

---

# THE CrossFit LIFE

---

## All in the Same Room

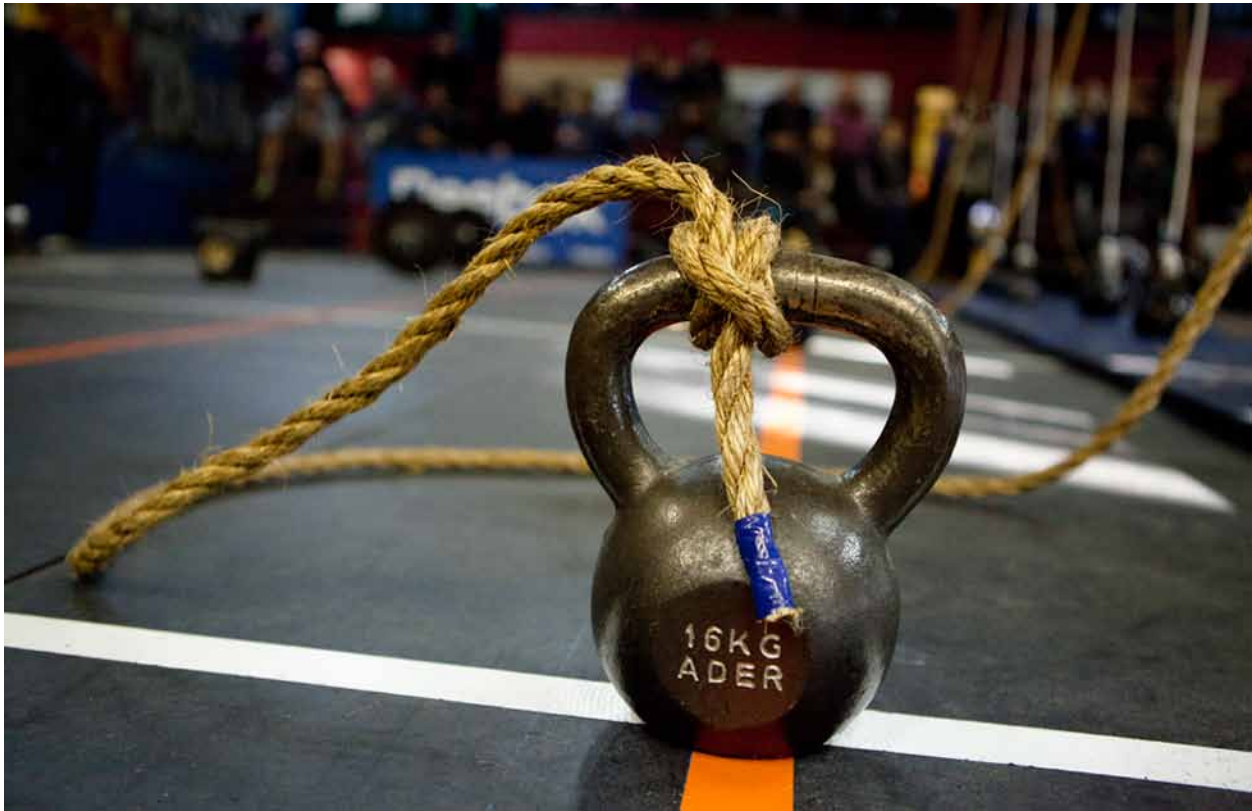
Emily Beers reports on the mix of veteran and first-time CrossFit athletes at the 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge, held Nov. 4-6 in Victoria, B.C.

---

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

November 2011

---



Sara Carle

CrossFit Taranis owner Reed MacKenzie takes the microphone. A hush comes over the crowd as he announces the first workout to an eager audience. It involves 2 sets of max handstand push-up attempts, with some power snatches in between.

---

1 of 4

The 10th-fittest female in the world from the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games, 36-year-old Angie Pye, makes her way to the warm-up area to get her body ready to go. She's decked out in Reebok gear from head to toe. Everything about her screams "pro athlete"—her physique, her veteran walk, the way she warms up and the confidence in her movements. This is just another day at the gym for Pye.

Warming up in the same area as Pye is Kira Hallwood, a 22-year-old who just discovered CrossFit a few short months ago. She is insanely nervous about her first CrossFit competition.



Sara Carle

**Steve Howell is training hard for a shot at the 2012 CrossFit Games.**

"What's a power snatch again?" Hallwood asks, 10 minutes before the workout. "Is that when you throw the bar over your head? Oh, and I've only ever done kipping handstand push-ups. I'm not sure I can do one without a kip," she adds.

She looks over and sees Pye.

"Holy shit. Look at that girl. She's ripped. I'm so scared now," Hallwood says.

I start laughing to myself. It's not every day, or in every sport, that the Hallwoods of the world get to compete alongside the Pyes. There was something so authentic about this dichotomy, something so refreshing about the diversity of characters that CrossFit attracts.

The 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge showcased a handful of these characters.

### **Steve Howell—Boom**

Steve Howell has been talking about the 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge since the 2010 Challenge ended. He's possibly the most devoted man in the entire Northwest. Steve Howell lives for CrossFit. He doesn't read books; he reads the *CrossFit Journal*. He doesn't drink. He doesn't eat sugar or starch. He calls himself "80 percent Paleo." When you ask him what he eats for the 20 percent Paleo cheat, he says, quite seriously, "Whey protein powder."

