossFit."**

Favorable adaptation includes improved body composition and improved health markers such as fasting glucose and triglycerides. It takes people from sick to well to fit.

"Be impressed by intensity, not volume," Glassman is quoted as saying as early as 2002.

Crudely translated, it means this: Do more work in less time—not more work in more time. Explained via a CrossFit scenario, if you took 10 minutes to do Fran and then did another workout because "10 minutes wasn't enough," you did not perform Fran

**"Intensity is being comfortable  
with being uncomfortable."**

**—Chris Spealler**

with intensity. If you had, you'd still be on your back. Likewise, you will not reap intensity's benefits.

The scenario is becoming increasingly common at affiliates worldwide.

"There's a pervasive thought process going on in kind of the competitors' circle that more volume equals better, and I see that leak into our regular classes where everybody wants extra work to do," said Ben Benson, owner of CrossFit Terminus in Atlanta and coach to Games athletes Emily Bridgers, Stacie Tovar and Becca Voigt.

When he started CrossFit, he remembered, the mentality was to give 100 percent effort on every workout.

"Now I'm seeing people approach them with a gaming-type attitude," Benson explained. "It's a very insidious problem that I'm trying to address."

Games athletes are able to do more because they can maintain intensity throughout all the additional workouts, he noted.

"They've earned that volume, and they have the measurables and the resiliency to do that."

One way Benson addresses the problem is through scaling.

"On a day-to-day basis ... we do a lot of scaling to try to get classes to be on the same page, especially with finishing times. We do a lot of time capping also," he said. "It's a culture thing we worked on: not letting people make short workouts huge aerobic-capacity endurance tests."



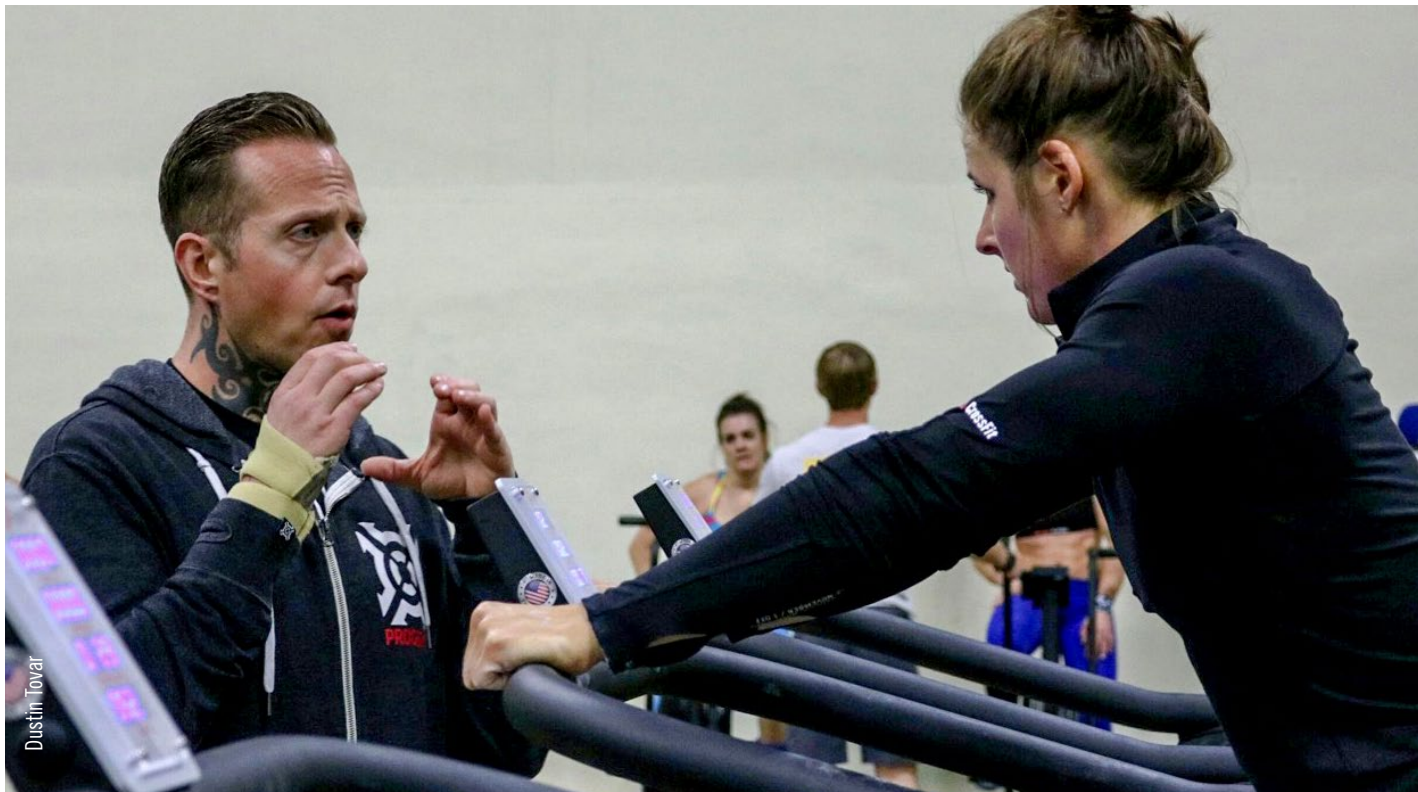
The legendary Chris Spealler explained that just like proper mechanics in the air squat, for example, coaches must teach intensity.





