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SOCIAL CLUB

CrossFit affiliate owners discuss how to build a healthy schedule of get-togethers and events that will help grow and strengthen the community.

BY HILARY ACHAUER



Affiliate owners give many reasons for opening a CrossFit gym: a love and passion for CrossFit, the thrill of owning a business, and a desire to build a community, among others.

Almost no affiliate owner ever opens a CrossFit gym because of a love of event planning.

However, many owners have discovered community events—from throwdowns to potlucks—are a vital part of a healthy gym. A thriving CrossFit community starts in the gym, but it’s strengthened and deepened in get-togethers that go beyond regularly scheduled classes.

Building a busy schedule of events doesn’t mean an affiliate owner has to turn into Cruise Director Julie. Here, affiliate owners share why they believe community events are an essential part of a successful affiliate and how others can create a robust roster of yearly events.

Competitions and Throwdowns

Most CrossFit affiliate events fall into two categories: competitions and social events including fundraisers, parties and activities. [Green Mountain CrossFit](#) in Berlin, Vermont, leans heavily toward the competition side, hosting four events each year.

Nicholas Petterssen, owner of Green Mountain CrossFit, said it all started in 2012 with a single event: The Vermonster Challenge.

“There was a real deficit of any sort of competitive (fitness) in Vermont, and we were traveling out of state to Massachusetts (to compete). We wanted to throw something to get the Vermont community together,” Petterssen said.

He said the event, which has grown each year, is an opportunity for members to compete and volunteer, and it gives his gym a chance to connect with other affiliates.

“Right from the get-go we had a long-term vision of growing it to be a very large event. And so we put a lot of planning and a lot of energy into running a very well-run event,” Petterssen said.

After the success of The Vermonster Challenge, Petterssen and his team gradually added more events, including The Backyard Games for masters and intermediate athletes, the Sweatheart Throwdown on Valentine’s Day, and a power- and Olympic-lifting competition called Lift Up.

Petterssen understands the importance of a well-run event and the amount of work it takes to ensure everything proceeds smoothly.

“When (events) are poorly run it’s really a disappointment. If they don’t



Four Barrel CrossFit members get outside for a Memorial Day workout involving swimming and a burden run with a log.

stay on schedule, if things aren't done well, it doesn't make it worth-while," Petterssen said.

Three full-time staff members work on the affiliate's events.

"We have one person who is responsible for program design, facility and equipment, another person whose focus is the athletes and organizing the heats and communications, (and) another person is in charge of judging," Petterssen said. "It is a three-team hard push for every one of these events. We start six months out planning for each event. And then activity builds and builds ... (then) all three of us are full bore for the weekend."

Before he opened Green Mountain CrossFit, Petterssen said he handled trade-show operations as part of his job in the software industry, but none of his staff has special training in running events.

"We've taken our licks and learned over time how to run things as smoothly as possible. We've gotten better over time. It gets a little easier," he said.

Workouts—and Beyond

David Osorio opened [CrossFit South Brooklyn](#) in 2007. His affiliate has grown to 700 members served by 23 employees, and Osorio said regular events have made members feel more connected to CrossFit South Brooklyn.

"We try to have something every month," he said. The schedule includes traditional CrossFit events such as Memorial Day Murph, as well as a female-only powerlifting event called the Iron Maidens Raw Open.

"We had several hundred people come out for that and check it out, and we got some coverage on the local media, and that's a big event for us," Osorio said.

Osorio starts off each year with a big community potluck.

"It's a way to bring in the new year, celebrate the accomplishments of last year and recognize some people from the previous year," Osorio said.

"We have a big movie projector in our gym, so we'll try to do a movie night," Osorio said. This year they screened "Fittest on Earth 2015."

The affiliate has organized a snowshoeing trip, a hiking excursion and a stand-up-paddleboarding outing, and its members have participated in a Spartan race. Sometimes only 15 to 20 people join in the fun, but Osorio thinks these smaller group experiences are important for an affiliate like CrossFit South Brooklyn.



Special workouts at CrossFit South Brooklyn (above) and Raleigh CrossFit (below) bring the community together.



"We have the smaller events that are more experiential. For us, we really just want to create novel experiences for our members and create opportunities for them, for people to have fun and have positive associations with the gym," Osorio said.

**"We really just want to create novel experiences for our members and create opportunities for them, for people to have fun."
—David Osorio**

Osorio has an in-house event planner who helps organize the smaller get-togethers and events. For bigger events, such as the powerlifting competition, a coach takes charge, with the event planner helping with details.

"It's important to have at least one central person for the events," Osorio said. "There's no shortage of ideas ... (you) have to have somebody who has the time to follow through with and (who has) clear checkpoints."

Osorio promotes the events and requests volunteers through the affiliate's blog, which is updated every day by CrossFit South Brooklyn's managing editor. Photos for the blog are supplied by photographers who receive a discount on membership in exchange for uploading a set number of photos onto the gym's Flickr account every week.

"And for events we'll contract (the photographers) out, so one will work the first shift and one the next shift. You have all these awesome photos and use them as promotions for future events," Osorio said.

Helping Others

Chennelle Miller is the owner of [Raleigh CrossFit](#). Open since 2010, the affiliate has about 200 members. Miller says she plans at least one community event a month, with a focus on fundraisers and donation drives. The affiliate hosts American Red Cross blood drives and book drives, and it organizes a day with Habitat for Humanity.

"(We've done) food drives for the last five years at least," Miller said. She noted the affiliate will do approximately two drives a year, sometimes collecting goods such as paper towels in addition to food.

“This year we are partnering with the USO (United Service Organization) of North Carolina for Memorial Day Murph,” Miller said. “You can kind of be creative. Last year we did it with the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. See what your community is going to be geared toward.”

For a long time, Miller organized all the events herself, but in 2015 she hired another full-time coach, Christina Atti-Uptegrow, who became the community-outreach coordinator.

“She and I work together to plan out events, seek out different events that might be fun. We each have our different responsibility depending on what the event is. (Atti-Uptegrow) was entirely in charge of bringing in the American Red Cross Blood Drive last year and this year,” Miller said.

If an affiliate is looking to do some good in the community, Miller recommends reaching out to local nonprofit groups such as the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club. She also suggests reaching out to members or friends for community connections.

“I like people to associate good things with CrossFit.” —Chennelle Miller

Miller said she is sensitive about balancing out fundraisers with other events. In May 2016, Raleigh CrossFit is hosting Beers and Barbells, a competition held at a local brewhouse owned by a friend. She said she doesn’t want members to feel as if she’s always asking for money.

“I try to even it out so we can give back and I can give back and we are all continuing to have some fun and (doing) CrossFit,” Miller said.

The Importance of Events

Hosting events—whether it’s a throwdown or a potluck—takes time. Why should affiliate owners spend their precious hours and money on parties, field trips and in-house competitions?

Petterssen said the biggest benefit from hosting events like The Vermonster Challenge is what he calls “reputation marketing.”

“Being known as a good, quality gym with a really supportive membership ... really builds that reputation so that when other affiliates have people moving into our area, or whatever the situation may be, they can give us a good, quality recommendation,” Petterssen said.



Todd Poole

Competitions such as the Sweatheart Throwdown at Green Mountain CrossFit give members a chance to compete, volunteer or cheer on friends.



CrossFit Punta Gorda athletes donate their time to the environment by hauling 30-lb. bundles of shell to help restore an oyster reef.



Post-workout holiday nutrition at at CrossFit Maribyrnong.



Life's a beach for happy members of South Seattle CrossFit.



Chennelle Miller (left) of Raleigh CrossFit at a Barbells for Boobs Fundraiser.



Raleigh CrossFit's community board lets members know about upcoming events.

Now in his fourth year of running events, Petterssen has also seen a benefit to the gym's bottom line.

"It doesn't match our yearly membership income, but at four times a year, we are bringing in an extra \$5,000 to \$6,000 (USD per event). We've developed good enough systems so that the costs to us are not all that high," he said.

Petterssen said competitions benefit his members—even those who don't compete—because people who serve as a volunteer or judge can experience the competitive side of fitness.

"I think it is cool for many of our members to recognize (CrossFit is a) big organization and it goes beyond the walls of our gym," Petterssen said.

The non-competitive events, like potlucks, are a chance for members to connect. Petterssen thinks this is especially important for an affiliate such as Green Mountain CrossFit, which has been around for six years.

"The potlucks, the social things, the holiday workouts, all those are opportunities for people from different (class times) within our schedule to mingle and get to know each other ... and establish that larger connection," Petterssen said.

Osorio keeps a close eye on the attendance and expenses associated with each of the events at CrossFit South Brooklyn, even though he doesn't see them as revenue generators. Nevertheless, Osorio thinks they are extremely important, and members look forward to the recurring events all year long.

"It's almost like you are creating holidays within your community ... you are creating these landmarks within the year," Osorio said.

Miller said she emphasizes fundraisers at her affiliate because she wants to spread the good feelings people have when they join a CrossFit community. She said she sees her members as people who have something positive in their lives.

"You can spread that positive attitude toward other people who may need that," Miller said. "If in some way we can give back, whether it is through time, money or donation, then I think that you are sort of extending that (sense) of well-being to others. It gives Raleigh CrossFit a really generous place in our community in downtown Raleigh and beyond, and I really like having that. I like people to associate good things with CrossFit."

Celebrations and competitions also have a positive impact on member retention. The more events members can train for and anticipate, the more likely they are to stick around.

"With Fight Gone Bad, it's something people talk about all year round. They look forward to it," Osorio said.

Petterssen said members who volunteer or judge find the experience gives them a deeper connection to the gym, making them feel more valuable and important.

"I don't consider being invested in the events as a way of member retention, although that may aid in that," Miller said. "My goal as an affiliate is that the athletes at Raleigh CrossFit are invested in one another and are proud of what we do as a community."

Build Slowly

Affiliate owners have a lot on their plates, and tasks are plentiful: keeping members happy, managing staff, maintaining equipment, writing programming, bringing in new members and so on. Often, events can fall by the wayside as owners focus on the day-to-day operations.

Osorio said the key is to start small. CrossFit South Brooklyn events that draw hundreds of people today weren't huge events when he started six years ago.

"It was 10 people who showed up to this thing. And then we did it again, and the next time we had 25. The next time it was 50 and the next time it was 100," Osorio said.

"Have your expectation to make it the best experience for the people who show up, and if that's successful it's going to grow. And if you can create some excitement around it, it's going to grow," he said. ■

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CLASS ACTION

Affiliate owners share the various ways they've tailored the group-class model to create strong businesses that produce fitter clients.

BY HILARY ACHAUER



Brian Alexander chose to go big with his affiliate, CrossFit Illumine near Chicago. He trains over 300 members in 17,000 square feet of space.

Johnny DiGregorio opened CrossFit Pasadena in 2008. What started as a small community grew into a group of more than 240 members training in a 5,600-square-foot gym. Membership fees were about US\$175 a month. By 2013, most classes had more than 30 people.

DiGregorio staffed each session with three coaches, but he still felt clients were falling through the cracks and weren't getting the attention they deserved. He was overworked and unhappy.

This was not what he dreamed of in 2007, when, after attending a Level 1 Seminar, he quit his job as a personal trainer and opened CrossFit Pasadena on the advice of CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman.

"It was a really big machine to operate," DiGregorio said. He hired a consultant to help him figure out how to fix things, and the consultant told DiGregorio it sounded like he didn't want to own that gym anymore. DiGregorio's heart sank. He thought it was the end, but the consultant saw a different path.

"He said the beautiful thing about being a CrossFit affiliate owner is you have the freedom to make whatever business you want," DiGregorio said.

Instead of the end, it was the beginning of something new.

DiGregorio closed CrossFit Pasadena in 2014 and opened the 900-square-foot CrossFit Alhambra in Alhambra, California, with a membership cap of 130. An unlimited membership costs \$250 and no class has more than eight people. Members receive highly individualized attention, and DiGregorio rediscovered what he loved about owning an affiliate.

At the same time, Brian Alexander of CrossFit Illumine outside Chicago, Illinois, hit his groove running a 300-plus-member, 17,000-square-foot gym. He feels connected with his members and has a profitable business.

