
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

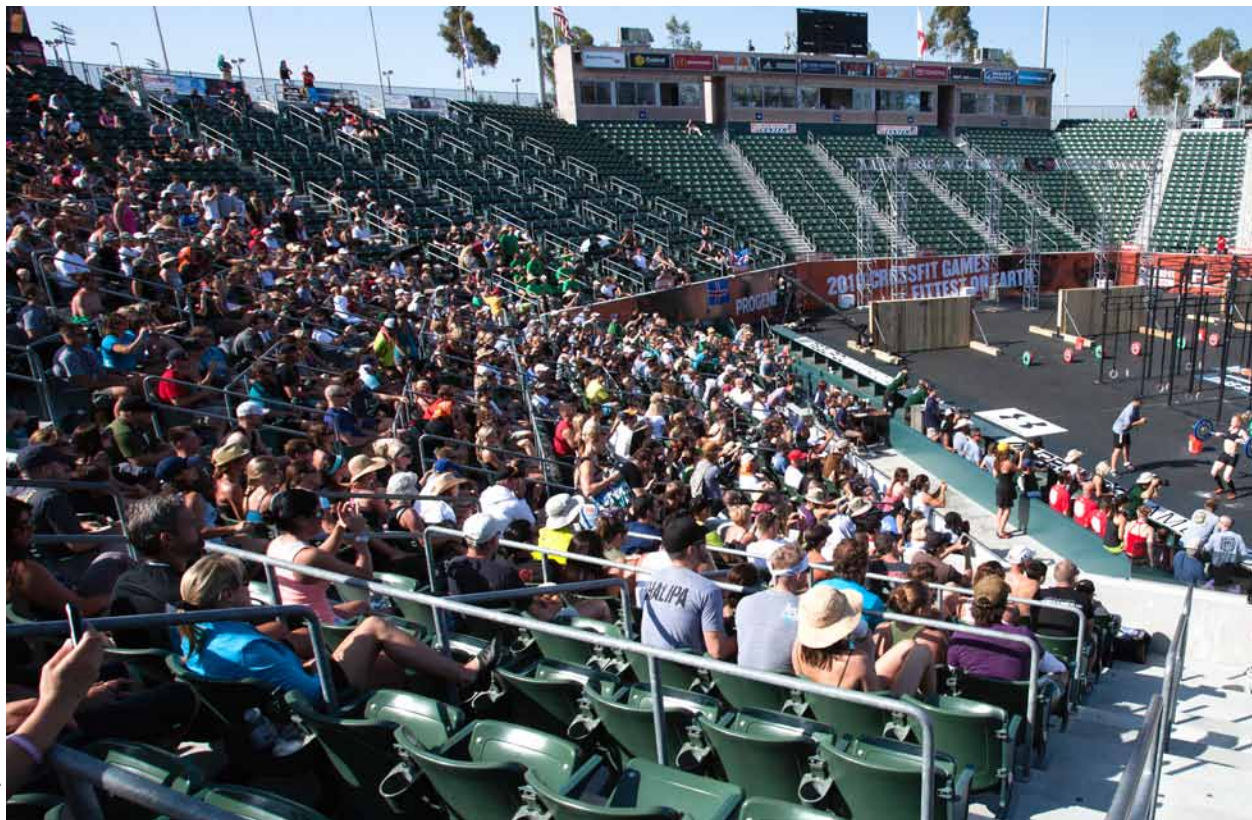
Sights of the Games

Mike Warkentin shares some of the best moments of the 2010 CrossFit Games.



By Mike Warkentin

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S. Dy/CrossFit

An all-access pass is a special thing at a CrossFit event. I was lucky enough to be able to hang out with all the athletes as we covered the event for the CrossFit Games website, and I got to see a lot of special moments throughout the competition. Here is a collection of the very best of the 2010 CrossFit Games.

