
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Tribes in Texas

Mike Warkentin reports on the CrossFit Tour stop in Fort Worth, Texas.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

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All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

A roasted pig is on a folding table outside CrossFit Fort Worth.

As athletes complete Reebok CrossFit Games Open Event 12.5 and recover, they stagger over to the table for roasted pig and chicken and a host of different salads. Everyone eyes the decidedly non-Paleo cupcakes and wonders who will be the first to break.

1 of 6

A dog works its way through the crowd, sucking down bits of dropped food like a canine vacuum. It pays no attention to the noise of barbells slamming down inside the gym, where the music is pumping and the crowd is cheering. CrossFit dogs don't startle easily.

Original Firebreather Greg Amundson, fresh from judging a few workouts, looks around and smiles.

"Ten years ago, CrossFit was doing the same thing in Coach's backyard."

Meet the Community

Ten years ago, CrossFit wasn't a global sport, and over 3,500 affiliates weren't scattered around the world. The CrossFit Games didn't exist, and no one had heard of Annie Thorisdottir or Rich Froning Jr.

But Cindy and Fran were still around, and at Coach Greg Glassman's original box in Santa Cruz, Calif., the sport of fitness was being created. But perhaps even more important than that, the CrossFit community was born. Even back in the early days it was clear CrossFit wasn't just about fitness but good people coming together and enjoying each other. The 2012 CrossFit Tour is a reminder of that fact.

**"CrossFit stands for making
people's lives better.
All things good come
from the CrossFit gym."**

—Coach Greg Glassman

With two stops complete and three more planned for 2012, the CrossFit Tour is a chance for the CrossFit community to come together for a few days and reconnect. That happens at competitions and events like the CrossFit Games, but the atmosphere isn't the same when the clock is on and affiliate owners are preparing teams of athletes. The Tour is a lot more laid back. There's an agenda, sure. But it's loose. There's time to mix and mingle, to reconnect with old friends, to meet members of CrossFit Headquarters, and to hear Coach Glassman himself address the community.



Coach Greg Glassman highlighted four new and inspiring projects at the Texas Tour stop.

For many, the Q&A with Coach Glassman is a highlight, but Coach's speeches are rarely lengthy. In Fort Worth on March 24, he took the stage and highlighted four CrossFit community initiatives: building [schools in Kenya](#), raising funds for [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#) in Memphis with a new and brutal workout called Hope, preventing drowning by partnering with [Infant Swimming Resource](#), and working on an SAT-prep program to help students get into the right schools and embark on successful careers.

But Coach's speech was brief. He told the community what he's doing, asked them for their support and then spent the rest of the time answering their questions. In Fort Worth, he took more than an hour to respond to questions on everything from the relationship with Reebok to his favorite workout (Fran) and his least favorite workout (also Fran).

In the end, his overarching message was clear: "CrossFit stands for making people's lives better. All things good come from the CrossFit gym."

And really, they do. That's obvious when you mill about at a Tour event and meet the CrossFit nation.

There's something special about Disposable Heroes Project founder Brad McKee shaking Amundson's hand and telling the Original Firebreather that his ultramarathon was the inspiration for McKee's own run in support of wounded warriors. McKee traveled from Louisiana and said he was "just coming to see the family." He was taking home some warm-up ideas borrowed during a visit to CrossFit Dallas Central.



CrossFit Aledo hosted Open Event 12.5, which featured a guest appearance by Games champ Rich Froning Jr. and 2011 Open winner Dan Bailey.

There's something special about seeing gymnastics expert Jeff Tucker wearing his normal attire—a cowboy hat and boots—in a state where doing so is actually 100 percent appropriate at all times.

“That’s what CrossFit is all about: building community. I think CrossFit is so much more than a workout.”

—Dallin Frampton

There's something special about knowing the story behind some of CrossFit's most famous workouts. Lynne Pitts told how she and Kelly Moore met on the Internet when

both were following CrossFit.com back in its early days. Both now work for HQ, Pitts as operations manager and Moore as specialty course support. Both are diminutive in stature but were competitive powerlifters who served in the military. Both have workouts named after them—but Lynne's features movements she loves, while Kelly's is full of things she hates. Lesson learned at the Tour: don't tell Coach which movements you don't want to do. Even so, Lynne will tell you, "I hate me after Round 3."

There's also something special about talking to people like Dallin Frampton, the Utah CrossFitter who told Coach he wanted to build another school in Africa and needed help. Frampton built his first school near Mombasa, Kenya, in 2010, and he came back hoping to do more. Coach Glassman wanted to help, so he funded the building of a CrossFit school in Africa in December 2011. Coach is now leading the charge to build more schools in Africa.

"That's what CrossFit is all about: building community. I think CrossFit is so much more than a workout," Frampton said at Billy Bob's Texas honky tonk.

Strength in Numbers

You also get to meet some very special people who have the most amazing stories at Tour stops. Like Rob Davis of CrossFit 817.

The day before the Tour officially kicked off, Davis hosted Event 12.5 in his brand new 12,000-square-foot box in Keller, Texas. Davis has over 250 members and more equipment than most gyms can dream of.

