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TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
Coach.	O'Hagan
Warm-Ups, Flexibility and the Olympic Lifter	Starr
If You Build It ...	Beers
Competitive Conundrum	Cecil
Cleansed or Conned?	Achauer
Squat Fix: Falling Backward	Cecil
Mo' Muscles, Mo' Problems	Achauer
Virtuosity 1: Morrill of the Story	Pike
Motown Solo	Cecil
Hungry, Hungry Hippo	Poggi



Coach.

Maureen O'Hagan examines the dearth of females in the upper ranks of CrossFit coaches.

By Maureen O'Hagan

Kim Bellavance

Pop quiz: Name three people who coach CrossFit Games athletes.

If you follow the Sport of Fitness at all, you'll have no trouble. Bergeron. Martin. Chapman. Hyland. And so on.

Now for Part 2: Name three top female coaches—that is, women who coach Games athletes.

We posed this question to nearly a dozen longtime CrossFitters, and here's what they came up with:

Eva Claire Synkowski, said two-time Games competitor Annie Sakamoto.

Eva Claire Synkowski, said Hollis Molloy of CrossFit Santa Cruz.

Eva Claire Synkowski, said Ben Bergeron of CrossFit New England.

But beyond "E.C." Synkowski, Bergeron just scratched his head.

"I can't name another female that coaches a Games-level athlete," he said. "Which is really kind of shocking."

To be sure, there are other elite CrossFitters with female head coaches. Six-time Games competitor Christy Adkins, for example, was coached for several years by Melody Feldman of CrossFit MPH along with her current coach, John Main, but Feldman has since moved into more of a support role. But there's no question the roster is strikingly lopsided.

So where are all the female coaches?

After all, there are thousands of successful female affiliate owners. Many of them are just as inspired, knowledgeable and technically proficient as their more well-known male counterparts. There are plenty of women who help run CrossFit Inc., as well, including nearly 30 percent of the Level 1 Seminar Staff.

Yet at best only a small handful of women serve as the official coach to Games athletes.

The question is why?

Equality From the Beginning

Before we begin to think about an answer, two points are worth noting. One is directly related to CrossFit and the other is more broad.

We'll start with the latter, Title IX, the federal law enacted in 1972 that said, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Title IX was about educational opportunity, but today it's thought of as the law that prohibited gender discrimination in sport. After the law took effect, high schools and colleges began fielding female sports teams. Women began getting sports scholarships, which helped them through college. Eventually, there were professional leagues for female athletes.

The proof is in the numbers. Before Title IX, about 16,000 women played intercollegiate sports; today, that number is more than 200,000.

The impact of the law should not be underestimated. Caity Matter, winner of the 2008 Games, played in the WNBA. Four-time Games veteran Lindsey Smith got a soccer scholarship that never would have been available to people in her grandmother's generation. But beyond legalities, Title IX both fueled and reflected an attitudinal shift about what sport can do for women—and what women can do for sport. Turns out women are a heck of a lot more athletic than they were once perceived. Strong has become the new sexy.

Which brings us to CrossFit. This year, the American athletes who competed in the individual events at the CrossFit Games have lived their entire lives in a post-Title IX world. They don't know a world where women are not considered athletes.

Certainly, CrossFit Founder and CEO Greg Glassman didn't underestimate the capabilities of female athletes when he designed the program. Women perform workouts alongside men at affiliates around the world. In the Games, some of the workouts are identical for men and women. Sometimes, the women beat the men in head-to-head competitions. (Remember Julie Foucher's performance in the grueling swim-bike-run event in the 2012 Games, when she bested all but eight of the men?)

Greg Glassman didn't underestimate the capabilities of female athletes when he designed the program.

Sakamoto believes equality has been inherent in the sport.

"I feel like CrossFit has always highly acknowledged its female athletes," she said. From the early days, "I felt we got more attention for what we were doing physically than the males did. At that time, we rarely ever took our shirts off. I really think it was what we were doing athletically that was getting so much attention."

She brings up another good point, as well. Unlike many other big-time sporting events, the prize money is the same for male and female Games competitors.

"CrossFit," Glassman has said, "is as close to leveling the field as we can."

Rising to the Top

This year, C.J. Martin of CrossFit Invictus coached 11 individual male and female Games competitors. Clearly, he's got something athletes want.

Ask him how he got there and he'll talk about two things: first, an early start with a top athlete who helped build Martin's reputation. And second, he started posting his competition programming online. That had the effect of attracting a wider following and deepening his reputation. Now he does online coaching for 60 athletes in addition to his Games competitors.

Bergeron did the same thing. He coaches three Games athletes, including Chris Spealler, one of his early successes, and puts his competition programming up on a freely accessible blog.

"I think a lot of coaches get well known because of their willingness to promote themselves," Bergeron acknowledged. "You don't see many female coaches out there promoting themselves in this way."



Additional Reading

For more on Title IX, read the CrossFit Journal articles "[Women's Wait](#)" and "[A Mandate and an Opportunity](#)" by Andréa Maria Cecil.

"Maybe for some reason females aren't as willing to promote themselves. Maybe they're not as willing to boast about accomplishments."

He has a point. And it's not just about sports. Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, wrote a bestselling book in 2013 around that premise. It was called "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead." As she surveyed the corporate world, she noticed women weren't putting themselves in the game the same way as men—literally and figuratively. Sometimes she'd notice they wouldn't even sit at the boardroom table, instead relegating themselves to the perimeter.



CrossFit Games athlete Nichole DeHart is a top coach who assists C.J. Martin at CrossFit Invictus.



Richwell Correa/CrossFit Journal

Many top female coaches are part of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff.

“We hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in,” she wrote. She cites studies bearing out that idea.

“Women need to shift from thinking ‘I’m not ready to do that’ to thinking ‘I want to do that—and I’ll learn by doing it,’” she believes.

Synkowski is one woman who made that shift.

Getting in the Games

A manager for the Certification and Training Department and a member of its Seminar Staff, Synkowski has been involved in the sport for years and is known for her technical proficiency.

“I go to her as a reference all the time,” Bergeron said.

In the 2012 and 2013 Games, she coached competitor Austin Malleolo, and she also worked with the veteran Smith in 2013, though the athlete didn’t make it past regionals that year.

“Austin said people are always shocked to find out his coach is female,” Synkowski said.

She came to the role organically. Malleolo had a coach for programming but initially went to Synkowski for help on his lifting technique.

“It’s an area of my weakness and a passion of hers,” he said. When his programming coach had to bow out (he was involved in planning the Games events, so there was a conflict of interest), he asked Synkowski to take over.

“I knew her skill set,” Malleolo said. “She’s among the best in the world.”

“If Rich Froning had a female coach, I’m sure that coach would have lots of inquiries.” —E.C. Synkowski

In the beginning, they both recalled, she wasn’t sure she was right for the role. To her, programming for someone whose athletic abilities so far surpassed hers would be a challenge.



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

Annie Sakamoto learned about CrossFit's stance on equality when she trained with Greg Glassman in the early days.

“There was a time I could estimate based on my own performance,” she recalled of her earlier days. “But now I can’t use myself as any example for any program. I can’t do everything Lindsey can do by any stretch, but I’m closer to her than what Austin can do.”

That hurdle, she soon realized, applies to any Games coach. None of them can do what their athletes can do.

“As Games athletes get more and more out of reach, it becomes harder for coaches in general,” she said.

She focused on her strengths: “knowing about CrossFit, about programming methodology and being able to assess his weaknesses relative to his competitors.”

Malleolo said it made no difference to him that his coach was a woman. There’s no set “female” coaching style, just like there’s no “male” coaching style. He and other competitors are looking for one thing.

“All elite athletes want are results,” he said. “Results are results. They’re unbiased.”

He added: “People want to get coached by people who coach champions.”

Noted Synkowski, “If Rich Froning had a female coach, I’m sure that coach would have lots of inquiries.”

So, you get to be a coach for Games athletes . . . by successfully coaching Games athletes. In that case, it makes it pretty tough to break into the field.

A Larger Problem

The lack of elite female coaches isn’t solely a CrossFit issue, of course. It’s an issue in just about every sport. Less than half of women’s NCAA teams, for instance, have female coaches, according to two Brooklyn College professors who have been surveying the field for 25 years. It’s true for the Olympics, as well. In 2012, nearly 90 percent of accredited coaches attending the London Games were male, according to the International Council for Coaching Excellence



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

CrossFit's inclusive nature means a large number of females can be found at Level 1 Seminars, which will eventually produce more top-level female coaches.



Alicia Anthony/CrossFit Journal

We're so used to seeing male coaches, in fact, that it's easy to unconsciously stereotype coaching as a male role. Sakamoto, for one, said that until she was interviewed for this story, it hadn't even registered to her that there was a dearth of female coaches for CrossFit Games athletes.

"That's maybe the sad thing that some of those gender roles are so deeply ingrained," she said. "Even for somebody like me, I view myself as fairly progressive."

Then again, maybe that stereotype is working in another way. Maybe there are more female coaches than we realize—the problem is recognition.

"Nobody is operating in CrossFit in a vacuum," said CrossFit Santa Cruz coach Laurie Galassi. "Maybe it happens to be a male name that gets mentioned (as the coach), but there's often a woman or two there."

Martin realizes that when people think of Invictus, they may think about him. But he has two assistants, including Nichole DeHart. Invictus, he pointed out, "is also Nichole."

It's also true that many Games athletes don't have a single designated "coach." Many seek out an array of specialists for their expertise in a particular subject area. One of them is Diane Fu, of San Francisco CrossFit, who helps athletes hone their Olympic weightlifting.

As a young weightlifter, she sought out female coaches because she felt she could identify more with them and they would understand issues that are uniquely female.

"I was looking for role models," she said. There were a number of female athletes she looked up to, and some of them were exploring the idea of transitioning into coaching. But "when they started branching out more into coaching, they would end up stopping really short. Then they took a big divergence and started an online cookie shop or something."

"I think you're going to see emerging female coaches." —C.J. Martin

It seemed to Fu that not a lot of women really wanted to take on the role of coach. She wondered why.

"We have a lot of women in the strength-and-conditioning world that are actively coaching," she said. "But they haven't done anything for themselves to move themselves into a light where they can affect the greater population."

She said making that leap can feel risky.

"I just feel like they don't do anything to move themselves into that fear," Fu said.

That's why Fu created FuBarbell, which offers online Olympic-weightlifting training. For her, being a woman was an advantage.

"If I was a male coming into this sport, there are so many voices (that) I would have had to work harder to have risen to the point I'm at right now," she said.

"The playing field," she added, "is leveling itself out."

Martin agrees.

"I think you're going to see emerging female coaches," he said, noting that CrossFit is a relatively new sport in a world of fitness that is largely male-dominated.

"I'm not sure it's much more than just a matter of time." ■

About the Author

Maureen O'Hagan is a Seattle-based journalist who is the recipient of numerous national writing and reporting awards. Skeptical by nature, she tried CrossFit for a newspaper story in 2009. Now she's hooked.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Warm-Ups, Flexibility and the Olympic Lifter

If your pre-workout prep consists of a cup of coffee and a few squats, Bill Starr has some advice for you.

By Bill Starr

October 2014



All pics: Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

As every Olympic lifter fully understands, doing full snatches and clean and jerks requires a high degree of flexibility in every part of the body. All the major muscle groups and corresponding attachments are involved in the two competitive lifts: shoulder girdle, back, and hips and legs. A lack of flexibility in the shoulders will prevent the lifter from locking out snatches and jerks. It may also keep him from racking a weight on his shoulders while cleaning. Tightness in the hips will have an adverse affect on getting into a low position for snatches and cleans.

1 of 7

Because every part of the body is activated during the execution of the two Olympic lifts, every joint and muscle group needs to be given some attention before doing any heavy lifting. And this is where there is confusion between the two disciplines needed to enhance flexibility: warming up and stretching. While closely related, they are not the same. Merely stretching a muscle or joint isn't sufficient preparation for a heavy session in the weight room that will be filled with complicated athletic movements. Stretching your quads and calves may be enough prior to a run, but much more has to be done to get ready for an Olympic-lifting workout.

In this article, I will explain why warming up and stretching are both vital disciplines for all Olympic lifters. Warm-up exercises come first and should do just what the name implies: elevate the body's core temperature. When the body temperature is raised, the arteries, veins and capillaries are able to deliver more oxygen to all the muscles. Hemoglobin is responsible for providing oxygen to the working muscles, and it does that more effectively when the muscle fibers are warm. In addition, a slightly higher body temperature creates a positive pressure between

the muscles and the bloodstream, which enables more oxygen and nutrients to be pumped into the muscles and attachments, allowing them to function at a higher level.

And equally important to a lifter who is about to attack the quick lifts, a higher core temperature facilitates the transfer of nerve impulses while doing these high-skill exercises. Yet another plus is a well-functioning nervous system, which helps the lifter concentrate on the many form points of snatches and clean and jerks. When the nervous system is clicking on all cylinders, it's easier to prepare for the psychological demands of going after a personal best on a lift or learning how to do a new, complicated lift such as the drop snatch or hang clean.

**It's only common sense to know
supple muscles are less prone to
injury than tight ones.**



Bill Starr recommends focusing on the core during a general warm-up designed to raise the body's temperature.

There's more: warmer muscles help a lifter perform at a higher level by releasing those enzymes responsible for the multitude of chemical reactions that occur during exercise. The body's energy system depends on these enzymes, and anyone who starts in on his routine without a sufficient warm-up will be more sluggish than the athletes who take the time to warm up properly. Everyone knows a warm muscle is more elastic and reacts better to movement than a cold one. And it's only common sense to know supple muscles are less prone to injury than tight ones.