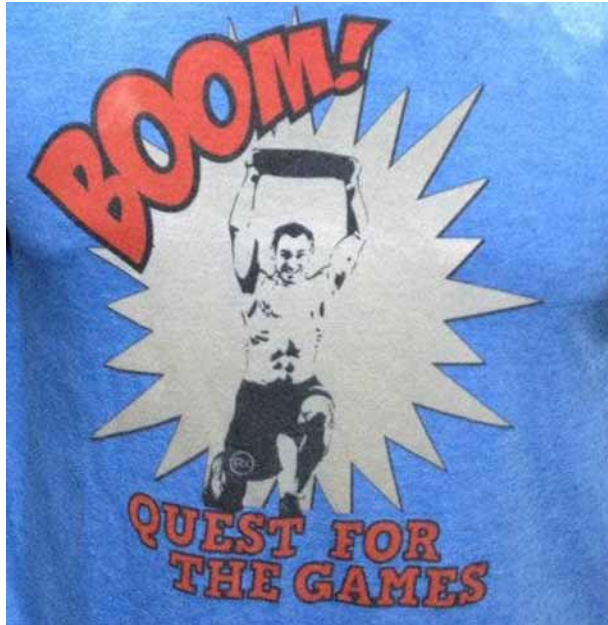
In short, he is the most dialed-in man around.

But don't mistake his possessed focus for selfishness. Howell is the first to give another man props on a big score. He is the first to graciously congratulate his competitors.

And I learned this summer that it's not just words he's willing to give. When my team went on a weekend retreat to Whistler prior to the 2011 CrossFit Games, it was Howell who volunteered his time, programmed for us and coached us all weekend before we set off for California in July.

As for Howell's own quest for the CrossFit Games, he puts himself out there, boldly and publicly. There's something so innocent and carefree about the way Howell has expressed his passion to get to the Games. And it has caused people all over Canada West to embrace him. It's hard not to jump on board the Howell quest.

Jordan Glasser/CrossFit Whistler



*Howell has even printed a few T-shirts to keep himself motivated, and some of his fellow competitors are wearing them, too.*

At the Taranis Winter Challenge, even some of his competitors were wearing T-shirts with a picture of Howell that said, "BOOM: Quest for the Games."

This weekend in Victoria, Howell took one step closer to reaching his quest. He chipped away, workout after workout, flirting with the leaders all weekend.

He finally reached the top spot for the first time after the final workout on Sunday afternoon, beating out Connor Nelson (second) and 2011 individual Games competitors Jeremy Meredith (third) and Lucas Parker (fourth).

### The Whistler Ladies

Twenty-six-year-old Sophie Garneau, who has been involved in CrossFit for less than a year, competed in her first CrossFit competition with the CrossFit Whistler team this weekend. Garneau is a former gymnast from Montreal who looks like a mini version of Camille Leblanc-Bazinet.

Her coach, CrossFit Whistler owner Jordan Glasser, agrees.

"I told her that she could be the next Camille," Glasser said. "In response, she said, 'The next what? What's that?'" He laughed. For now, Garneau says she does CrossFit because it gives her more balance in her life.



Sara Carle

**Sophie Garneau: CLB2?**

"It's a reason for me to get out of the office at 5 p.m. I like going to the gym. I used to hate going to the gym, but now I feel like I have a purpose. It's about work-life balance for me," she said.

Garneau's teammate, 33-year-old Jo Macalister, also experienced her first CrossFit competition this weekend. She surprised herself when her team tied for first in their heat and went on to the team playoffs on Sunday.

"I thought we'd be shopping today," Macalister said after her team won its quarterfinal workout, putting CrossFit Whistler in the final four. "I just love the support. We're all competitors, but everyone is rallying for each other, too. You walk out after a workout feeling like you've done the best thing ever."



Sara Carle

**Kira Hallwood during "the worst thing that's ever happened to me."**

Judging by the crowd's response, Garneau and Macalister indeed did one of the best things of the weekend in the final team workout of the competition.

Garneau, who weighs just 100 lb., was stuck on kettlebell strict presses for a number of minutes during the workout, failing on multiple reps. But when the crowd grew louder, Garneau suddenly found a surge of energy and shoulder strength she didn't know she had and got through it.

Then it was time to back-squat Macalister, a woman twice Garneau's size and who weighs more than the Garneau's max back squat. Garneau managed to stand up a couple of times with Macalister on her back before the time expired. Between grimaced attempts, both Garneau and Macalister kept their smiles. The crowd stood up and applauded loudly to show their appreciation.

Macalister said she definitely wants to compete again, but that competition isn't what CrossFit is about for her.

"It might sound cheesy, but CrossFit has made me a better mom and a wife ... I'm a better person because of CrossFit," she said.

### **Kira Hallwood**

It's Sunday evening. The awards ceremony is about to start. I approached Hallwood.

"So, are you loving this yet? What surprised you most about the competition?" I asked.

"It surprised me that the ball run was around a track. I thought it was going to be 400 meters in a straight line," said Hallwood, whose teammates are suddenly suspicious that this is her first athletic event of any kind. "I always thought people were such pussies for complaining about ball runs. Now I realize why. That ball run was the worst thing that's ever happened to me," she said, laughing.

Hallwood added, "Another surprising thing about the competition was the fact that the men have bigger pecs than the women have boobs. Honestly, I don't know if this is for me. This whole weekend has just been so stressful. I cried. I actually cried. Twice. And I never cry."

A teammate chimed in, "That's because this is pushing you in a way that you don't like to be pushed. You usually hide from things that are hard for you," he said.

"I know," Hallwood nodded.

"Wait a week and you'll realize you grew more this weekend than you have all year," I said. "CrossFit is personal development."

"I don't know. I need time to recover. I need a drink," Hallwood said.

The awards presentation began.

The announcer called Steve Howell up to the podium to accept his first-place prize.

"Who is he? Is he the guy who won?" Hallwood asked.

