

My 2008 CrossFit Games Experience

Kallista Pappas



I left the 2008 CrossFit Games a changed person. My mental and athletic confidence have grown tenfold and I cannot adequately express my gratitude for everyone's support and encouragement.

The event was bigger and better than last year by far. I didn't know what to expect, and I was very nervous. But I came and did what I came to do. I couldn't be happier with the outcome. I had trained alone in my little living room (yes, there was a weight rack in the living room) for six months before the Games. I was worrying over the fact that I might not be ready for what was to come. I knew it would be a whole different event and I needed to make many adjustments in my training to reach my goal of going as prescribed. I look back now and don't think I should have done anything differently. Most of my workouts were heavy, to increase my strength, and they definitely pushed me to my mental limits. The fact that I was training while my coach (Dad) was at work made that very challenging.

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My 2008 CrossFit Games Experience... (continued)

When people at the Games asked me what I thought about the weight prescribed for the workouts, I didn't know exactly what to say. It was heavy, and I was nervous, but I just said, "We'll see how it goes." My mindset (as it always is for any kind of competition) was to take it as it comes, one lift at a time, one breath at a time, one step at a time. I had to be in the moment and have fun. Being relaxed and letting your body do what it knows how to do is key.

The first workout shocked me just a little because I had no idea what to expect. I may have been a little psyched out and should have paced better, but it was a decent start. It was a good idea not to start hard, to save some juice for later. That was my very first as Rx'd "Fran." My specific goal for this workout was to do no extra work and make every single rep count. As for what I thought on the "new standards" for the competition (i.e. chest to the bar on pull-ups), they are the standards that I live by in every workout. I always hit my chest to the bar and I always lock out overhead. Virtuosity is a quality that has been imposed upon me and my whole family throughout our experiences in sport and life.

After the thruster/pull-up workout, I had a feel for the competition and was confident for the next round:

deadlift/burpee. The weight for women, 185 lbs. (almost twice my bodyweight), was very close to my 3RM, but I knew I could do it at five reps. I was just going to take it five reps at a time and finish the workout. I did just that and at a very satisfying time: 5:53.

The last workout of my day was the 720 meter hill run. I was familiar with the hill because I did it last year. It was just as I remembered it: steep and dusty. The run was different only because it was a sprint. I was very satisfied with my finish at 4:52, a great end to the day. I finished the first day in 15th place, which put me into the final women's heat the next day.

The workout on Sunday was Grace at 100 lbs. (Coincidentally, I had done a power clean and jerk Grace at 95 lbs. in seven and a half minutes a couple of weeks prior, so I had a feel for the weight.) For the Games Grace, the rep only counted if you squatted before the weight went overhead. Coach Mark Rippetoe said my only job was to start pulling when the judge said go. He also suggested a very good pacing strategy to my dad but, unfortunately, I was in a very inconvenient place for the plan to be executed, so I just went with my intuition: do one, take a few breaths and do it again until the judge says 30.





Kallista Pappas: The 14-year-old CrossFit Games Competitor

by Lisbeth Darsh

Kallista Pappas was 14 years old when she delivered a performance at the 2008 CrossFit Games that inspired an entire community. At an age when many kids are merely hanging out at the mall, Kallista, a home-schooled gymnast who lives in Seattle, Washington, was training gymnastics five hours per day and throwing in CrossFit workouts three times a week too.

"Once I started doing CrossFit, my gymnastics got transformed," Kallista said in a recent interview, "I won at the state level that year. I got so much more powerful and stronger. I passed my teammates up in conditioning."

Kallista's father introduced her to CrossFit when she was 11. Her first workout was "Fran" with 10 lb. thrusters. She competed in the first annual CrossFit Games when she was 13, at which she was awarded the female "Spirit of CrossFit" award.

So she continued to train, often with the weight set in her living room, and always under the careful eye of her father, Bill, who serves as her weightlifting and CrossFit coach. Together they kept a keen eye on technique, as well as getting complete rest and not overtraining. When the 2008 Games rolled around, Kallista was ready.

"Going into any competition, you're always going to be nervous," said Kallista, "It was definitely hard. But CrossFit is always hard."

She knew she wanted to compete this year at the prescribed weights. "I was nervous about all of them . . . but it was what I was training for. I was actually a little excited about the run because it was shorter than last year. But then I got these reports that it was really bad."

Still, she survived and made it through the first three events, enough for 15th place going into the final day – and the final workout: 100 pound Clean and Jerks x 30. When you only weigh 103 pounds, that's a pretty tall order.

Online Video

http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitGames08_KallistaCJFinals.wmv

http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/CrossFitGames08_KallistaCJFinals.mov





My judge (Kevin Suttmoeller from CrossFit Redding) was very supportive and I really appreciated his coaching. It made up for my dad not being there, and it helped immensely. Looking back now, this workout was climactic because it was the event that made the Games something that I will never forget. It changed me as a person. On repetition 22, I was getting ready to jerk it when I lost focus. I didn't take my inhaling breath to lock my core and, as I got it up to a point near lockout, I lost it and fell down. The weight bounced off my knees and I lay there, stunned.

At this point, someone yelled something that still sticks in my mind: "Don't give it up, you've come this far, you can't give up!" With a rush of adrenaline, I got up and did some air squats. I took a deep breath as I bent down for my next rep. As I locked the next one overhead, I heard the audience cheer. With every cheer I got an extra rush of adrenaline. This workout wouldn't have been finished if I had been alone in my living room. The supportive yelling made the day complete.

Even today, I cannot believe what happened. If I hadn't gotten up to finish those last reps, I wouldn't be the person I am right now. It was then that I came to realize the full meaning of what the alpinist Kelly Cordes once said: "You are really capable of twice as much as you think you are." Knowing that I inspired people old and young to do pull-ups that are legit, and that I inspired them to never give up, makes me feel proud of someone inside of me that I did not know before. I am so proud to say that I am a part of this community and that you are a part of me.



Many people have seen the now infamous video of her gritty, fire-in-the-belly, screaming display of human tenacity, but what exactly happened during that moment when she tumbled backwards and the bar glanced off her body, leaving her somewhat dazed in the dust?

Kallista explained: "When I was dipping for my drive, I didn't tighten up. I had this thought: 'Uh-oh, this is bad.' And then, when it fell on me, I was really lucky where it fell." (If the barbell had fallen in a different spot, she surmised, it could have broken her leg.)

"I was thinking, 'Is this over?' and then I heard this guy yell. A few deep breaths and I shook it off and kept going."

As for the aftermath, she doesn't remember things too clearly: "I was kind of dazed. Everything was blurry and spinning." She does recall all the hugs and the incredible support of the CrossFit community. "It was kind of overwhelming. I've never had that kind of attention," Kallista said.

The attention of one woman in particular stood out. "When the competition was all over, Caity Matter (the 2008 CF Games Female Champion) came up to me and gave me a whole box of stuff from her prizes. I was so honored by that," Kallista said.

"I gave her all of my prizes pertaining to workouts (Indo Board, Ab Mat, Rogue Rings, Rogue Lifting shoes)," Caity said. "She deserved everything with that performance. 185 pound deadlifts and 100 pound squat cleans are amazing for any woman, but to be 14 and so competitive? I love it! She is what the Games were all about – and she is an inspiration to us all!"

There will be no resting on laurels for this inspirational teenager, though. Kallista is already training for the 2009 CrossFit Games. "I'm just going to go and do the same thing next year. And hit it in the same way and have the same mindset."

Oh, and she will only be a high-school sophomore then.