Oil the Machine

An Olympic lifter needs to set aside 20 minutes for warming up. This was the guideline set by the Russians in the '70s, and it still holds up. There are two stages to the warming-up process. The goal of the first stage is to increase the pulse rate, respiratory rate and body temperature and improve the mobility of the joints. Any exercise—or series of exercises—that make an athlete huff and puff and break into a light sweat will fill the bill.

There is an extensive list of exercises you can do. Skipping rope was the choice of many of the York lifters. Riding a stationary bike, walking on a treadmill or simple calisthenics also work. When I trained in a bare-bones weight room, I would just do jumping jacks until I was blowing and sweating.

Next, do something specific to warm up the trunk—or “core,” which is an overused term but fits in this case. When the abs and lumbers get flushed with blood, the rest of the body responds much faster. That's because the midsection is involved in every physical activity. I have my Olympic lifters do sit-ups, crunches or leg extensions, then a set of back hyperextensions or reverse back hypers—high reps in the 75-100 range.

Finally, I have them hold a stick over their heads and do side-to-side bends. Then, without pausing, I have them lower the stick behind their neck and do twists. One hundred of each will bring the obliques and transverse abdominis into the game.

Stretching is an integral part of the second phase of warming up. The reason why lifters need to wait until they have completed the first part of the warm-up procedure before stretching is simply because warm muscles and attachments respond more favorably than cold ones.

Editor's note: The author is not talking about lengthy periods of static stretching but rather specific work to help the athlete achieve more ideal positioning.



Side-to-side bends are a great way to get the obliques firing during warm-up.

If a lifter is going to lead off with snatches, he needs to make sure his shoulders are loose. Most Olympic lifters have a stick they use for stretching their shoulders and for shadow lifting. This can be a handle from a broom, a mop or a length of bamboo. The shoulders can also be stretched out with a towel, a rolled-up T-shirt or a length of clothesline. Many of the York lifters preferred the clothesline because it was easy to carry in their gym bags. Dr. John Gourgott was so flexible in his shoulders that he could rotate a stick from straight overhead down to his lower back while holding it closer than shoulder width.

It takes time to obtain that degree of flexibility, and he spent hours working with a stick at night after he had finished his workouts. Lock the stick overhead and do overhead squats. Sit at the bottom and rotate the stick around until you feel the muscles in your back and shoulders relax a bit. Then do some shadow snatches until you have the groove down perfectly. Now you're ready to begin your snatch workout.



Working with a band, clothesline or piece of PVC will help increase range of motion at the shoulder joint.

If cleans are first in that day's session, take ample time to make sure your wrists, elbows and shoulders are flexible enough for you to rack the bar across your frontal deltoids without any discomfort. The best way to do this is to lock a bar in a power rack at shoulder height. Start with one arm at a time. Grip the bar, and while keeping your torso straight, elevate your elbow as high as you can and hold it there for a six or seven count. Then do the same for your other arm.

For the next step, you will need help. Grip the bar tightly with both hands and have a training mate slowly but steadily push up against your triceps (see photo on Page 1). This needs to be done gently, and again your upper body must remain straight. If you allow your hips to ease forward to relieve the pressure on your shoulders, elbows and wrists, the stretching will not be nearly as effective. When your elbows are as high as you can bear, signal your training mate not to push anymore, but continue to hold your arms at that height for six or seven seconds. Take a short break, then do it again. If your shoulders are still tight after a couple of sets, do another.

There's no sense in trying to do full cleans if your shoulders are not flexible enough to rack the weight properly. In the event there's no one else in the weight room to assist you, try this: Load up a bar with more weight than you can move and do this form of stretching on your own. It takes some grit to force yourself to elevate your elbows higher and higher when they're screaming for relief, but that's exactly what it takes to increase flexibility in the shoulder girdle. The good news is that once you have achieved that level of flexibility, it's rather easy to maintain.

These stretches should also be done if you're planning on starting off with front squats. While this makes sense, those who open with back squats seldom take any time preparing their shoulders for the upcoming workout. Powerlifters are notoriously guilty of going right to the squat rack without the least bit of concern for their shoulders. Their thinking is the shoulders don't play a role in the full squat, so why waste time warming them up? Many do take the time to ensure that their backs and legs are flushed with blood by doing light warm-up sets on machines: leg curls, leg extensions, adductor work and a few good mornings. But nothing for the shoulders and arms.

However, the truth of the matter is the shoulders are very much a part of a back squat, especially when the lifter uses the style where the bar is placed very low on the back.



Shoulder mobility is important in the squat, especially if the lifter uses the low-bar back squat.

When the bar is locked low on the back, a tremendous amount of stress is placed on the elbows and shoulders. Squatting with cold shoulders is the same as doing an isometric contraction on cold muscles and repeating it over and over.

**Powerlifters are notoriously guilty
of going right to the squat rack
without the least bit of concern
for their shoulders.**

One year, I trained at Doug Patterson's Metro Athletic Club in Grand Prairie, Texas. It was primarily a powerlifting gym, and none of the lifters bothered doing any warm-ups before they squatted. A few complained about aching shoulders when it was warm, but when cold weather settled in, there was an epidemic of dinged shoulders and elbows. The lifters were using muscle rub by the gallon and wraps from their elbows to their shoulders. Some even resorted to getting cortisone shots for their aching shoulders.

Eventually, a few of the lifters came to me for advice about their ever-growing problem. I explained my concept about the stress being placed on their elbows and shoulders during the squats and suggested they start warming them up thoroughly before doing any squats. I had them stretch their shoulders just like an Olympic lifter, then do a set of lateral and frontal raises with light dumbbells to get some blood in their shoulders.

And I told them to stretch out their shoulders in between every set and also later on, either at the end of the workout or at night. As could be expected, they were skeptical—but not for very long. After the first workout on the squat where they thoroughly warmed up their shoulders, elbows and wrists, they experienced much less pain than usual. Within a week, they were pain-free. Or, I should say, most of them were pain-free. A few had abused their elbows and shoulders so severely they had to take a layoff to allow the irritated areas to heal.

The last step of the second stage of warming up is simply common sense, but as all of us understand, common sense isn't that common. It's an extension of using the stick and doing shadow lifting: Start an exercise with light weight and slowly add more and more resistance. This allows you to focus more fully on your form so you're using perfect technique when you get to the working sets. By making each set a bit more difficult than the last, you're forcing your body to work harder, and that's exactly how you get stronger on any exercise.



Even the strongest lifters will benefit by setting excellent movement patterns with PVC, empty bars or very light weight.

Keep in mind the basic rule in strength training: You can never start with a weight that's too light, but you can start too heavy. One of the best lifters I ever trained with used to use an empty bar for 2 warm-up sets before he began piling on the plates.

You can never start with a weight that's too light, but you can start too heavy.

Keep that stick or piece of clothesline handy and put it to use in between sets of snatches and jerks. It helps keep the shoulders loose and set the pattern of the movements.

Post-Workout Work

The real key to improving flexibility is taking the time to stretch after the workout is over. This is called the "warm-down" phase and is very important to any lifter who is serious about making improvement on the two lifts. Stretching the shoulders, back and legs after a session aids in removing waste products that build up during exercise and relaxing fatigued muscles by releasing congested blood.

A reminder that there are three types of stretching: passive, ballistic and static. Passive is when someone assists you with your stretching exercises, such as having a training mate elevate your elbows to improve flexibility for racking a clean or a front squat.

Ballistic stretching should never be done by anyone, athlete or not. It is a rhythmic, bouncing motion and is potentially risky, especially when the muscles and attachments are fatigued.

Static stretching is the best for most body parts. It consists of stretching some muscle group and holding the stretch for a certain length of time. Many experts recommend only holding a stretch for 20 seconds; I believe longer is better—45 seconds or a full minute. I found that when I hold for that longer count, I can feel the tight muscles slowly relaxing as I approach 45 seconds and relax even more at a full 60 seconds.



Flexibility training and thorough warm-ups will help athletes achieve the positions that will help them succeed in Olympic weightlifting.

If you experience a sharp pain during a stretch, that's the stretch reflex telling you to back off. Static stretching is done gently. It is never forced. When the stretch is forced, the stretch reflex is activated. This is a built-in safeguard to keep you from harming your muscles and attachments by overstretching them. If you experience a sharp pain during a stretch, that's the stretch reflex telling you to back off. Ease up a bit and allow the muscles to relax a tad, then continue to hold in that more comfortable position for the desired count.

Stretching should never be painful. Rather, it should be soothing. Many times, lifters are short on time and do not bother to stretch after a workout. I've been in that boat numerous times myself. I found that if I stretch right after a shower, the muscles are more accommodating. I used this idea at contests, as well. After weighing in, I would take a long, hot shower until my skin tingled. Then I would get dressed and grab my stick and start stretching and shadow

lifting. It made my warm-ups a great deal easier, and I always lifted better in the meets when I followed that plan.

At one Philly Open that started at 4 p.m. and finished at 2 a.m., I showered before all three lifts. It was impossible to stay warm the whole time, so I relaxed after each competitive lift, then showered and began my warm-ups 20 minutes prior to my first attempts. And once I got going, I was constantly stretching my shoulders with my stick and shadow lifting.

Even when I'm rushed, I make sure I stretch after my training. I find it relaxing to stretch out my worked muscles later on at night. By that time, the fatigued groups begin to reveal themselves, and I can do specific stretches to loosen them. And when I stretch late, I find that I am more relaxed and can get to sleep faster than when I don't spend any time making my body more supple.

Warm, Limber and Ready

Every Olympic lifter is unique, so he will have certain areas that need to be stretched out more than others.

And don't overdo stretching before a workout. Let the lifts themselves help you improve your flexibility. Several studies have shown that excessive stretching before a training session can lower your performance level and result in muscle damage.

Warming up and stretching are vital to long-term progress in strength training, and especially so in the two Olympic lifts because they require such a high degree of athleticism. Flexibility is a key factor for success in the sport, so you absolutely must spend time working on that attribute by making stretching a part of every training session.



About the Author

Bill Starr coached at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the 1970 Olympic Weightlifting World Championship in Columbus, Ohio, and the 1975 World Powerlifting Championships in Birmingham, England. He was selected as head coach of the 1969 team that competed in the Tournament of Americas in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, where the United States won the team title, making him the first active lifter to be head coach of an international Olympic weightlifting team. Starr is the author of the books "The Strongest Shall Survive: Strength Training for Football" and "Defying Gravity," which can be found at TheAasgaardCompanyBookstore.com.

IF YOU BUILD IT ...

Creative affiliate owners with time and space seek new ways to support their members and generate revenue. *By Emily Beers*



Running a CrossFit affiliate involves using the CrossFit methodology to help people increase their fitness and improve their lives. That's black and white. Gym owners enter a slightly gray area when they start to talk about what else to offer clients, be it services, products, additional programs and so on.

In the 2012 CrossFit Journal article "[The CrossFit SAT-Prep Program](#)," CrossFit Inc. Founder and CEO Greg Glassman suggested that if he were still running his gym, he'd be administering more than just workouts.

"If I could go back to that original little CrossFit gym in Santa Cruz and unlock the door, I'll tell you right now what I would do next: I would take those chairs we were using for seminars and I'd hold SAT-prep classes. I'd teach math to people who are afraid of math, and I'd be doing everything I could to improve the cognitive processes of my friends," he said.

This is just one idea of how affiliates can use their time and space to help improve lives and possibly generate additional revenue in the process.

Generally speaking, affiliates generate revenue by selling fitness training—fundamentals, personal training and group classes. But many gyms are getting creative and extending their reach to raise revenue and help more people. From hosting children's birthday parties to renting space to chiropractors and massage therapists, affiliate owners are making use of time and square footage to create a happy community and a business that is perfectly tailored to the needs of its members.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Lindsey Marcelli of CrossFit Eminence in Denver, Colorado, discovered planning events is one of her favourite aspects of being involved with the CrossFit community. She runs many events at her gym and also helps other affiliates with their event planning.

"Sometimes they're just community-based events. Sometimes they generate revenue," Marcelli explained.

Many affiliates run small competitions, but Marcelli has gone beyond fitness challenges: She also uses her members' often-obscure talents and expertise to bring her community together. For example, one of her members, a photographer, hosted a photography class for the Eminence community, while another member led a class in which people learned how to make a set of earrings. When Marcelli hosted a health fair, she invited experts including chiropractors and food-company representatives to offer education and sell services and products. The day

also featured a well-received opportunity for members to get blood work done at reduced cost.

Marcelli explained she simply looks within to come up with ideas.

"If I were a member of my gym, these would be the things I'd want," she said.

Her creative ideas are primarily driven by a desire to help her community.

"I love that we're a gym, but these things build all these friendships. It's not just a gym," she said.

TREATMENT CENTERS

Many educated CrossFit athletes take care of their health by paying regular visits to professionals who can assist them with maintenance, injury prevention and recovery. Today, many affiliates are providing these types of services inside their boxes.

Brian Strump of CrossFit Steele Creek in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a chiropractor as well as a CrossFit coach and affiliate owner. He's combined his gym and treatment center under one roof. The arrangement saves him money on rent and travel time, and it generates additional revenue. Cross-

over is good for the gym and the chiropractic center, and it adds something for the clients as well.

"It provides a convenience for members that's difficult to match," Strump said.

He added: "It gives members another option for their health care."

Leslie Friedman from CrossFit DeCO in Denver, Colorado, brings in chiropractors and massage therapists for her athletes, paying herself a small portion of the revenue.



Courtesy of Lindsey Marcelli

Special events are a great way to unify the community while generating revenue for the business.

"It's a split that works favorably for the therapists, but I would rather be able to offer this service than view this as a major source of revenue," said Friedman, who currently has one chiropractor and one massage therapist on site regularly.

"Our members know and see our specialists on a regular basis ... and are comfortable approaching them with small or larger issues. To me, it enhances the community, lets our members know their health and wellness are valued, and helps set DeCO apart," she said. The added revenue is obviously good for the business as well.