Alexander and DiGregorio are running different versions of the same basic business—a CrossFit affiliate built on the group-class model—and demonstrating the freedom CrossFit affiliate owners have to solve the problems of retention, staffing, welcoming new members, managing overhead and so on. There's no one formula for running a CrossFit affiliate, which is what makes owning one so liberating.

Here, successful affiliate owners talk about what's worked for them in optimizing the group model for business, community building, and the overall health and wellness of their members.

The Beginning

Glassman started out as a personal trainer. As detailed in "Learning to Breathe Fire: The Rise of CrossFit and the Primal Future of Fitness," he bounced around from gym to gym, often leaving because he objected to the cut the large gyms would take from his personal-training sessions. His last place of employment, Spa Fitness in Santa Cruz, California, kicked him out when one of his private clients dropped a bar with steel plates from overhead.

In the first CrossFit gym in Santa Cruz, Glassman had personal-training clients and ran group classes. The former created the latter when demand for Glassman's time increased to the point that he was forced to use small groups to accommodate everyone. More athletes paid lower rates to train together but generated more total income for Glassman, who skillfully held the groups together by ensuring no client felt a reduction in attention from his or her coach. It was a classic value proposition.

Training several people at once was better financially for Glassman, and he discovered the clients benefitted from the structure as well. Glassman tracked everyone's performance and asked athletes to report their scores, so healthy competition arose among his group clients. As those who've played a team sport or served in the military know, people form strong bonds when they sweat and suffer together. Enduring Fran at 6 a.m. creates a connection between people. Repeat that experience multiple times a week for a year, and the bonds grow stronger. Add a few friendly rivalries and suddenly you have built-in retention and motivation—two elements the traditional fitness industry has long struggled to provide.

Glassman wrote about his business model in the 2006 CrossFit Journal article "[Scaling Professional Training](#)." In it, he identified two potential problems with the group model: lack of space and dilution of professional training standards. The latter can be mitigated by skill and relentless pursuit of excellence in training clients, while the former requires expansion if demand exceeds space.

Around 2003, Glassman took over the space next to his original 1,200-square-foot gym on Research Park Drive, removing the wall between the two. The situation was not ideal—the two spaces were mirror images of each other, with staircases on the end of each space leading to a loft—but Glassman used the environment to his advantage, making members run up one staircase, across the loft and down the other staircase.

More clients mean more income, but more space means more overhead. Large numbers of clients also create a need for staffing, management systems and so on. It's all business: Offer an excellent product and find a way to maximize profits by serving the



Scott Brayshaw

At the first CrossFit gym, Greg Glassman found that training athletes as a group provided built-in motivation as clients developed friendly rivalries. That tradition continues today in affiliates all around the world.

greatest number of clients and keeping costs down.

Glassman’s model succeeded, and it spread. The first CrossFit affiliate, CrossFit North in Seattle, Washington, opened in 2002. Many more followed. Glassman has said he envisioned an affiliate model that would eliminate everything he found frustrating about his experience with globo gyms, putting the power in the hands of the affiliate owner. He described it as “a low-threshold, loosely structured business model that has you in control—you’re in charge. You get to decide hours of operation and the color of your shirts and the music that’s on and what decorations go on the wall—it’s all of your choosing, and remove everything between you and your success that isn’t essential,” he said in 2012 in the CrossFit Journal video [“The Founder’s Views Part 1: The Affiliate Model.”](#)

The original CrossFit model or a variation thereof is still used in most affiliates, with the goal being to fill the right space with the right people, maximizing wealth for the owner and health for the clients. The exact details of how this model is implemented around the world vary greatly according to the preferences of the owner—just as they should. Success or failure is entirely in the hands of the entrepreneur.

One Size Doesn’t Fit All

When DiGregorio realized his business model at CrossFit Pasadena wasn’t working for him, he took what he’d learned and started over.

He realized he missed the feeling of his gym in 2008, with a tight community of 100 members. He couldn’t go back in time, but he could create a business that aligned with his goals. The smaller CrossFit Alhambra space is much cheaper to rent than the CrossFit Pasadena space was, and it’s closer to DiGregorio’s house.

“With CrossFit Alhambra, I designed a smaller boutique business where the cost was manageable and the profitability was as high for the members as it was for the business,” he said, meaning he provides a one-on-one feeling for members for less than the cost of daily personal-training sessions.

He continued: “CrossFit is for everybody, but my gym is not for everybody. I want to make sure I build the right culture of people in my gym and protect that culture.”

With no more than 130 members on the roster, he can make sure each member gets a weekly text message and phone call from him or one of the coaches. Recently, he’s started using Snapchat to keep in contact with members. He encourages members to send

him a Snapchat of what they are cooking so he can give them feedback on their nutrition.

“They deserve that kind of follow-through, and that’s what I would have loved when I started,” DiGregorio said.

“Remove everything between you and your success that isn’t essential.”

—Greg Glassman

For DiGregorio the answer is a more intimate setting, but he’s well aware others are choosing a different path and finding success.

“That’s not to say a bigger-group-class model doesn’t work,” he said. “I’ve seen some gyms that do a very good job running 20 people per class.”

He said he thinks large gyms with big classes can be effective, profitable and fun.

“It just doesn’t work if you’re not ready for it,” he said.

Alexander of CrossFit Illumine was ready for it—but he had to roll the dice, as all entrepreneurs do at some point. He opened his gym in May 2013 in a 2,000-square-foot space. He kept his full-time sales job and paid a year’s rent up front, but six months after opening, the gym was bursting at the seams.

“We started growing exponentially,” Alexander said. With 10 to 15 new people joining the gym every month, Alexander went hunting for a 5,000-square-foot facility, but the only available space was 17,000 square feet—many times bigger than his original facility.

“We bit the bullet: We took a big gamble believing in what we were doing and that we were going to continue to grow,” Alexander said.

Two and half years later, the space is full and the gym is thriving. Alexander left his corporate job a little over a year ago, and he just renewed his lease.

“It’s nice to have a lot of space and programs and options. We can run a group class, an Olympic-lifting program and one-on-one (sessions) all at once. I’ve had like seven programs running at once within this 17,000 square feet; it’s just something you can’t accomplish in a smaller space,” Alexander said.

Overcoming Challenges With Creativity

Owning a CrossFit affiliate is not without its challenges. Affiliate owners can run the business how they please, but this also means there’s no manual. It’s often a trial-and-error process, especially if the owners don’t have experience managing a business—but that freedom to experiment is exactly what affiliate owners signed up for.

Jake Adams opened CrossFit High Road in Chino, California, in early 2014. He had been doing CrossFit for two years and was working as a personal trainer and a strength-and-conditioning assistant at the University of California-Irvine.

Adams owns his gym’s building, which is 7,500 square feet, including 4,500 square feet of usable gym space. CrossFit High Road has four coaches, plus Adams and his business partner, Josh Baumgarten. One of the coaches is full time, and they also employ a general manager.

Adams is of the opinion that some affiliate owners get ahead of themselves, letting the membership base expand without having systems in place to manage those new members.

“As gym owners, there is a tendency to think we can do anything and everything. We can—just not alone,” Adams said.

Adams said it’s essential to put together a solid team of coaches who are knowledgeable and dependable. Then put in place efficient systems to manage introductory or on-ramp classes and arrange class times to accommodate the demographics of the area.

“The concept of interdependency, relying on our strengths and abilities combined with the strengths and abilities of others—hopefully filling the gaps of our weaknesses—far outweighs that of independence or trying to accomplish everything on our own,” Adams said.

From Day 1, Adams had member-management software, a billing system, a pricing structure and an introductory program set up and ready to go.

“This may seem like common sense, but I have come to learn that many places are jumping the gun, and their eagerness sets in and they are forgetting one or more of these crucial steps,” Adams said.

Just as important, he said, is making sure everyone on the team understands the gym’s core values and communicates a consistent message to the members. Adams said he makes sure the coaches focus on creating a positive and healthy environment for everyone.



Naomi Chu Photography

Skilled coaches can handle larger groups and ensure all athletes feel like they’re receiving a great deal of attention. The learning curve for coaches likely involves working with individuals and small groups before tackling bigger crowds.

The final piece of the puzzle, which may be the most important, is a willingness to put in the hard work.

“Long hours. Long days,” Adams said. “Forget the if-you-build-it-they-will-come mentality or the get-rich-quick thoughts.”

He said it takes hard work to make a CrossFit gym successful.

“The successful group model isn’t an anomaly. If thousands of others can do it, so can you,” Adams said.

For Alexander of CrossFit Illumine, the key to his gym’s success is avoiding complacency. He’s always evaluating and adjusting, looking to improve his systems and practices.

Early on, Alexander discovered that although 10 to 15 new members joined the gym every month, Illumine had a major problem with retention. After the on-ramp and the first month of classes, members would start to drift away. CrossFit Illumine retained only 65 percent of its members at the six-month mark. Alexander said he knew the problem was in his system, not with CrossFit or the group-class model.

To solve the problem, Alexander implemented a quarterly one-on-one goal-setting session with each member. He tried managing these appointments with spreadsheets and manual processes but found it time consuming and frustrating. After a year of searching for an automated solution, Alexander found an automated web-based goal-setting and tracking software called **Lifetick**. He used that in tandem with **ScheduleOnce**, which athletes use to book their appointments. Once automated, the one-on-one sessions were easy to track and schedule.

The other problem Alexander saw was the different needs of members with varying degrees of abilities in the same class. He implemented a two-track system for the workouts: fitness and performance. This helped both beginners and more experienced athletes meet their goals.

“Since the move to the new system we have a much better retention rate and morale is through the roof,” Alexander said.

Another challenge with the group model is some class times will be more popular than others. If a person prefers to work out at 5:30 p.m., you can’t make him work out at 8 a.m. Alexander’s expansive square footage makes it possible for him to run multiple classes during the same time slot, which accommodates demand at popular times but also ensures coaches aren’t overwhelmed trying to give individual attention to a class of 20 people.



In 2014, Jake Adams planned well ahead to have all systems in place when he opened CrossFit High Road in Chino, California.

“The successful group model isn’t an anomaly. If thousands of others can do it, so can you.” —Jake Adams

“All in all, the group model has worked tremendously for us from a business perspective but more importantly a community perspective. It is part of our culture—from on-ramp to regular classes—and our athletes appreciate what they get here at Illumine,” Alexander said.

Software was the saving grace for Alexander, but it’s not a solution for everyone. Mark Lin of CrossFit 858 in San Diego, California, is involved in operating three affiliates. Lin was clear about his hatred

of all software solutions, proving that what works for some won’t work for others.

“Line up all the software next to each other and you have a wide array of different types of shit sandwiches. Dog-shit sandwich, cat-shit sandwich—they are slightly different, but all shit,” he said.

Lin keeps retention high by staying on top of his members’ achievements and making a point to acknowledge even small accomplishments. Two affiliates are home to about 200 members each, and Lin expects the third—which he just took over—to reach that level in less than a year.

“I routinely have athletes write their PRs (personal records)—no matter what they are or how big or little they are—on the PR boards. It allows their accomplishment to shine in front of me, the staff and their fellow athletes. It’s one of many ways you can reach out and touch someone and make them feel like you acknowledge them as an individual. This I feel is the most important part to retention,” Lin said.

Lin also arranges regular social events in and out of the gym, which he said encourages a feeling of community and intimacy.

“Also, I think it’s important to use social media as an extension of your gym, your operating hours and you as a person,” Lin said. “There is just as much online banter, sometimes more, that goes on (during) off hours as there is in the box itself.”

For Lin, the final piece of the puzzle is staffing.

“Although we are CrossFit affiliates and not franchises, I think it’s important to ‘franchise’ yourself and the way you operate, coach and interact with athletes in your staff. In other words, you must duplicate your output and methods via your staff as they are an extension of you and your brand when you aren’t there,” he said.

Lin trains all new coaches himself. Before a coach takes on a class, he or she shadows Lin and learns only from him. Once they are “imprinted,” as Lin describes it, they shadow other coaches.

“I think it’s important to find the balance between making cookie-cutter coaches and having wildly different coaching styles,” Lin said.

