

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

The CrossFit Journal: A Retrospective

Tony Budding



The CrossFit Journal started with a yellow writing pad and a Pentel .5mm mechanical pencil. A meticulous outline, calculated drafts, and extensive rewriting preceded the easy flowing genius of the first twenty-five CrossFit Journals. That period constitutes CrossFit Journal 1.0: Greg Glassman articulating the various aspects of his vision for a new era of functional fitness. An era in which empirical, measurable results trump theoretical posturing, in which game, mission, and life prevail over anything that may happen in a mirrored gym.

Greg wrote all the articles (save two) in each of the first 25 issues (while Lauren did all the graphics, photography, and layout, plus read and reread all Greg's drafts and tolerated all the vicissitudes and vituperations of Greg's writing state). Those of us who were part of CrossFit Santa Cruz back then always knew when it was Journal time because Greg was at the gym constantly. Writing tortured him, and anything was better than that yellow pad. Starbucks for a venti Earl Gray tea, the gym for morning classes, the Silver Spur for a CrossFit Sandwich (2 fried eggs, bacon, cheese on 2 pieces of toast—a perfect 4-block meal); Lauren's phone calls were no match for the "urgent" client relations happening. In the end, the articles all got done, on time and brilliant. But as smooth as the finished product was, getting there was anything but. Life was always a little brighter after the 1st of each month.

1 of 4

The Garage Gym launched it, in more ways than one. On September 1, 2002, exactly six years ago, the CrossFit Journal issue 1 was published. "How to Get Kicked Out of Your Gym in 10 Days or Less" by playing music you like, lifting heavy, using chalk, doing box jumps, and performing dumbbell walking lunges in the parking lot. The Glassmans knew what they were talking about. When they had finally been kicked out of the last gym in Santa Cruz, they were forced to pave their own way. After a short jaunt in a Brazilian jiu-jitsu gym, they opened up the first CrossFit garage gym at 2851 B Research Park Drive in Soquel, CA. Twelve hundred square feet of light industrial space pioneered what we now take for granted.

Issue 2 was the seminal "What is Fitness" (CrossFit Journal Issue 2, October 2002). For the first time in our industry's history, fitness became defined in a measurable, observable, repeatable way. External criteria by which we can all judge our success replaced the relativistic and egocentric approaches rampant throughout the industry ("fitness is different for everyone" and "use the mirror to see your progress.") The prescription for elite fitness was established: Execute a wide variety of functional movements at high intensity. This 12-page manifesto articulated both the goal and the way to achieve it, and, perhaps more than any other single element, set the stage for an international movement.

This was October 2002, and the old website was going. There were no comments, no pictures, no videos. Just workouts with the smallest descriptions.

The new website was launched on April 25, 2003, with this:

Friday 030425

Tabata Squats, Push-ups, and Pull-ups resting one minute between efforts.

½ Tabata Squats, Push-ups, and Pull-ups resting one minute between efforts.

"Variances in effort, intensity, enthusiasm, and performance are an inescapable part of life. The belief that these natural variances can be planned for months in advance in order to optimize performance at a later date is hogwash."

- Greg Glassman

American Gymnast is a good resource for all things gymnastic:

There were no comments that day. The first comment came four days later, by our very own Robb Wolf (speaking about the push jerk):

I LOVE this movement! It is amazing how good it feels to send body weight over head like it is nothing!

Robb

Comment #1

Posted by: Robb Wolf at April 29, 2003 11:57 AM

And the CrossFit community was born.

Robb, along with Dave Werner and Nick Nibler, were to become the first affiliate (CrossFit North).



Before October 2004, there were only two instances where others supplied material for the Journal. In March 2003, Dan John contributed a review of the World Class Coaching tapes, and in March 2004, several community members contributed their take on what CrossFit was. Robb Wolf, Kelly Moore, and Mark Twight all wrote about the substantial impact CrossFit made on their fitness and training in general.

So, for just over two years (25 monthly issues), Greg wrote the Journal. Beyond the theoretical bases for why CrossFit works, he covered the movements, programming, nutrition, modifications and scaling. The basics were covered, the protocol was established, and both the numbers of participants and breadth of empirical evidence were growing. What was next?

CrossFit Journal 2.0

Enter CrossFit Journal 2.0 and outside contributors. From October 2004 until February 2006, an increasing number of specialists and other writers joined Greg in exploring topics significant to the CrossFit community. Issue 26 had Michael Rutherford's first article on dumbbell training, and my article on incorporating CrossFit into a high school PE program joining Greg's "Beginner's Guide to CrossFit" (CrossFit Journal Issue 26, October 2004). The ground was broken, the solo was over, and the CrossFit Journal became the chorus of significant authors that we've known now for years.

There are a few key issues worth highlighting. In May 2005, we published Eugene Allen's "Killer Workouts" (CrossFit Journal Issue 33, May 2005). The dose response curve for CrossFit workouts is steep, and when it became clear that folks unaccustomed to them could become seriously ill from them, we shared it immediately with the community. Uncle Rhabdo first showed his head officially in October of that year. We've learned that slow ramp-ups without dramatically exceeding what you've done before is a virtual guarantee of not getting rhabdomyolysis. With proper acclimation, there doesn't seem to be a set limit to how much intensity athletes can sustain. At the same

time, for the unacclimated, a child's CrossFit workout has induced rhabdo (see <http://www.crossfit.com/mt-archive2/004059.html>).

