



## The Sweet 16

Thirty-two men and women made it to Day 2 of the CrossFit Games. The *CrossFit Journal* takes a closer look at these elite athletes and how they got to Aromas.

Mike Warkentin



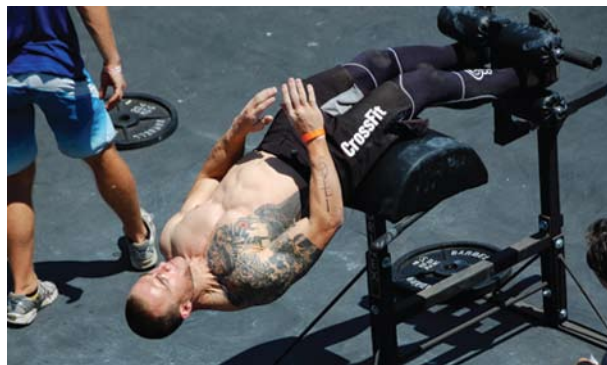
The CrossFit Games champions have been crowned, and you'll be hearing a lot about **Tanya Wagner** and **Mikko Salo** over the next year.

A host of other elite athletes turned in similarly outstanding performances at the Games, perhaps setting themselves up for a run at the title next year. What follows is a closer look at the top 16 male and female competitors who distinguished themselves at [The Ranch](#).

Pictured: Lindsey Smith



Pictured: Steve Willis



Pictured: Kristan Clever



On the men's side, the Last Chance Qualifier produced three athletes—all of whom finished in the top 12 when the Games wrapped up. **Tommy Hackenbruck** (second) **Peter Egyed** (sixth) and **Spencer Hendel** (12<sup>th</sup>) used the Internet to punch a ticket to the Games. For the women, all Last Chance qualifiers were eliminated on Day 1.

Of the 11 Legacy competitors who qualified on past performance, six made it through to Sunday's final WODs. **James (OPT) FitzGerald**, **Jeremy Thiel** and **Jason Khalipa** made the top 16 males, and **Tamara Holmes**, **Jolie Gentry** and **Tanya Wagner** represented the female Legacy qualifiers.

While the Last Chance and Legacy athletes made up almost 40 per cent of the men's top 16, only Canada West (**D.J. Wickham**, **Michael "Bro-PT" FitzGerald**) was able to place two athletes in the ranks. The Dirty South, Hell's Half Acre, Great Basin, Midwest and Northeast were all shut out of the men's side of the Sweet 16. Hell's Half Acre managed to place three females in the top echelon: **Carey Kepler**, **Lindsey Smith** and **Crystal McReynolds**. The Northwest placed two: **Charity Vale** and **Jennifer Olson**. Incredibly, only **Kristan Clever** made it to the final day to represent women from either

of the California qualifiers. Only Canada East, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia failed to send a single athlete through to Sunday's final events.

The average stats of the top four men (**Mikko Salo**, **Tommy Hackenbruck**, **Moe Kelsey** and **Steve Willis**) are as follows: 30 years old, six feet tall, 200 lb. For the middle men (36<sup>th</sup>-39<sup>th</sup>: **Pat Barber**, **Brad Posnanski**, **Ricky Frausto** and **Darren Rosten**), the numbers were 30 years old, 5'8" and 171 lb.—which, coincidentally, are almost exactly Mikko Salo's stats. For the bottom four men (**Mike Giardina**, **Rob Gerdes**, **Dutch Lowy** and **Nelson Barriga**) the numbers are: 25 years old, 5'7" and 170.

The top four women (**Tanya Wagner**, **Charity Vale**, **Carey Kepler** and **Kristan Clever**) averaged 29 years old, 5'4" and 134 lb. The bottom four competitors (not eliminated by injury) were **Dana Lynch**, **Tia McDougall**, **Nikki Hall** and **Jenni Orr**. Their numbers: 29 years old, 5'3" and 137 lb. The female competitors in 34<sup>th</sup>-37<sup>th</sup> place (**Apollonia Helm**, **Michelle Benedict**, **Stacie Tovar** and **Danielle Dionne**) averaged 26 years old, 5'4" and 133 lb.



