



Sights of the Games

The CrossFit Games produced a host of great stories. Here are a few that you might not know about.

Mike Warkentin



Over the course of the CrossFit Games, media teams took over 100,000 photos and recorded hours of video footage. But the camera doesn't always catch everything. What follows is a compilation of some of the best behind-the-scenes moments from three days of total fitness chaos.

1 of 8

Pictured: Mike Burgener



Pictured: Jeff Martone



Pictured: Brett (AFT) Marshall



Mike Burgener was on hand to watch his daughter **Sage** compete in the Affiliate Cup with CrossFit Invictus, who made it into the top five and won the final WOD on Sunday. After the last Affiliate Cup event on Friday, the coach was spotted in the Stadium leading yet another athlete through some Olympic lifts. A large crowd gathered around the impromptu session, but no burpees were handed out.

John Welbourne of CrossFit Balboa was on the scene Friday afternoon. The former NFL lineman and CrossFit Football founder seemed to be more relaxed than last year, when he was a competitor and had to carry 300-plus lb. of bulk up The Hill.

Kettlebell expert **Jeff Martone** was in the crowd on Friday for the Affiliate Cup and probably could have offered some advice to the competitors swinging the bell in the Stadium. Several reps were disallowed by judges because the kettlebell wasn't exactly vertical at the top of the swing. Perhaps Martone will serve as a judge if the Turkish get-up ever finds its way into the CrossFit Games.

Brett (AFT) Marshall, who finished second in the 2007 Games, helped CrossFit Calgary to a fourth-place finish in the Affiliate Cup. The team from **James (OPT) FitzGerald's** box originally finished out of the top five until a scoring error was detected. As a result of an incorrect total score of 825 in the OHS/pull-up WOD, CrossFit Calgary was slotted 35th in the workout, resulting in an overall score of 58 and a finish of 13th overall. The revised score of 925 put them seventh in the WOD, lowering their overall total to 30 and moving the outfit to fourth overall. In Sunday's final the team managed to finish second, with AFT ripping through burpees at a blistering pace.

CrossFit HQ trainer **Rachel Medina** was working the Volunteer Tent on the morning of the Affiliate Cup, and the cool a.m. temps were doing absolutely nothing for her. After signing in a few more volunteers, Medina vowed she was going to go find a pair of sweatpants to get her through until the sun came out of the morning fog. At a Level 1 Cert in San Diego in March, Medina was chilled from the bitter cold she experienced the day before in Edmonton, Canada. It's been a cool year for the California girl.



Pictured: Mikko Salo



Pictured: Jeff Tucker, Annie Thorisdottir, and Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson



WOD 2 in the individual competition was a deadlift ladder topping out at 505, with 10-pound increments to be lifted every 30 seconds. Even after a 7.1 kilometer trail run, 16 men pulled the big weight at the end, and a host of competitors set new PRs. **Cyndi Frieling** told the *CrossFit Journal* before the competition that she could lift more than her PR of 365, and she proved the point by pulling 375 and finishing first. Big **Jerome Perryman** and **Lance Mosley** have PRs over 600lb. and pulled the weight with ease. After the event, they both said they could have done a few reps at 505. **Mikko Salo** got the last bar off the ground but couldn't lock it out. Salo finished second in the run, and had he made the lift he would have taken a large lead into the final workout.

Icelander **Annie Mist Thorisdottir** distinguished herself early in the contest with raw athletic performances that had everyone amazed. Mist had never done GHD sit-ups before WOD 3 and found them "easy." She was similarly unfamiliar with the snatch, and when the 1RM snatch WOD was announced she received 10 minutes of intense coaching from Mike Burgener. Coach B's advice and Mist's athleticism combined to produce an ungainly but powerful 115, good enough for ninth

(tying **Jolie Gentry**). Later, CrossFit Director of Training **Nicole Carroll** and CrossFit Gymnastics Coach **Jeff Tucker** were teaching Mist and countryman **Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** how to do muscle-ups. Mist managed her first muscle-up during WOD 8 and drew one of the loudest roars of the weekend. She wasn't able to complete the workout but vowed to learn the movement as soon as possible. As of press time, she probably has. Sveinbjornsson also got his first and then went on to complete seven more, claiming each one more easily than the previous.

Eventual winner **Mikko Salo** was similarly unfamiliar with double-unders and picked up some tips from other competitors before Sunday's final WOD. When asked about the new movement before the event, Salo was uncertain if he would be able to pull it off. His strategy during the WOD: taking one single and then throwing in a double. Salo lost a bit of time on the rope but was still well ahead of **Jason Khalipa** when he threw a 45 lb. bumper overhead and started the lunges to the finish line.