Getting Personal—or Not

While group classes are the foundation for most affiliates, one-on-one coaching has a place in CrossFit: It’s how Glassman started out, and he retained some private clients even after he moved to group classes. He even said that one-on-one work is the first step to becoming a skilled group coach. Personal training is also a great way for coaches to make money and for athletes to benefit from some extra attention.

CrossFit High Road offers personal training as a supplement to the regular classes, and Adams thinks everyone can benefit from the sessions.

“However, I do not believe that’s the bread and butter of the business. I truly believe in the group model,” Adams said. “Coming from coaching sports and working with people in a group environment, watching people thrive in that environment is unlike any other. If executed properly and with the same attention to detail, it can be just as effective as working with somebody one-on-one.”

Adams said he thinks personal-training sessions can add value to an existing group model, but he doesn’t think it works the other way around.

“There’s a reason why I no longer personally train. You also have the power to affect more people’s lives. From a personal stand-



Excellence is obvious to everyone, and excellent affiliates find success regardless of the size of the gym or its classes.

Erica Livoti

point, I like being able to communicate with 100 people a day versus only being able to touch 10 or 12 in a day,” Adams said.

When Andrew Bueno first tried CrossFit in 2007 he was immediately intrigued. Bueno, who was 21 at the time, was working as a personal trainer at a globo gym when he worked out at CrossFit North (now known as CrossFit Seattle).

“Seeing what (owner Dave Werner) was able to build in a warehouse was weird to me, seeing as how I got into the business thinking I was going to be doing personal training: wearing polos, hanging out with bros,” Bueno said. Inspired, Bueno opened his own affiliate, Foundation CrossFit (also in Seattle), in 2007.

Much has changed since 2007. But Bueno, who still owns and operates Foundation CrossFit, said the fundamentals of running an affiliate have stayed the same. Bueno offers both group training

and personal training at his gym.

“Personal training (is) less than 10 percent of our business,” Bueno said. “We made the product the CrossFit classes and made those really popular.”

DiGregorio said one-on-one training will yield results, but not everyone wants to pay \$120 an hour for that individualization. He also thinks it’s possible to get very close to private-training results in a group setting.

At CrossFit Illumine, Alexander estimates personal-training fees will be 5 percent of projected annual revenue of about \$800,000.

“We are doing really well with the group model. It’s part of our culture,” he said. “People are so bought into this group thing.”

For Lin, personal training is not part of his business model, although he said he believes in it.

“There’s too much demand for us to create a bottleneck of personal training only. Although we don’t rely on a high-volume/low-cost model like a globo gym, we do need to sustain ourselves on higher volume due to the market and overhead,” Lin said.

He offers personal training to his members but pushes for them to join the group classes first.

Above All, Hard Work

Glassman has said the pursuit of excellence guided his every move as a gym owner, and that excellence ultimately created success for his business.

“It becomes obvious that the most effective business plan comes from achieving excellence and letting the market bring the money to you,” Glassman wrote in “Scaling Professional Training.”

“The pursuit of excellence is the heart of our business plan.”
—Greg Glassman

Pursuing excellence, of course, includes providing quality coaching as the foundation, but it also includes sound management of all aspects of running a gym.

Some owners, like DiGregorio, prefer a smaller gym, where members pay a higher monthly fee for individualized attention and smaller classes. Others, like Alexander, want a large gym with multiple classes and coaches that can accommodate large groups at the most popular class times.

What all successful affiliate owners share is a relentless work ethic and a focus—above everything else—on the health and happiness of their members.

“This is where working your butt off comes in,” said Adams of CrossFit High Road. “If you want to have a successful gym with the group model—do it.” ■

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.

HOPE FOR RAIN

CrossFit community funds construction of life-changing dam in Rabai, Kenya.

BY DALLIN FRAMPTON



All photos: Courtesy of Dallin Frampton

Sickness and dehydration are common in Rabai. Once full, the dam will provide 5,500 people with a reliable source of water during the long dry season.

As the sun slowly crept up and over the heat-scorching hills in the middle of Rabai, Kenya, we pulled our shirts off and hung rings over a mkupha-tree branch for a workout of muscle-ups, air squats, running and burpees.

It was 6 a.m. on a Thursday morning in November 2015, with 85 percent humidity and the temperature already well over 90 F. Kenya is hot in the middle of November—really hot. Our expedition group knew before breakfast that it would be the hottest day yet, so we threw a few extra shirts in our backpacks, well aware we would go through them all before noon.

Our group was made up of my wife, Carlyn; my father, Jason Frampton; and multiyear CrossFit Games athlete

Dan Bailey. My wife and I were on hand to coordinate various projects and make sure the expedition went smoothly, while my father tagged along to break ground on a water-cistern project funded by his company, Ken Garff Automotive Group. Bailey was there to hand over to the Mwanjama community a school building he [funded completely on his own](#).

The trip to Africa marked the 12th expedition CrossFit has been part of. Since 2011, CrossFit Inc. and its affiliates have participated in starting and finishing school buildings, constructing pit latrines, nailing desks together, and celebrating success stories with community elders in various villages. Affiliates and CrossFitters around the world fund the projects by donating through [Hope for Kenya](#).

This trip, however, was different than previous expeditions: The green light had been given to move forward on the biggest project to date, and our first step was to find exactly where we were going to put the damn thing. We had to be sure of location: A dam isn't something you can move later. After bringing in multiple hydrologists, geologists and land surveyors, we had three potential spots.

After we made our selection, we brought in a front-end loader to start digging a massive hole. To catch enough water, we had to go deep, but we also needed width to strategically catch runoff from nearby villages. The deeper and wider we dug, the more we had to pile up soil on the walls of the dam to ensure the structure wouldn't rupture. The placement of the entrance was also key: We had to be

CrossFit is changing lives from the ground up—literally.



Locals will also benefit from a garden beside the dam and fish released in the water collected by the dam. Both will help diversify a diet currently based on corn.



Aside from this filtration pipe, the entire dam is constructed with earth.

QUICK STATS: RABAI SURFACE DAM

CAPACITY

3million gallons

COST

\$50,000us

SERVES

5,500people
daily

MAY AVG. PRECIPITATION

9.3inches

FEBRUARY AVG. PRECIPITATION

0.6inches

Sources: Dallin Frampton/Climatemps.com

Although many areas of Kenya receive ample amounts of water throughout the year, Rabai, about 12 miles northwest of Mombasa, isn't on the list. The locals have adapted very well to the semi-arid climate and the dry months of the calendar, but adaptation simply hasn't been enough. These people are constantly sick, and many die each year from dehydration or contaminated water. To remedy these problems, we plan to leverage the short April-June rainy season, catching and storing every precious drop in the manmade reservoir.

Every day, about 5,500 people will benefit from this surface dam. To put things in perspective, 3 million gallons would allow 1,000 people to each pull two 5-gallon buckets out of the dam daily for 300 total days. The normal dry season in Kenya lasts about 240 days, from July 1 to Feb. 28.

This dam will provide more than just water: It's going to create a new and everlasting ecosystem. Once the dam is completely full, sometime around June, a few thousand fish will be released into the water, providing a new and essential source of protein for the locals. The fish will solve other problems by feeding on algae and insects—specifically mosquitoes.

A perpetual garden will be constructed in July on the lower side of the dam. Filled with local fruits and vegetables nourished by a renewable water source, the garden will provide essential nutrients beyond the current diet of corn for all three meals.

CrossFit is changing lives from the ground up—literally. This water source, along with a little hope and a can-do attitude, will alter the trajectory of the villagers' lives. Instead of struggling with disease, dehydration and poor nutrition, they'll be moving toward health, longevity and wellness. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dallin Frampton manages the global philanthropic efforts of CrossFit Inc. He's managed the construction of 16 school buildings, hundreds of desks, and dozens of pit latrines and water cisterns. He owns [CrossFit SpearHead](#) in Salt Lake City, Utah, and runs it along with his wife, Carlyn.



MIKE WARKENTIN | UNCOMMON SENSE | MAY 2016



Everything changed when I put each lifter on the platform alone with the group watching.

In the final week of a two-month focus on the snatch and clean and jerk, I had athletes list three snatch attempts based on confidence and form: “What are you 90 percent certain you can lift well every single time?” The goal was to use sure-thing loads and add a bit of pressure so athletes might know what a weightlifting competition would feel like.

Some of the athletes made all attempts, but about half missed at least once, and a few missed twice. To my greater surprise, each athlete showed form variations I didn’t expect after seven weeks in which the lifters had eliminated many errors and become much more consistent. For 14 sessions in a row we had drilled mechanics, and technique and consistency had improved across the board. But when the athletes were alone on the platform with submaximal loads, many old errors came back.

Perplexed, I did what any intelligent coach would do: I talked to my dog about it.

Lifting Heavy

Dogs have always been a big part of CrossFit. Athena, a pit bull, was a fixture at Greg Glassman’s original gym in Santa Cruz, California, and people who worked out there recall she would hop up on a plyo box for applause from CrossFit Inc.’s Founder and CEO.

I doubt it’s a coincidence that Glassman, a trainer, had and continues to have an interest in dogs. Teaching a canine to sit isn’t all that different from teaching an athlete to squat when you get right down to it. I didn’t realize the relationship until I got a dog in 2015.

Heavy, a St. Bernard/English-mastiff cross, was 110 lb. at one year and strong as Jason Khalipa. Heavy’s pretty trainable, and when she’s motivated she’ll respond almost instantly to over a dozen commands. Of course, she isn’t always motivated, and our thick bitch has moments when she just doesn’t care what we say or do.

Determined to break through to her, I hit the internet in search of tips for training stubborn dogs. I found a bunch, but I also found this paragraph from Laurie Luck: “In my 15 years of training, I’ve not yet run into a stubborn or hard-headed dog. And I don’t think that’s because I’ve figured out how to screen the stubborn or hard-headed dogs out. I don’t think there are any out there.”

In “[How to Deal With a Stubborn Dog](#),” Luck explained that

dogs thought to be obstinate are actually untrained beasts who are distracted—and here’s where we link up with weightlifting and CrossFit again.

Some gifted dogs learn commands relatively quickly, while others struggle and are labeled stubborn or untalented. In either case, dogs need hundreds or thousands of repetitions, and trainers will tell you even the best beasts are only reliable about 80-90 percent of the time once they’re well trained.

Sounds a lot like Olympic weightlifting, doesn’t it?

Similarly, many dogs are reliable only in certain situations. For instance, in the back yard I’ve taught Heavy to stay for up to three minutes with laser focus on the treat in my hand and slobber gushing from her substantial jowls. Outside the yard, “stay!” has no effect. This is very common, and training books advise slowly adding distractions when working with a dog, teaching it to focus despite new stimulus.

Intensity brings results, but consider
it a distraction that can change
mechanics if consistency born of
repetition is lacking.

So as I firmly told Heavy to stay yet watched her coiling up to playfully launch herself at the approaching Alaskan malamute, I had a revelation: Surprising instances of suboptimal movement are the product of athletes who need more repetition and less distraction to ingrain good habits forever. Training is incomplete—no matter how well they move at times.

Consider the athlete who shows off beautiful warm-up air squats that turn ugly when Cindy starts. How about the “good mover” who transforms into a round-backed brawler in a competition workout? And then there are the CrossFit Kids—the program emphasizes that young athletes in the throes of growth spurts, hormone changes and Snapchats will often start moving poorly with almost no warning even though they know better.

The fix is the same as it is when training dogs: Relentlessly but patiently ingrain good patterns with only the level of distraction that can be tolerated at any given point. That level might be



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

By training a dog to obey commands consistently, you can eventually teach that dog to obey you even when distractions are present.

different from day to day. Gradually increase distractions. Take a step back when problems arise—this part is critical but often ignored. Add more distractions only when results are consistently better.

It’s an incremental process that’s clearly laid out in this classic CrossFit progression: mechanics, consistency, intensity.

Intensity brings results, but consider it a distraction that can change mechanics if consistency born of repetition is lacking. Intensity comes last for a reason. Other distractions include competition pressure, life stress, minor aches and pains, that smokin’ body in the 3-p.m. class. All these things—and many

more—can turn a glorious split jerk into a hot mess.

