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Think Like a Bumblebee, Train Like a Racehorse

Ben Bergeron teaches a few CrossFit lessons learned from the animal kingdom.

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One of the most powerful and motivating coaching mantras I have ever stolen (yes, I steal from other coaches) was given to me while I was a triathlete training for the Ironman in my former life.

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Joe Friel, a world-class endurance coach and author of *The Triathlete's Training Bible*, has a powerful message he uses to get his athletes to stay focused and believe in themselves during the long training season.

His message is "think like a bumblebee and train like a racehorse." This message works as well, or even better, for CrossFitters as it does for endurance athletes. I have employed this message with every top-level CrossFit athlete I have coached, and I believe it is enough to bring an athlete from good to great.

Last spring when I was coaching the CrossFit New England team to prepare for the CrossFit Games, this was a constant theme at every practice. The women on the team even got bumblebee earrings to remind themselves of this powerful message.



Racehorses don't question their program, their coach or their training; they do exactly what is asked of them.



Like the bumblebee, elite CrossFit athletes have ultimate faith in themselves to do the impossible.

Think Like a Bumblebee

Bumblebees are relatively huge, furry insects with tiny little wings that fly with incredible speed, accuracy and agility. NASA scientists were infatuated with the bumblebee. How could something that big and furry fly with such little wings? So they studied the bumblebee. The thought process was that if they could replicate the physics of the bumblebee, they could build aircrafts and weapons of similar ability.

You, as an athlete, need to have an unyielding belief in yourself. Don't let your past, your peers, your family or your competitors limit your performance.

After extensive research, the scientists unanimously came to the same conclusion: bumblebees can't fly. The physics behind bumblebees simply say they are too large and too heavy. But here is the interesting part: No one told the bumblebee it can't fly, so it goes right on flying. It flies even though the smartest people on Earth doubt it can.

Because the bee has ultimate faith in itself, it is able to do amazing things. You, as an athlete, need to have unyielding belief in yourself. Don't let your past, your peers, your family or your competitors limit your performance. You, like the bee, can fly if you believe you can.

Train Like a Racehorse

Racehorses are just like other elite athletes. They know they are athletes, and they know they are different from the other horses.

They train with heart-rate monitors. They do intervals and lactate-threshold training. They eat a special diet designed to improve performance. They have coaches, and they get nervous on race day just like you.

The difference between racehorses and you is racehorses don't second-guess their training program, their abilities or their coaches. Racehorses go all out when asked to; they don't save something for tomorrow. You'll never see a racehorse doing extra laps around the track because it felt like it should be doing more. Racehorses don't look at other horses' training programs and freak out because the other horses are doing double days. Racehorses just do exactly what is asked of them—nothing more, nothing less.

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Racehorses have 100 percent commitment to their program, to their coaches and to being the best they can be.



Live your life with a singular purpose and a singular focus, never questioning, never doubting.

How much extra energy do you spend examining the programming of other gyms or athletes? Do you jump from site to site, never letting the benefits of a single program take effect?

How about comparing yourself with other athletes? Do you think racehorses build up extra anxiety by comparing their times or bodies with other horses? Racehorses, just like you as an elite athlete, have one purpose in their lives: to get faster and stronger, to be better.

If you are a strong athlete and have a good coach and live your life with a singular purpose with a singular focus on one goal, one mission, you will become elite.

The take-home message is to have complete belief in yourself. Believing you are capable is the first and most important step in becoming elite. Second, you must train with purpose. If you are constantly second-guessing, you undermine your accomplishments and will never reach the highest levels.

Think like a bumblebee, train like a racehorse.



Courtesy of CrossFit New England

About the Author

Ben Bergeron, along with his wife Heather, is the owner and operator of CrossFit New England in Natick, Mass. Bergeron has been coaching for more than 15 years, is a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff and coached his affiliate team to a first-place finish at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.