In July 2005, the "Garage Gym Revolution" (CrossFit Journal Issue 35, July 2005) was published, with Brian Mulvaney's open source call to make fitness free (free as in speech, not beer). This marked the Glassmans' recognition of the Affiliate Program's broad potential. The same concepts that had made CrossFit so successful in the small Santa Cruz box and on the web could be replicated indefinitely by enthusiastic, competent trainers. They were right. When Nicole Carroll and I became the first Affiliate Directors later that month, there were 13 affiliates. By the end of 2006, there were 100. By February 2008, when Lisa Lugo and Nancy Meenen took the reins as directors, there were about 300 affiliates. Today there are nearly 700.

Coaches Mike Burgener and Mark Rippetoe have made perhaps the greatest impact of all the specialists who have brought their expertise to CrossFit. Their training of the various barbell lifts has deepened the efficacy of CrossFit programming. We've published well over a dozen articles and videos of Burg's approach to Olympic-style weightlifting. Rip's treatises on the slow lifts and his pontifications about the fitness world in general are classics.

During this same period, Carrie Klumpar's role became increasingly significant. Carrie had editing experience ranging from academia to high-tech, and she was called in to help bring outside contributors' writings up to the Journal standards. We could say that CrossFit Journal 2.5 launched in May 2006. Otto Lejeune took over the layout from Lauren, and Carrie took responsibility for the general workflow.

Carrie took the Journal from averaging three to five articles per issue to the current 10-15 articles per issue. All the while, she was primarily responsible for bringing articles from authors' conceptions through all the editing to layout-ready. It was a monumental achievement, which culminated last month with our final monthly issue.



Carrie is switching gears to focus on CrossFit Eastside in Seattle, WA, which she owns with Michael Street. They just doubled their facility space to handle the tremendous growth they've seen. We wish her all the best and can't thank her enough for everything she has done.

CrossFit Journal 3.0

Way back in 2002, the concept of an e-mailed "e-zine" was revolutionary and brilliant. Distribution costs were virtually nil, so subscriber growth was nearly identical to profit growth. Broadband was in its infancy, and only a small percentage of the population was willing to spend a significant amount of time online. The PDF format lived up to its name (portable document format), and once it was downloaded, folks could read the Journal on their computer or print it as they wanted.

As the Journal grew, particularly in this 2.5 phase, the "e-zine" medium seemed less than ideal. Broadband matured, video as an Internet medium grew, and the wealth of information on the net changed the way people want to get information. The Journal was too long to read in one sitting on the screen, but printing it left you hanging with the multimedia links. The content was still fantastic, but the delivery hadn't evolved with the times.

Knowing the problem and knowing the solution are two entirely different animals. Enter Ryan Lucas. Ryan is an extraordinary web and graphic designer with a profound knowledge of branding. With his arrival, the process of redesigning the Journal moved into high gear last November. We quickly discovered that the technical challenges associated with moving the Journal online were at least as complex as creating an outstanding reader experience. To make a very long story short, Ryan, along with Ron Wilhelm and our very own Lynne Pitts, Brian Mulvaney, and Bill McGair, have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for nearly a year to bring you the CrossFit Journal 3.0, starting now.

At the very least, a crisp design and intuitive interface provide much better access to all the new articles we publish. There will be no more monthly issues. Instead, articles will be released continually. We'll start with three to four articles a week, and over time, increase that frequency.

We read articles one at a time, and with the web as the medium, there's no downside to delivering them one at a time. But the CrossFit Journal 3.0 is much more than just a slick new way to deliver the same content.

It also introduces a number of new technical and content features:

- Posting articles one at a time within a blog format allows and encourages a level of discussion and interaction never before seen with the Journal content
- Restricting comments to registered users elevates the level of discussion even further
- The entire CrossFit Journal library is available at all times to subscribers, dramatically enhancing your ability to research and explore topics
- Multimedia content is easier to deliver and navigate
- Now you can scroll through content by category, not just release date
- Related article links facilitate and enrich study
- Subscriber comments and the ensuing discussions and debates are permanently linked to the articles, so the articles themselves become more compelling with time.

Think of this new Journal site as the world's premier fitness library, which every day becomes more robust. In addition to continuing to deliver the same profound content we always have, the new format allows us to augment the library with all kinds of material otherwise impracticable.

Starting this Sunday (September 7, 2008), we're also launching CrossFit Radio with Neil Anderson of [FitZone Radio](#). CrossFit Radio will be a one-hour weekly show airing on Sunday mornings. Tune in live (free and available to all), or download from the archives any time (only for subscribers). Neil will address all the biggest topics facing CrossFitters, and will have all the biggest names in the CrossFit world on as guests.

We're also planning to release a bunch of content from the archives. Ever wonder what it was like at the first few CrossFit seminars? We have video of them. Photos too. Plus, more excerpts from the CrossFit Movie. And CrossFit TV is coming down the road at some point.

We're out of the Vanagon and into an Escalade. The future is bright indeed.

