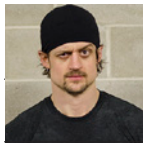

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Weak Behavior: One-Upping

Mike Warkentin advises you to find your own limit in your next workout.



Uncommon Sense

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

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All Photos: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

Ever watch an auction and want to choke the guy who continually adds a buck to the top bid?

You know the guy. He's the same one who ruins office pools with the ultra-clever "and one dollar" bracketing strategy learned from contestants on *The Price Is Right*.

One-Upping ... (continued)

He's also the guy who ruins any poker game without a minimum raise by forcing everyone to call dumbass nuisance raises.

That guy can be found in a lot of CrossFit gyms, too. Let's call him the one-upper.

In the clever article [Clock Whores](#), Doug Chapman, the owner of CrossFit Ann Arbor/Hyperfit USA, wrote about those who care nothing for integrity or fitness but desire only to have the best time of the day by any means necessary. They'd jump over a bleeding family member to get that time, and they'd count the jump as two reps if a trainer wasn't watching.

One-uppers are a lot like clock whores; they'll definitely sacrifice integrity at times, but one-uppers don't want to win big. They just want to win by a pound or a second, and their whole workout plan involves strategically gaming WODs to worm their way to the best time on the whiteboard.

For example, one-upping involves moving the rower underneath the pull-up bar to shave a second by dropping right into the seat. It involves hiding change plates inside full-size bumpers to obscure the true load. Or it involves fractional plates or some complete bullshit stacking of collars for a snatch of "200 plus 4 collars."

Unless you're using a pair of competition Oly collars that weigh 5 kg, the fucking collars don't count. Let us be clear about that right now.

But this sort of nonsense is the one-upper's stock in trade. He'll show up late in the evening to see what's on the leaderboard, and if the best load is 200, you can bet you're going to see an attempt at 201 or—if you're lucky—205. Sometimes that attempt is warranted, and other times it's foolishly aggressive and should be vetoed by the coach on duty.

The one-upper also avoids classes in which he'll have to go head to head with others in workouts he thinks he can't win, or he finds some way to modify the workout to avoid



When creative equipment placement trumps effort, you are probably dealing with a one-upper.

direct competition. I'd guess that 25 percent of all heavy-Fran instances involve scaling up to avoid a straight-up loss. Wearing a weight vest at questionable times is also the mark of a one-upper.

In some cases, there's nothing wrong with one-upping. It's how you win the gold medal in weightlifting at the Olympics, and the athlete at the top of the podium is often the best one-upper of the competition, especially if the margin of victory is a slim 1 kilo. In competitions where a second can decide who goes to the CrossFit Games, shave that second and one-up your rival. You'd be dumb not to. But this sort of pathological behavior in training and regular WODs is bad par.

Imagine the current best time in a five-round workout is 10 minutes. You catch your athlete taking calculated rest and pacing himself through five 1:59 rounds for a time juuust under the best of the day, then bragging he "isn't even tired." Again, if Jason Khalipa needs a particular score in the final heat to win the CrossFit Games, the California Bear might want to get out a calculator and a lap timer. But if you're always shaving seconds in training, you need a sharp reminder from time to time.

That reminder usually comes when a one-upper one-ups the wrong athlete, and suddenly that shit-hot time a single second below the previous best gets steamrolled by some machine who doesn't even look at the clock because he's too busy dismantling the workout while chewing on kettlebells, laughing like a pirate and generally dominating the landscape.

Here's the deal with constant one-upping: it does nothing for you in the long run unless you're working to your absolute limit. If you are, then the whiteboard is being used as intended. You're using the times posted there as information and motivation, and then you're doing up your chinstrap and discovering what you can really do with the workout. If your absolute best happens to be a single rep above the best score, that's not really one-upping.

But if you're playing games for the best scores on a daily basis, one-upping actually holds you back because you never push yourself to your limit. You push to someone else's limit and then add a pound, like the auction asshole described above. That's ultimately weak behavior unworthy of a CrossFit box.

Why not find your limit? Competition drives us, and people will indeed die for points, but don't be satisfied with the best time on the whiteboard if it isn't your best effort.



Hiding change plates and adding collars for "more weight" are but two habits of the one-upper.

Take off the diaper and dig in. Forget the whiteboard and go head to head with yourself. Decide that you're going to push until the tank is empty and then see what the clock says. Choose to pull the heaviest deadlift you can, scrawl the digits on the board and let the plates fall where they may. Show up first thing in the morning and put up a boss time that sits atop the board like a dare. If you think you're capable, resolve to blow the top time out of the water by 2 minutes, not 2 seconds.

The whiteboard is one of CrossFit's most brilliant tools, but try not to be a tool when using the whiteboard.



About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the **CrossFit Journal** and the founder of **CrossFit 204**.*