Athletes appreciate having the option of getting treatment at the gym, and the additional revenue these services generate makes it a win for all.

Like Friedman, Brett Marshall of CrossFit Calgary in Calgary, Alberta, has a treatment area for his athletes and leases the space to a registered massage therapist he trusts. Katrina Mackay pays Marshall a flat rate each month, leaving her free to run her own small business within Marshall's space. Mackay schedules and treats her clients independently, creating no additional work for Marshall. The arrangement creates a stable stream of income for the facility, and Marshall is expecting the treatment area will grow as practitioners decide to link up with the CrossFit community.

Jamie DeFelice of CrossFit KMK in Fairfield, Connecticut, is another gym owner who offers chiropractic services. He takes things even further by offering "therapy night" at the gym.

"Multiple people come in—chiro's and acupuncturists—and work on our athletes," DeFelice said.

Although Strump, Friedman, Marshall and DeFelice all offer health services in a slightly different manner, they all agree on one thing: Their athletes appreciate having the option of getting treatment at the gym, and the additional revenue these services generate makes it a win for all.

MIND AND BODY

Brian Nugent is the owner of CrossFit Courage in Pickering, Ontario. A former professional athlete who played in the Canadian Football League, he's also a certified life coach and a graduate of York University. Nugent completed the 10-week online life-coach certification through the Certified Coaches Federation, founded by author Derrick Sweeney.

"It's my job to make sure (my clients are) filling their purpose. Maybe they're in a job or a relationship they don't want to be in, so I give them a tool set to deal with this," he said.

"A life coach has to be able to work with someone emotionally, spiritually, intellectually. It's about getting our minds right to handle the battle of life, relationships, work," he added.

Once Nugent realized many people come to his gym for more than just a workout, he decided to start offering life-coaching service to his CrossFit Courage members.

"You're going to get your fitness, that's for sure. But we're more than fitness. We're a wellness center. Thirty percent of clients are looking for something more, to get their minds right," Nugent explained.

Nugent charges his athletes CA\$49 an hour for life coaching, 50 percent less than he would charge a non-member.

He starts out by doing one two-hour intake session in which he assesses his client's goals and digs into his client's thought processes. From there, Nugent works with his client to find out what's holding him or her back and then provides strategies for positive change. Currently, Nugent has eight athletes enrolled in his life-coaching program.

Beyond the one-on-one sessions, the group also meets once a month for a group session called "power therapy," an opportunity for athletes to share methodologies, compare eating habits and goals, and discuss ideas about bettering their lives.

"People share stories, and others pick up things from them and give advice," Nugent said.

Nugent has found his therapy clients never quit his box, which is a good thing considering Pickering isn't a metropolis and doesn't have thousands of new people moving to the city each year.

"Our retention is extraordinarily high. The only time we've lost people is because they've moved," he said.

While life coaching is a relatively obscure area of expertise, many CrossFit coaches have talents or skills in other areas. Coaches who also happen to be RMTs, dietitians, athletic therapists and so on have something more to offer clients.

PRODUCT SALES

As an affiliate owner, you certainly don't want to become the snake-oil salesman of the week, the guy who's always pushing a new product on members. Glassman has always been clear that professional trainers offer services and train their clients; they don't focus on selling paraphernalia. But if you're truly focused on bettering the lives of clients and put training virtuosity first and foremost, some products and services might fit the bill if you're convinced they can help your clients get fitter or add convenience to their lives.

DeFelice recently started selling a performance and recovery drink that's all natural and contains very little caffeine.

"It's a product that I feel comfortable selling. I'm not a big supplement pusher," DeFelice explained. "I don't want to sell things just for the sake of making money, but I believe there's good value there."

So far, his members love the drinks, and DeFelice earns a cut of the revenue. In the first month, he sold 10 cases.

Other gyms have meal services that offer convenient and healthy ways for clients to eat for performance. Many services provide options such as grass-fed meat, gluten-free snacks or ready-to-eat healthy meals, which can help out a busy client who might be considering unhealthy options on the way home. Other gyms have coffee or smoothie bars for clients to refuel after a workout or grab an espresso after the 6-a.m. class. Both options remove a line from a client's to-do list.

If you aren't interested in opening a second business or retailing, maybe one of your clients is. Athletes are constantly starting small businesses that cater to other athletes, and perhaps a client would jump at the chance to rent space or strike a deal to share profits from products sold at the gym.

It's no secret the CrossFit community is ravenous for products and services that will better their lives. And they're willing to pay for them. So if clients are demanding a product that truly helps them, a gym could set up a retail system to respond to the demand.



Brian Nugent (right) is a trainer who uses his skills as a life coach to help clients and offer additional wellness services at CrossFit Courage.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Brian Alexander of CrossFit Illumine of Niles, Illinois, and Marshall both have successful CrossFit Kids programs that generate considerable revenue for their businesses. Alexander has an entire area of his facility—5,500 square feet—designated for kids. In Calgary, Marshall's CrossFit Kids program has been running since 2008 and generates approximately CA\$25,000 in revenue a year, a helpful boost for the affiliate.

Reebok CrossFit FirePower, owned by Andrea Savard, takes kids programs to another level altogether in Milton, Ontario. Savard dedicates a ton of energy to kids and even created a website called FirePower Kids. Jackie Clark is head coach of the program.

"Milton is the fastest-growing city in Canada. The demographics of youth and children moving here (are) high. There has been a lot of growth in the need for our kids program," Clark said.

As the program grew, Savard cut a hole in the wall in 2013, adding an additional 3,000 square feet dedicated to children.

"They need to be kids, to run and play and jump and throw. They need their own space," said Savard, whose kids program generally accounts for one-third of her gross annual revenue.

Kids programs highlight a need to consider demographics when thinking of new ways to fill space.

On top of running regular CrossFit Kids classes, which are divided into age categories, Savard and her team also run circus training and a junior-firefighter program. Savard said the latter perfectly complements the CrossFit program.

Beyond classes, FirePower hosts birthday parties, which cost CA\$250 for two hours of gym time. First, the kids go through CrossFit Kids workouts and games, and then they stick around for birthday cake and presents. Currently, FirePower sells four to five birthday parties each month, generating \$1,000 to \$1,250 in additional revenue.

FirePower also offers summer camps. For \$250 each, 16 to 20 kids attend a five-day camp that runs from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Coaches do not spend the entire day with the kids because it can be exhausting. Instead, CrossFit Kids coaches run the workout portion of the day, while Savard hires other professionals to take the young campers on field trips to places such as the local grocery store, where they learn about healthy food choices.

Savard is proudest of her Fun Fit Girlz program.

"It's for girls that might not necessarily be your superstar track athlete or hockey player, girls who may struggle with balance or coordination," Savard said.

Savard's own daughter has a development coordination disorder, as well as vision problems, which is why Savard created the program.

"All the other kids could jump and climb and hang. (My daughter) works with an (occupational therapist) and a pediatric physiotherapist," Savard explained. "Kids like her, when it gets intense, they pull away, so we made a new group for girls who are maybe shy or maybe who are overweight."

The program has been very successful.

"They have completely flourished," Savard said of her Fun Fit Girlz. "They have found a love of fitness. It's been great to be able to find a niche for those kids and help them grow together."

Kids programs highlight a need to consider demographics when thinking of new ways to fill space. Are there groups looking for space or fitness programs affiliate owners can easily provide?

TOO MUCH SPACE

Alexander opened CrossFit Illumine just a year ago and said he took a risk when he settled on a 17,000-square-foot facility. Overhead costs are high, so he's made it his mission to take advantage of the space and the gym's quiet times by offering as many services as he can.

"It was a scary leap of faith (opening a facility this large), but our on-ramp program was growing rapidly and retention was good, so we took a gamble," he said.

"With all the space, we had to find other ways to generate revenue to help with the overhead and make it worthwhile," he added.

To get people inside the gym, he started an Olympic-weightlifting program, which he sells to those who want a bit more help with their technique. Each session is six weeks long and includes one three-hour class per week at a cost of US\$175 for members and \$225 for non-members. The program also includes strength and accessory work, as well as video analysis and feedback. And at the end of the six weeks, Alexander hosts an in-house weightlifting competition.



Courtesy of Brett Marshall



Courtesy of Jackie Clark

Courtesy of Jackie Clark

Many CrossFit affiliates have found programs for kids are a great way to fill empty space and offer more to members with young ones.

Alexander explained that starting the program was another risk because sometimes it's difficult to ask your members for more money on top of regular membership fees. But he knew the program would succeed if members saw value and improved performance. So far, he's been proven right. Thirty-five people went through the first six-week cycle he offered, and 40 people are going through the second.

To accommodate the group that already went through the program, Alexander recently added a second level. To be part of this more-advanced group, members pay an additional \$50 a month for two classes a week. One hour is coached, and the second hour is more or less open gym time. Because he has the luxury of space, Alexander is able to run these programs simultaneously with regular group classes.

"You can't create more popular times, so you have to limit what you do or grab more space and capitalize on having more space," Alexander said. "We've definitely built the CrossFit of our dreams from a space perspective. We have 250 members now and will continue to offer programs members are interested in."

Like Alexander, CrossFit Calgary offers Olympic-weightlifting, gymnastics and strength-based programs that are membership add-ons. Each runs over a 12-week block.

Marshall charges \$275 for regular members and \$350 for non-members. To his surprise, non-members are the ones generating much of the revenue. Currently, 30 to 50 percent of the athletes who join his specialty courses are members of other boxes. Sometimes, they're even new affiliate owners who are eager to learn from CrossFit Calgary, the original Calgary affiliate.

Marshall believes part of the reason people are attending is because the coach who runs the Olympic weightlifting sessions is Chris Lemky, a national-level lifter with a lot of expertise.

The point: If the program is good, people will pay for it.

GROUP TRAINING

Affiliates with space and expertise have a host of options, including sport-specific team training, obstacle-course-race training and corporate training. Nugent offers corporate training at his facility. He explained that most people who live in Pickering are business professionals, so offering corporate training was a no-brainer. He charges CA\$200 a session for group corporate-training sessions, which he coaches himself.



With 17,000 square feet of real estate, CrossFit Illumine can run several programs at once, accommodating a host of members at popular times.



If a gym owner is always focused on improving the lives of clients, new opportunities will present themselves all the time.

CrossFit Courage also offers sport-specific training. One of Nugent's clients is hockey player Jennifer Wakefield, a left winger who won gold for Canada at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. His sport-specific athletes generally do one-on-one training, which costs \$100 an hour, and he currently has four athletes he trains three or four times per week.

Like Nugent, Alexander also offers sport-specific training at CrossFit Illumine, although he's getting involved with teams. His first was a local swim team he used as a "dry" run, and now he's building out his program to include football and lacrosse teams from local high schools. The beauty for Alexander is he has enough space to run an entire team in one part of his gym while a group class is going on somewhere else.

"The space is big enough to separate everyone. We have 5,500 of additional square footage attached to the main room, separated by two garage doors," he said.

Time, space and demand can easily combine to create new programs, and it might be worth looking into what types of groups or teams you can bring into your box.

GET CREATIVE

When building the community and generating revenue, creativity is key.

What's stopping you from hosting a trivia night or a book-club meeting? Or from renting space for a stag or stagette, a ski or bike swap, or a garage sale?

Community and space combine to present a host of opportunities. Back when there was but one CrossFit gym, its owner saw empty space and opportunity.

What could you put in your empty space to build your community and create new revenue streams for your business? ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Competitive Conundrum

How much focus should affiliates place on CrossFit as a sport vs. CrossFit as a training method? Several box owners explain their approaches.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

October 2014



Andrea Savard

Consider this: The CrossFit methodology existed for 33 years before the inaugural CrossFit Games.

Yet, Ben Bergeron has noticed a trend of late.

"A majority of the affiliates are programming for their athletes like they're going to compete in the sport. They haven't recognized the difference between the sport of CrossFit and training with CrossFit," said the coach to multi-year CrossFit Games athletes Chris Spealler, Michele Letendre and Becca Voigt.

1 of 6



Michael Brian/CrossFit Journal

While many affiliates are programming for elite athletes, CrossFit Level 1 Seminar Staff members say that can be a mistake.

Bergeron's gym, CrossFit New England in Massachusetts, has been an affiliate since 2007, and today he is a member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff.

"If you're a soccer dad or a soccer mom just trying to be fitter, you don't need a 500-lb. deadlift. If there's a big group of athletes in your gym ... that can deadlift 550, you're probably not programming well."

Elite-level competition does not define CrossFit, emphasized CrossFit HQ's Pat Sherwood, a former member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff who plans to open an affiliate in San Jose, California. Therefore, it's folly for affiliates to focus on elite-level competition as the end goal, he continued. Most athletes who walk through the door are simply trying to become better at everyday activities—better at life, Sherwood said.

"As long as you're living your fucking life, you're doing fucking CrossFit."

Rally the Troops

In Utah, CrossFit Park City would be empty if the box focused on elite competition.

"We wouldn't have anyone. We'd be in big trouble," owner and seven-time Games athlete Spealler said with a laugh.

He went on: "Our demographic is not one that really supports that. It's a really small group of people who are interested in competing, but most of that is for fun."

A couple of CrossFit Park City athletes are now hoping to qualify for the CrossFit Games regionals, but that's the exception, not the rule, said Spealler, who is a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff and an instructor for the CrossFit Competitor's Course.

"That stuff happens, but it's over time."

And while the affiliate does host competitions, they're not intended for glory.

"(They're) really there for us to build the community," he explained.

More than 2,000 miles east—at CrossFit South Brooklyn—competitions and competitors alike unify members.

"The thing about the competitive people in your gym is, No. 1, it's a really small subset. ... But at the same time, you want to encourage those people because they rally the whole gym. Those people can be an inspiration to everybody else," said David Osorio, who opened the New York affiliate in 2007.