In my class, I had the loads and reps dialed in correctly for the athletes: Each attempt was very makeable and below maximum effort. What I didn’t anticipate was the dramatic effect the modest pressure would have on new movement patterns that hadn’t become completely automatic in every situation.

I and my athletes forgot to account for distractions—and this happens more often than you might think. We’ve all seen the athlete who squats 195 for a triple but gets buried by 200 for a single because the PR attempt got in her head. And how many people suddenly started missing double-unders in the CrossFit



If you can teach a dog to stay, you can probably teach an athlete to squat—and vice versa.

Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

Games Open for no apparent reason?

The lesson, of course, is that coaching is more than just cueing and writing prescriptions of sets, reps and loads. Good coaches are keenly aware of their athletes' levels of development and work hard to figure out exactly what their charges need to succeed in any given workout. They're very sensitive to the great many things that can affect athletic performance, and their programming and cueing reflect their daily evaluation of each athlete.

Other coaches simply write the workout on the board and expect results to come quickly and in every situation for every trainee. That can work with very gifted athletes, but it's equivalent to saying "down" after a dog has already decided to hit the floor.

"The degree of reliability is directly related to the number of successful responses in various environments," Paul Owens wrote in "The Dog Whisperer," and he might as well have been talking about CrossFit athletes.

If an athlete is missing lifts more often than he or she should, or if a dog-in-training suddenly yanks you across the lawn, the solution is likely the same: more repetition and less distraction.

Or, in CrossFit terms, go back to mechanics, consistency, intensity. ■

About the Author: Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and the founder of [CrossFit 204](#). Heavy the dog is on Instagram as [@heavysaintmastiff](#).



THE
CrossFit JOURNAL

DOCUMENTING THE CROSSFIT GAMES

Photos and text by Kieran Kesner

I began defining myself as a CrossFitter shortly after I joined CrossFit Praha in 2013, while living in Prague, Czech Republic. It was there that I learned how to squat, press and deadlift, and it was there that I first heard names such as Rich Froning and Annie Thorisdottir.

The CrossFit Games athletes became my role models, and I spent much of my time dreaming of what it would be like to someday compete at the elite level. While I might never enter the StubHub Center in Carson, California, as a professional athlete, entering the arena as a photographer is the next best thing.







At the Long Beach Marriott, the ballroom is transformed into a CrossFit gym for Games week. Suddenly the world's fittest athletes were before me, training, hanging out and relaxing in preparation for a competition that would crown one man and one woman Fittest on Earth.



I arrived at Hermosa Beach early to get a sense of how the events would be laid out and where I might position myself to capture the best images. It's one thing to see these athletes in photographs or video and another thing entirely to see them in person. Never in my life had I seen such extreme fitness. Each athlete was beautiful: strong and explosive yet equally delicate in movement.



The CrossFit Games were unlike anything I had ever documented before. The events are incredibly fast, but their action is predictable to a CrossFitter. I found myself not only reacting to the environment as I do on other shoots but also taking time before each event to understand the test. Each time, I developed a strategy and began surveying the environment to find little corners I could tuck myself into or places where I could peer just over the wall.

My goal was to try and capture the perfect moment, and while the CrossFit Games athletes provide a host of candidates during each challenge, I tried not to shoot endless frames with hopes of getting lucky. Even during fast-moving situations, I took the time to understand the workout and place myself in the athlete's shoes. I wanted to understand each competitor's approach and compose my photograph accordingly.





Documenting the Games involves finding moments I wish everyone had the opportunity to see. After the national anthem, the color guard withdrew behind the CrossFit Games banner in the Tennis Stadium, and the members of the crowd were beginning to psych themselves up for the competition. Thousands of eyes had left the color guard, but their attention to the flags did not fade. It was beautiful.

For the first time at the Games, Murph and a heavy version of DT challenged the competitors, who paid tribute to two servicemen who gave their lives for their country: Navy Lt. Michael P. Murphy and Air Force Staff Sgt. Timothy P. Davis. It's special to watch athletes compete to be named the Fittest on Earth, but it's truly moving to see the blood, sweat and tears that pour from them as they honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice.







The fifth and final day was torture. The athletes had pushed their limits physically and mentally, but despite the exhaustion you could see in their eyes, each one displayed the grit, character and determination that define the Fittest on Earth.







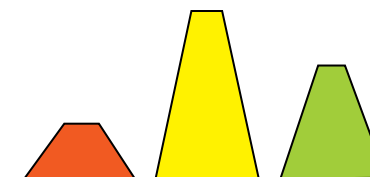
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WARM AND HAPPY

CrossFit coaches share their favorite warm-up games to get athletes laughing and moving.

BY BRITTNEY SALINE



“High knees, lunges and PVC pass-throughs!”

While lunging her way across the room for what feels like the millionth time, an athlete steals a jealous glance at the CrossFit Kids class in the next room, giggling wildly as they play a [tic-tac-toe racing game](#).

At CrossFit Leverage, warm-up games aren't just for kids.

“All of our members have got real jobs and real lives outside of this place,” said affiliate owner Dave Fecht, “and if they’ve had a long, stressful week, it’s silly games like this that kind of give them a chance to play and have fun.”

Besides ending the monotony and helping athletes crack a smile, the occasional warm-up game can also break the ice for new members or athletes from different class times.

“It’s a good way for people to overcome that standoffishness or nerves coming into their first main group class,” said Aaron McIlwee, director of CrossFit East Auckland.

“And it’ll still get the heart rate going,” said James McDermott, head coach at Albany CrossFit. “It will still prepare them for the WOD, they’ll still break a light sweat, but they’re gonna have fun, too. And if you have people laughing and smiling, then you already know it’s going to be a good day.”

Sweat and smiles: Two elements of a great warm-up.



Lateral movement makes the stick game a great warm-up option.

The Stick Game

CrossFit Island Park head coach Keith Van Wickler plucked the concept of the stick game from within the chasms of the internet.

“That one we like a lot because it gets everyone in the group kind of competing with each other at the same time,” he said.

The concept is simple: At the coach’s call, athletes, standing in a circle holding a PVC pipe on end before them, rapidly rotate clockwise or counterclockwise while leaving their stick behind and attempting to grab their neighbor’s before it hits the floor.

“It works on aspects of fitness that you don’t see focused on too much in workouts,” Van Wickler said. “So, lateral movement, moving in the frontal plane instead of the sagittal plane, reaction time and hand-eye coordination. When (athletes) are playing the game and having fun, they’re not even thinking about all that, but they’re training it at the same time.”

Equipment

1. One PVC pipe per athlete.

Rules

Arrange athletes in one large circle, about 2 feet between athletes. At the coach’s call of “left” or “right,” athletes rotate, leaving their PVC pipes balanced on end while attempting to grab their neighbor’s stick. If an athlete fails to catch the next person’s pipe, he or she must do 10 burpees before re-entering play. Every few rounds, athletes take a step backward to increase difficulty.

Variation

For large classes, split athletes into smaller circles and play eliminations rounds.

Bonus Challenges

1. Athletes must hold their dominant hands behind their backs, using only their non-dominant hand to play.
2. Athletes may only grab sticks with the hand opposite the direction called.



The group must communicate to spin its designated member away from the tagger.

Funnel Tag

For some, the game of tag might bring up horrifying memories from middle-school P.E. class. Perhaps fonder memories will come from a game of **funnel tag**, a team-based adaptation with a literal twist.

Standing in a circle, arms entwined as in a pre-game huddle, athletes protect one chosen person in the huddle from another athlete outside the circle by spinning and sprinting like a human tornado.

A more entertaining way to ramp up the heart rate than the standard 400-m run—uncontrollable laughter might benefit the abdominal muscles in addition to making breathing more challenging—the game “gets the blood flowing and gets the body warm and ready to go,” said LYFE Fitness/Team CrossFit coach Ernie Azpeitia.

Sudden changes in direction as the human cyclone tries to maneuver its chosen athlete away from the tagger, he said, are a great way to prime the reflexes and train in the lateral plane.

“It’s a great team-builder, too,” Azpeitia added. “You have to communicate with each other. Even if you mess up, it’s funny and people laugh.”

Equipment

None.

Rules

Divide the class into groups of 6 or 7 athletes. Each group chooses one athlete to be the tagger and one athlete for the tagger to pursue. The group faces each other in a circle, arm-over-arm, and spins to the left or right in an attempt to keep the chosen athlete as far from the tagger as possible. The tagger must remain outside the circle, sprinting around it in pursuit of the prey.

If the tagger successfully tags the athlete, cyclone athletes must do 5 burpees. If the cyclone fends off the tagger for a predetermined amount of time (1-2 minutes should suffice), the tagger must complete 5 burpees. Choose a new tagger and target for each round.



Team inchworm requires coordination and gets both the upper and lower body working.

Team Inchworm

After a late night or a long day at work, athletes sometimes arrive at the gym dragging ass. Thankfully, CrossFit East Auckland’s got a warm-up for that: **team inchworm race**. In teams of at least three, athletes inch their way across the floor in a seated crab-walk position, pulling with their feet on the floor while pushing back on the ankles of the athlete behind—like a human rowboat.

McIlwee invented the game while warming up his class for a heavy squat day.

“It gets the heart rate moving and the legs prepped,” he said.

Unlike a warm-up of simple air squats, he said, the game also works the lats, traps and triceps while challenging athletes to keep a tight midline. Going even short distances in his 120-square-m gym, McIlwee said, is enough to take athletes’ breath away.

“They went one length and back the other and they were absolutely knackered,” he said.

At the same time, the game promotes communication and teamwork.

“They have to work as a team to be able to move,” he said. “Like a rowing race, everyone’s gotta be on point for the boat to move ... the team that works together the best wins.”

Equipment

None.

Rules

Depending on class size, divide athletes into two or more teams of at least three athletes. On the call of go, teams inch forward while seated to a set point approximately 10 m from the start. Each athlete but the last must grip the ankles of the person behind, with the final athlete pushing off the floor with his or her hands.

At the 10-m mark, athletes turn around in place so the rear athlete becomes the leader, then race back to the start line. For added incentive, the losing team might do 10 burpees.

Bonus Challenge

Instead of turning around at the 10-m mark, athletes remain in position and proceed to inch backward to the start line.



Symbolic frolic: Farmers set objects up and lumberjacks knock them down.

Farmers and Lumberjacks

“The older we get, we kind of just play less,” noted Nick Bastianelli, owner of CrossFit 248. “And that playing is really important for us physically as well as emotionally.”

So every now and then he takes a leaf out of the CrossFit Kids book and swaps the line drills for farmers and lumberjacks in his adult CrossFit classes.

“It’s a good stress reliever,” he said. “A lot of our athletes are professionals working white-collar jobs, many of them sit at desks all day, and a large majority of them have really high-stress positions. They kind of count on us to change that.”

Adult athletes at CrossFit 248 play it just like the kids do. Divided into two teams, “lumberjacks” attempt to knock down cones set around the room, while “farmers” pick them back up. If all the cones are up or down, the opposing team must do 10 burpees or another movement of the victor’s choice.

“We’re getting people sprinting forward, back-pedaling, shuffling from side to side, and they’re constantly moving and stopping,” Bastianelli said. “It’s just a good all-round warm-up.”

The zig-zags, swerves, sudden lurches and dives—movements uncommon in most programming—help preserve muscular balance, Bastianelli continued.

“It’s really important to work in all planes,” he said. “It helps build a bullet-proof athlete.”

Equipment

Six to 10 cones, depending on class size. The smaller the cone, the greater the challenge.

Rules

After scattering the cones across the field of play—some standing up, some lying down—divide the class into two equal teams. At the call of go, lumberjacks try to knock all the cones down while the farmers set them upright. Athletes may only use their hands to right or upset a cone, and guarding is not allowed. The winning team gets to choose the fitness-related punishment—“motivational consequences”—for the losers.

Variation

For large classes, limit duration of play. The team with the most cones knocked down or standing up when the time expires wins.



Leaving a gap in the circle inserts a margin of safety so rising athletes don't trip runners.

Follow the Leader

“If you catch her, she’s gotta do the dishes!” said Jason Ackerman as a married pair of athletes raced through a game of [follow the leader](#).