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The Best of the Games

Chris Spealler is without a doubt one of the nicest guys in CrossFit, and he's also a fierce competitor. While waiting for the athletes to exit the arena after Event 1, which Spealler won, I spotted his wife Sarah holding their newborn baby and waiting for her husband. When Speal emerged from behind the curtain, he was greeted by a kiss from his wife and a family hug. It was a special moment, and only one of several involving the legendary athlete from Utah. Perhaps the best of them all came when Spealler was given a standing ovation when he received the Spirit of the Games award for exemplifying the qualities of a true CrossFitter.

Canadian **Camille Leblanc-Bazinet** was virtually unknown coming to the Games after finishing fourth in her regional. In the first heat of the first event, Camille became an instant hit as the dynamic athlete from Quebec ripped out nine unbroken muscle-ups with a powerful gymnastic kip. Indeed, it turned out that Camille is a former gymnast who has trained muscle-ups with a 20-lb. vest. That strength came in handy when pull-ups, knees-to-elbows, pistols and handstand push-ups turned up. I caught up with Camille on Day 3, and she told me she had been dared to try CrossFit after a few drinks at a party. She showed up at a CrossFit box a short time later and beat everyone there, but coach Alexandre Bureau wasn't ready to let it go to her head. "I think my coach, when I come back, will finally say I'm good," she said with a smile. Leblanc-Bazinet has a twin and a mother who can do 18 pull-ups, but "no one in my family wants to challenge me."

Pat Burke is a straight shooter if ever there was one. Pat is an outstanding 400-meter runner and set the early pace in the Hell-In workout before falling off toward the end of the lengthy event. I asked him afterward what his strategy had been in the first minutes when he jumped to the front of the pack. "Get out front and make them chase me. Fuck with their heads," he said bluntly.

In that same event, **D.J. Wickham** struggled badly with the run and was almost lapped by some of the other competitors. He was still working when the time cap came and was given 90 seconds to get some weight overhead. D.J. went over to the racks at the other end of the track, and after successful first attempts decided to go for a big win. His lift of 325 lb. was above anyone else and drew a huge roar from the crowd.



D. Rey/CrossFit

Camille Leblanc-Bazinet has trained muscle-ups with a 20-lb. vest, so the unweighted movement was not a problem at the Home Depot Center.

Tommy Hackenbruck, a former construction worker, proved in 2010 that he's dominant in any WOD involving an implement from Home Depot. Hackenbruck won the row/sledge/row event in 2009 by burying his stake almost instantly, and he was 17 seconds faster than any other competitor on the sandbag move event that had athletes trucking stacks of sandbags from one side of the stadium to the other. "Why is Tommy good at all the weird shit?" one competitor was heard to say on the steps after the sandbag event. I asked Tommy that exact question the next day, and he said it wasn't weird shit but work, and he's really good at working. He was also prepared for the wheelbarrow part of the event and knew that he needed to lift it slowly and then build up some momentum before pushing the pace. Other competitors tried to go too quickly and were slowed up when their wheelbarrows tipped.

Heather Bergeron is just a whole lot of fun. She never seems to stop smiling and is always having a good time, even when she's nearly crippled after a hard workout. While recovering on the stairs after the sandbag event, she was given a curtain call by her CrossFit New England brethren, so she didn't disappoint and offered them a huge smile and a double-biceps pose that might have made California's governor smile.

Lauren Plumey and **Libby Dibiasi** are famous for short shorts, and Plumey joked about auctioning off last year's minimal attire to help her pay for a trip to California. On Day 3, I spotted Plumey in a yellow pair of shorts that were short by society's standards but almost frumpy by Plumey's. I asked her about the change in style and she explained that her husband **Dave** had suggested a change after hearing people in the crowd cheering for



S. Dy/CrossFit

If you need some work done, call Tommy Hackenbruck. If he isn't running a class at Ute CrossFit, he might be able to help you build that deck or pave that driveway in no time.