"Ultimately you have to come down to, 'What does the average member need?'"

He added: "The vast majority of people who we are working with—90, 95 percent—are doing (CrossFit) to be a little bit healthier. They don't know who Rich Froning is."

Same goes south of North America, where Reebok CrossFit PTY in Panama has a handful of in-box competitions throughout the year. The reward: beer.

"Ultimately you have to come down to, 'What does the average member need?'"

—David Osorio

"We do think competition has its value in terms of community building, keeping friends," said coach Thomas Patton. The gym—owned by his wife and Level 1 Seminar Staff member Adriana Roquer—has been an affiliate since 2010.

But elite competition wasn't the couple's intent when it opened CrossFit PTY.



Ali Sumson

***Competitions can create community and inspire many,
but affiliate owners should always take stock of the needs of their membership as a whole.***

"We set out to open a gym focusing 100 percent on kids, older adults, people who had given up on fitness," Patton explained. "We don't feed on being competitive—it's just part of our personality. We set out to teach human movement, proper function and that was it."

When the CrossFit Games Open began, the affiliate used it as a community event, he said. Because of it, some members started competing.

"It was never our main intention."

The Competitor Balance

When it comes to competitor programming, it's a delicate balance for affiliate owners to ensure it does not define their gym.

At CrossFit Roots in Boulder, Colorado, Nicole Christensen developed the program over the course of three years.

It started as one competitor class. Then it expanded to two, eventually grew to three and finally became a bona fide time investment.

"It's helping them get better at CrossFit in a way that's interesting to them. But it's definitely not the focus of our gym in the sense that the focus of our gym is to take care of all of our athletes," said Christensen, a Seminar Staff member and Certified CrossFit Coach (CF-L4) who opened her affiliate in 2009.

Christensen went on: "I am a firm believer—from an affiliate-owner standpoint—that my goal is to help people do CrossFit however ... that lets them (best) enjoy CrossFit."

More than 18 hours across the Pacific Ocean in Australia, CrossFit Brisbane went through a similar evolution with its competitor program.

"We were an affiliate well before the CrossFit Games, so our focus has always been teaching people to 'not suck at life' by training for a broad and inclusive fitness," explained Matt Swift, whose gym has been an affiliate since 2006, "but then when the Games became so popular, we had more and more people throwing themselves at competition."

To cater to them, CrossFit Brisbane started biasing its programming toward competition demands.

"But then that didn't work for the people not interested in competition," said Swift, a Level 1 Seminar Staff member, via email.

During the next five years, the affiliate tried multiple approaches—including naming a designated competition



Brian Sullivan

"Whether you're coaching competitors or coaching people who (just want to be fit), the coaching is the same."
—Nicole Christensen, owner of CrossFit Roots

squad—until it settled on its current model in which athletes opt in for extra work that is integrated into the daily workout.

Today, CrossFit Brisbane considers the competitors program a "subset" of the overall program, Swift said.

"The majority of our clients are what I would call 'health and fitness' CrossFitters," he explained. "The primary motivation for their training is to improve their life by improving their health and fitness. For these athletes, doing the standard program is enough to prepare them for recreational competition. ... We make sure that the level of competition remains fun and appropriate for their skills and fitness level."

Like Bergeron, Christensen sees some affiliates preoccupied with developing a competitor program to the point where their primary concern becomes elite athletes.

"I think there's a lot of pressure on newer affiliates and affiliates in general to offer a competitors program, and that



ErikSchmaedeke

The beauty of competition is sometimes best displayed in the people who support the competitors.

somehow that validates them as a legitimate affiliate. But what they forget is whether you're coaching competitors or coaching people who (just want to be fit), the coaching is the same," she said.

"A lot of people lose sight of that and think they're gonna gain more members ... with coaching that's focused on competitors."

When he opens his affiliate, Sherwood said that won't happen.

**"I also don't want competitors
to ... influence the general
population (as to) what you need
to do to get fit."**

—Pat Sherwood

"Anything which in any way, shape or form degrades the experience of the average client, I will squash," he said.

Sherwood added: "I don't want the competitors group to make the average person feel inadequate, inferior or whatever. I also don't want competitors to then influence the general population (as to) what you need to do to get fit."

A Matter of Interpretation

With the Games' ever-increasing popularity, the onus is on trainers to ensure athletes are getting the best CrossFit experience, Spealler said.

"Owners and coaches have a big responsibility," he explained. "They need to program for the community and not for the Games athletes."

But the worldwide competition's ubiquity sometimes presents a conundrum.

"The Games are really sexy, and they're very viewer friendly, and you have these people who look incredible," Osorio said. "We do have people who come in and say, 'Hey, I saw this on ESPN and I want to do that.'"



Aaron Wyche

At its core, CrossFit is about health and fitness. Competition simply provides a place for certain athletes to test that fitness against each other.

On the other hand, some people are intimidated, falsely believing Games competitors are representative of the typical CrossFit athlete.

"The Games are phenomenal," Osorio continued. "How people perceive the intention of ... the Games ... (is a conversation) you have at your gym. The gym culture comes first, and that'll express however people perceive the Games."

It boils down to what kind of community affiliate owners want to create and the type of culture they want to nurture, Spealler said.

"That is what sustains a gym and that is what sustains a community—that level of care."

He went on: "People have to make the decision to have that culture. They have to decide."

Trainers and coaches must help members understand CrossFit is simply about making better people by showing examples of regular folks with monumental triumphs.

"Affiliate owners need to take the time to find that stuff, make the time to learn about that stuff and expose their box to that stuff, and not just, 'Rich Froning winning for the fourth time,'" Spealler said.

Scott Panchik, a three-time Games competitor who opened CrossFit Mentality in Ohio last year, has a simple philosophy.

"At the end of the day it's a fitness program. It's something that is going to improve your health," he said.

And his goal as an affiliate owner is to attract people who share the same passion: fitness.

"If they have goals ... competition is just going to naturally come. We don't need an emphasis on that—just on great coaching."



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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Cleansed or Conned?

A look inside the juice-cleanse trend.

By Hilary Achauer

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Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

Teresa Godfrey (not her real name) wanted a break.

She'd spent the last few months eating too much and drinking more than usual, and she was feeling the effects of that excess. And she really wanted to lose 5 lb.

To jumpstart her healthy habits and drop some pounds, Godfrey decided to do something drastic. Each day for three days, she would drink six brightly colored, attractively designed bottles of juice filled with things such as spinach, kale, agave nectar, cashew milk, cayenne extract and lemon. Each bottle, delivered to her apartment by BluePrint Cleanse, cost about US\$11, for a total of \$65 a day.

Before she started, Godfrey shared her plan with some of her co-workers in her Manhattan office. A few of them wanted in.

"One girl was getting married, one was a fad dieter who would try any crazy diet, one dude was a total frat boy—I have no idea why he wanted in—and one girl just wanted to be part of any cool-kids plan," Godfrey said.

Unprepared for the experience of consuming only strange-tasting liquids for three days, many found the experiment was over before it really started. One of the women in Godfrey's group discovered she hated how the juice tasted.

"People were tapping out after the second beverage," Godfrey said. "We have this super-strange IT guy who wound up taking all the extra juice home every night.

"Nothing brings you closer to colleagues you barely know than the concern you're either not going to be able to crap or that you're going to crap your pants at the office," Godfrey said.

The popularity of juice cleanses has taken off in recent years. BluePrint Cleanse juices can be found in Whole Foods, and many people are buying juicers and whipping up their own concoctions at home.

Proponents say cleanses rid your body of toxins, clear your mind, rest your gut, and, of course, help shed pounds. Doctors and nutritionists point out that no studies support these claims and say the body has its own effective method for removing toxins.

We all like to be clean. But can we scrub our body of toxins the same way we'd clean out our car?

History of the Modern Cleanse

The original juice cleanse is the Master Cleanse, developed by Stanley Burroughs in the 1940s. Also known as the Lemonade Diet, the Master Cleanse lasts for 10 days and includes only one drink, a mix of lemon juice, cayenne pepper and maple syrup. Oh, and a cup of herbal laxative tea every night, along with four cups of salt water in the morning. Beyoncé famously lost more than 20 lb. while following the Master Cleanse when preparing for her role in "Dreamgirls."

Juice cleanses remained an extreme option reserved mostly for celebrities until BluePrint Cleanse began offering its six-juice-a-day cleanses in 2007. These pre-packaged juices took the work out of juicing, and BluePrint offers different levels of cleanses and juices made with ingredients such as cashew milk and agave nectar. Soon, the juice-cleanser craze began, and by 2013, juicing became a **\$5 billion business**, spawning companies such as Cooler Cleanse, Life Juice Cleanse, Juice Press, Organic Avenue and Ritual Wellness.

Those who swear by juice cleanses say it's not just about weight loss. Advocates say drinking juice for three to five days will flush toxins from your body while letting your gut rest, freeing your body to heal.

According to the BluePrint Cleanse website, its cleanses "take away the work of digesting food, (allowing) the system to rid itself of old toxins while facilitating healing." The site says the cleanses will help the body rid itself of built-up matter, cleanse the blood, rebuild and heal the immune system, and fight off degenerative diseases.

That's a lot to expect of juice.



Juices have become more popular in recent years as people look for ways to optimize health and fitness.

Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

Athletes and “the Other Juicing”

A lifelong athlete, Crystal Cañez has been doing CrossFit since 2010. The program got her attention because it was so hard.

“I got beyond obsessed (with CrossFit),” Cañez said. “Why was I not good at this the first time I tried it? CrossFit was a whole different beast.”

After a year of CrossFit, Cañez attended a Level 1 Seminar and became a coach at CrossFit Hillcrest in San Diego, California. She was slowly improving at CrossFit, but one piece of the puzzle was missing: her nutrition.

In 2011 Cañez met Drew Canole, who created the fitness-and-health website Fitlife.tv. Cañez began working as an intern and learning about Canole’s business and philosophy.

Canole is an advocate of juice cleansing. On his [website](#), Canole says drinking freshly juiced vegetables and fruits “will finally detoxify your body of the mass pollutants that have been stuck inside you your whole life.”

“I did a five-day detox called the Alpha Reset,” Cañez said. “From that experience, not only physically but mentally, I was completely transformed.”

She added: “The (cleanse) was able to give me a resting period to reset everything from past damage—from eating gluten to dairy, just a lot of outside pollutants—literally cleaning my body from the inside out.”

In addition to the physical benefits, Cañez found the cleanse to be a mental detox as well.

“It takes a certain type of person to do (a cleanse) correctly.”

—Crystal Cañez

“My environment was different, the people I hung out with were different ... The whole lifestyle was different,” she said. “If you’re fasting for five days, it’s not like you’re going to be able to hang out in these crazy social environments. It’s kind of more alone time.”

Cañez said the fast made her slow down mentally. She read more. Instead of rushing from place to place, she sat quietly.



Israel Woolfolk

Athlete and coach Crystal Cañez swears by the juice cleanse if it's done correctly.

Now, three years after that first fast, Cañez said she does a five-day juice fast about two or three times a year, particularly after the holiday season or if her diet hasn't been particularly healthy.

"I use the five-day detox as more of a reset," she said. "Whenever we get a facial, we like to scrub out all of the stuff out of our face, so it's kind of the same thing for my body."

Cañez said she thinks juice fasting is something everyone should try at least once in his or her life, if only for the mental discipline.

"If they are doing it for the quick fixes, this is not something they want to dabble in. It can also be very addictive for those looking for that quick fix. A lot of people come into CrossFit because we see these beautiful bodies. There is that vanity coming into it. It takes a certain type of person to do (a cleanse) correctly," she said.

Cañez said people should try a juice cleanse in order to flush out toxins, reset their gut and improve their athletic performance once they start eating.



Israel Woolfolk

Cañez believes everyone should try a juice cleanse at least once in his or her lifetime.

"I don't work with people who are doing it just to lose 10 lb. quickly," she said.

Cañez makes her own juice and cautions against the store-bought juice cleanses. She said some of the popular juice cleanses contain as much as 120 g of sugar in each bottle.

"Within three or four sips your insulin is so spiked up, and a lot of people don't take that into consideration," she said.

Cañez recommends more greens and less sugar. She said lemons clean out the blood, and greens help reset the gut. As far as frequency, Cañez says a juice cleanse about two to three times a year is ideal.

"The digestive system is like a machine," she said. "There's nothing wrong with cleaning out your gut."

The Group Cleanse

When Godfrey and her co-workers did their group cleanse in 2011, the primary motivation for most of them was to drop pounds.

"The only reason (for me) to do it was to lose weight," she said. Removing toxins was a side benefit, but that alone was not enough to get Godfrey to spend about \$200 for three days of juice.

On the first day of her cleanse, Godfrey went to a spin class at the gym. She felt fine and had no problem putting down the six bottles of pre-made juice each day.

One woman, known for her love of any type of diet, gave up after the second juice of Day 1.

"It's disgusting. I'm done," Godfrey remembers her saying.

"It wasn't overly spinach-y. It wasn't bad," Godfrey said of the green juice.

One of the women in the group didn't like celery, a major ingredient in two of the six juices. She hung in there, just skipping the juices she didn't like.

By noon of the second day, the co-worker Godfrey affectionately called "the frat boy" said he was dying.

"He was lightheaded. He couldn't get any work done and spent all of his time complaining about being hungry," Godfrey said.

One of the participants, a woman who ate mostly junk food, had trouble finishing her juice and left most of them in the office fridge.

"By Day 2, I was feeling pretty tired, lightheaded," Godfrey



While many start a juice cleanse to lose weight, some have also experienced a mental or psychological change.

said. She added: "I was almost like not in my body, floating. It wasn't good or bad."

However, Godfrey did discover an unpleasant side of effect of not eating.

"I became obsessed with having diarrhea or not pooping," she said. The first cleanse she did left her constipated, so on her second she took a herbal laxative.