Pictured: Spencer Hendel



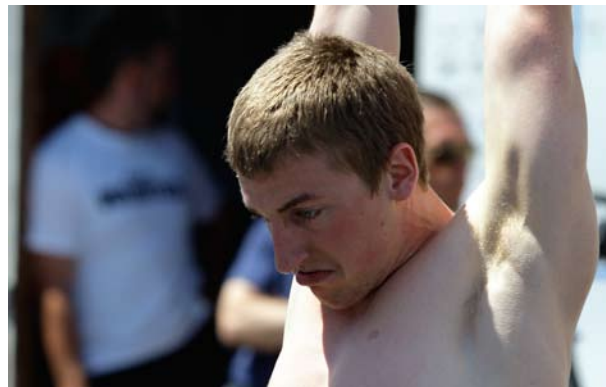
Pictured: Ed Rockowitz



Pictured: Valerie Mackenzie



Pictured: Michael (Bro-PT) FitzGerald



The men's snatch event saw some truly ugly lifts and bad bails, as well as some impressive performances. Eliminated the day before, Olympic lifting expert **Josh Everett** was not in the competition to give other athletes an example of how to get 270 overhead in a flash. After the event, Mike Burgener selected **D.J. Wickham** and **Jeff Leonard** as two of the better technical lifters. The coach was also very impressed with **Spencer Hendel**—a Last Chance online qualifier—who locked out 225 lb. "Give me three months and I'll make him a national champion," the coach said of Hendel.

A few athletes were injured during the trail run, including **Joy Nguyen** and **Valerie Mackenzie**. The latter athlete provided one of the more memorable moments of the weekend when she staggered into the Stadium bleeding from her head. She collapsed several times but shook off medical personnel to literally fall over the finish line, bringing tears from many who witnessed the heroic effort. Mackenzie's time: 46:15.2—the 10th woman across the line.

Ahhh Massage therapist **Ed Rockowitz** provided massage services for the athletes and reported some incredibly gnarled muscles found their way onto the two tables set up at the back of the athletes' warm-up area. Rockowitz noted that the trail run seemed to be the event that did the most damage. Many athletes reported that the team from **Ahhh** included some of the best massage therapists they had ever encountered.

James (OPT) FitzGerald finished sixth in the trail run, only 43.5 seconds ahead of his brother, **Michael (Bro-PT) FitzGerald**. The younger athlete has had shoulder problems in the past and struggles with overhead work but turned in a solid performance and found his way into the top 16 with big brother. Michael also found the sledgehammer WOD to his liking. He estimates that he pounded 1,500 stakes in the ground as part of a summer job in Newfoundland and Labrador, so he was in familiar territory. Unfortunately, OPT was forced to withdraw from the contest just before Sunday's final event with an injury. Michael finished 11th.



Pictured: Annie Sakamoto



Pictured: Charlie Dunifer



Pictured: Nicole Gordon

One of the original CrossFit stars, **Annie Sakamoto** competed in the Affiliate Cup for CrossFit Santa Cruz Central. She said the judging was very strict but fair, especially during the wall-ball section of the Stadium workout. Some females struggled mightily with the height of the wall-ball shot, while a few others complained that sloped sections along the ground below the target put some competitors at a disadvantage.

Charlie Dunifer, a colourful character who got to the Games via the Last Chance Qualifier, had several creative programming suggestions for **Tony Budding** of CrossFit HQ. Perhaps most interesting was “stealing shit for time,” an event Dunifer said he would utterly dominate. Dunifer also pioneered an interesting technique on the sledgehammer WOD. After getting frustrated swinging the hammer, Dunifer actually flipped it upside down and attempted to use the top of the sledge like a potato masher. The technique was unsuccessful and Dunifer finished 43rd in the WOD—but he laughed it off afterwards.

Lee Knight finished fourth in the Mid Atlantic Regional. She showed up to compete with a broken foot and a special T-shirt. On the front: “75th place.” On the back: photos of her shattered foot being repaired during surgery. She was determined to compete anyway and ran the flat part of the trail run. When the hills came up, the pain was just too great and she had to withdraw.

Nicole Gordon finished second in the Mid Atlantic Regional but had difficulty in the sledgehammer WOD. She mangled her fingers on one of the strikes but finished the workout with her hand a bloody mess. She was sent to Medical, and then the ER, where X-rays revealed she had not fractured any bones. Gordon got on the phone immediately and told organizers to hold a spot for her in the next WOD as she raced back to The Ranch.

Pictured: Pat Barber



Pictured: Chastity Slone



Pictured: Mikko Salo, J.C. Nessa



Pictured: Kyle Maynard and Jolie Gentry



Pat Barber does video work for CrossFit HQ and operates out of the same office as Tony Budding, who had some input in programming the Games. In the lead-up to the Games, Budding was often forced to have conversations outside so as to keep the events secret from Barber and maintain the integrity of the contest. Barber was eliminated after the first day and promised that he certainly would not berate Budding about the programming of the 2009 Games "every single day for the next year." (Although Budding reports that the berating has been pretty consistent so far.)