Anne Taihelm

Chris Spealler, a longtime member of CrossFit's Seminar Staff, explained intensity is about doing more work faster.



Dustin Tovar

Ben Benson, coach to Stacie Tovar, said he sees many people opt for volume over intensity with poor results.

“There’s a pervasive thought process going on in . . . the competitors’ circle that more volume equals better, and I see that leak into our regular classes.”

—Ben Benson

For a workout like Kelly—5 rounds of a 400-meter run, 30 box jumps and 30 wall-ball shots—he typically institutes a 30-minute cap. For Grace—30 clean and jerks for time—it’s a 5-minute cap.

“I might do an 8-minute cap (for Grace),” Benson said, adding that he tries to balance such goals with ensuring all athletes feel included. “I don’t want to make the cap so damn hard that nobody ever finishes anything.”

Most members have the ability to complete workouts in a timely fashion and also get a dose of intensity relative to their fitness, he noted.

“That’s one of the arts of coaching a group class: You have to accommodate for what is relative intensity.”

In other words: scaling.

“It’s so important when we get to driving intensity in a class,” Benson stressed.

Spealler cautioned that intensity is not simply telling an athlete to “go as fast as you can” on Helen, for example: 3 rounds for time of a 400-meter run, 21 1.5-pood kettlebell swings and 12 pull-ups. If the athlete PRs his 400-meter run but falls on his back, unable to complete the remainder of the workout in the intended time domain, the coach has missed the point, he said.

“Isn’t that intensity? Well, no. In that workout the goal is to have a good time.”

Same goes for a workout such as Filthy 50, which calls for 500 total reps across 10 movements. Spealler has seen athletes go “just berserk and explode” on the workout upon the advice of a trainer.

“I honestly think that coaches think that’s what intensity is. That’s kind of a real bad idea, actually,” he said, laughing.

But those who pick up the barbell when they don’t want to and push the limits of their discomfort are doing it right, Benson said.

“The people that are approaching it in that manner, they’re getting the most bang for their buck out of their training, not necessarily with volume but with intensity,” he said. “That’s going to be, really, what gives you adaptation. And it doesn’t matter what it is. . . . Going to your end point—that’s really what drives physical and hormonal change. But I see a lot of half-assing it. And not necessarily seeing things get better.” ■

## About the Author:

Andréa Maria Cecil is assistant managing editor and head writer of the CrossFit Journal.



# WHEN LIMBER BECOMES TOO LOOSE

Theresa Larson explains when and how to stretch—and why some people shouldn't stretch at all.

BY HILARY ACHAUER







Theresa Larson helps an athlete improve his rack position with PNF stretching.

Lululemon Athletica

Theresa Larson’s physical-therapy patients come to her with a variety of ailments, but back pain is one of the most common complaints.

Recently, a woman who does CrossFit and yoga came to Larson complaining of a low-back pain that radiated down her leg.

“What stretches should I be doing?” she asked.

Before answering, Larson asked the woman to bend at the waist with her legs straight and touch the ground.