"By Day 3 I was exhausted. I just wanted to chew. I would go to bed at 7 p.m. just to get to the next day."

"By Day 3 I was exhausted. I just wanted to chew."

—Teresa Godfrey

A few stalwarts hung in for the entire three days, including Godfrey. When they were done, they had a massive pig-out to celebrate the end of the cleanse.

Godfrey lost 5 lb., but the weight came back fairly soon after she started eating normally.

Although Godfrey said she initially did the juice cleanse to lose weight and atone for weeks of overindulging, she was surprised to find some psychological benefits from not eating for three days.

"I go through the day eating so much," Godfrey said. "I rarely experience hunger. It's more like, 'Oh, it's time to eat.'"

She said it was interesting to experience what real hunger feels like.

"It's 100 percent an exercise in self-control," she said.

The cleanse didn't bring about glowing skin or a dramatic improvement in her health.

"It's more like a jumpstart or a reset. It's good when I've been off the wagon (as far as healthy eating) for a long time," she said. "It puts me on the right foot to start over."

Cleanse Gone Wrong

Not everyone has a positive experience with juice cleansing. Keka Schermerhorn is a 36-year-old Manhattan resident who works for a hedge fund. She did her first juice cleanse years ago to cut weight for a kettlebell competition.

Courtesy Keka Schermerhorn



Keka Schermerhorn, an athlete and kids coach, has had negative experiences with juice cleanses.

"Not only did I gain weight but I had serious hypoglycemia, low blood pressure and digestive-related side effects (from the cleanse)," she said. Schermerhorn had to resort to traditional methods—such as sitting in the sauna and running in layers of clothing—to drop weight for her competition.

A lifelong athlete who's done everything from ballet to boxing, Schermerhorn has been doing CrossFit for five years. She runs a CrossFit Kids program at Reebok CrossFit Fifth Avenue.

"I've done so many juice cleanses," she said. "For a period I would do a juice cleanse for 24 hours every Friday—that went on for a couple of years."

Even though she always reacted badly to cleanses, Schermerhorn kept doing them. Within eight hours of starting the cleanse she would get cold, her skin would turn grey, she'd break out in cold sweats, her heart would race, she'd feel sick to her stomach, and she'd get a headache.

People told her these symptoms were caused by toxins leaving her body. Her friends insisted her body would get used to it, so she kept trying cleanses.

"I'm somebody who doesn't give up," she said. She remembers thinking her body must need these cleanses if it was reacting that badly.

Her hypoglycemia got so bad that Schermerhorn's boyfriend took to carrying candy around in his pocket when she started to turn grey and shiver.

"The insulin spikes were the worst. I didn't know it, but I was just feeding my hypoglycemia," she said.

As soon as Schermerhorn stopped juicing and started eating in a way that regulated her insulin, she noticed an immediate improvement. It's been three years since Schermerhorn last did a juice fast, and she hasn't experienced a hypoglycemic episode since.

When Schermerhorn encounters people who are contemplating a juice cleanse, she tells them they're crazy.

"Usually my first question is 'why?'" she said. "The most common answer is 'I'm going to the beach next week or I have a wedding next week.' They want to reach that immediate goal. I say there are other ways you can get there," Schermerhorn said.

As far as the mental benefits of juice cleanses, Schermerhorn said she derives so much psychological pleasure from eating that she can't imagine why she would want to give that up, even for a short amount of time.

"There's a tremendous social aspect to (eating)," she said. A former chef, Schermerhorn looks at food as more than fuel. It provides her with a deep sense of contentment. However, it wasn't always this way for her.

"It's taken me a while to develop a comfort level with food, where it's not the enemy," she said.

The self-denial involved in a juice cleanse does have a punitive aspect.

"If you're feeding your body the things that it needs, not the things that you think you want, I think there's tremendous comfort in that. A bowl of Brussels sprouts with pastured bacon is the most delicious thing I can have," she said.

Daily Detox

Like an organized closet or a clean desk, there's something satisfying about the idea of cleaning up and starting over. It's appealing to think we can do the same thing with our bodies, especially after a period of overindulging. Unfortunately, no scientific evidence supports the idea that a juice cleanse—or any sort of fast—removes toxins from the body.

"I'm not a proponent of detoxification programs," alternative guru Dr. Andrew Weil wrote on his website, DrWeil.com. "The body does a pretty good job of cleansing and purifying itself."

Weil is a leading expert on holistic health and integrative medicine.

Sources such as [Harvard Medical School](#), [BBC News](#) and the [Mayo Clinic](#) are unanimous: There's no data or science to support the claims made for detox diets.

"To date, there has been little research on the various detoxification diets, and as a result, there is no scientific support for or against any of their health claims," Maria Adams wrote in a [2012 post](#) for Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital.

An [article](#) on the website Science-Based Medicine stated, "There's no published evidence to suggest that detox treatments, kits or rituals have any effect on our body's ability to eliminate waste products effectively."

The liver and kidneys are not filters, capturing and retaining toxins. When toxins enter the bloodstream, the liver and

kidneys process the harmful substances and eliminate them in sweat, urine and feces. The colon contains bacteria that detoxify food wastes, and mucus membranes prevent those toxins from re-entering the body.

"We have our digestive tract, our kidneys and our liver that all perform those (detoxifying) functions for us, naturally, and when we eat a balanced diet, those organs are better able to perform those functions," said Margaux Neveu, a registered dietitian and nutrition expert who blogs at [Food as RX](#).

Neveu said a juice cleanse can actually inhibit the body's ability to filter toxins. Juicing fruits and vegetables removes the fiber, which Neveu says helps the body naturally eliminate toxins.

"You're not giving your body the fiber that it needs to actually soak up those toxins you get from eating fruits and vegetables," Neveu said. She noted that some toxins are there naturally, while others are related to pesticides.

Like many health-care professionals, Neveu is bothered by the absence of clinical research supporting the claims made by companies selling juice cleanses.

"Three to five days of eating fruits and vegetables is not going to make up for a year of unhealthy habits."

—Margaux Neveu

"They are not regulated by anyone, so they can make these claims and these statements that are just not true. You go through and you look at the clinical research, there's just nothing to support any of the claims that they make," Neveu said.

The other problem with a juice cleanse, Neveu said, is its short-term nature.

"(A cleanse) doesn't teach you how to have a healthy relationship with food. You just kind of go on a three-day thing, and you're not learning anything from it because it's not sustainable long term," she said.

For those people looking for a quick way to lose weight, Neveu said severely restricting calories could work against you by slowing down your metabolism.

"In cutting down calories and protein, you actually cause your body to convert to breaking down your muscles for energy, so you're not really losing weight, and your body is breaking down your good, lean tissues to preserve itself," she said.

Neveu said the idea of a cleanse "resting the gut" is similarly misguided and not supported by any clinical research.

"Gut rest is not beneficial for someone who has a healthy, functioning GI tract," she said. "It actually is the complete opposite."

Our bodies are designed to work best when we consume nutrient-dense, fiber-filled food. Fiber slows down digestion so the foods can be absorbed. Fiber also bulks up the stool to help carry the toxins out.

Any CrossFit athlete knows if you don't challenge your muscles, they atrophy.

"The same thing happens to your gut," Neveu said. "It's a muscle."

Neveu said people who have eating disorders or who are in the ICU for a long time can experience gut atrophy, impairing the gut's function and sometimes causing irreversible damage.



Courtesy of Margaux Neveu

Margaux Neveu speaks out against juice cleanses and encourages healthy eating rather than fasting.

"Outside of religious or meditative reasons, I don't see that juice cleanses have a place. They are not effective for weight loss or removing toxins," Neveu said.

Neveu also said certain people should never attempt a juice cleanse: diabetics, women who are pregnant, growing children or anyone who has had an eating disorder.

"Three to five days of eating fruits and vegetables is not going to make up for a year of unhealthy habits," Neveu said.

No Quick Fix

Fasting and food restrictions are a part of almost every major religion. Limiting or completely abstaining from food may address some primal need or might help give a sense of control in a chaotic world.

We live in a time when food—especially cheap, unhealthy food—is everywhere, and for many people, a juice cleanse is an enforced break from the constant onslaught of food—of thinking about it, shopping for it, preparing it and eating it.

Experts are clear: Current data does not support claims that juice cleanses rid the body of toxins, and your gut doesn't need to rest.

If you're going to do a juice fast, be realistic about the results. Avoid fads and quick-fix solutions and consider the best approach to achieve your long-term goals. Always consult with a professional, and if you do choose to follow a cleanse program, pay attention to how your body responds. If something works, consider adding it to your regimen. If you don't see results, move on.

Just like building strength takes weeks, months, even years, true health is achieved over time.



About the Author

Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary writes for the CrossFit Journal and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit-athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilary-achauer.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Squat Fix: Falling Backward

CrossFit HQ's Russell Berger and Pat Sherwood dissect a common problem: athletes who fall backward when learning the air squat.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

October 2014



All images: Dave Re/CrossFit Journal

The Problem

Longtime CrossFit trainers have seen it more times than they can count: an athlete falls on his butt at the bottom of the air squat.

1 of 4

The hips go back and down, but then the chest falls. When he tries to regain a neutral midline, it's time for someone to yell "timber!"

But why does it happen? And how can it be fixed?

The Causes

Pat Sherwood, a Certified CrossFit Coach (CF-L4) and former member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff, blames butt crashes on one thing: ankle mobility.

"You take those same people and put them in a pair of women's high heels ... they would look like a catcher at home base. Their torso would be vertical," he said.

He added: "If their ankle is at 90 degrees, too much of their weight is going backward. They're going to compensate by really leaning forward at the waist."

A trainer sees that fault and cues the athlete to lift the chest, Sherwood said. And the athlete can do it, he noted. But without proper range of motion in the ankles, the athlete will fall backward.

Only a small percentage of people are able to get into the correct position after one cue, and that's probably because they have the requisite ankle mobility and hadn't realized their bodies' capabilities, he said.

"But most people don't have that mobility, so they fall over."

Russell Berger, on Seminar Staff since 2009, sees the fault when athletes try to keep the foot flat on the ground and raise the chest up to maintain a neutral spine.

Those two points of performance "can be difficult to do at the same time, especially with the untrained," he said.

What Berger typically sees is athletes pulling themselves to the bottom of the squat first and then trying to arch their backs as much as possible.

At that point, the athlete is taking an unbalanced position, not moving anything else and shifting his or her weight to the posterior half of the frontal plane, he explained.

The intentions are good, but this course of action is "an unrealistic way of gaining better movement."

"That's why it's important to arch the back and maintain it on the way down rather than squatting down real low and then arching the back," Berger said.

Ultimately, it's a balance problem.

"Something is loading too much backwards," he said.



If mobility isn't an issue, it's possible the athlete simply doesn't know where his or her body should be in the squat. Tactile cues from the trainer can often help.

This usually means the athlete is trying to raise the chest at the bottom of the squat without pushing the hips forward to right himself.

If the hips are pushed forward and an athlete runs into the ankle issues Sherwood referenced, he or she will be forced to raise the heels—another form error.

A rarer scenario is a long femur.

"If an athlete has unusually long femurs, all of a sudden that pushes his entire torso to the posterior, to the rear. In order to compensate for this, the athlete will usually be leaning quite far forward with their chest," Sherwood said. "Now we're asking for superhuman type of stuff."

Long femurs make ideal positions difficult.

"It's certainly hard to have a really beautiful squat," Sherwood said. "Not impossible. But the odds are stacked against you."

Aja Barto, a three-time CrossFit Games athlete who stands at 6 foot 5, has an impressive air squat, Sherwood noted.



Note the difference in angle at the ankles. On the left, the athlete is able to flex at the ankles and keep the chest upright. On the right, the athlete is struggling to maintain balance and keep her chest up. If her ankle mobility is very poor, she will have difficulty getting into the correct positions.

But Seminar Staff member E.C. Synkowski, who is 6 feet tall, has struggled with her squat for about seven years, he added, because of her leg length.

The Solutions

To begin correcting the fault, Berger recommended the trainer ask the athlete to raise the chest earlier during the descent. The athlete could also grab onto a pole, pull-up rig or squat rack while squatting to keep the torso upright, he offered. Or the athlete could hold a weighted object while squatting or squat in front of a wall.

The goal is to teach the athlete to get the chest up and drive the hips back and down.

Watch the descent and correct any forward lean on the way down so the athlete never gets into a poor position, Berger advised. Still, he added, "that's not always a luxury you have."

If the chest is far forward, begin by ensuring you're communicating well with the athlete.

"They may not know what I'm asking. They may not know how to use the muscles in the back or how to turn them on," Berger explained.

In this case, it might be necessary to use a tactile cue with a knuckle, demonstrate the desired position or have the athlete practice flexion and extension of the spine to connect with the correct muscles.

"To get a beautiful air squat, it could take years," Berger noted. "(But) I could get you to stop falling on your butt pretty quickly."

He encouraged trainers to take a flowchart approach in their coaching.

"Take it one step at a time and go down the path until you reach a dead end, and then back up."

And tackle the big issues first, he said.

Sherwood's advice: First, stop wearing Olympic-weightlifting shoes.

"Why does everyone squat better in Olympic-lifting shoes than regular shoes? It's because of the heel," he explained.

He continued: "Leave the Olympic-lifting shoes on the shelf. Squat more."



Pat Sherwood uses this drill to increase range of motion at the ankles, and there are others like it. Improved dorsiflexion will often allow athletes to make positive changes in torso angle in the squat.

Specifically, Sherwood recommended a stretch sequence he himself does in his warm-up.

With the athlete's back toward the wall, have him or her squat as low as possible with the wall supporting the butt. The feet can be anywhere from 1 to 6 inches away from the wall, depending on the athlete's build, Sherwood said. At this point, the athlete should keep the heels up off the floor enough so that a finger could easily slip beneath.