Ackerman is a CrossFit Inc. Level 1 Seminar Staff member and former CrossFit Clifton Park/Albany CrossFit coach, and though he no longer coaches at Albany CrossFit, McDermott has kept the game alive in his stead.

“CrossFit in itself is adult play ... but I think you need to go beyond that and bring it back way more basic, way more to almost childhood things,” McDermott said.

Follow the leader—in which athletes leap over each other in a never-ending circle like a webpage that won’t finish loading—is a great lung-burning alternative to the standard 400-m run or row, McDermott said.

“Instead of everyone going out and doing a lap in the parking lot, let’s make it fun,” he said.

Athletes begin lying prone on the floor, requiring them to pick themselves up before racing around the circle and leaping over fellow athletes along the way.

“So everyone’s kind of doing a burpee, just not killer burpees,” McDermott said. “They’re also having to jump, they’re having to think, (and) they’re having to be agile not to land on anyone.”

As the class warms up, its members can speed up, attempting to complete the revolution faster with each round. Or the class might try to complete a certain set of revolutions within a predetermined time period.

“Right away, we’re paying attention, we’re being actively involved in class, and we are working towards a common goal, and everyone can congratulate each other at the end,” McDermott said. “And you can also set a standard you can try to beat later on.”

Equipment

None.

Rules

Have all athletes lie prone on the floor in a circle, leaving space between each athlete and a modest gap in the circle where no athletes are lying. If running counter-clockwise, the athlete to the immediate left of the gap starts (as viewed from outside the circle). At the call of go, the athlete jumps up and proceeds

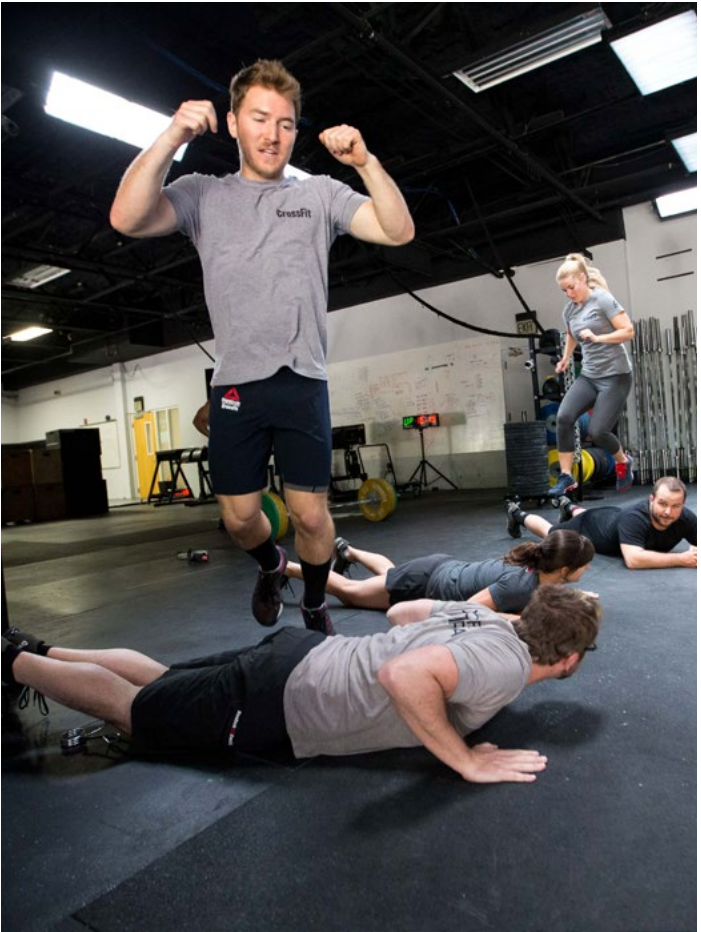
to run around the circle, stepping or jumping over each athlete in turn. When the athlete clears the others and reaches the left side of the gap, he or she lies down. Each athlete springs up to become a runner as soon as he or she is jumped over and becomes the last athlete to the right of the gap. Safety note: athletes who rise at the wrong time can create a tripping hazard, especially when multiple athletes are moving about the circle. Leaving a gap in the circle ensures a margin of safety. Passing should also be discouraged.

Variation

Have every other athlete in a bridge position, requiring the runner to crawl beneath the “bridges.”

Bonus Challenge

Set the clock to count down from 1 minute (give or take, depending on class size). If an entire revolution is not completed before the clock runs out, the whole class must perform 10 burpees.



Sneaky coaches: This game disguises its burpees with running.



Plank tap race: the drag racing of the gymnastics world.

Plank Tap Race

Planks are like vegetables: We know they’re good for us, but we don’t always care for them. Best to disguise them in a way that makes them more palatable. For the athletes at CrossFit Leeds, a **race** is just the thing.

“If we can make the warm-ups effective and fun at the same time, then that’s perfect,” affiliate owner Mike Rawlinson said. “It sets everyone off on the right foot and makes for a really good, fun session.”

In this four-footed race, athletes must hold a plank position while scuttling along a row of kettlebells, tapping each bell with each hand. The goal is to beat your partner to the end without sacrificing the midline—or collapsing on the floor.

“It’s short and fast (and) it’s really accessible,” Rawlinson said. “You often get quite close races because it only takes maybe 10 seconds.”

At CrossFit Leeds, the game is often used before workouts with handstand push-ups, cleans or overhead barbell work.

“It’s great for the midline, but also we start to load the shoulders up and the wrists—which are often neglected—getting them in that extended position,” Rawlinson said. “(Athletes) think they’re just playing a game, but we’re actually using it as a really useful tool to get them prepped for whatever’s coming.”

Equipment

12 to 20 kettlebells.

Rules

Place the kettlebells in a straight line about shoulder-width apart. Two at a time, athletes race down either side of the line, maintaining a plank position at all times. Athletes must tap each kettlebell with each hand.

Variations

1. Divide athletes into two teams for an overall race.
2. Athletes race in pairs, with winners facing off in elimination rounds while the rest of the class holds a static plank position until the ultimate champion is crowned.

Bonus Challenge

1. Make the line of kettlebells uneven, requiring the athlete to navigate forward and backward as well as laterally.
2. If an athlete falls to the floor, he or she must go back the space of two kettlebells before continuing.



If two teams are evenly matched, this warm-up can definitely become a workout.

Wall-Ball Burpee Tennis

Is it Wimbledon or the CrossFit Games? At CrossFit Leverage, who can tell?

While playing a casual game of medicine-ball catch one day, CrossFit Leverage coaches noticed a few boxes abandoned in a convenient line across the floor.

“We were like, ‘You know what? We could turn this into kind of a warm-up,’” Fecht reported. Thus **wall-ball burpee tennis** was born. Mimicking a game of doubles tennis, athletes “volley” a 10-lb. medicine ball over a “net” of boxes, completing a burpee after each toss.

Besides encouraging friendly competition, Lecht said, the game jacks up the heart rate with the burpees and works the obliques with the medicine-ball toss.

“With that med-ball side throw, now you’re working rotary muscles, so it helps warm up the midline,” he said. “In CrossFit, we don’t do a lot of rotary movements and lateral movements, and now you’re forced to use those muscle groups that may not fire as much during a workout but that you’re gonna use a lot during everyday stuff.”

Equipment

One 10-lb. medicine ball and four boxes per group of four athletes.

Rules

Depending on class size and available space, create 3 to 4 “courts,” using boxes spaced a few inches apart as nets and cones, kettlebells or chalk to mark the field of play (each side of the court should be about 7 to 9 feet long). Divide athletes into teams of two.

As in a game of doubles tennis, teams volley the medicine ball over the “net.” After each toss, the athlete must complete one burpee, and the ball must bounce once on the opposite side of the “net” before being caught. If at any point an athlete forgets to do a burpee after tossing the ball or if a team fails to return or catch the ball, the match is over and the losing team must perform 10 medicine-ball cleans.



Grudge matches encouraged.

Variation

- 1. Winning teams on each court face off until only one team remains, while athletes cut from play perform burpees, air squats or medicine-ball cleans to keep moving.
- 2. Instead of forming multiple two-person teams, divide the class into two equal teams for one giant match. Athletes must hold the bottom of a squat unless actively catching or throwing the ball or completing a burpee.

Bonus Challenge

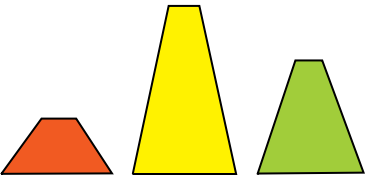
With each elimination round, stack more boxes to create a higher net or use a heavier medicine ball.

Play Time!

Warm-up games are not meant to replace the line drills, skill practice, barbell complexes and dynamic stretches that prepare athletes to do CrossFit.

But every now and then “it’s important to play,” McDermott said. “Kids play and adults should play, too, and there are some people out there that never get to play. Their lives are very serious, and it’s good to bring (play) into the gym because the gym should be an escape from whatever’s going on in your life.” ■

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](#).



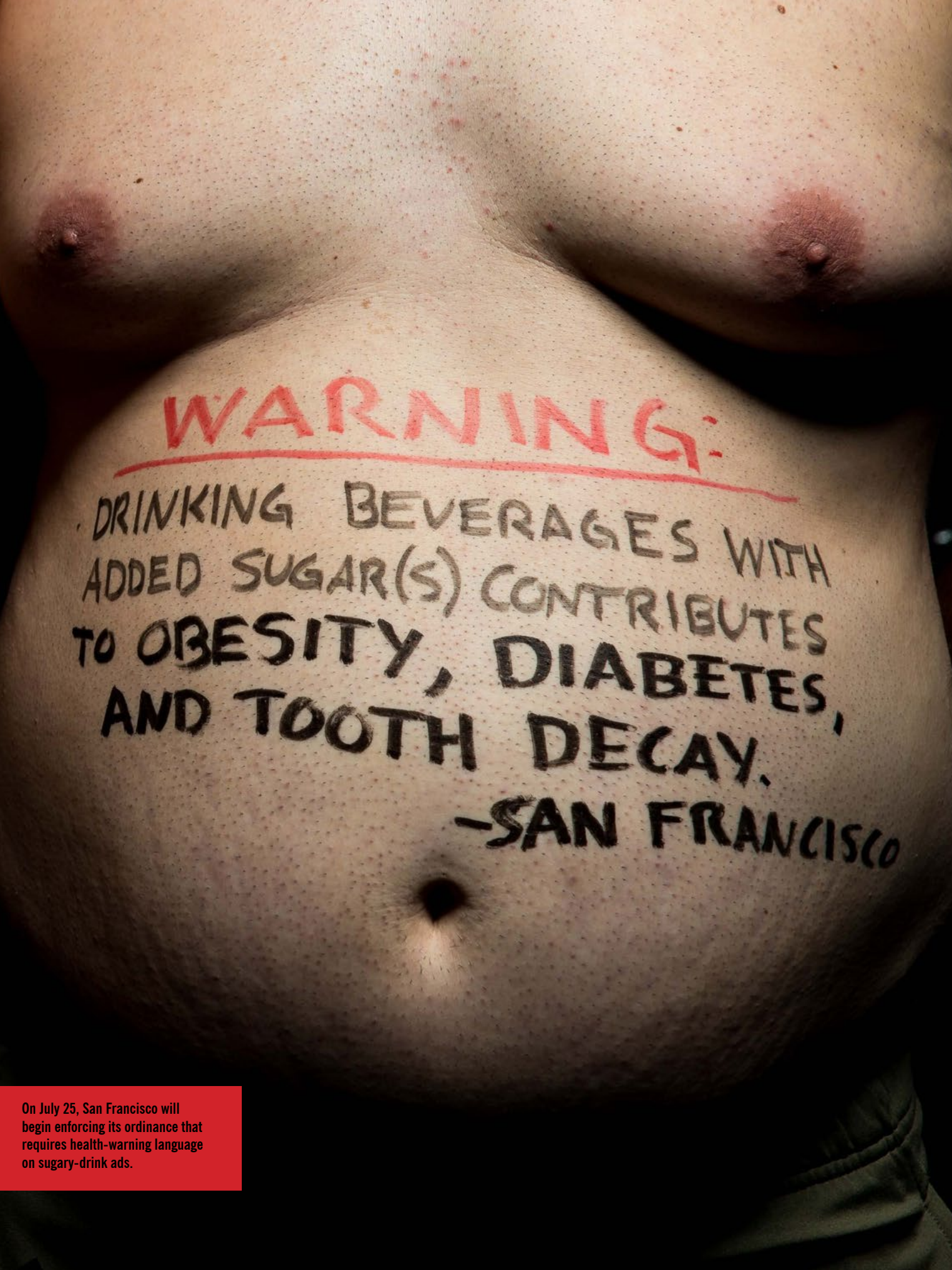


THE
CrossFit JOURNAL

SODA SUIT FIZZLING OUT

California federal judge denies beverage-association motion to stop San Francisco from requiring warnings on sugary-drink ads.