S. Dy/CrossFit

Lauren Plumeley decided to “cover up” a bit on the last day of the Games, to the disappointment of her fans.

“the chick in the tiny purple shorts.” When commentator **Marty Cej** announced that over the live webcast, Plumeley’s husband immediately received text messages from Lauren’s fans. The outgoing athlete said she likes to party as much as she like to work out and planned to celebrate the end of the Games with lots of beer and a bag of chips on a San Diego Beach.

Earlier in the year, I worked with **Peter Egyed** to produce a *CrossFit Journal* article detailing how his arrest and substance abuse eventually led him to turn his life around with CrossFit. In the article, Egyed explained that he had been arrested after failing to scale a wall with police in hot pursuit. When I saw him on the massage table on Day 3, I asked him about the sandbag event, in which he had to scale a wall. Peter told me that wall was almost the same height as the one that tripped him up in October 2004, and he actually thought about how his life had changed just as he easily hopped over the concrete barrier at the Home Depot Center.

Competitors didn’t know how many events there would be, but by Day 3 **Rich Froning Jr.** and **Graham Holmberg** had emerged as the potential favorites based on the lead they had established over the pack. Because the

top athletes were always in the same heats, Froning and Holmberg had a chance to get to know each other. Late in Day 3, the two were found sitting near the video display in the warm-up area, just chatting and hanging out. I got to join the conversation, and Froning explained that he hadn’t used chalk in workouts until a month ago but had instead used baby powder at times, assuming it had the same effect. Holmberg said that his goal for this year was simply to do better than last year, when he placed 19th and missed the top 16 cut by only a few points. Holmberg, from Ohio, and Froning (Tennessee) swapped places atop the leaderboard shortly after the conversation ended, and their friendly rivalry was a great extension of the heated competitions that occur in every CrossFit gym in the world.

Chad Mackay of Australia was one of the top international competitors, and he was a bit of a dark horse after **Chris Hogan** dominated the Australian Regional. Mackay was rolling his hamstrings when I got a chance to ask him a few questions. He explained that he felt he had done Australia proud by making it to the top 16 and was now hoping to represent himself well in the final events. He did. Mackay finished 12th.



D. Smith/CrossFit

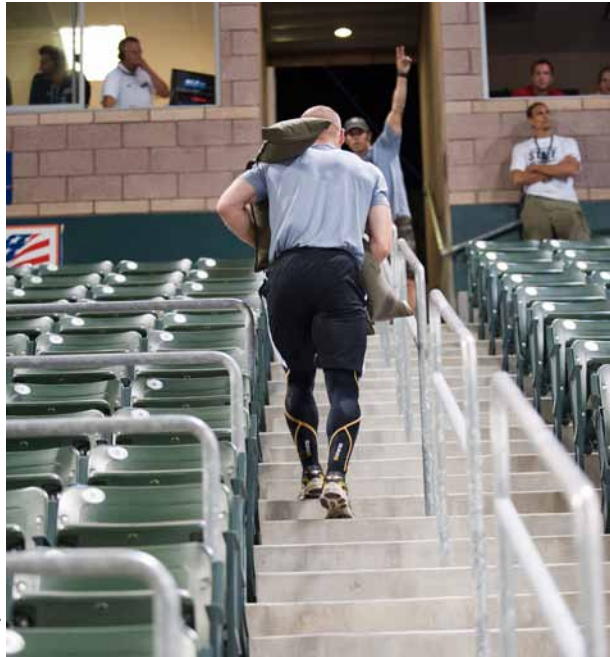
Jerome Perryman: one of the largest and nicest CrossFitters you're likely to meet.

Jerome Perryman is listed as 6'3", 225 lb., but that seems like it might be bullshit. The guy is massive, and he's simply a huge presence in any group of CrossFitters. Perryman looks intimidating but is actually an incredibly polite, personable and well-spoken member of the CrossFit community. You might be scared to approach him, but you should. The big man from CrossFit H.E.L. is always good to talk to.