"Then I would take a 45-lb. dumbbell ... I would rest my elbows on my knees and hold the dumbbell with one head of the dumbbell in each hand," Sherwood said.

Slowly, the heels begin to come down.

"I've found that to be personally very helpful."

Sherwood also cautioned against simply throwing athletes to wall-facing squats in this particular case.

Doing so is going to fix an immature squat caused by lack of kinesthetic awareness—the kind of squat Berger talked about—"but if it's some sort of mechanical impingement

stopping you from that range of motion, that's not going to help."

If the toes are close to or touching the wall, the knees simply cannot go forward, therefore promoting a bad squat, Sherwood said.

"The biggest thing is just squat and squat often, and think about how you're squatting. It's easy to squat relatively lazy—most people do that all the time. ... If you're doing 1,000 squats and (they're) all in that comfortable range of motion, you're not going to get any better."



About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil is a CrossFit Journal staff writer and editor.

By Hilary Achauer

MO'

MUSCLES, MO' — PROBLEMS —

Style advice for the athletic man.

Stylist Catherine Bachelier Smith has a message for men over 35: Your clothes are too big.

“Most men over age 35 wear their clothes a size or two too big,” she said. “Fitted clothes make you look thinner and younger.”

Even the young and perfectly sculpted walk around in ill-fitting clothes because most off-the-rack garments are not designed to fit the traps, lats, quads and glutes of CrossFit athletes. “Good style equals good fit,” Bachelier Smith said.

The best way to ensure a perfect fit—and to look younger and trimmer without diets or plastic surgery—is to have a piece of

clothing custom made. Custom, or bespoke, clothing is not just an option for the fabulously wealthy. You’ll pay slightly more than what you’d pay in a department store, but the end result is a perfectly fitted, well-crafted, one-of-a-kind piece.

And fit, according to Bachelier Smith, is everything.

To help bring some style into the lives of CrossFit men, we gathered three athletes and a professional stylist at Crow Thief, a bespoke men’s clothing store in San Diego, California, to talk about custom and off-the-rack clothes, vests, pocket squares, and the manly art of perfectly cuffed jeans.

THE
CrossFit JOURNAL



All photos: Dave Re//CrossFit Journal

Perfect Fit

Buying clothes can be intimidating, especially for men who spend most of their day in workout attire.

Men with athletic builds often have difficulty finding dress clothes that fit. CrossFit makes people look better naked, but some events in life require clothes.

Alec Zirkenbach is an owner and full-time trainer at Fathom CrossFit in San Diego. The 30-year-old said he has trouble finding dress shirts that fit—especially casual, short-sleeved button-down shirts.

“If the shirt fits the chest, the sleeves are too tight,” Zirkenbach said.

That’s where Melissa Hendrix, owner of Crow Thief, comes in.

Hendrix knows many men are reluctant to try bespoke clothing. Custom clothes cost more than those you’d find in a discount store but are comparable in price to garments found in high-end department stores. For example, a custom long-sleeved button-down from Crow Thief costs around US\$150 to \$180. Custom pants run about \$180 to \$200.

However, a pair of pants or a shirt made for your exact measurements from handpicked fabric more than justifies the price difference. Bespoke clothing is especially valuable for hard-to-fit types. CrossFit athletes work hard for their wide shoulders and narrow waists, and it’s a shame to hide that fitness with ill-fitting clothing.

Going to a store like Crow Thief also supports the local economy—it’s the sartorial equivalent of bypassing the nationwide chain to dine at a restaurant that serves locally sourced food. Sure, the food costs more, but it also tastes better.

Hendrix makes clothes for all types of men.

“I have a client who is 6’11”, and he can never find jeans that fit. I’ve made him 20 pairs (of jeans),” she said.

Hendrix’s process requires a time commitment, but the experience is unlike battling the crowds at the mall and sorting through racks of clothes.

In the first meeting, Hendrix talks with her client and gets a sense of his personal style and the challenges he faces buying off-the-rack clothes. Then, once they decide what pieces Hendrix is going to make, she takes measurements. This initial meeting usually takes about one-and-a-half hours.

Hendrix then makes the pattern and sends it with the fabric to her local sewing experts. More complicated pieces sometimes require a sample

fitting, which means a second visit and fitting for the client, but the clothes are usually ready in six to eight weeks.

Hendrix made a custom vest for Zirkenbach, then Bachelier Smith put together the rest of the versatile look. His dress shirt, slacks and custom-made vest can easily go from day to evening, from the office to a night out with friends.

Zirkenbach said he likes the idea of wearing a vest but hasn’t found an off-the-rack piece that fits well.

“It takes time to build confidence,
but the more confident a man gets,
the more layers he can add.”
—Catherine Bachelier Smith

“The chest would fit, but the bottom wouldn’t,” he said.

He particularly liked the details of his custom vest, such as the contrasting fabric on the back and the metallic buttons. The vest, made of 100 percent wool, costs \$178.

According to Bachelier Smith, the vest is what makes the look. She says shirts and trousers are like a blank canvas. A third piece makes the outfit stylish.

“A third piece adds visual interest,” Bachelier Smith said. The same rule goes for women, whose third piece can be a piece of jewelry, an extra layer or a scarf.

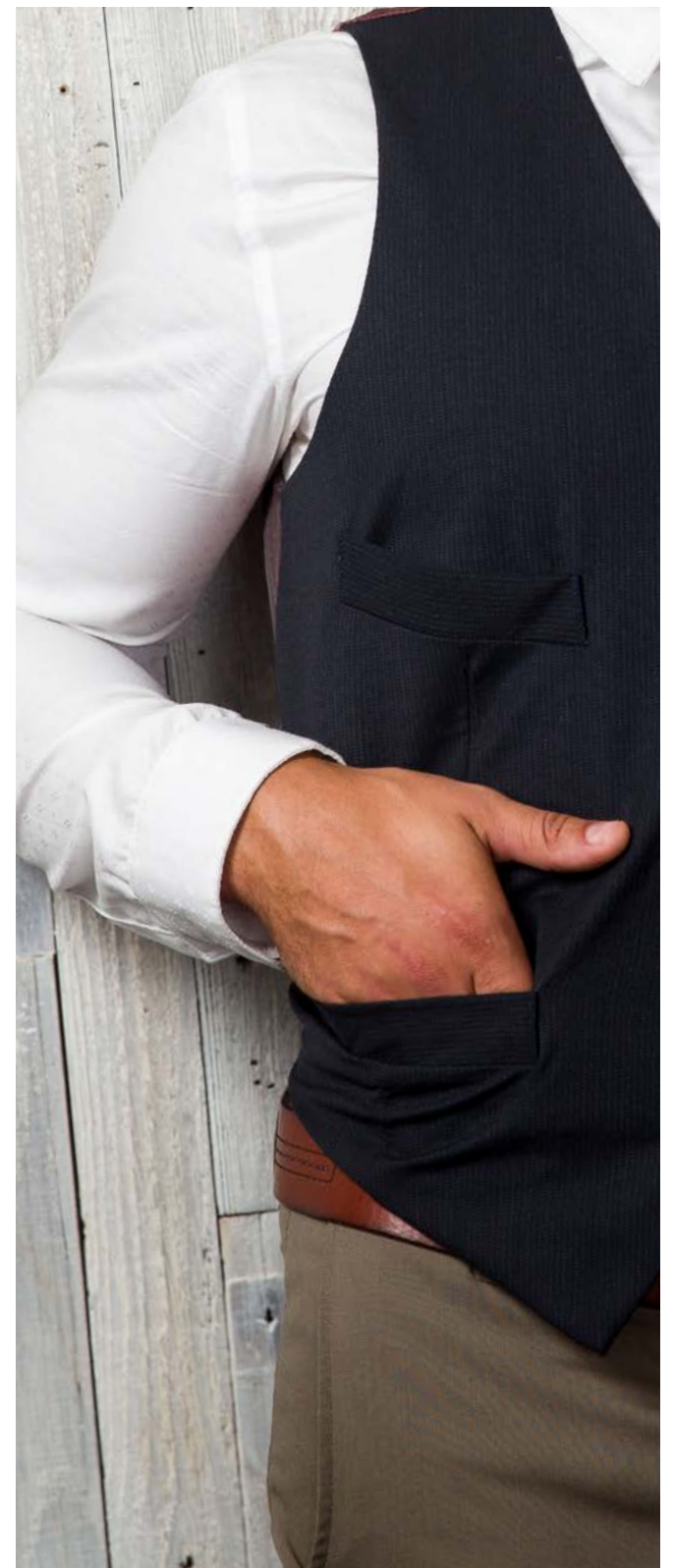
Zirkenbach is wearing his own belt, shoes and watch. The neutral trousers, shirt and tie are basics most men own.

Bachelier Smith said many men are hesitant to wear something like a vest.

"It takes time to build confidence, but the more confident a man gets, the more layers he can add," she said.

“I can see wearing this with a nice white V-neck T-shirt, going for drinks with friends, or date night,” Zirkenbach said.

“I’m single,” he said with a smile.





Find a Tailor

Grant Foreman, also an owner at Fathom CrossFit, will be the best man in his friend's wedding, and he needed a suit for the occasion. Foreman paid \$250 for the suit and then almost as much—\$200—in alterations as he tried to get the off-the-rack suit to fit his athletic 6-foot-4 frame.

When he was shopping for the suit, someone at the store told Foreman he has “the shoulders of a fat man and the waist of a regular guy.”

“I buy shirts that fit smaller people with shorter arms and then cuff the sleeves,” he said.

Foreman's dress pants have made repeated trips to the tailor to mend the crotch, which is no match for his squat-strong legs. Foreman has never purchased bespoke clothing.

“I don't make enough for custom-made clothes,” he said.

Bachelier Smith says looking stylish is not all about spending money.

“As a stylist, I spend more time teaching people how to fit the clothes they already have. Instead of buying a new shirt, spend \$10 and get it tailored,” she said.

Bachelier Smith encourages people to look at what they have in their closet.

“People assume I want them to spend a lot of money,” she said, “but we all have more clothes than we need.”

However, every man should own a good suit. While a completely bespoke suit will ensure the best fit, it's also the most expensive custom option.

A fully tailored suit can cost thousands of dollars, although Nordstrom offers [made-to-measure custom suits that start at \\$795](#). A custom suit is an investment not every man is willing to make, especially if he wears a suit but once or twice a year.

When shopping for an off-the-rack suit, such as the one Foreman is wearing,

the first step is to obtain your measurements, which you can do at any good men’s clothing store. If the difference between the jacket measurement and the pants waistband is substantially more than the standard 6 inches (as it is for most athletic men), consider buying a suit from a store that sells separates, such as J. Crew. A tailor can only take in the waist of the pants so much before ruining them.

After buying an off-the-rack suit, immediately head to a tailor to get it altered to fit you perfectly. It’s an important step many men skip. Those adjustments are going to dramatically improve the look of the suit and make it yours.

“Men and women should mix masculine and feminine elements.”
—Catherine Bachelier Smith

In recent years, a new option has arrived for suit-seeking men: online tailors like Blank Label, Alton Lane, Indochino and J. Hilburn. These companies offer custom-made suits for about \$500. A customer picks his style, fabric and details and then submits his measurements. The suits are manufactured in China, and the fit is dependent on the customer’s submitting accurate measurements, but the suits cost substantially less than hand-tailored garments, and they offer more customization than off-the-rack clothing.

No matter where you get your suit, you can add style and interest without great expense. For instance, Bachelier Smith added a floral pocket square from J. Crew to Foreman’s suit.

“Men and women should mix masculine and feminine elements,” Bachelier Smith said.

Most people are wary of mixing stripes with florals, but Bachelier Smith said there’s a rule of thumb for mixing prints: Look for the dominant color in the print. The dominant color in Foreman’s striped tie is cobalt blue, and the dominant color in the pocket square is light blue. Cobalt blue and light blue go well together, which is why these prints complement each other.

“Don’t be afraid to mix patterns,” Bachelier Smith said. “It’s a sign of confidence.”

Suits automatically come with their own third piece—the jacket—but men shouldn’t be afraid to add metallic elements such as cufflinks or a tie pin.

“Every man should own a good pair of cufflinks,” Bachelier Smith said.

Foreman’s tiepin is smaller, so it doesn’t compete with the cufflinks.

The final piece of Foreman’s look is the socks. The color palette is a mix of blue and black, unifying the elements of his suit.

Although Foreman spends most of his time in workout clothes, he said he loves the more formal look.

“I like to dress up, and I’d rather be overdressed than underdressed,” Foreman said. “I want to stand out.”

Custom Casual

Luke Maznio is a 23-year-old student of electrical engineering. He works out at CrossFit Invictus in San Diego and classifies his style as “laid back.” He’s a jeans-and-T-shirt kind of guy.

A high-end, custom suit might not make sense for someone like Maznio. For a man who lives in jeans, custom denim is a better option.

“We create the perfect fit,” Hendrix said of her custom denim.

Most of Crow Thief’s raw material is from Japan, which produces some of the world’s finest denim. Higher quality denim has a tighter, denser weave, which makes the final product sturdier and more distinctive.

Hendrix works with her clients to design every part of the jeans, including the pockets, zippers, stitching, rivets and pocket lining. A pair of custom jeans costs about \$200, not including the \$65 pattern fee.

Unlike most commercially sold denim, which has been chemically washed, Hendrix’s custom denim starts out raw and then gradually fades in a way that’s unique to the wearer.

Maznio is also wearing a custom-made shirt from Crow Thief. The fabric, imported from Japan, is 100 percent cotton, but it reads like linen. Hendrix says this is because of the texture of the fabric, which adds visual interest.

Bachelier Smith says another way to add texture is to roll up the sleeves and the pants.

“If you’re shorter, make the pants into a thin roll,” Bachelier Smith said.

The final detail is Maznio’s boots, which offset the more formal shirt and tie.