BY ANDRÉA MARIA CECIL



On July 25, San Francisco will begin enforcing its ordinance that requires health-warning language on sugary-drink ads.

Should the American Beverage Association appeal a recent federal judge’s order denying its preliminary-injunction motion against a San Francisco ordinance, it will have “an uphill battle,” said an attorney with the Public Health Law Center.

“The order was very detailed and the court laid out its reasoning, so it created a solid foundation for (the city),” explained Julie Ralston Aoki, a staff attorney with the Minnesota-based center at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law. Before joining the center, Aoki served as a Minnesota assistant attorney general for nine years.

The center was among more than 20 organizations that filed an unsolicited brief in support of San Francisco’s ordinance requiring health-warning language on outdoor ads for sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). The ordinance is the first of its kind in the country.

Aoki added: “A motion like this is a really good way to test the strength of their case.”

On May 17, U.S. District Judge Edward M. Chen denied the American Beverage Association (ABA) motion to stop San Francisco from enforcing the measure, saying the plaintiff’s arguments that the **city’s ordinance** violates the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment “are not likely to succeed.”

“And it is unlikely that they would suffer irreparable harm if the ordinance were to go into effect,” Chen wrote in his decision. “Even if Plaintiffs had established serious questions going to the merits, balancing of hardships does not tip sharply in their favor.”

The ABA—the trade group that represents the country’s nonalcoholic beverage industry, including the likes of The Coca-Cola Co. and PepsiCo Inc.—**filed suit** against the City and County of San Francisco on July 24 in the U.S. District Court, Northern District of California. They claim the ordinance violates the First Amendment, which guarantees multiple freedoms, including speech. Joining the suit are the California Retailers Association and the California State Outdoor Advertising Association.

“This is big. This is enormous. I mean it’s not just a denial of the preliminary-injunction (motion). It’s a judge in federal district court saying that the beverage industry’s arguments against warning labels do not stand up in court,” said Harold Goldstein, executive director of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.

He added: “That’s the first time in the country that a court has weighed in on that issue.”

“It’s a judge in federal district court saying that the beverage industry’s arguments against warning labels do not stand up in court.”
—Harold Goldstein

The ordinance, which will go into effect July 25, requires at least 20 percent of a sugary-drink ad to display the following language: “WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. This is a message from the City and County of San Francisco.”

It is likely the city’s mandated warning is factual and accurate, Chen wrote.

“The City had a reasonable basis for identifying SSBs as a cause. The City has a legitimate interest in public health and safety, and the warning that SSBs contribute to obesity and diabetes is reasonably related to the City’s interest in public health and safety, particularly in light of the evidence indicating that SSBs are a significant source of calories as well as a significant source of added sugar.”

San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera praised Chen’s decision.

“I’m gratified by a very strong ruling, which eviscerated plaintiffs’ arguments that common sense warnings about the health risks associated with sugar-sweetened beverages—like obesity, diabetes and tooth decay—are somehow misleading. The truth is these sugary products cause many health problems,” he said via an email from press secretary Matt Dorsey.

The health warning will provide information consumers need to make informed decisions, said San Francisco Supervisor Scott Wiener, author of the warning language.

“Consumption of sodas and other sugary beverages are making people in our community sick, particularly in our low-income communities, and education is a critical part of improving our society’s health,” he said via email.



Although Chen's decision does not signal an end to the suit, Aoki called his order “a very positive development.”

“It's really gratifying—the thoughtful analysis that the court applied to the First Amendment arguments—and it's also a really important milestone for this movement around warning labels for sugary beverages and other foods, nutrients that might be of concern,” she said.

Still, the case is “high impact,” Aoki noted. She said she wouldn't be surprised if the ABA continued to pursue the case even if it lost an appeal.

“It could end up in the Supreme Court.”

“It's also a really important milestone for this movement around warning labels for sugary beverages and other foods.”
—Julie Ralston Aoki

Herrera expressed unconcern about an ABA appeal.

“I think a strong and thorough ruling like this bodes well for the City's position on appeal,” he said.

In a statement sent to multiple news organizations, ABA leadership said it was disappointed in the court's ruling.

“We believe that the city of San Francisco's mandate violates the constitutional rights of a select group by unfairly discriminating against one particular category of products, based on one ingredient found in many other products. We are reviewing the decision and look forward to making our case on the merits of this ordinance in court.”

The ABA has 30 days from the order's issue to file an appeal.

Goldstein welcomed such a filing.

“The longer the beverage industry fights this, the more attention is going to be brought to the facts of the case, which is that these beverages lead to obesity, diabetes, tooth decay. The more they fight it, the more the public will learn about the harms of its products. So they can keep fightin' it, for all I care.” ■

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Might Over Mitochondrial Disease

Theresa Couture uses CrossFit to rebuild her body after suffering a stroke.

By Ginger DeShaney

May 2016



All images: Courtesy of CrossFit Wingman

Theresa Couture fell out of her wheelchair in her kitchen, sending the chair flying across the room. As she lay there, home alone, she knew she didn't have the strength to drag herself to the chair and get back in it.

"That was the final straw for me," said Couture, who has mitochondrial disease (mito). Mito manifests itself through dysautonomia, strokes, muscle weakness, and neurological and stomach issues.

1 of 4

She decided to give CrossFit a try in October 2015—with the goal of being able to get back in her chair from the floor.

“Now I get out of my chair and onto the floor and back into my chair without assistance,” said Couture, a founder of the nonprofit MitoAction, whose mission is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives with the disease.

Couture has been wheelchair-bound since March 23, 2015, after her last stroke. She has had strokes before and always recovered, but this one was different: It left her unable to move her legs because the area of the brain that helps her move took the hit.

“I could feel my legs but I couldn’t make them move,” Couture said.

Couture started physical therapy right away after the last stroke. Meanwhile, her daughter, Brianna, who also has mitochondrial disease, was doing CrossFit and making wonderful strides. She encouraged her mom to give it a try, telling her she could strengthen her arms, core and back.

“You always taught me you can’t live like you’re waiting to die,” Brianna told her mom.

With the kitchen incident burned into her mind, Couture headed to CrossFit Wingman in Agawan, Massachusetts, for an interview. The first things she noticed were handicap parking and a handicap ramp—both great signs. One of the coaches, Aaron Zanchi, interviewed her—and she interviewed him.

“He asked me (about) my goals, what I could do from the chair, and (for) information about how my disease impacted me,” Couture said. “As a former ICU/trauma nurse, I was duly impressed. He was educated, welcoming, thoughtful, and proactive in his interview and in his approach to developing a plan.

“What was new for me was the focus on what I could do, not what I couldn’t do. That’s a different model. That question brought it positively forward.”

“What was new for me was the focus on what I could do, not what I couldn’t do.” —Theresa Couture



After starting CrossFit, Couture was able to stand up out of her wheelchair twice. A Facebook video showing her accomplishments has been viewed almost 900,000 times.

CrossFit: Infinitely Scalable

Zanchi spent two weeks working privately with Couture to establish her baseline and see what she was capable of before she started group classes and working with another coach. Trainer Zachary Betta explained CrossFit is universally scalable, inclusive and adaptable to athletes of all abilities.

In December, everything was different from when Couture started two months prior, Betta said. In the beginning, Couture was using 2-lb. hand weights and her movements were very, very small. She also didn’t get out of her chair at all. About eight weeks later, she was lifting a 45-lb. barbell, and she got out of her chair, got on the floor, did adaptive sit-ups, got back in the chair and went to the next station.

She even stood up out of her wheelchair—twice—on her own power, an accomplishment chronicled in [a video](#) taken by Betta and posted on the CrossFit Wingman Facebook page. CrossFit shared the video, and as of press time the clip had almost 900,000 views.

Previously, Couture had been unable to stand or walk, with even the smallest movements resulting in severe muscle spasms and tremors. But because she’s so much



Zachary Betta works with Couture on a slightly raised platform that simulates curbs and other obstacles she must navigate outside the gym.

stronger now, she stood up with no leg spasms at all.

"That moment was in the middle of a workout when she was tired," Betta said. "It was an amazing moment for all of us."

Couture admitted that some days her workout is just getting dressed, transferring to her chair, getting in and out of the car, and getting into the gym.

"On those days, I cheer on others. But I don't let it get me down," she said.

Betta has learned to read Couture's demeanor when she comes in the gym, and he adapts the workout accordingly.

"If she has lots of energy, I know it's a good day and she can work hard and make progress," he said. But he also knows if she works hard one class, she may be tired the next. On those days, they will work from the chair to increase her competence and strength in the chair.

Couture constantly challenges herself.

"It's easy to throw in the towel," she said, "but the more you do, the more you can do."

Betta agreed: "Every time she comes in, she does something new. Her adaptability is incredible. And a big piece is her attitude and unwillingness to give up. She works her (butt) off. She has never missed a day. She's been this ball of positive energy. I've never seen her be negative about anything."

Her coach also noted Couture is close with a regular group of workout partners—something very common in CrossFit gyms.

"The power of community helps me feel engaged. It helps my body, mind and spirit. You need a community of people to lift you up when you're feeling down," Couture said.

CrossFit, Exercise and Mito

Any endurance or fitness athlete is familiar with the term "mitochondria" because the tiny cellular component is solely responsible for all the energy we need for proper cell, organ and body function. In addition, mitochondrial adaption to high-intensity exercise training is known to be responsible for improvements in VO₂ max and lactate threshold.

"The benefit of exercise for patients with any chronic disease seems logical since it may improve overall physical and cardiovascular conditioning," said Dr. Eduardo Balcells, cardiologist with Mountain States Health Alliance; athlete at Iron Mountain CrossFit in Abingdon, Virginia; and father of a child with mitochondrial disease. "Patients with mito, however, have dysfunctional mitochondria and are therefore unable to effectively produce 'cellular energy,' which then affects body parts such as muscle, brain and GI tract—all of which are energy-demanding organs.

"Exercise for people with mito may then seem counterintuitive due to the limited energy production and possibility that exercise may then use up all the limited energy available."

However, exercise is known to increase the number of mitochondria in our muscles and other organs, and in mito patients this means more healthy mitochondria—more energy. Exercise is exactly what mito patients need, Balcells said.

"In the mito world, people give up on being active," Couture said. "The fear of something bad happening keeps people from living their life."

"It's counterintuitive to think that the less you do, the more you'll be able to do. You have to keep moving." —Theresa Couture

Before the wheelchair, Couture said her life was very small: Fatigue would prevent her from performing everyday tasks such as going to the grocery store. Thanks to CrossFit, Couture now lives a full, strong life.



**"Your body loves motion, even if you have mito."
—Theresa Couture**

"I've become more safe (in the wheelchair). It's empowering me to have a positive life. I feel more engaged in my life," she said.

She added: "Exercise is hard for mito patients, but little activities over time add up to big gains."

Couture encouraged mito patients to find an activity they love and do it.

"It's counterintuitive to think that the less you do, the more you'll be able to do. You have to keep moving. Your body loves motion, even if you have mito. You have to behave (in) your life as if you're going to live. If you don't do that, you set yourself up for failure. You have to re-engage in life to become a part of life."

She continued: "Embrace life. When life kicks you, regroup, reorganize and start again. Keep moving forward. Do what you can do and do it to the best of your ability."

For more information about mitochondrial disease, please visit Mitoaction.org.