Dr. Harold Doran is a statistician with a PhD, and he's also a CrossFitter. He analyzed the results of the competition and drew the following general conclusions (Doran reminds that the sample sizes are too small to have produced definitive results):

*Age does not matter and never correlates with any of the results.*

*Weight seemed to work slightly against athletes in the run but gave them a fairly substantial advantage in the deadlift. Taller athletes were also better at the deadlift.*

*Age, height and weight had no bearing whatsoever on the sandbag sprint.*

*Height produced a small advantage in the sledgehammer WOD.*

*Weight appeared to matter a great deal for the snatch WOD.*

*Smaller stature appeared to give athletes an advantage on the triplet.*

*Height and weight were big factors in the chipper. Taller athletes did worse, as did heavier athletes.*

Six of the top 16 men were international competitors. Three came from Canada (**OPT**, **Bro-PT** and **D.J. Wickham**), while **Steve Willis** came from Australia, **Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** came from Iceland, and eventual winner **Mikko Salo** came from Finland. Of the top females, only **Annie Thorisdottir** (Iceland) and **Lauren Pryor** (Canada) had to come through customs to reach California.

Former Games champion **James (OPT) FitzGerald** from Calgary was forced to withdraw from the competition shortly before the final WOD due to injuries. "He was so disappointed and he was saying, 'I've let so many people down,'" Tony Budding of CrossFit HQ recalled. "The reality is he didn't let anybody down. He gave his best... I can't imagine that anybody would ever look at him at the end of that even in that scenario and say, 'You failed.'" Any disappointment OPT might feel as an athlete should be remedied by his stats as a trainer: **CrossFit Calgary** finished fourth in the Affiliate Cup, and CFC athletes **Bro-PT**, **Lauren Pryor** and **D.J. Wickham** all made the top 16.



Pictured: D.J. Wickham



Pictured: James (OPT) FitzGerald

Pictured: Jeremy Thiel



Pictured: Gillian Mounsey



Pictured: Josh Everett



CrossFit Central had similar success. Their Affiliate Cup team finished second, while **Jeremy Thiel**, **Crystal McReynolds** and **Carey Kepler** all represented the Texas box at the top of the standings.

Several notable athletes failed to make Day 2. Last year's winner, **Caity Matter** from Ohio, was forced to withdraw from the contest due to heat exhaustion after the third WOD. **Gillian Mounsey**, who finished third last year, was eliminated after the fourth WOD. **Josh Everett**, second in 2008, did not make the second day to the surprise of many, and **Pat Barber**, fourth in 2008, was similarly left out. Notable men who were eliminated at the first cut included **Dutch Lowy**, who won the Hell's Half Acre Qualifier, and **James Hobart**, who was first in the Northeast. **Jenni Orr** won the Dirty South and **Hilari Eaton** won the Great Basin event, but both were dropped at the first cut on Day 1.





Pictured: Stacey Kroon



Pictured: Moe Kelsey



Pictured: Cyndi Frieling

A host of male competitors spent some time on the gridiron. **Tommy Hackenbruck** (middle linebacker, University of Utah), **Moe Kelsey** (high school), **Jason Khalipa** (guard/defensive end, high school), **Jeremy Thiel** (high school), **Jeff Leonard** (defensive end, Wyoming), **D.J. Wickham** (linebacker, University of Calgary), **Blair Morrison** (wide receiver, Princeton) and **Pat Burke** (high school) all spent time on the football field. **Spencer Hendel** didn't play football, but his father, **Andy Hendel**, was a middle linebacker for the Miami Dolphins in 1986. **David Millar** played the other kind of football—soccer—for four years at UC Irvine.

A host of women were collegiate athletes, including **Tanya Wagner** (soccer, Georgia Southern), **Sarah Dunsmore** (rugby, UNC), **Stacey Kroon** (multi-sport, Keene State), **Tamara Holmes** (volleyball, UC Berkeley), **Jolie Gentry** (volleyball, San Francisco State), **Lindsey Smith** (multisport, DePaul), **Cyndi Frieling** (basketball, Briarcrest), **Christy Phillips** (lacrosse, George Washington University), **Charity Vale** (soccer, Oklahoma City University), and **Carey Kepler** (basketball, Angelo State).