“He could also wear Chuck Taylors with this, or a crisp, white tennis shoe,” Bachelier Smith said.

In addition to the fit of their clothes, men should also pay attention to the condition of their shoes. Get rid of bedraggled flip-flops and keep old, worn-down tennis shoes in the gym. Shine your shoes regularly. Not only will they look better but they’ll also last longer.



Looking over Maznio's outfit, Bachelier Smith went back to her first lesson of the day: Make sure your clothes fit. She said most men she sees wear their jeans almost two sizes too big.

"These guys have great bodies," she said. She noted it's a shame to hide them in shapeless clothes.

Making It Work

Style and fashion are different.

Fashion is ever-changing. It can be intimidating and sometimes ridiculous. Style is about expressing your personality through your clothes, about understanding what works for your body type and lifestyle.

Style does take effort, though. Most good things do. The trick is knowing where to focus your effort and your money. The **style pyramid** is a simple-but-effective reference point. At the top of the pyramid is fit. That's essential. To ensure the best fit, look for a bespoke store like Crow Thief in your neighborhood. Even a small piece, such as a custom-made shirt or vest, will instantly elevate your wardrobe.

Just below fit are fabric and style. A perfectly fitting polyester shirt is a bad choice. If something makes you uncomfortable or makes you feel as if you're wearing someone else's clothes, it's not the right style for you. At the very least, go through your closet and get rid of anything that is stained, ripped or just never fit in the first place.

Life is too short—and you look too good—to wear ill-fitting clothes. ■

Learn More

Catherine Bachelier Smith: [CBS Life Stylist](#)

[Crow Thief](#)

<http://lifehacker.com/5909754/five-best-online-custom-clothing-stores>

About the Author

Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing articles, online content, blogs and newsletters, Hilary writes for the CrossFit Journal and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. An amateur boxer-turned-CrossFit-athlete, Hilary lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit hilaryachauer.com.



Simply Style for Men

Shoes every man should own:

1. Dress shoes.
2. Clean tennis shoes.
3. Workout shoes.
4. A great pair of sandals or clean, new flip-flops.

How to be stylish:

1. Shrink clothes down.
2. Add a piece or two.
3. Match your belt to your shoes.
4. Don't match your socks to your shoes. Choose some element of your outfit—shirt, jacket, vest—and match the socks to that.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL VIRTUOSITY

Virtuosity 1: Morrill of the Story

Athletes look past a monster truck full of rottweilers to find a coach who's 100 percent invested in his athletes.

By Audrey Pike

October 2014



Shae Foy

At first glance, one would surmise that Kris Morrill is an asshole.

1 of 2

The owner and head coach at World Camp CrossFit in Albany, Georgia, is 6 foot 3 with bulging biceps and the swagger of an athlete. He has three rottweilers, a truck that gives Bigfoot a run for its money and an intense love of guns. Just as CrossFit is misjudged and stereotyped by people who know nothing about its methodology, Kris Morrill is often misjudged based on appearance alone.

Then, without fail, those who are vocal in their opinions about Kris and World Camp eventually find their way through our doors. They see the incredible results in both athleticism and appearance the World Camp athletes enjoy. They hear about World Camp athletes frequently reaching the podium at competitions. They watch the camaraderie among the World Camp members, the support and community and love. They decide to see, just once, what is really happening at World Camp CrossFit.

They walk through our doors positive it will only be for one workout.

They never walk back out. That is because of Kris Morrill.

CrossFit and its impact—its beauty and ferocity and brilliance—cannot be fully appreciated until one actually tries CrossFit. The same is true of the magic that permeates World Camp CrossFit: It cannot be fully appreciated until one attends a class and feels the community, and the World Camp community cannot be understood until one understands Kris.

Kris, in his bones, is a coach. In his heart, he is a teacher. In his spirit, he is a person who believes anything is possible with hard work. He is adored by his members. It could be because of his ability to remember names instantaneously. It could be because of his enormous sense of humor and sharp wit. It could be because of the programming that he is known for within the CrossFit community.

Underneath it all, the real reason Kris has grown such a successful business—why he has made such an impact in Albany since 2008—is because of his unwavering belief in each and every one of his athletes. His belief is so real, so tangible, that when he says you can lift a weight, you suddenly know you can. You step up to the bar buoyed by his faith in you, and without hesitation you lift a weight that only moments before seemed impossible. As you celebrate your PR he quietly smiles, his eyes shimmering with pride and the shared excitement of your achievement. You feel his pride and know you are unstoppable.

It's the magic that resonates within each World Camp member, it's what fuels each athlete to be better than yesterday, and it's why so many incredible athletes found their start at World Camp CrossFit: When Kris Morrill believes in you, anything is possible.



Submission Guidelines

To be considered for publication, authors must satisfy the following:

1. Articles must be original, unpublished works. Authors of selected submissions will be supplied with legal documents to be filled out prior to publication.
2. Articles must be submitted in Word documents attached to an email. Documents should not contain bolding, italics or other formatting. Please submit in Arial font.
3. Articles can be 500 words maximum.
4. Each article must be accompanied by at least one high-resolution photograph to illustrate the story. The photo can feature the coach, the affiliate, the community—anything that illustrates the article. Photo guidelines are as follows:

- A. Photos must be original and owned by the person submitting. Photos taken by others may be submitted provided the owner has given permission.
- B. Photos must be in focus, well lit and free of watermarks. Minimum file size is 1 MB. Please review your camera's settings to ensure you are shooting high-resolution images. Cell-phone photos and thumbnails are not accepted.
- C. Photos must be attached to the email as JPEG files. Do not embed files in Word documents. Photo file names should list both the name of the subject and the name of the photographer in this format: SubjectName-PhotographerName.jpg. Examples: JonathonSmith-RachelDouglas.jpg or CrossFitAnyTown-JimJohnson.jpg.

Virtuosity@crossfit.com is open for submissions. Tell us why you train where you train, and do it uncommonly well.

MOTOWN SOLO

In a city long at conflict with itself, Jarrod Bell runs the only operating CrossFit affiliate because, he says, it's the right thing to do.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

The 400 m surrounding Detroit's first and only operating CrossFit affiliate is a microcosm of the city's decay.

There are overgrown lots—a couple outlined with rusted chain-link fences forbidding the curious—and abandoned turn-of-the-century Victorian-style brick homes whose vine-covered walls, broken windows, “No Trespassing” signs and unkempt grounds seem suited for a horror film. Beyond that immediate radius are vacant buildings of all heights—some boarded up, others with broken windows, all with graffiti. One 14-story building warns “Zombieland” in thick black letters across the top.

Most wouldn't choose this place as the ideal location for a small business. Or any business. Detroit's cruel tagline, Renaissance City, has mocked its reality for the better part of 60 years.

It's a town characterized by empty parcels of untrimmed grass, burnt shells of homes left vacant and roaming packs of emaciated dogs—coyotes, at one point. The 313-year-old city is proudly known as the birthplace of Henry Ford's first automobile, Motown and techno music. For decades it's struggled with deep-seated racial tension, high crime rates, government corruption, strapped finances and a dwindling population.

Outside its borders, Detroit has been known as Destroyed, Michigan. Murder capital, drug capital, homeless capital, illiteracy capital. The list of labels is endless. And the message has always been clear: Don't go to Detroit. It's a war zone.

In March, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder declared a financial emergency in the city and appointed an emergency mayor. Four months later, Detroit became the largest municipality in U.S. history to file for bankruptcy. Total sum: \$18.5 billion.

Yet when Jarrod Bell decided to move CrossFit Benchmark Workouts (BMW) out of the trendy suburb of Royal Oak in 2012, he chose Detroit. It was the same year the city recorded 411 homicides—the highest total in almost 20 years.

“At that time, the community centers in Detroit were closing. There was a need, there was a fit, something I could bring to the table,” the 48-year-old said. His box is a Local Club in the Steve's Club National Program, a network of CrossFit services for at-risk and underserved youth.

But things haven't worked out the way he intended.

Bell went from having two coaches in Royal Oak to becoming a one-man show. Thus far, he's worked with “less than a handful” of at-risk youth. Earlier this year, he had to cut two classes out of the schedule so as not to stretch himself too thin. And in early October—after nearly two years on Detroit's historic Cass Corridor—Bell began scrambling to find a new space for CrossFit BMW “before the snow hits” and before his lease ends in November.

All the while, economic-development efforts have gained steam in parts of Detroit. Rent prices are climbing, and it's not unusual for properties to sell

for four times what they did in 2012. Likewise, buying the building his box now occupies—without investors—is out of the question for Bell.

The silver lining is change is finally happening in Detroit's core. Those involved with redevelopment efforts say they are the most aggressive since the 1950s, when the then-booming city was enjoying its final decade as the world's automotive capital.

“The resources are here to have a great, great city,” Warren Buffett said in a November 2013 news conference, reported the Detroit Free Press.

The business magnate, investor and philanthropist spoke at a Goldman Sachs Group Inc. event announcing a program providing up to \$15 million in loans to Detroit small business in an effort to spur economic development. Goldman Sachs said it allocated an additional \$5 million to educate and train entrepreneurs.

"The United States with a flourishing
Detroit is going to be a . . . better
United States than without one."
—Warren Buffett

"The potential's huge," Buffett said at the event.

He added, "The United States with a flourishing Detroit is going to be a . . . better United States than without one."

The Decision

Detroit is where Bell grew up; his family's there. But, more than anything, he just kept thinking about the long-forgotten people of inner-city Detroit—kids without playgrounds, adults without guidance.

Now, after two years in Detroit, Bell's membership has gone from about 90 at its highest in Royal Oak to 65. During that time, it's been difficult to make ends meet.

Between the 6-a.m. class and the two evening classes Monday through Friday, he takes on a handful of personal-training clients and tends to the particulars of owning a small business. On occasion, he's met with clients at 5 a.m., and somewhere in between all that, he tries to work out himself. For two weeks out of each month, he instructs the box's beginner classes at 7 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. on both Tuesdays and Thursdays and 8 a.m. on Saturdays. Before school started, he was working with eight high-school athletes. In Royal Oak, he worked with at least 15.



Detroit is still characterized by tens of thousands of buildings like these—empty and unkempt with graffiti warning visitors.



The Spirit of Detroit monument is one of the city's most iconic landmarks. Its likeness appears on most municipal logos.

He's tired often. That's when he hangs out at the back of his 4,800-square-foot gym. From there, he can see the entire class.

"I'm also taking a break," he said with a quick laugh.

The 14-mile relocation was difficult for many of his athletes to swallow in 2012, especially because it would require them to go to Detroit. Only a handful of athletes stuck with him. Many others said Detroit was just too dangerous.

Wendy Becker was one of those who followed. But it was after much handwringing.

"I didn't know if I could come to the city," said the 46-year-old, who began training with Bell in February 2010. "I was scared of it."

She continued: "At one point, I said, 'I'm not going.'"

But a greater fear gripped her: fear for her health. Becker lost 70 lb. in the first year of training under Bell.

"I'm truly scared if I don't do CrossFit, I won't live much longer," said Becker, who tried to become a contestant on "The Biggest Loser."

Tamara Cook also followed Bell to Detroit.

The 48-year-old joined CrossFit BMW in 2011. Having worked in the city for years, she didn't share the others' concerns. Still, Cook said she was bummed that the group broke up.

"People who left still aren't back. But it turned out OK because it's just a different group of people."

The Neighborhood

CrossFit BMW athletes gather either before the sun rises or as it's setting at their box among few other businesses along the Cass Corridor.

The 6-year-old affiliate sits at 3124 Cass Ave., roughly 2 miles northwest of the GM Renaissance Center, the iconic cylindrical glass skyscrapers also known as General Motors world headquarters. The seven shiny buildings—including a hotel with a rooftop restaurant—total more than 5.5 million square feet and sit on the Detroit River overlooking Windsor, Canada. The buildings house more than two dozen businesses.

CrossFit BMW, meanwhile, is surrounded by blight and only a handful of other enterprises, including J & L Foreign Auto Centre next door and Canine to Five Dog Daycare at the end of the next block.

In the 1960s, the Cass Corridor was Detroit's Chinatown. But as the city continued to decline, "That name was synonymous with 'danger,' a red-light

district," said Bell as he sternly and pensively examined the thoroughfare from the garage-door entrance to his box.

These days, the corridor is said to be next on the gentrification list, driving up rent and property values.

For the time being, it's a place where multiple ambulances whizz past over the course of the day, their wailing making thought impossible. Myriad people walk by, too—some of them homeless, others simply donning the eccentricity found in a big city. Each time, Bell extends an arm in their direction, shows his palm and says, "All right," answering an unspoken question.

Sometimes they keep walking. Other times they have something to say.

"You go, girl," loudly encouraged a 20-something man in a driving cap, track jacket and jeans who was making his way past female athletes taking the 400-m lap around the box. As the ladies neared the second half of the run, he shouted, "Damn, you made it around the block already?"

This is typical at CrossFit BMW. And Becker likes that.

"I love getting cheers when I run by," she said, smiling. "It's cool."

Ashes to Ashes

If your last visit to Detroit was 20 years ago, it looks different. And the same. It depends on what part of town you're in, what building you're looking at.

"Detroit is really a tale of two cities. There are two very different realities in Detroit," said George Galster, Clarence Hilberry Professor of Urban Affairs in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Downtown and in the Midtown neighborhood, redevelopment efforts have gained traction in the past five years. The city now has a bona fide downtown with restaurants, coffee shops, bars and a smattering of retail. Midtown saw a Whole Foods open in 2011 and has hosted the local art-and-light festival DLectricity since fall 2012. Bustling Woodward Avenue—also known as Michigan 1, the country's first so-called superhighway—has been temporarily reduced to one lane in each direction for construction of a rail line that will cover 3.3 miles, beginning at the waterfront. The project, known as M-1 Rail, is a public-private partnership.