About the Author: Ginger DeShaney is director of operations and support for MitoAction, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for children, adults and families living with mitochondrial disease through support, education, outreach, advocacy and clinical research initiatives. DeShaney was a journalist for 24 years before joining the nonprofit ranks.

THE CrossFit **KITCHEN**



SUPER RADICAL TRI-TIP WITH BALSAMIC APPLE COMPOTE

By Nick Massie

Overview

Nick Massie of [PaleoNick.com](http://paleonick.com) is spicing up an old favorite: meat and potatoes. Massie is the instructor for the newest CrossFit Specialty Course: [Culinary Ninja](#).

Ingredients for Tri-Tip and Yams

- 4 lb. grass-fed beef tri-tip
- ¼ c. Super Radical Rib Rub
- 6 lb. yams

Ingredients for Compote

- 4 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 yellow onion, julienned
- 2 oz. balsamic vinegar
- 2 c. water
- 1-2 tsp. olive oil
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste



Directions for Tri-Tip and Yams

1. Heat oven to 400 F.
2. Place the yams on a foil-lined sheet pan and roast in the oven until soft, approximately 40 minutes.
3. Rub the tri-tip on all sides with Super Radical Rib Rub. Place the meat on a foil-lined sheet pan and roast in the oven until it reaches an internal temperature of 125 F. Allow the meat to rest for 15 minutes and then slice across the grain.
4. When the yams are done, remove them from the oven and slice them.
5. Place 3-4 slices of yams on a plate, top with 5 oz. of tri-tip and finish with a spoonful of balsamic apple compote.

Directions for Compote

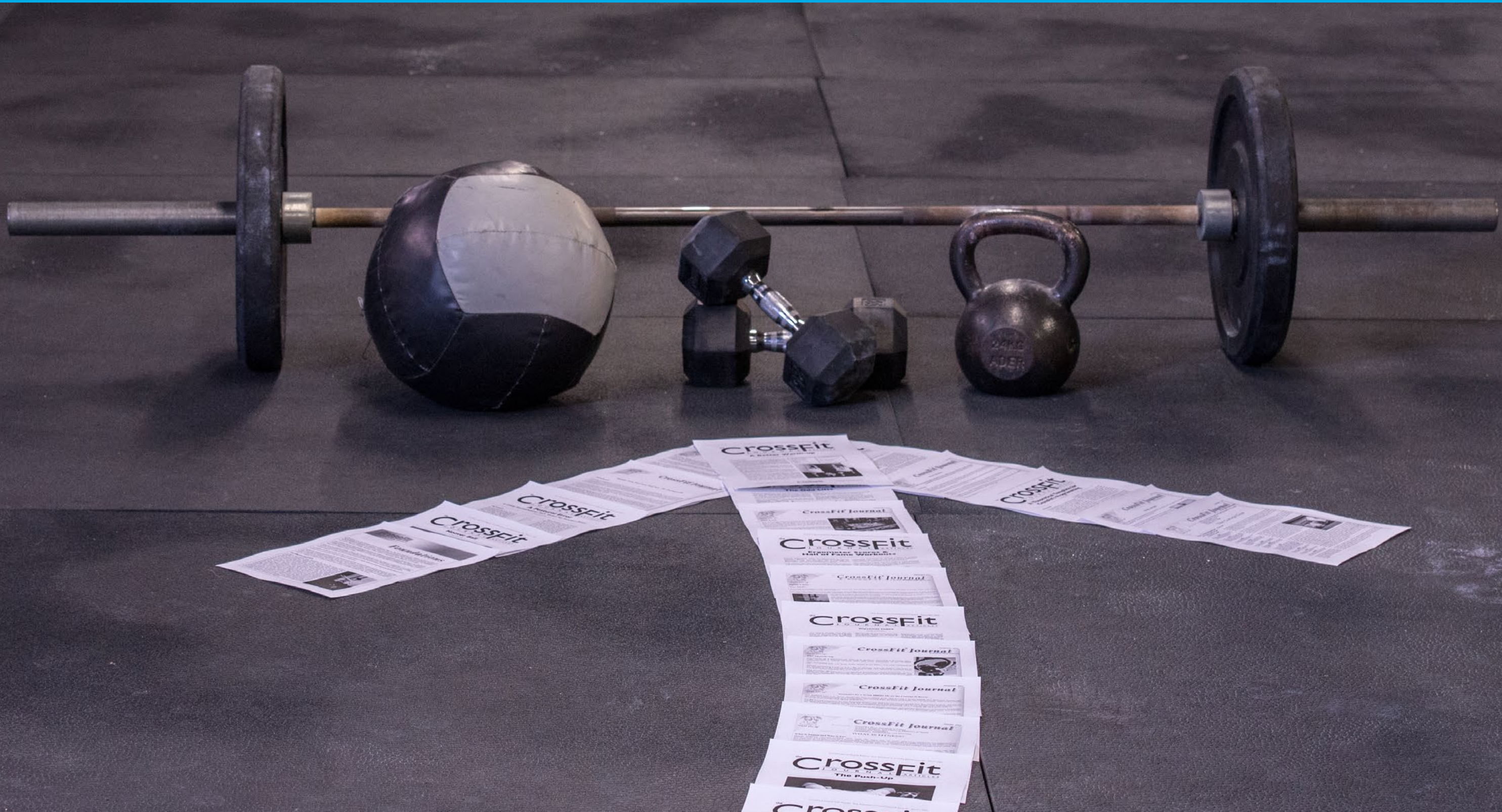
1. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add olive oil and onions to the pan and cook until onions caramelize.
2. Move the onions to one side of the pan, add a little more olive oil to the empty side of the pan and then add the apples.
3. Cook until the apples are caramelized. Fold the apples into the onions and add the balsamic vinegar and water.
4. Bring the compote to a simmer and cook until the liquid reduces to "au sec," which means "almost dry." Cut the heat and season to your liking with kosher salt.

THE GLASSMAN CHIPPER

We challenge you to improve your mental fitness by reading our Founder and CEO's earliest CrossFit Journal articles.



MIKE WARKENTIN | UNCOMMON SENSE | MAY 2016



When a pegboard showed up in Event 12 of the 2015 Reebok CrossFit Games, a lot of people were shocked.

That's a weird reaction by any follower of a sport in which competitors sign up to face the “unknown and unknowable,” but it's even weirder when you consider CrossFit's Founder and CEO wrote about pegboards back in 2002.

In the second issue of the CrossFit Journal, Greg Glassman listed and sourced all the equipment a person would need to turn a garage into a “world-class strength and conditioning facility.” The article, “[The Garage Gym](#),” has been sitting in our archives since September 2002, and it's the third most popular of our 4,000 pieces of content. Only the “[Level 1 Training Guide](#)” and “[What Is Fitness?](#)” outrank it.

Be that as it may, a great many people missed this section of “The Garage Gym”: “Pegboards can be used to develop great back and arm strength. ... Again, we've plans to install pegboards on our walls soon. This is our favorite alternative to the climbing rope.”

Other early CrossFit Journal topics have influenced Games or regional events: [single-speed bikes](#), [two-person lifting](#), [handstand walking](#) and [swimming](#), for example. The recent announcement of strict muscle-ups at regionals? Glassman didn't mention kipping once in “[The Muscle-Up](#)” in 2002. He was clearly detailing the strict movement.

And then there's “World-Class Fitness in 100 Words”—published October 2002 as part of “What Is Fitness?”—in which Glassman advised athletes to “regularly learn and play new sports.”

I have trouble thinking of many sports that don't involve swinging an implement or throwing something, and yet people were surprised by stake drives, sledgehammer events and ball throws at the CrossFit Games.

All this is to say the CrossFit Journal archives are rich with knowledge, but a lot of people are missing out on it.

From a historical perspective,
Glassman's early articles signaled
a new era of fitness.

From a historical perspective, Glassman's early articles signaled a new era of fitness, just the way the first Nautilus machines changed the fitness industry in the early '70s, though many would rightly contend [those machines were a step in the wrong direction](#).

Glassman wrote about topics all but banished by traditional fitness publications that were only too eager to obsess over Arnold Schwarzenegger's biceps yet again. By shedding new light on the disciplines of gymnastics, kettlebells, powerlifting, Olympic lifting and more—all combined in the CrossFit program—Glassman bent the fitness industry away from selectorized machines and aerobics one PDF at a time. For proof of his success, you need only look at the current widespread availability of all the once-rare equipment Glassman listed in “The Garage Gym.”

Beyond that, Glassman's articles have stood up to scrutiny over the years: They contain the first true definition of fitness, they explain exactly why and how the CrossFit program works, and they detail everything you need to know in order to become very fit. Taken together, they're like finding the formula for gunpowder.

Some of these seminal pieces are part of the “CrossFit Level 1 Training Guide” and are seen regularly, but many remain more obscure than they should be. We're well aware that the Journal's search engine isn't ideal, and a lot of gems are hidden many clicks away from our landing page, so it's high time we brought Glassman's writing to the forefront again.

To make things very CrossFit, your next workout is a chipper for time, and it will challenge your mind. Glassman did, after all, say this: “The greatest adaptation to CrossFit takes place between the ears.” To the right, we've collected Glassman's earliest CrossFit Journal writings from April 2002 to March 2004—38 articles published over two years. Your challenge is to read or reread them all in order.

Attention spans are short, and it's far easier to get click-baited into a rabbit hole of top 10s and celebrity gossip, with ample distractions provided by text messages, Facebook notifications and Snapchats. Some will definitely ask “why bother?” before hitting Instagram to double-tap hearts onto a sea of slow-motion snatch videos.

I'll answer that question with another: Why do you do Fran, Grace and Helen? ■

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



CrossFit Journal Glassman Chipper

For time, read all articles listed below from start to finish in order:

- “Foundations,” published April 2002.
- “The Garage Gym,” published September 2002.
- “What Is Fitness?” published October 2002.
- “Strategies for a 7 Minute 2K on the Concept II Rower,” published November 2002.
- “The Muscle-Up,” published November 2002.
- “Glycemic Index,” published November 2002.
- “Squat Clinic,” published December 2002.
- “Ergometer Scores and Hall of Fame Workouts,” published December 2002.
- “Fast Food,” published December 2002.
- “A Postural Error—A Costly Biomechanical Fault: Muted Hip Function (MHF),” published January 2003.
- “The Overhead Lifts,” published January 2003.
- “Interview: Coach Greg Glassman,” published January 2003.
- “The Odd Lifts,” published January 2003.
- “Hooverball,” published February 2003.
- “Theoretical Template for CrossFit's Programming,” published February 2003.
- “Seniors and Kids,” published February 2003.
- “The Push-Up,” published March 2003.
- “Police Training,” published March 2003.
- “A Better Warm-Up,” published April 2003.
- “How Fit Are You?” published April 2003.
- “The Pull-Up,” published April 2003.
- “Two Training Aids,” published May 2003.
- “Three Important Ab Exercises,” published May 2003.
- “Beginners' Workout,” published May 2003.
- “Metabolic Conditioning Glossary,” published June 2003.
- “Interval Generator,” published June 2003.
- “Metabolic Conditioning,” published June 2003.
- “The Clean,” published July 2003.
- “Anatomy and Physiology for Jocks,” published August 2003.
- “The Deadlift,” published August 2003.
- “Functionality and Wall Ball,” published August 2003.
- “Benchmark Workouts,” published September 2003.
- “Really Cool Homemade Parallettes,” published September 2003.
- “Team Workouts,” published October 2003.
- “Nutrition: Avoiding Metabolic Derangement,” published November 2003.
- “Handstands,” published January 2004.
- “Macroclimbing,” published February 2004.
- “What Is CrossFit?” published March 2004.

Post time to comments.



THE **CrossFit** JOURNAL

THE SILVER MARKET

BY EMILY BEERS

Affiliate owners share how they're tailoring their approaches to introduce Baby Boomers to CrossFit.



Courtesy of Neil Hauger

“A lot of helping them is about having face time with these people and being a lot more hands-on,” said Neil Hauger (left), owner of CrossFit 1080 in Minnesota.

The loud music, the intimidating movements and the unbearable crash of barbells smashing the floor—none of it appealed to Lucia Bragan.

