

Only in America

Canuck Emily Beers learns a few lessons from her American neighbours/neighbors.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

07302011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

I grew up believing—call it assuming, even—that the United States was the greatest country in the world. And I'm not even American.



Enthusiastic fans greeted the competitors as they entered the stadium for the opening ceremonies.

As a child, I always thought of the United States as that friend you couldn't seem to beat at anything.

I'm a proud Canadian; I really am. But there are two things I think we could learn from our neighbors that would make us more successful, as individuals and as a nation.

1. How to Embrace Athletics

I've been an athlete my entire life, and it has always frustrated me that, other than hockey, Canadians don't embrace sports the way Americans do.

I played basketball at the University of Idaho in my first year of university. Our football team was mediocre at best. But every Sunday, thousands of people flocked to the stadium, turning the little city of Moscow, Idaho, into a ghost town. Trumpets sounded, cheerleaders tumbled and the people genuinely cared how their team did.

The following year, I transferred home to the University of British Columbia. The stands were sporadically littered with our parents and the odd great-aunt who was likely guilted into attending. My teammate's mailman was the closest thing to a "super-fan" that we had. We won the national championship that year, and nobody took notice.

As I marched in to the opening ceremonies at the 2011 CrossFit Games, I thought to myself, "Only in America."

It was even worse as a university rower. Suddenly, I was paying fees to be a part of the university's varsity team.

It's just not in our culture to support athletics. I hate to say it, but if Canada tried to host the CrossFit Games, nobody would show up.

So as I marched in to the opening ceremonies at the 2011 CrossFit Games—amidst the corporate sponsorships, the waving of flags, and the stands packed with cheering fans—I thought to myself, “Only in America.”



At press time Andrew Swartz and his CrossFit Vancouver team were in 10th overall.

2. How to Have Self-Belief

Last year, I worked as a reporter at the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. As I covered figure skating and speed skating, I discovered that the American athletes were by far the best ones to interview.

They spoke with confidence; they spoke with ease. They didn't smile and spout out modest clichés about just going out there and trying to do their best. They told you boldly and proudly what their expectations were for the weekend. They weren't scared to put on a show; they weren't scared to win.

When my team arrived in L.A., I had modest expectations. My team was 14th last year, and we pretty much brought the same team with us this year. We knew the competition would be much stiffer this year.

I hate to say it—maybe it's the Canadian in me—but I didn't arrive here with exceptional confidence in my team. I started to make excuses.

“I'm recovering from Achilles surgery, and Andy (Andrew Swartz) is suffering from a couple of nagging injuries, as well,” I thought. I didn't want to feel pressure, and I figured if we were in the top half we'd be doing pretty well.

But as the “3, 2, 1” sounded this morning, we put our heads down and worked our asses off, and all of a sudden we had managed to win our heat, which eventually placed us sixth overall in the event. Same thing with the rope-climb event: another top-10 finish.

Suddenly, I believe. Why not us? Why can't we place in the top six and move on to Day 3?

It feels good to believe. Maybe it's the American athletes wearing off on me.

Emily Beers is competing on CrossFit Vancouver's Affiliate Cup team and will be writing from ground level throughout the competition.