“She flopped over and put her elbows on the ground,” Larson said. “I asked her if she felt any tension—any hamstring stretch at all—and she said no.”

Larson, a physical therapist specializing in movement and rehabilitation for athletes and adaptive athletes, told the woman she could help, but the treatment wouldn’t involve any stretching. The woman’s problem was she was too flexible. She lacked stability in her joints, and that was contributing to her low-back pain.

Stretching is something we all feel we should be doing. For many of us it falls to the bottom of the list, somewhere between taking vitamins and finally learning a second language.

According to Larson, not everyone needs to stretch. People with too much mobility frequently lack stability.

“When you bend over and touch your toes, you should be able to feel tension in your hamstrings and butt. If you don’t, you need more stability. So stretching more isn’t going to get you that. It’s going to hinder you,” Larson said.

If you can’t touch your toes, you could benefit from increased flexibility, but research shows traditional static stretching—holding a stretch for a few seconds to a few minutes—is better after the workout. This doesn’t mean you should jump into a workout cold, however. Movement-specific dynamic stretching is an essential part of any athletic pursuit.

Stretching is simply not a one-size-fits-all prescription. Before you join your friend for an epic mobility session, assess your flexibility and stability and the type of activity ahead.

## Pre-Workout Movement

The consensus on the benefits of pre-workout stretching has shifted over the years. There was a time when stretching before exercise was considered essential. Then, in the early 2000s, experts determined static stretching had a negative impact on performance and could even increase the risk of injury.

“Static stretching will not increase your force production. If you are going to do a high-velocity-type training, that’s not going to help your vertical jump. That’s not going to help your force production. So it’s actually going to diminish your ability to work fast if you static-stretch before training,” Larson said.

If the static stretch is held for less than 30 seconds and followed by warm-up movements, there’s almost no negative effect on performance.

In early 2016, the journal Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism published a study analyzing more than 200 studies on stretching and exercise. (The study is summarized in this [New York Times article](#), and the original paper can be found [here](#).)

The study found static stretching could have a temporary negative effect on the body’s ability to generate power only if each stretch was held for more than 60 seconds and the subject immediately jumped into the activity. As the authors of the study point out, that’s not how most people approach warm-up stretching. Most people hold stretches less than 30 seconds and usually do some type of warm-up movement before the sport or exercise. If the stretch is held for less than 30 seconds and followed by warm-up movements, there’s almost no negative effect on performance. The study also noted that short pre-workout static sessions can reduce the risk of muscle strains and tears.

A dynamic or ballistic warm-up can have benefits. For example, if the workout is going to include squats or deadlifts, a dynamic warm-up might include air squats, leg kicks, lunges or jump squats. The Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism report found about a 1.3 percent performance improvement as a result of dynamic stretching.

Dynamic stretching has benefits beyond performance. The study found dynamic stretching “can elevate the core temperature ... which can increase nerve conduction velocity, muscle compliance, and enzymatic cycling, accelerating energy production.” A few studies showed dynamic movements can have a 4.9 percent improvement on vertical jumping.

Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) is the third type of stretching: It involves both stretching the muscle and contracting it against resistance. PNF stretching is typically done with a partner or immovable object. For example, the athlete lies on the floor and a partner moves the athlete’s extended leg to a point of mild discomfort. The athlete then pushes against the partner’s resistance before relaxing and allowing the partner to take the stretch further. The consensus in the study is PNF stretching improves range of motion (ROM) but has no positive effect on performance.

“Stretching is not going to help you with your movement patterns in a workout,” Larson said. “Ballistic stretching and PNF will





Before a workout, dynamic stretching is preferred over a lot of static stretching. Post workout, feel free to hold stretches for 180-300 seconds.



help muscle activation, but they aren't going to help you with the movement patterns you are about to do in the workout. You need to have a good warm-up, do dynamic stretching and PNF, and then do movements that are going to prepare you for the workout."

The authors of the Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism study acknowledge that such variability among studies in terms of type of stretching makes it difficult to reach a firm consensus, but studies across the board show pre-workout static stretching doesn't demonstrably improve performance.

This information has not reached the masses—Larson said she often encounters people who stretch before a workout with the idea that it will positively affect their performance.

"It's not going to help you improve your skill in the sport," she said.

## Post-Workout Flexibility

If static stretching is best saved for after a workout, how long and how often should you stretch post workout?