During the first heats of the rowing/sledge WOD, many male competitors were swinging so wildly that they were snapping and damaging multiple sledgehammers. With Games Director **Dave Castro** reminding competitors in the next heats that success with the stake drive came more from accuracy and skill than power, CrossFit HQ sent personnel off-site to buy as many back-up sledges as possible. Staff members made three stops and came back with about 24 reserve hammers. Luckily, competitors in the later heats learned from the mistakes of those who went first, and the back-up equipment wasn't needed.

Tommy Hackenbruck was overjoyed to hear about the sledgehammer workout. Hackenbruck runs an affiliate now but until three months ago worked construction jobs, swinging the big iron for a living. He annihilated the WOD in 4:36, and other competitors were amazed at how Hack was able to bury the last foot of the steel rod with one mighty but accurate blow. Other competitors who were adept with the hammer: firefighters **Jeff Tincher** and **Matt Chan**, and **Chastity Slone**, who grew up on a farm.

One of the best moments of the sandbag sprint came when **J.C. Nessa**, the overall leader at the time, was leading his heat with his "balls to the wall" approach. Passing is incredibly difficult on the steep terrain near the end of the run, and only a few meters from the finish it looked like Nessa would win. When he slipped and nearly dropped his bags, **Mikko Salo** seized the chance and snuck past for a dramatic win.

Featured in the moving *Wounded Warriors* video series, **Kyle Maynard**, one of CrossFit's most inspirational athletes, was spotted greeting athletes in the warm-up area and watching the chipper WOD with **Coach Glassman**.



Pictured: Sarah Dunsmore

Libby Dibiase from Omaha, Nebraska, was almost as famous for her performance in 2008 (sixth) as she was for the tiny bright red shorts she wore to the Games. Dibiase did not disappoint her fans, and the shorts once again made an appearance at The Ranch. The dynamic Dibiase finished 47th.

The top three female competitors from the Rocky Mountain Qualifier decided to forego the individual competition in Aromas to instead compete in the Affiliate Cup. All from Front Range CrossFit, **Kristen Olsen**, **Cori Gobell** and **Jasmine Dever** led a team that flew out in front after all Affiliates had completed one WOD. They faded as the competition continued and finished in 10th place.

Sarah Dunsmore, who weighs 120 lb., managed to pull 270 in the deadlift, stopping short of an all-out effort. Dunsmore revealed afterward that she's had spinal fusion of her L5 and S1 vertebrae and felt it was a smart play to back off and save her body for the rest of the contest. It turned out to be a solid plan: Dunsmore went into WOD 7 as a contender for the title. The energetic woman from North Carolina was eliminated from contention when she couldn't complete a handstand push-up. She did, however, have the option to complete the final workout to distinguish herself from the other women who were also unable to complete a handstand push-up. Her heroic effort to finish just before the time cap moved a half dozen judges to tears.



Pictured: Fred Zabala



Pictured: Geoffrey Tudisco



Pictured: Jolie Gentry

In one of the more imaginative cross-marketing ploys, **Geoffrey Tudisco's** CrossFit Bogota shares space with a cardio-strip-tease/pole-dance studio. It's doubtful that any main-site WODs will include the phrase "remove clothes for time," but if they do, Tudisco is set. Josh Everett happened to be nearby when Tudisco was explaining his intriguing set-up in Columbia, and the colourful character originally from New York asked Everett if he might want to come down and do an Olympic lifting cert.

On Saturday night, statistics from the beer tent revealed that about 364 gallons had been sold to CrossFitters, and some of it found its way into CrossFit Ventura's "crunk bat"—a hollow plastic baseball bat that served as a cup. Four ounces of beer represent one block on the Zone diet, but the team from Ventura did not provide volume figures for the crunk bat.

The Games were rocking from start to finish with a live DJ who showed a preference for metal and hard rock, with some rap thrown in for good measure. The thumping bass and rhythms helped keep both the crowd and the competitors pumped.

During the pull-up/OHS WOD in the Affiliate Cup, one competitor loosely interpreted the instructions of Games Director **Dave Castro** and hung from the pull-up bar by his legs while letting his arms recover. He did this several times before **Nicole Carroll** happened by and informed the judges that the playground technique was creative but not legal in the CrossFit Games.

SWAT operator **Jolie Gentry** was in the warm-up area after the Games wrapped up, teaching a very young female friend how to launch a powerful kick into a heavy bag hanging from the pull-up rack. Shortly after, Gentry was given the Military/LEO Award by Viking Tactics during the closing awards ceremonies.



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He shares Rachel Medina's distaste for cold weather.