Davis knows most of the affiliate owners in the area—there are a lot—but rarely sees them, including Kelly King-Kelley, who left 817 to start CrossFit Aledo, where Rich Froning Jr. and Dan Bailey did Event 12.5 at 11 a.m. on March 24. At the Tour events, Davis was looking forward to talking to other people, reconnecting and then maybe doing some sharing.

"I love this open-source fitness where you can glean anything from anybody, and I hope we're giving some back," he said.

He laughed: "When everyone starts drinking, we'll talk about best practices."

"I don't think we've even begun to tap into the influence we can have here in the world."

—Rob Davis

Davis indeed has something to give back: an inspiring story most people don't know.

Davis is head of a family of eight, and in 2010 he had been laid off for 16 months from a corporate job before spending the family's last \$250 to put the deposit down on a CrossFit Level 1 Trainer Course. He had no idea how he'd pay the balance.

"There was something about it," he said of CrossFit. "I was hooked."

At Christmas 2010, with the financial situation worsening, the Davis family got a knock on the door and received a check "from Santa." The card simply said "Merry Christmas," and to this day Davis doesn't know who sent it. But it was enough to pay off the balance of the Level 1 and buy some equipment for Davis to start training people out of his garage.

In April 2010, the money ran out, and the Davis family lost their house—and their garage. Rob told his clients that CrossFit 817 had outgrown the garage space, but it wasn't the truth. Davis took his wife and six kids and moved in with a friend for more than four months. When they found a great deal on a 1,500-square-foot place, CrossFit 817 survived.



Do the WOD, recover, then make new friends.

About two years later, CrossFit 817 is in a giant space, and it's thriving. At dinner at Billy Bob's, Davis was surrounded by his family, athletes, trainers and clients, and it was an inspiring sight. He was also surrounded by the larger CrossFit community of affiliates, some of them located not far from CrossFit 817.

But Davis, a man who lost his house and whose livelihood hinges on the success of his gym, doesn't feel threatened by the growing CrossFit community. Not one bit. In fact, he welcomes more affiliates in the area "because I don't think we've even begun to tap into the influence we can have here in the world."

Davis sees it differently than some: it's CrossFit against the rest, not every affiliate for itself. He sees the growth of CrossFit as nothing more than an opportunity to spread the word—and the WOD—and suck more people off their couches and out of Globo Gyms.

"I'm a competitive guy," Davis said. "I want to succeed—but never at the cost of another box Let's just grow this thing. It's a better opportunity for all of us."

You know what? He's right.

Earlier that night, Darin Deaton of CrossFit Fort Worth was hanging out with fellow affiliate owners, and he was making things happen. Deaton's box holds a sports-injury clinic, while nearby CrossFit Brandt runs yoga classes. They were talking about trading services and offering more to members of both boxes.

"There's no sense of competitiveness because you're just at a party. You're at a pig roast," Deaton said over a drink after Coach Glassman's Q&A.

"The Tour has given us a venue for box owners to meet each other ... and share ideas," he explained. "This type of activity gives us a chance to talk about creative opportunities."



There's nothing quite like a friendly Texas welcome.

That couldn't please Tour organizer Paula Gravatt more.

"They're coming in to hang out and meet with other CrossFitters and be part of the community," she said. "It feels like old-school CrossFit. The Games are the Games, but we still need to have this."

WODs—and More

In Fort Worth, top athletes Bailey and Froning were on hand to compete in Event 12.5. Froning posted the third-best score in the world at CrossFit Aledo, and Bailey was only a few reps behind him. The two of them actually warmed up in between signing autographs and posing for endless pictures. Their performance in front of a pack of Texas CrossFitters was impressive, as was their friendly interaction with the community.

"They're coming in to hang out and meet with other CrossFitters and be part of the community. It feels like old-school CrossFit."

—Paula Gravatt

After watching live bull riding in the dirt ring at Billy Bob's, Bailey sat on a railing and chatted with CrossFitters. He's a celebrity for sure, and he said being one of CrossFit's elite athletes "is kind of like one of those childhood dreams come true."

But more than that, he's happy to be part of the community.

"It's good to meet on a common basis," he said. "You're not going to see that in any other fitness realm. It's one of those things that makes CrossFit unique."

Sure enough, Bailey and Froning and Amundson rolled up at 9 a.m. Sunday morning for the Hangover WOD down by the river. It was Griff, and Amundson crushed it, taking time to yell and encourage others while running backwards along the course beside the Trinity River. Froning and Bailey were jogging with the people, doing a bit of active recovery after finishing first and fourth overall in the Open. HQ staff members were in there too.

CrossFit Tour: Copenhagen

The CrossFit Tour heads across the pond to Europe for a weekend in Copenhagen, Denmark, from May 25 to 27.

The Tour stop will coincide with the Europe Regional, where Annie Thorisdottir will compete to get back to the CrossFit Games to defend her title as the world's fittest woman.

For more details, visit Tour.CrossFit.com.

Everyone was sweating together in the hot Texas sun, and everyone was having a good time. They were working out, and some of them were working it off after enjoying a Josh Turner concert at Billy Bob's. All were looking forward to the farewell brunch that was to follow, and not just because bacon was on the menu.

They were looking forward to hanging with new friends, talking and laughing before heading home to their boxes.

CrossFit, you see, is more than a workout, and the CrossFit Tour is the proof.



Dave Re

About the Author

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