Downtown and Midtown have seen substantial improvements in residential investment, as well as in the income and education of its residents, Galster noted.

"That part of the city, indeed, has changed dramatically," he said. "Then there's the other tale of the city, which is poorer, blacker (with) abandoned and dilapidated housing."

There, on Detroit’s outskirts, the population continues to decline, housing continues to be abandoned and blight gets worse.

“Detroit is really a tale of two cities.”
—George Galster

Unlike most cities that grew up, Detroit grew out. All told, it swallowed nearly 140 square miles. Add another 5, and both Boston and Pittsburgh could fit within Motown’s boundaries. At its peak, Detroit swelled to nearly 2 million people in 1950. Today its population is roughly 700,000.

“Detroit is really a funny place because there’s parts that are clearly thriving,” Galster said.

He added, “I’ve never seen a city like this—with a vital core and vast, empty territory around it. It’s an unprecedented pattern of urban development.”

For some, the beacon of hope is downtown and Midtown, where Sue Mosey has seen the difference just a couple of years can make.

“I couldn’t get a (real estate) broker to spend time with me five years ago,” said the executive director of Midtown Detroit Inc., a nonprofit planning and development group focused on that neighborhood.

Now brokers are “smitten” with Detroit, Mosey said. Attitudes about the Motor City, she continued, have “fundamentally changed.”

“If it remains on this trajectory . . . the urban core, in another five years, will be vibrant,” Mosey said.

A native Detroiter, Mosey has held her job for nearly 28 years. She’s known as “the mayor of Midtown.”

She went on to describe the city’s bankruptcy as “a really great freeing exercise,” but she noted there’s still “a tremendous amount of abandonment.”

Indeed, there are roughly 80,000 abandoned properties in the city. Many of those parcels are considered a public nuisance with owners owing years of back taxes. Earlier this year, the city began suing some of those owners.

For so long, Detroit was a one-trick pony—its identity tied to the long-failing auto industry. Chrysler, Ford and General Motors all have their headquarters in metro Detroit. And as the Big Three continued to bleed, so, too, did the Motor City.

“There are a special set of circumstances that make Detroit an extreme place,” said Galster, author of “Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City.”

“One of them is this extreme dependence on one industry that’s had a long-term decline in employment. And the second is that we’ve had an unusually vicious set of conflicts in this city on both racial grounds and I’m going to call it ‘class ground’—I really mean union and (corporations)—over a century.”

Detroit is the only American city the U.S. Army has occupied three times after its own residents set it on fire during the race riots of 1863, 1943 and 1967.

Still, first-term City Councilman Scott Benson describes Detroit as “up and coming.”

“It had some great times, it’s fallen on hard times, and now it’s digging itself back up again,” he said. “There’s a great deal of momentum.”

As a former CrossFit BMW member and former Midtown Detroit Inc. employee, Benson helped usher Bell’s business into the city.

The affiliate, he said, fills an “unmet need.”

Benson said he’s spoken to Bell about available resources to help in his gym’s relocation once CrossFit BMW’s lease ends in November at 3124 Cass Ave. He foresees the Cass Corridor being a high-rent district in three years and said other nearby neighborhoods are at “the tip of the spear” in terms of gentrification, offering affordable investment prospects today.

“It is the land of opportunity,” Benson began. “There is so much going on here. There is a huge market, pent-up demand, unmet needs, all kinds of resources for people. We are an international city that is the only U.S. city that’s north of Canada. We have an international border. We have so much going on here—international music scene, amenities, museums, architecture you can’t find anywhere in the world.”

Yes, the city has its challenges, he said, but so does every big city.

“Warren Buffett is saying, ‘Buy Detroit,’” Benson noted. “That adds a certain cachet to the brand.”

Whether the tale of two Detroits will continue to unfold is anybody’s guess, Galster said.

“I think that the forces that are continuing are essentially going to keep that emptying-out process alive and well. So you’re going to have this strange pattern of a very vibrant mini city in Midtown/downtown surrounded by kind of a no-man’s land.”

Still, the renewed pride and resilient attitude about being from Detroit is palpable in the city and reminiscent of a post-Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana. It’s a pride that hasn’t existed for decades.



CrossFit BMW owner Jarrod Bell (right) is the sole full-time coach at the box. He teaches three classes a day, with personal-training sessions in between, and he coaches the fundamentals cycles at the beginning of the month.

T-shirts proclaiming “Made in Detroit” and bumper stickers that let you know “Detroit Hustles Harder” are ubiquitous. Ask any resident if it’s true what they say about Detroit and you’ll get a quick answer.

“(Don’t) listen to the media,” said April Wilcox, a CrossFit BMW member and native of New Hampshire who has lived in the city for nearly three years. “It has such a negative stigma, and it’s a pretty amazing city.”

Fellow BMW member and lifelong Detroiter Holly Hughes echoed those sentiments.

“Detroit is not what they make us out to seem,” she said.

Hughes added, “I was born here. I was raised here. I believe we’re gonna turn it around.”

The public fascination around a city that birthed so much creativity and has simultaneously been at war with itself is not lost on those involved with reviving it.

“There’s a high degree of interest in Detroit from all over the country—folks wanting to see Detroit succeed,” Mosey said. “It’s a very iconic city. It’s still a huge metro area, and it’s full of talented people.”

A Cool Cat

*Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone.
It’s not warm when she’s away.
Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone.
And she’s always gone too long.
Anytime she goes away.*

Bell unabashedly sang from the SUV’s right rear passenger seat. He’s known to play classic funk in the box until members complain. With the window down, his short, black wavy hair in the usual ponytail and his rose-colored sunglasses wrapped around his face, he gave Bill Withers a run for his money.

*And I know, I know, I know, I know,
I know, I know, I know, I know, I kn . . .*

Michelle Raphael swerved right, avoiding a collision. Three of her passengers commended the fellow CrossFit BMW member on her vehicular acumen.

Bell, no longer singing, said only one thing.

“Man, messed up my groove.”



Construction crews are part of the Detroit skyline throughout downtown and its Midtown neighborhood. The city's core is becoming vibrant, while the remainder continues to decline.

The former college football player is meticulous and particular. He likes what he likes and is unapologetic for it. He once called it off with a woman because she didn't understand his diet. He's a vegetarian.

"If my diet baffles you, you baffle me," he said with a tempered laugh.

And after one of his late-September classes, he spent the better part of 10 minutes painstakingly moving bumper plates to and from the front and back of the gym so like weights were together. When class ends, his members dutifully wipe down their equipment and put it away without Bell's saying a word.

His coaching style mirrors his personality.

"He has this quiet, commanding presence," Becker explained. "He just has this way of looking at you that lets you know you can do it."

Even when it's Brittany Ford.

The master's student at Central Michigan University started at CrossFit BMW in November 2013. As a Type 2 diabetic weighing roughly 300 lb., Ford arrived with two goals for the year: She didn't want to be medicated,

and she wanted to lose 40 lb. Ford met both with flying colors, losing 100 lb. in less than a year.

Yet, she's not exactly enthusiastic.

Most days, Ford communicates with Bell with a tilted head, a protruded hip and attitude to spare. He calls her "Hollywood" because "she walks in there like she owns the place."

Bell ignores her nonverbal communication.

"I can't do that," she defiantly told him one morning after he asked the tall athlete to squat in front of a rectangular wooden box to prevent her chest from collapsing.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because I'll fall," she retorted.

"Don't fall," Bell calmly replied before continuing the task of coaching the other athletes in the 6-a.m. class.

Rest assured, this isn't fun for Ford. But she keeps coming back because

"it works."

"No matter how many times I roll my eyes, he tells me to keep going," she later said. "Just about every day I say, 'I can't,' and I'm proven wrong."

When it comes to Becker, Bell doesn't accept excuses either.

"He doesn't treat me like the fat girl in the room. He expects me to do everything," she said.

The nickname probably helps.

"He calls me Wonder Woman. That's an honor to me."

Becker wholeheartedly trusts her coach.

"I know that I can run and leap at him, and he'll catch me."

Bell, she said, has a passion for changing lives.

When the two first met at a local gym in which Bell was renting space, he walked up to Becker while she was on the treadmill and asked two questions in succession: "What is your name? When are you going to work out with me?"

"He just looked at me and knew I could do better," Becker said.

And that goes beyond the box.

In late September, Becker walked into the gym with pep in her step. She approached Bell, who was observing athletes as they came in and began warming up.

"I got advanced at work," she proudly said, chin high.

Bell smiled as if he always knew that would happen.

"That's my girl," he said boastfully.

When class began, Bell was equal parts relaxed and intense. He walked the perimeter and spent minutes at a time explaining to a couple of athletes how to fix an error. It is not unusual for him to pause a member mid-workout because of incorrect form. He's also been known to tell an athlete to reduce the load in the midst of a met-con.

"He (cares) about you as a person, your body," Hughes said. "He would rather see you knock weight off the bar and do it with perfect form."

She paused, gathering her thoughts.

"I can implicitly trust this man because he's proven to me that he cares if I

walk out of this box without hurting myself."

For Wilcox, who repeatedly told her husband CrossFit wasn't for her, Bell made the difference: "Jarrod's the first coach that made me believe I was a real athlete and made me feel like I belong," she said.

Doug Chapman, owner of CrossFit Ann Arbor, Michigan's first CrossFit affiliate, met Bell in 2007.

"He's a pretty sharp coach," said Chapman, a former member of CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff and coach to CrossFit Games athlete Julie Foucher.

"I've heard nothing but good things about him."

Joe DeGain, a current Seminar Staff member and owner of 810 CrossFit in Grand Blanc Township, Michigan, met Bell in 2007. Both men were at a weightlifting clinic Coach Mike Burgener instructed at CrossFit Ann Arbor. At 6 foot 2 and 245 lb. at the time, Bell, who played football at Grambling State University under Eddie Robinson, stood out.

"He has a large physical presence, and he can be perceived as quite intimidating," DeGain said via email. "However, once you talk to him and recognize his humble presence, desire to improve people and thirst for knowledge, he possesses a magnetism that makes you want to be better. He is a professional in our affiliate community."

For Chris Sinagoga, Bell is a role model. The 24-year-old owner of CrossFit Athletic Group in Madison Heights, Michigan, met Bell in 2009 when he and a buddy were doing CrossFit.com workouts. After Sinagoga started a fitness club at a local high school, he and his group frequently ended up at CrossFit BMW, where there was better equipment. Eventually, the school put an end to the club, and Sinagoga was left without a place to train. That's when Bell offered his space at no charge.

"He saved our life. For real," Sinagoga said.

These days, the two affiliates pair up for fundraising efforts, and Sinagoga and Bell will sometimes coach at each other's boxes.

"He actually really changed our philosophy because we used to kind of allow a lot more slop in form than we should have back at the high school. Even myself, I'd let my form break down a lot," Sinagoga added. "He opened our eyes. You've got to prioritize form 100 percent and never allow that to deteriorate. Now we pride ourselves on having the best-moving athletes in the state of Michigan. And that comes from Jarrod getting on me."

Plus, Bell's not too terrible to hang out with: "He's so cool—that's the best way I can describe it. He's very, very mellow. Like," Sinagoga stopped to think, then continued, "just very level headed. I guess he's cool. He's a cool cat."



Bell often works out alone in his down time from coaching at CrossFit BMW. A lifelong athlete, the 48-year-old played football at Grambling State University under famed coach Eddie Robinson.

No Regrets

It's true that finances have been tight since Bell moved CrossFit BMW to Detroit. Still, he said he wouldn't have made a different decision.

He knows he needs coaches and specifically someone to lead CrossFit BMW's nonprofit efforts. But, he noted, there's a lot that's going right.

"It's been good because I've been doing what I want to do. Clients are happy, they're getting better, they're sticking (to the program), they're staying."

He added, "If you stick to what works, quantify things, you'll see the best possible outcome, which is going to eventually become better quality, better performance and excellence."

Being a CrossFit affiliate, he said, is "a beautiful opportunity."

And while some might never understand why Bell chose Detroit, Sinagoga explained that the owner of CrossFit BMW is driven by a higher purpose.

"If he decides it's the right move, it's the right move. He's probably not going to get many members . . . because of the perception, but the city needs it."

"Some of these people are homeless, they've been out of a job for a while," Sinagoga added. "There's a lot of inner-city kids that need a location, a CrossFit gym in the city of Detroit. And every gym is going to say that 'we have good form' and 'we coach technique,' but this guy is the godfather of quality movements."

Besides, Bell can handle the Motor City.

"If there's a guy to do it in Detroit, it's Jarrod," Sinagoga said.

"His actions . . . speak to where his priorities are, and his priorities are, 'This is something that needs to be in place right now. Fuck the money. I need to do this.'"

Bell, who doesn't often curse, said he plans to stay in his hometown—no matter what.

"I'm from Detroit, I'm a product of Detroit, I was born in Detroit, I was raised here. . . . There is a change brewing. I want to be a part of that change."

And he'll do what he needs to do to keep coaching.

"I'll be training out of a phone booth, but I'll be here." ■

About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil is a CrossFit Journal staff writer and editor.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Hungry, Hungry Hippo

Some kids will find medicine balls are more fun when they aren't used for wall-ball shots.

By Lura Poggi, CrossFit Kids

October 2014

Object

To "eat" the most medicine balls as a team.

Equipment

Medicine balls of varying sizes and weights.

Set-Up

1. Define the play area with cones, approximately 20 feet by 20 feet.
2. Place the medicine balls in the center of the play area.

Game Play

1. Divide the kids into four teams and position them on four sides of the play area.
2. On "go," one player from each team performs a burpee and then runs to the pile of medicine balls in the center of the room.
3. Each player returns with only one ball per trip.
4. The game continues until all medicine balls have been "eaten."
5. The team with the most medicine balls wins.



Daniel Marks