First, determine if you should be doing any post-workout stretching. As Larson told her overly flexible client with low-back pain, "Not everyone should be stretching."

If you can bend over with your legs straight and put your elbows or palms on the ground, Larson said flexibility should not be your focus.

"You should do more stability work," she said.

She's found people with too much mobility often have low-back or sacroiliac-joint pain and don't know how to activate their glutes. Larson said these are often the people who tell her, "I only feel my quads when I squat."

Such people lack tension in the back of their body, and they are often the ones unnecessarily doing stretching programs.

"(The back side of your body) actually protects your back—that's going to cause problems down the road with decreased tension," Larson said.

Larson has a **program** that includes a movement assessment for those looking for more information about low-back pain associated with too much mobility.

A lack of stability does not mean a problem with balance; it's an inability to control the joint. If a joint has too much motion, it can lead to a weak rotator cuff, back pain and so on.

Instead of yoga classes or hour-long flexibility sessions, those who are too flexible should be doing stability drills such as pause squats with a band around the knees, holding the end range of the squat.

"If they can squat using a band, it will give them tension in



Scott Brayslaw

**If you're very flexible, skip the stretching session and do isometric work to increase stability and foam rolling to decrease stiffness.**

their glutes," Larson said. "If they squat and hold the bottom position, the body becomes more aware of what that should feel like. People who are missing stability need more motor-control drills, activation drills and tissue smashing."

Those who are not overly flexible can benefit from daily static stretching after a workout.

"When you increase the time of the stretch, 180 seconds to 300 seconds, you are going to increase the flexibility of the muscle tissue. ... The 180-second mark is going to decrease stiffness and increase range of motion," Larson said.

"You are not going to increase force production and muscle activation in the tissue, but you are going to increase flexibility, which will help prevent injury."

Larson recommends holding each stretch for the full 180 seconds, accumulating about an hour of stretching overall.

She also recommends PNF over static stretching "because (with

static stretching) you can only go so far before you run into a stop," she said.

"With PNF, you contract the muscle," Larson said. "Say I'm stretching my hamstring. I contract my hamstring in a gentle stretch position. The Golgi tendon organ in the tendon itself inhibits the activity of the muscle spindle so you can go a little bit further into the stretch. All of a sudden there's a relaxation in the muscle ... you are contracting, relaxing, contracting, relaxing."

Beyond increased range of motion and flexibility, post-workout stretching has another benefit, especially for people who practice a fast-paced sport such as CrossFit. Just as we need to move our body quickly, we also need to spend time deliberately slowing down. Spending an hour stretching helps down-regulate the body, which, if you also concentrate on your breathing, can be a form of meditation.

For those who are overly flexible, Larson suggests passing on stretching and instead spending the time doing isometric drills

or self-myofascial release (tissue smashing) with a foam roller or lacrosse ball.

**For those who are overly flexible, Larson suggests passing on stretching and instead spending the time doing isometric drills or self-myofascial release.**

Isometric exercises are movements you hold under tension, such as a plank, a hang from a bar or a pull-up hold, or a glute bridge.

Self-myofascial release, or tissue smashing, involves rolling on a foam tube or lacrosse ball, concentrating on the muscle rather than the bones or joints.

"You'll hear someone who is super bendy say, 'Well, my hips are tight or my quads are tight,'" Larson said, "but they are not tight. They are missing stability, so their muscles are overactive. They need to get in there and gently bring blood flow and nutrients to the muscles.

"So by smashing it helps decrease the knotted feeling, and ... that will help decrease stiffness over stretching because they don't need more length. They simply need blood flow to the tissue."

## Daily Dose

Whatever your particular needs—whether it's improved flexibility or stability—you need to dedicate time each day to see a change.

Those who need more flexibility should work on stretching every day. The overly flexible should spend that time doing isometric exercises and tissue smashing.

"You need to understand what your body needs," Larson said, "tightness doesn't mean more stretching, and stretching doesn't mean improved performance."

Prepare your body for the workout ahead with a dynamic warm-up, and then spend your post-workout time addressing your body's individual needs. ■

**About the Author:** Hilary Achauer is a freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary writes for the CrossFit Journal. To contact her, visit [hilaryachauer.com](http://hilaryachauer.com).