“My husband had been doing CrossFit for four and a half years, and I would go watch sometimes. I knew I wasn’t capable of doing what he was doing,” said the 77-year-old from Maryland.

“And they played really loud music with that heavy beat. I guess it charges the younger folks up and gets them going, but for me it was a turn-off. I wouldn’t be able to hear the coach.”

Needless to say, Bragan had no intention of ever following in her husband’s footsteps by joining Rock Creek CrossFit in Kensington, Maryland—at least until coach Trina Kerns approached her in September 2015 and offered an alternative. The process would start with a face-to-face introductory session at a time when the gym was quiet and empty. No loud weights. No blaring music.

Bragan decided to take Kerns up on her offer. The two met up and discussed Bragan’s health history, and then Kerns put her through a short fitness assessment.

Bragan remembers being intimidated and somewhat overwhelmed, but Kerns was with her every step of the way, which made her more comfortable, she said.

“She asked me to reach up and hang from the bar and I couldn’t do it. I was on a box because I couldn’t reach the bar, and she asked me to lift just one leg off the box instead. So I lifted one leg up and kept the other one on the box and was able to do that,” Bragan said.

Soon, Bragan realized CrossFit—and lifting weights—wasn’t as scary as she thought it would be.

“When I (used to think) about lifting weights, I envisioned the big weightlifters—the heavy-duty muscled men who pick up 350 pounds and raise it above their heads and throw it back down to the floor, and I would think, ‘Forget it,’” Bragan said. “But when I found out I could start with 15 lb., it made a big difference.”

She added: “Turning off the music and the one-on-one coaching with Trina because I’m not a very athletic person ... (also) made the difference for me. I never would have joined the regular program.”

That’s not to say older athletes can’t join normal CrossFit classes. Many masters athletes thrive in general classes that welcome everyone from teens to those well beyond 50, and great coaches are able to modify workouts for athletes of very different levels in a group setting. Some affiliates, however, are finding success creating entire programs that are tailored to help groups of Baby Boomers use CrossFit to stay fitter in their Golden Years.

The Personal Touch

One of the original CrossFit concepts is that all human beings essentially have the same fitness requirements. Load and intensity might vary with age, but the program is basically the same.

“The needs of an Olympic athlete and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind,” CrossFit Inc. Founder and CEO Greg Glassman wrote in the October 2002 CrossFit Journal article “**What Is Fitness?**” Glassman, of course, was basing that statement on experience. He worked with older athletes as well as young fire-breathers, and while he had Nicole Carroll, Annie Sakamoto and Eva Twardokens push through a tough workout like **Nasty Girls**, he had 60-something **Mary Conover** doing shallow squats to a tall plyo box when she started a CrossFit program.

When working with older athletes, movements can be modified—but they’re still doing CrossFit. For instance, masters might do step-ups instead of box jumps, they might squat holding a kettlebell instead of a barbell, or they might row if the impact of jogging troubles them. Loads, repetitions and time domains can be modified to suit the needs of the individual. But each athlete is still getting fitter, improving range of motion and maintaining or improving his or her capabilities by performing constantly varied functional movements at relatively high intensity.

The degree-not-kind philosophy is as relevant today as it was when Glassman was running the original CrossFit gym, and it doesn’t just apply to movements. The principle also applies to communication, atmosphere and other aspects of interaction. For example, introducing CrossFit to a 20-year-old athlete often looks very different than introducing a 65-year-old to a barbell for the first time in her life, explained Kerns, 43.

“We’ve used our same routines for elderly individuals with heart disease and cage fighters one month out from televised bouts. We scale load and intensity; we don’t change programs.”
—Greg Glassman



Courtesy of Neil Hauger

Hauger, 52, modifies pull-ups at CrossFit 1080. When working with older athletes, creative scaling can help Baby Boomers work around fears, injuries and flexibility issues to get a great training session.

Understanding age-related differences has been a key to success, said Kerns, who started working with senior citizens in 2008 as a personal trainer at a YMCA. When she began coaching at Rock Creek CrossFit in 2015, Kerns saw an opportunity with older clients. She noticed older folks like Bragan were intimidated to try CrossFit, but she was sure she could connect with hesitant older prospects if she tailored her approach.

Kerns said she quickly learned small details make all the difference: phoning instead of emailing, turning music off during training sessions, interacting face-to-face rather than online.

“One-on-one time and face time make them more comfortable. Twenty-year-olds just want to work out. But older athletes want to talk first and feel comfortable,” Kerns explained.

To accommodate the older demographic, Kerns schedules a one-on-one sit-down meeting with prospective Baby Boomer clients, which gives her a chance to chat and connect, talk about details, and discover any concerns or health issues that need addressing before working out, she said.

Neil Hauger, owner of CrossFit 1080 in Woodbury, Minnesota, has had a similar experience.

Hauger, 52, trains 18 athletes in the 50-plus category, many of whom have pre-existing health issues such as diabetes or cardiac problems. Some have even suffered a cardiovascular event in the past, he explained. Health concerns often lead to fear and intimidation at the very thought of beginning a workout program, Hauger said. But when he convinces them to sit down with him one-on-one, he always has more success, he explained.

“A lot of helping them is about having face time with these people and being a lot more hands-on to keep them from feeling overwhelmed or out of place,” Hauger said.

Gaining Confidence

After Kerns started bringing 50-, 60- and 70-year-olds into the gym, her next priority was ensuring they stuck around.

She knew if her older athletes felt part of the community, they’d be more likely to commit for years to come. This was the impetus behind her Mighty Masters program, a class for older clients that runs during the week at 11 a.m. when the gym is quiet and the music isn’t playing. The class has helped Kerns’ older athletes connect with each other and the community, she said.

“And it makes them more comfortable working out with people their age.”

Arthur Cohen, 70, is one of the Mighty Masters.

“We call ourselves ‘the old farts,’ but they like to call it ‘the Mighty Masters,’” Cohen said with a laugh.

Working out with his peers is the reason he and wife Erin Fulham had the confidence to start and, more importantly, stick with CrossFit, he said.

“I was totally intimidated by the whole scene (at the start),” said Cohen, who has lost 20 lb. since starting CrossFit one year ago. “I was so far away from being ready for a group class. I would have been totally overwhelmed.”

Hauger, too, is in the process of putting together a formal program for Baby Boomers. Like the Mighty Masters, Hauger plans to run his class in the middle of the day, which he said is ideal for his business, as it will fill some of the quieter hours during the week.

“This demographic can come in the middle of the day when the gym is quiet. And they have money. They’re a demographic who can afford it, and they need more personal attention than they’re going to get at a regular globo gym,” he said.

Mike Casavant is another CrossFit coach who is dedicating much of his time to masters athletes. The owner of Iron Force Athletics in Natick, Massachusetts, programs for more than 400 masters athletes, some of whom are over the age of 55.

Connecting with clients is one key to keeping his older athletes happy and committed, Casavant explained.

“It’s not really about the programming. It’s about being a platform for these people to express themselves. And they’re different than younger people. They have a lot more life experience, and things that resonate with a 22-year-old won’t resonate with a 55-year-old,” he said.

“I don’t use certain slang (language) with older athletes, or I wouldn’t talk to a 55-year-old about ‘South Park.’”

As with Kerns’ Mighty Masters, Casavant said he believes his family of older athletes has grown as large as it has because it provides them an opportunity to be part of a greater community. Many of the interactions happen through a private Facebook group, where coaches and masters discuss everything from training to growing old, share videos, ask questions, give advice and just come together to share a laugh, Casavant explained.

“It gives them something to be part of.”

Although Casavant, Kerns and Hauger all said they see the value in giving older athletes their own community within the larger group, none of them built a masters program with the intention of isolating older athletes from the younger crowd. All of her athletes are welcome to join regular group classes if and when they feel ready, Kerns said. Kerns said she doesn't care whether or not members of her 60-plus crew ever choose to leave the Mighty Masters to train with people half their age. What's more important for her is watching them gain confidence and improve their lives through fitness, she said.

"At the start, barbells intimidated them, but now they think it's really cool they can use all the same equipment as the young people are using," Kerns said. "It gives them a lot of confidence. And it adds to their quality of life."

Even though he still chooses to train with the Mighty Masters, Cohen said he is no longer scared to join a group class with the 20-year-olds.

"If Trina thinks I can handle it, I would give it a go. I would do my best," he said.

"The question regularly arises as to the applicability of a regimen like CrossFit's to older and deconditioned or detrained populations. The needs of an Olympic athlete and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind."
—Greg Glassman

Their Message

Ginny Jager is a 63-year-old from CrossFit Island Park in Long Beach, New York, who was 40th in the Masters Women 60+ Division in the 2016 Reebok CrossFit Games Open.

As one of the fittest 63-year-olds in the world, Jager said there's a lot of misinformation about who is capable of doing CrossFit. Many of her friends, for example, see how fit she is and assume they aren't good enough to join a CrossFit gym, she said.



Fit over 50.



Trina Kerns with Lucia Bragan.



Trina Kerns (right) and her Mighty Masters.



Trina Kerns with Arthur Cohen.



Ginny Jager, 63.

"Or they think they can't do it because they have injuries, or maybe their back bothers them, or they think they're too old to start CrossFit."

She wants them to know they're wrong, and she wants them to know most people her age aren't gunning for the CrossFit Games. Most of them are like Bragan or Cohen: ordinary people in their 60s and 70s who are improving their fitness and health one day at a time.

For 70-year-old Cohen, it's about being fit enough to garden and do woodwork.

For 77-year-old Bragan, it's about taking it one day at a time to stay as healthy as possible for years to come.

And for Jager, it's about trying to qualify to the CrossFit Games this summer, about pursuing Tough Mudder races, about rock climbing and waterfall rappelling.

While Cohen's, Bragan's and Jager's journeys vary, the original CrossFit message does not: We differ by degree, not kind.

Doing CrossFit and getting fit really helps people realize this, Kerns said. Even 77-year-olds, she added.

"They soon realize they're the same as younger athletes." ■

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

THE CrossFit KITCHEN



THAI TURKEY MEATBALLS WITH CAULIFLOWER RICE

By Nick Massie

Overview

Nick Massie of PaleoNick.com last served up [Mexican meatballs](#). This time, he's going Thai. Massie is the instructor for the newest CrossFit Specialty Course: [Culinary Ninja](#).

Ingredients

- 2 lb. ground turkey
- 6 c. carrots, shredded
- 8 c. cauliflower, shredded
- 2 c. light coconut milk
- 2 c. bamboo shoots
- 2 c. water chestnuts
- 3 c. onions, diced
- 3 c. green bell pepper, diced
- 1 c. ginger, minced
- 5 tbsp. Paleo Grind Ga Ga Garlic
- Cilantro, to garnish
- 3 tbsp. sambal
- 3 tbsp. tamari or coconut aminos
- 2 eggs
- Olive oil, as needed

Directions for Meatballs

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine 2 lb. ground turkey, 2 c. carrots, 1 c. onions, 1 c. bell peppers, ½ c. ginger, two eggs and 3 tbsp. of Ga Ga Garlic. Mix well until uniform.
2. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and add 1 tbsp. of olive oil. Using a 1-oz. portion-control scoop, scoop meatball mixture into the pan. Repeat the process until the meat mixture is gone and you've got a pan full of meatballs.
3. Turn them 3-4 times with the goal of achieving nice caramelization on all sides and an internal temperature of 165 F.
4. When the meatballs are done, scoop 2 large spoonfuls of cauliflower rice onto a plate, top with the 4-5 meatballs, and garnish with sambal and cilantro.



Directions for Cauliflower Rice

1. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tbsp. olive oil, ½ c. ginger, 1½ tbsp. sambal, 2 c. onions, 2 c. bell peppers, 4 c. carrots, 8 c. cauliflower, 2 tbsp. Ga Ga Garlic, and tamari. Stir to incorporate all ingredients. Place a lid on the pan and cook for 7 minutes.
2. Remove the lid; stir the rice; add coconut milk, water chestnuts and bamboo shoots; and cook for 3 minutes longer.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and enjoy the rice immediately.
4. You can portion the rice and refrigerate for up to 5 days or freeze for up to 6 months.