Pictured: Blair Morrison

Pictured: Annie Thorisdottir



Pictured: Laura DeMarco



Pictured: Pat Burke



Pictured: Jason Khalipa and Ashley Fini



**Laura DeMarco** was adamant that she was not an athlete and had never played high-school or college sports. The former art director/graphic designer who runs **CrossFit RX** in Atlanta finished 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** was an alpine skier in Iceland and currently works as a civil engineer in Reykjavik. **Annie Thorisdottir**, who went into the final WOD in second place and with a legitimate chance to beat Tanya Wagner, wants to be a doctor and recently wrote a medical entrance exam. The outstanding raw athlete also took up pole vaulting in the last year.

Both **Moe Kelsey** and **Pat Burke** admitted they did some bodybuilding in the past but saw the light and put down the biceps curl bar when they started CrossFit. Moe is also a 6'2", 225 lb. triathlete who competes in firefighter challenges.

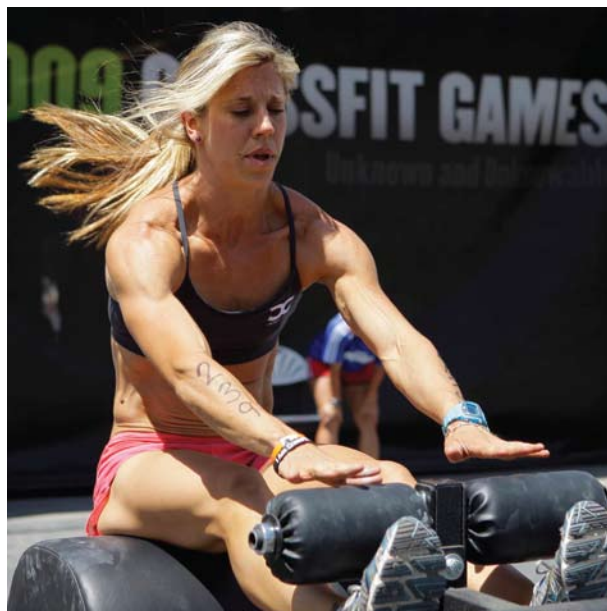
**Jason Khalipa's** preparation for the CrossFit Games included renting a tux. The fifth-place finisher married Ashley Fini on July 18. Khalipa says his better half is an incredible athlete in her own right. Khalipa trains her but maintains it's probably best not to coach your partner. "You can teach somebody something, but you can't push them because when you go back home with them you have to live with them," he said.



Pictured: Peter Egyed



Pictured: Carey Kepler



**Peter Egyed** takes physics at Arizona State University but doesn't want to be a physicist. He runs [CrossFit Fury](#), and his outstanding performances in the Last Chance Qualifier and the Games prove he understands force equals mass times acceleration, even if he doesn't want to wear a white coat for the rest of his life.

Firefighters in the top 16 include **Tamara Holmes**, **Jeff Leonard**, **Mikko Salo** and **Moe Kelsey**, while military and law-enforcement agencies are represented by **Steve Willis** (Australian Special Forces), **Jolie Gentry** (SWAT operator) and **Pat Burke** (U.S. Marines).

**Charity Vale** and **Jenni Olson** both made the Sweet 16, and the two are related by marriage. Olson's brother Jeff is married to Charity, and the two women drew on each other for support throughout the competition. The self-named "insta-buddies" have three kids each.

Both **Cyndi Frieling** and **Carey Kepler** jumped into CrossFit at the deep end by tackling Nasty Girls as their first WOD. **Tanya Wagner** found CrossFit through the 300 workout, together with her husband, Josh, who also competed in the Games. Josh finished in 40<sup>th</sup> place, and the proud husband said after the event that the couple wasn't coming so he could win; they were coming so Tanya could improve on her second-place finish last year.



#### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. His favourite WODs at the 2009 CrossFit Games were the deadlift ladder and the 1RM snatch.*