Kristan Clever and **Annie Thorisdottir** are strikingly different. Clever is shorter and darker, while Iceland Annie is taller and fairer. One has short black hair, the other long red locks. The two were first and second for almost the entire weekend, meaning they were stationed right next to each other on just about every event. On many occasions they went rep for rep, and their battles made for striking photographs. The CrossFit.com shot on July 17 is an absolute classic, and a host of others show the two athletes engaged in an epic battle that was eventually won by Clever.

Thorisdottir is known for her glowing smile, and that grin often shows up in workouts in spite of the difficulty of her tasks. During the sandbag event, Annie was carting a 370-lb. load across the stadium with abs rippling and traps twitching. Nevertheless, she still managed to give one of the brightest smiles of the weekend to her fans, and our photographers were lucky enough to get a shot that defines one of the greatest athletes in the sport.

If Clever ever felt stressed during the competition she didn't show it. Despite giving up a large lead due to a spilled wheelbarrow on Day 2, she was in great spirits in the warm-up area. "Darn that wheelbarrow!" she said, shaking a fist at the sky. "Shit like that happens all that time. That guy's wheelbarrow broke, and you just have to keep going." That guy was **Brandon Phillips**, who indeed needed a second wheelbarrow after his first one gave out on him in the middle of the arena. He grabbed another and kept fighting to finish, with Froning Jr. jumping out of his rest to shout encouragement to Phillips.



S. Dy/CrossFit

Salo will be back.

By Day 3, a host of athletes had badly torn hands after doing a ton of muscle-ups, pull-ups, kettlebell swings, snatches and deadlifts. Some of the worst went to Spealler and **Elyse Umeda**, who at times sported so much tape that they looked like they were going into a boxing match. **Austin Malleolo** played catch-up in the final event and left the stadium with savagely blistered hands that had been burned by a series of rope climbs. Austin, a former hockey player, was in great spirits nevertheless after giving a great performance to finish sixth overall.

I saw a disappointed **Mikko Salo** standing off to the side after the awards ceremony that featured Graham Holmberg atop a podium that was last year occupied by Salo. Mikko explained that he knew now that he had to improve his skills and was planning to do so immediately. "Yeeeah," Salo said when asked if he was satisfied with fifth. "The goal was to of course win the Games, but it's the right place for me this year. The right guys were ahead of me." Salo trains like a workhorse, and when asked if he could train with even more intensity, he said he could. "I'll come back next year and I'll be better. (I can train) harder, and I have to concentrate on my skills because this year I had a lack of skills." Many competitors refer to the Finn as a cyborg, and I asked him if he will return to the Games in 2011. Rest assured, Salo will be back.

Leaving the stadium I walked past a man resting on the grass and using a giant check as a shade from the blazing sun. It turned out he was Graham Holmberg's dad, who recognized me from an interview I had done with the champ about an hour before. **Elbert Holmberg** jumped up and shook my hand with a huge grin that was the very definition of the term "proud father."



Author's Note

*I'd like to thank a few people whose work often goes unnoticed. Photographers **Susannah Dy, Thomas Campitelli, Dave Re, Darryl Smith** and **Alicia Anthony** worked for three days straight under a blazing sun, and I'll be proud to publish their outstanding images over the next months. **Ryan Lucas** added shots as well, coordinated the photo team and made the competition area look like a pro-sports venue. **Pete O'Connor** did a great job sweating it out in the trenches to Tweet the Games to the world.*

***Chris Worden** was a great resource in updating the Games site with words and pictures. Tech wizards **Ron Wilhelm** and **Bill McGair** do not get anywhere near the credit they deserve for creating the scoring system, managing the technical aspects of the Games, getting the live stream to the CrossFit community, and basically figuring out the shit that mystifies everyone else. It was a privilege to work with all of these professionals.*

About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal.