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THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Tag, You're Out—and Back In!

Alison Patenaude introduces a game designed to prevent kids from sitting on the sidelines while waiting for the next round.

By Alison Patenaude CrossFit Kids

May 2012



Equipment

- Playing area
- Cones
- Pinnies or any other article to help distinguish taggers
- Plyo boxes or large tires

Set-Up

After designating boundaries, arrange tires or plyo boxes along one of the sidelines. Cone off an additional 50-meter loop for kids to run around after they are tagged.

Object

Stay clear of the taggers.

How to Play

Choose two taggers. The trainer dictates how class members will move around the playing area (bear crawl, crab walk, alligator crawl, high-knees skip, etc.). On go, taggers attempt to tag as many players as they can. Once tagged, children must run a 50-meter loop and make their way up and over the boxes or tires before they may return to the game. After about three minutes, the trainer calls time and taggers and movements are changed out.



Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

To Be SEALFIT: A Benchmark Learning Curve

Jared Cohen pushes himself through 50 hours of hell
and finds a new self on the other side.

By Jared Cohen

May 2012



Brian Doyle

Forty-eight hours later, eight individuals remain where there used to be nine.

A month ago when I was in similar shoes, we started with 17 and ended with 10.

Lance Armstrong said, "Pain is temporary, quitting lasts forever." This sentiment is easy to conceptualize but far from understood when daily comforts one takes for granted—dry clothes, sleep and more—are no longer automatic.

SEALFIT is a training program developed by former Navy SEAL Commander Mark Divine, co-located with his CrossFit affiliate gym, U.S. CrossFit. SEALFIT is a strength-and-conditioning program built upon Greg Glassman's approach to fitness and tailored to the specific demands of special ops. Similar to CrossFit, SEALFIT is the pursuit of a particular lifestyle.

"Being SEALFIT is more than just a sculpted physique; it is a way of life, state of mind and a way of orienting oneself in the world," says SEALFIT.com. While catering to "the unique and specialized needs of SEAL trainees, (SEALFIT) is effective for any professional serious about their fitness and performance, as well as all 'industrial athletes' who must rely on their bodies and minds to be at their peak for their daily jobs."

Mark Divine uses the term "industrial athlete" to include anyone who is focused on continually achieving new levels of excellence in his or her specific field of pursuit. Without a sustainable body for the mind to stand on, the mind is stripped from opportunities in which infinite experiences can stimulate innovative and evolutionary thought.

"There is an athlete and warrior in everyone."

—Mark Divine

During the last weekend of August 2011, I had the opportunity to observe a group of 10 individuals from age 17 to 54 attempt to survive training from early Friday afternoon to late Sunday afternoon. At the end of a three-week stay at SEALFIT in June 2011, I experienced a similar 50-hour journey while enduring no sleep and a chafed, cold and delirious body as well as mind. It is based on these experiences and on the literature of others with similar ideas that I explain the invaluable nature of pairing physical training—as opposed to general "exercise"—with other forms of education, particularly that of traditional academia. The CrossFit/SEALFIT/"warrior spirit" agenda has the ability to unlock untapped potential that can be applied in all domains by beginning with a concern for our bodies today, tomorrow and the indefinite long haul.



Brad McLeod

During the 50-hour Kokoro Camp, SEALFIT athletes are pushed to the brink both physically and mentally.

The term "warrior spirit" is widely used to express the motivational "never quit" type of attitude. The essence of a warrior spirit is a shared struggle to continue to move forward when resistance is present. Life has peaks and valleys, successes and failures, or good times and bad times, all of which are primarily unforeseeable. Some individuals are prepared to handle the unknown and unknowable better than others. Divine suggests that these types of individuals have a more developed warrior spirit. Furthermore, Divine has said, "There is an athlete and warrior in everyone. It is a birthright. However, only a warrior has the will to prepare."

SEALFIT's most well known and long standing camp that gives individuals the tools to prepare like a warrior is the 50-hour weekend Kokoro Camp—a crucible experience that tests one's ability to become comfortable amidst the uncomfortable. According to Divine, one pays to have the controlled environment of SEALFIT "force both one's mind and body to come to a cliff and fall off, and one's warrior spirit is that very parachute that gets pulled on the way down."

Kokoro is the Japanese word that is often translated as "mind" and "heart," indicating the close relationship of the two. Divine's Kokoro Camp is the moniker denoting the manifestation of an unbeatable warrior spirit. Kokoro is the fifth, final and culminating mountain in SEALFIT's five mountains of well-rounded success: the mental mountain, the physical mountain, the emotional/spiritual mountain, the awareness/intuitional mountain and Kokoro.

Chelsea

In CrossFit, Chelsea is a workout in which, every minute on the minute, one has to complete 5 pull-ups, 10 push-ups and 15 squats. Any time left over before the minute mark is for rest, but once the minute is up, it's back to the grind.

My friends and I were about 16 hours into Kokoro, having spent the last five on the beach, and things were starting to look up, but only because we could feel sunshine peeking through the clouds like a friend whose visit was

long overdue. With sunshine came warmth, and I was freezing. I was sandy, I was hungry, and I really just wanted to get as far away from the surf as possible. However, Chelsea awaited my boat crew and me. I was fortunate to have those guys. We had all been through the three-week SEALFIT academy together, so we were comfortable with one another during a time in which we were most certainly uncomfortable with everything else.

The extended blur of the night was pretty much a consistent battle to avoid having to get into the water; however, this avoidance certainly came at its own cost. Here we were at what we believed was the last station of this evolution before we got to go back to headquarters and have a little bit of whatever breakfast they were going to throw our way, and yet we all certainly felt like we had nothing left in us. Enter the initiation of a greater force, the kind that pays no mind to how one feels and acts only on what must be done.

"3, 2, 1 ... Go!" We had to complete five consecutive rounds of Chelsea and do pull-ups off the lifeguard tower about seven feet off the ground. We completed the five rounds. We now had two minutes to run up the hill behind us. If we didn't make it back in time, we not only had to do another five rounds of Chelsea but we also had to get in the water. We did everything we could to get up that hill; however, our bodies were fighting us, so we had no other choice but to lean on one another.

Upon returning, we were told that we were 10 seconds late. "Hit the surf!" So, we did, and all I kept hearing inside my head was "Fuck this, fuck this!" Back on shore, wet, cold, sandy, exhausted: "Another five rounds of Chelsea. 3, 2, 1 ... Go!"

Surprisingly, we completed the five rounds again; however, it was a close call as to whether we all were going to get through it. At the end of this cycle of Chelsea, they told us to come up with a time for how long it would take us to run up the hill and come back down. We knew that it would be a mistake to suggest too luxurious a time limit. We collectively decided on three minutes. We made it in 2 minutes 57 seconds, so our reward was we did not have to get in the water, and the coaches offered us just one more cycle of five rounds of Chelsea. If we completed it, we were secured from this evolution. If not, we had to hit the surf and be back for more Chelsea.



After spending three weeks together at SEALFIT, the athletes learn to rely on each other and get through each challenge as a team.

Brad McLeod

Four rounds in and we were just barely completing our task under the minute mark, but of course after the fourth round we had two seconds before having to start the fifth. It was do or die. The clock was rolling, and I jumped to grab the lifeguard tower to begin my pull-ups, but I just could not grab it. I fell back, head first on to the sand. I immediately jumped up, attempting the same move, and yet as if I had not even gotten up the first time, I was back on the ground. I went for a third attempt, and the same thing happened. By this point, 30 seconds had passed and I had yet to do my pull-ups, push-ups and squats. My boat crew was doing their best to shout words of encouragement, but I know what they were really thinking: "God damn it, Jared. If we have to hit the surf and do another five rounds of Chelsea ..."

I had no choice but to clear the mechanism around me. Zero in. Thirty seconds to tell my body to stop crying, to tell my mind to shut off, to exist not just for myself but also for my fellow teammates. A "no mind" state of being is what I manifested to get the job done. I jumped for the lifeguard tower, and I gave no thought to whether I would be able to hold myself up. I just went through the movements. I jumped down with 20 seconds remaining for 10 push-ups and 15 squats. I got through the push-ups and had less than 15 seconds for all 15 squats—less than a second per squat. With a millisecond to spare, the task was completed. I think my boat crew was more relieved than I was.

Creating a Warrior

This is the kind of educational experience that is 100 percent unique. Therefore, it acts as a benchmark that I internalize. All facets of the Chelsea experience are now part of a personal repertoire that can be called upon when facing new endeavors. In this way, as a "civilian warrior," I am now more proficient at handling the unknown and unknowable.

"The true virtue of strategy is in allowing us to overcome all odds in daily life and in helping us attain the closest state we can to being one with the supreme power before going into battle. The development of warrior consciousness is an ongoing thing. Each new experience continually leads to new challenges" (3).

Warriors are seen practicing effortless perfection. They demonstrate virtuosity by doing the common uncommonly well. They are masters of living because of the way in which they emphasize disciplined training of their mental capacities, physical capacities, emotional

capacities, situational awareness and the manifestation of their warrior spirit by integrally living and breathing all these categories of mastery. As Gen. Patton said, they test themselves daily in hopes that the more they would "sweat during peace, the less they would bleed during war." These kinds of individuals build their preparation upon simultaneous education and training.

This is the standard for those who are recognized as SEALs. Kokoro's 50-hour weekend, modeled primarily after the Navy SEALs BUD/s training program, simultaneously involves learning and experiential segments broken up into what are called "evolutions." Some evolutions might last one hour, while others might be as long as eight hours.

Kokoro, in and of itself, is one big evolution. In fact, the overarching characteristic of the Kokoro Camp is its ability to allow individuals to endure suffering in a controlled environment because life, even for the happiest people in the world, is the most painful evolution there is. Kokoro Camp prides itself on giving graduates a frame of reference for how things can always be worse. Life is chaotic and unpredictable. This is undeniable. As Divine says, destiny favors one who is best prepared to overcome any and all preconceived limitations.



Brad McLeod

Much like life, Kokoro Camp is full of unexpected and sometimes painful experiences.

Ruck This

At the end of the second week of the three-week academy, 13 of us were sitting facing a whiteboard, trying not to focus on how sore our bodies were while Coach Divine spoke to us about mental toughness.

"When you hear the term 'mental toughness,' what do you think of?"

Bryan, a 28-year-old computer engineer, says "a ruck." A "ruck" is what the military will refer to as a long hike under a heavy load of gear worn on one's back in a rucksack. In our case, they were really poorly made backpacks. Packs that had zero spine support and shoulder straps that dug into one's body. As soon as Bryan said "a ruck," we all laughed, including Divine, because we all knew this could not have been truer.

During the academy, we did two rucks. One eight-mile ruck along the sand, and one 11-mile ruck up and down part of Palomar Mountain, which has a peak of 6,500 ft. Rucks were certainly my biggest weakness other than enduring being cold and wet. I would confidently say I was one of the better-conditioned athletes, but when it came to moving a heavy load for any longer than 2 hours, especially uphill, I was easily one of the worst.

So, after 31 hours of Kokoro Camp, meaning roughly two days with no sleep, the 10 of us who remained loaded into two vans while a few of the coaches drove us about an hour from headquarters to the base of Palomar Mountain for an 11-mile hike up and an 11-mile hike down. Our packs roughly had 40 lb. of sand, water, meals ready to eat (MREs) and other snacks, and we held one weighted PVC pipe to simulate a weapon. Prior to this, our evolution had involved moving 90 percent of the SEALFIT/CrossFit gym so we could then clean the gym. Then we had to bring all equipment back into the gym 400 meters downhill. This took us three and a half hours, so we were definitely ready for the 22-mile hike ahead of us.

Initially, I was just happy to be done with being cold, wet and sandy, and I was trying not to focus on how rucks were something I dreaded. We got off the vans at the base of the mountain. It was pitch black. We were given a handful of glow sticks, split into two groups of five, and told to watch out for rattlesnakes on the side of the road when venturing to take a piss. The coaches gave one walkie-talkie to each group leader for us to check in every hour until we got to the top so they knew our whereabouts and could be present at checkpoints for us to refill our water bottles.



Brad McLeod

Not a typical day at the beach for these Kokoro Camp participants.

**Every minute on the minute,
I struggled to force my eyes to
stay open and make sure I did
not fall flat on my face.**

Finally, we were off. Not even three minutes in, my back felt like it was being snapped in half, and I quickly went to that dark place of "you got to be fucking kidding me." Then, a minute later, the pain in my back subsided, and all of the sudden I had an entirely new challenge: staying awake! Before I knew it, my eyes were closed and I was walking off the road, approaching rattlesnake territory and about to fall flat on my face only to be saved by that quick jolt of consciousness. Soon the four other members of my group were about 150 meters ahead of me, and they slowly realized I was hurting—and we had only been walking for about 10 minutes.

Three of them stopped, and Mark Carrion, our group leader, a veteran of both the Kokoro Camp and the three-week academy, a Naval Academy student, and a SEALFIT coach/ Navy SEAL officer to be, came stumbling down to retrieve me and attempted some words of encouragement, even though, for the first time, I could see he was hurting as well. He took his place behind me to make sure I did not get left behind again. Of course, it did not take long for me to fall behind. Like a workout of its own, every minute on the minute I struggled to force my eyes to stay open and make sure I did not fall flat on my face. It was 10 minutes later, and I was somehow more than 150 meters behind the group again, so Mark issued a break. I could not have been more thankful. We dropped our packs and all fell to the ground as one.

**I was the strong, stoic
motherfucker who wasn't
going to surrender before
reaching the finish line.**

After about five minutes of breaking, we decided to get back to it and attempt to only break every 20 minutes. My guys struggled, trying to get me to stick to such a plan. I did not know what to do. I could not for the life of me stay awake, and I knew I was holding my guys back. They were trying their best to keep me going, but they were in similar situations. One only has so much energy, and I can tell you I had not even enough to keep myself going. Eventually, Mark took hold of my pack, and I carried only his PVC pipe in addition to mine. I had so many mixed feelings taking place: exhaustion, gratitude and remorse for literally not being able to carry my own weight.

I was trying everything to stay awake: slapping my face, chomping on some candy bars I had packed in order to manifest a sugar high, but nothing was catching fire. Ultimately, Mark, pushing me in front of him, said, "Jared, now or never. You, we've all come too far to pull the plug now. Dig deep. Strong, stoic motherfucker. Strong, stoic motherfucker. Say it and don't stop."

Unfortunately, unlike in the movies, there was not an instantaneous jolt of fresh adrenaline; nonetheless, the speech was needed, and while, for the first time during

both the academy and Kokoro, I actually considered quitting, I quickly told that thought to bother someone else because I was the strong, stoic motherfucker who wasn't going to surrender before reaching the finish line.

We pressed on, a little behind schedule but still ahead of the other group. Like clockwork, every 20 minutes we would drop our packs, fall to the side of the road and pass out. Each one of us took turns staying awake to make sure the rest of us were not out for more than five minutes. A couple of miles from the top, I even refused a couple of the nap breaks and continued walking because I feared that if I drifted an inch from the momentum I would be back to sleepwalking.

At the top, both my feet felt like giant, inflamed blisters, and, due to lack of sleep, I felt like everything was spinning. After Mark took care of the reconnaissance details of a nearby house, we refilled our waters and waited for the van to make its way all the way down the mountain.

There was only one checkpoint left: the base of the mountain. We strategically decided to take a 45-minute nap before enduring the final 11 miles downhill. I remember all of us huddling on the ground next to this big log. I awoke to Mark gathering everyone up to make our trek down. At this point, I demanded my pack back and felt relatively pumped to get off the mountain. However, that enthusiasm was short lived. Going downhill was a lot more painful on the existing blisters and rapidly gave birth to new blisters. It was about 3 a.m., and it was freezing, but it was not long before I was back to sleepwalking.



Brad McLeod

Cohen repeated the mantra "strong, stoic motherfucker" to get through the weekend.

"You all right, Jared?" my buddy, Eric, asked me.

"Just fucking talk to me, Eric. Don't stop talking. I need to stay awake!"

At about 4 a.m., we dropped for one of our five-minute snoozes. I remember waking to Mark yelling, "Where am I? What the fuck is going on? How did we get here? What are we doing on the ground?" Now it was our turn to comfort Mark after we all had a good laugh about how our fearless leader had also hit his breaking point. Legendary football coach Vince Lombardi said it best, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us."

It was then around 5:30 a.m., and our friend the sun was back to say what we all needed to hear: "You guys made it another day." One step at a time. One breath at a time. We owed everything to micro goal setting, the sun's warmth and its ability to fight off fatigue, and each other.

Before SEALFIT, I was no stranger to teamwork, team-building exercises, team-building experiences, the value of brotherhood, etc. But none of that compared to what I experienced during those 10 hours and 22 miles. I heard numerous times during the academy: "Rambos do not exist! Your teammates are everything." And they most certainly were. We had about two miles to go, and we were generally in much better spirits.

"Thank you guys so much. I thought that was it for me, and I hated myself for holding you guys back, but you guys were never going to leave me behind."



Brad McLeod

The SEALFIT experience is an evolution—participants are forever changed.

"No worries, Jared. That is what this all about. We all reach our breaking point at some time, and it is the job of the rest of team to be there to pick up the extra load when that happens."

"That's right, Mr. CrossFit, we weren't going to leave you stranded up on Palomar!"

Finally, we loaded into the van, ready to catch a few Z's before the next evolution, until we heard, "Any eyes that I see closed will result in 50 burpees." This was our 50-hour hell week after all. Sleep was technically not an option, at least not until we were graduates at around 3 p.m. later that day.

We accumulated about 500 burpees by the time we were back at headquarters.

A New State of Mind

So much of Kokoro and the academy blends as one; however, the infamous 22-mile ruck is something I am sure I will never forget. That 6,500-foot mountain tested all five mountains of the SEALFIT agenda, and because of that, no matter what happens from now on, I have this crucible experience as a tool, a reference point and an eternal roadmap for future endeavors. Because of that, I am empowered and forever grateful.

There's an interesting thing about states of consciousness: they come and they go. Even great peak experiences or altered states, no matter how profound, will come, stay a bit, then pass. No matter how wonderful their capacities, they are temporary. Where states of consciousness are temporary, stages of consciousness are permanent. Stages represent the actual milestones of growth and development. Once you are at a stage, it is an enduring acquisition (6).

In the academy, we extensively studied Ken Wilber, a current American philosopher, due to the compatibility of his Integral Theory model with SEALFIT's five-mountain model. The physical endeavors of SEALFIT produce outcomes that are applicable to all. Evolution is not a temporary state. It is an occurrence that is completely enduring. Once a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, there is no turning back. Similarly, we are the result of atoms that became molecules that became cells, which created the organism that is the human species (6). The academy, Chelsea, the ruck, Kokoro and interning Kokoro are all examples of stages of consciousness. What were temporarily "passing states have become permanent traits" (6).

The educational climax of Kokoro involves a breakthrough that comes long after the body's normal understanding of fatigue and the mind's normal understanding of frustration and irritability. This is right at that point in which one has begun to exist in more of an autopilot fashion. Psychologically, one has no choice but to quiet the extremes of anxious, obsessive, stressed emotions. Or, more poetically, during the ruck, I had no choice but with the help of my teammates to plug into my "witness" as the commander-in-chief and allow my ego to act no longer as the leader but as a follower.

Yogi Amrit Desai is a teacher of "manifest vs. unmanifest reality," and in these teachings is the unfolding of spiritually being aware of one's ego mind vs. one's witness. Divine refers to the ego mind as the "monkey mind." The monkey mind is that voice that is always "chomping at the bit," "conditioned by social norms and personal likes and dislikes" (2). On the other hand, the witness views every event as neutral, neither inherently positive nor negative; rather, they are what one wishes to make of them in a non-impulsive manner. To bypass the monkey mind and be in touch with one's own witness is to see neutrality.

**Kokoro camp forces blood,
sweat and tears out of one to
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"Presence is undivided; choosing for or against is what gives birth to the ego-mind" (2). Yet the ego is still part of one's individual makeup—and an important component. It is critical to not let the ego mind take complete control. The former SEALs and coaches at Kokoro Camp use harshness as a means to break down one's ego and let the witness take primary control.

To perform the right technique in gung fu, physical loosening must be continued in a mental and spiritual loosening so as to make the mind not only agile but free. . . . There is nothing to try to do, for whatever comes up moment by moment is accepted, including non-acceptance. No-mindedness is then not being without emotion or feeling, but being one in whom feeling is not sticky or blocked (4).

Often one does not know how to fight, and flight is not an option, so, instead, one freezes. Therefore, by being able to illuminate one's own witness, one begins to start mastering an expertise of unconscious competence: the kind of proficiency that resists paralysis.

I am always hearing people comment on ways in which to simulate a completely present moment because they are tremendously therapeutic. However, they rarely come in an active manner that sacrifices temporary pleasure for long-term reward. Kokoro Camp forces blood, sweat and tears out of one to achieve something that can never be taken away. It is the result of putting everything on the line for 50 hours that creates the opportunity to shed the large amount of baggage and finally know the difference between what is worth grappling with and what is worth simply letting go.

During the last two hours that I interned at Kokoro, I feared what the everlasting effects of this experience would be for the trainees. I went through it and am empowered by the experience, which is why I returned to help. However, I could not but worry about the brutality of verbal abuse the coaches were dishing out in addition to the continual beatings on the trainees' bodies. The trainees were told they were worthless. They were practically told to quit and were tempted to turn on one another.

Nonetheless, around 1:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, the trainees were "secured." As soon as Divine spoke these words, I saw emotions of triumph and brotherhood that instantly replenished my faith and belief in SEALFIT's objective. These eight individuals were changed forever, and they were fully conscious of this.

"The more you sweat during peace, the less you bleed during war," and regardless of how much the 50 hours of Kokoro do in fact feel like war, they exist in a controlled environment of peace.

The Warrior Spirit

Benchmark education is invaluable by way of its balance in its teachings of the five mountains of success, as well as the way in which it exists as a hands-on learning experience: teaching and coaching that happen as one.

In education, thinking and thought are a means to an end. They are the means to understanding, and understanding is the "a-ha moment," the very epiphany that lights a fire in one's belly and reminds us of the unparalleled uniqueness of the human experience.

Similarly, SEALFIT taps into the mental, emotional, intuitional and warrior spirit through the platform of physical training that journeys far beyond the threshold of fatigue. This cannot be done if one's physical components exist in a vacuum. Proper physical stimulation is as much neurologically bound as it is organically bound, meaning there is a neuroendocrine response, an integration of the nervous system and the endocrine system. Neurotransmitters and hormones are working together. Therefore, let physical training—the kind devoted to body mastery, and the kind that is completely transferable and required for life's broad range of time domains and modalities—be a necessary example of what it means to both survive and thrive.

"Fall down seven times, stand up eight." Survival of the fittest, is it not?

SEALFIT taps into the mental, emotional, intuitional and warrior spirit through the platform of physical training.

Fortunately for humankind, we are not a bunch of brains in vats. Unfortunately, it means maintenance. If done properly, the inclusion of a physical emphasis will, in most learning environments, transcend outside the content-specific nature of any one domain. The overwhelmingly shared context among humankind is about quality of performance. Whether in the field, in the classroom, in the office or on stage, it does not matter. What matters is having the consistent ability to perform. Chronic cases of inflammation, fatigue, tension, stress and being overweight are going to be factors that compromise one's achieving the peak of performance.

Chronic stress is actually a relatively recent phenomenon. Robert Sapolsky's *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* analyzes the phenomenon of stress, stress-related diseases and stress-coping mechanisms by making the claim that the physiological stress response is a survival mechanism of the body's to restore allostasis, which is the process through which organisms actively adjust to demands that originally caused some amount of instability.



Brad McLeod

An old Japanese proverb says, "Fall down seven times, stand up eight."

"The secretion of certain hormones, the inhibition of others, the activation of particular parts of the nervous system, and so on. And regardless of the stressor—injured, starving, too hot, too cold, or psychologically stressed—you turn on the same stress response" (5).

Therefore, when having to activate the stress response on a consistently frequent basis, the body is in a constant state of emergency, causing growth and tissue repair to be curtailed (5). As humans, we have evolved, and a big part of our lives are mundane tasks that easily cause chronic stress and eventually exhaustion and psychological paralysis.

I refuse that this be the death of us. I refuse mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, neurosis and paranoia to be a lost battle that one accepts and treats accordingly. Why not let physical training be the path to an indefinitely growing buffer?

Greg Glassman, when answering the question "what is fitness?" uses a sickness-wellness-fitness continuum.

"Fitness and health are different measures of the same reality" (1).

Therefore, regardless of the presence of some catastrophe, the fitter one is, the greater the buffer that exists in protecting one from being in the realm of sickness. In contrast, if one is 40 percent body fat, one is considered pathological. This person is literally on his or her deathbed. No resistance exists, and one can be certain that inevitable daily chronic stress is going feed on this low level of resistance until there is nothing left of this person.

Let us assume that the key to life is choice and optimization, and one can only optimize choice with options. Physical training begins with ensuring one has options and ends with ensuring one has the clarity of mind to make the most of those options.

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Vaughn Brotton

About the Author

Jared Cohen is a CrossFit Level 1 trainer and has a CrossFit Movement and Mobility certificate. He trains at *Axiom CrossFit* in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. Additionally, Jared is an undergraduate student at Pitzer College and studies psychology with an emphasis in the field of epigenetics and its relationship with integrative health practices.

THE CrossFit LIFE

It's Mom's Turn

For the last eight years, Julie Olson put everyone else's needs first. Then she found CrossFit—and herself.

By Julie Olson

May 2012



After six months of CrossFit (right), Olson's smile is a bit wider, her eyes a bit brighter, and her clothes a lot looser.

I'm not a CrossFit trainer, a competitive runner or even an accomplished athlete. I am a suburban mom of three little kids who has spent the last eight years putting everyone else first, who wolfed down Lean Cuisines at the kitchen counter at 8:30 at night, who guzzled Diet Cokes and thought every single day, "I know I should work out, but I'm tired, it's too expensive and I just don't have time."

I'm a 39-year-old woman who is slowly but surely making some pretty life-changing discoveries about myself, my views about fitness and nutrition, and the future I want for myself and my family. CrossFit has profoundly and irreversibly altered my life, and I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Marcela Perea of [CrossFit 100 by MPower Total Fitness](#) in Glendale, Wis.



Feeling the burn in a functional way.

The mere idea of exercise always made me uncomfortable. I'm not naturally athletic, and I always told myself I was more of a book person, not a sports person. Don't get me wrong: like every other college girl on Earth, I went to aerobics in the dorms with my girlfriends, but mostly we snuck sips of Diet Coke and adjusted our scrunchies during class. There wasn't any real exercise happening. That was 20 years ago. After my oldest child was born, I joined one of those strip-mall 30-minute-workout places. I half-heartedly did the exercises but quit because I was frustrated when a six-pack didn't magically appear after two weeks.

That was seven years ago. Then, last summer, I met Marcela Perea at our local community pool. I'd recently lost 20 lb. and was pretty pleased about it. I was eager to share my accomplishment with pretty much anyone who would listen. Marcela congratulated me and asked what I was doing for fitness. I shook my head, made a joke (that's what I do when I'm nervous) and changed the subject. I firmly held the belief that I could just count points with Weight Watchers and somehow the pounds would melt away and

I'd have a firm, toned body without any exercise. But then our kids' swimming lessons ended, the summer faded into autumn, and I hadn't seen Marcela in some time.

In October I bumped into Marcela, and she invited me to attend one of her classes. I smiled and said, "Sure, sure. Maybe I'll see you there tomorrow morning." I really had no intention of going, to be honest. But the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to go and see what it was all about. The morning of the class, I was insanely nervous, so I ate a huge breakfast and finished my kids' breakfasts, too (that's also what I do when I'm nervous). I walked into class and was pleasantly greeted by Marcela's other clients, and Marcela warmly welcomed me into the class.

Needless to say, I could barely do the workout (I thought the warm-up was the workout), nearly fainted three times during class and vomited beside my minivan after class. My legs were so shaky I thought twice about driving home. The next day I couldn't move—literally. My 3-year-old patted my head as I lay on the couch feeling sorry for myself. I realized it was time to make some changes.

By all rights, and given my history of exercise, it would have been reasonable for me to quit right then and there. I could have said it wasn't for me, it was too hard, everyone else was so fit that it was intimidating—all the excuses I'd used in the past to avoid stepping outside my comfort zone. But there was something about Marcela that made me want to go back. Not only did I not want her to think I was a quitter, but I also wanted to show her and my classmates that I could try. She was encouraging without being bossy and pushed us all to go faster, lift more and make every second count.

I couldn't do a sit-up. I couldn't jog around the block. I couldn't do a push-up or an inchworm, and I couldn't hold a plank pose for more than five seconds. Marcela had to bring a 3-inch base for me to do box jumps onto because I couldn't jump up onto the shortest box. But I could try to do those things. I could hear Marcela telling me that I was already ahead of the person still sitting on the sofa. And that kept me going back.

I grew accustomed to dropping my youngest son off at preschool and heading to Marcela's studio every Tuesday and Thursday morning. I got so hooked that when one of my boys needed minor surgery and they called to schedule it on Thursday morning, I asked if it could be later in the day because I didn't want to miss CrossFit. I know: that did kind of cross a line.

When I first started attending class, I assumed (wrongly) that I had nothing in common with the other women in my class. I assumed they'd think I was a flabby loser and wouldn't want to talk to me. But one cold and grey morning while we were doing laps, a classmate lapped me and high-fived me as she went past. She yelled, "Go, Julie! You can do it!"

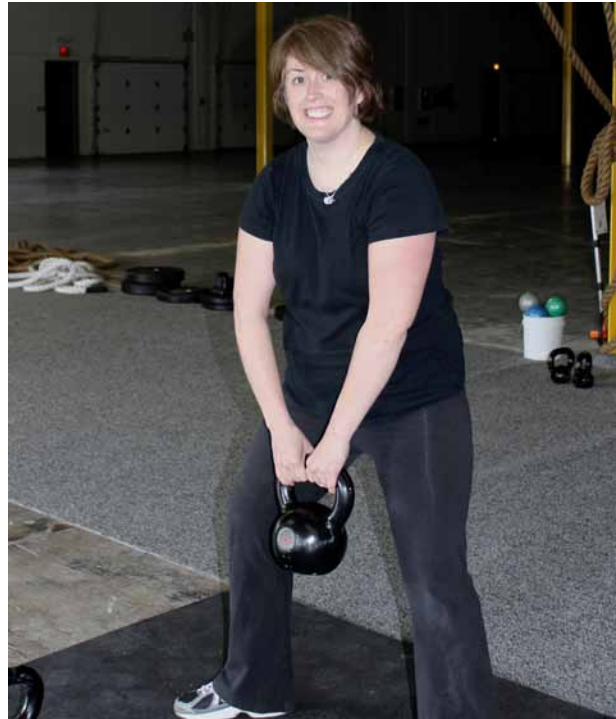
You know what? It made me start running again. It made me see that we are all in this journey together; we're just in different places along that journey. The encouragement, support, laughter and fun at every class made me feel like I belonged there. And Marcela empowered me, helped me get stronger both physically and emotionally, and gave me back my life after I'd spent so long just being a mom, a wife, a chauffeur, a maid, a cook and a bedtime-story reader.

Marcela and CrossFit have given me back me.

So now it's been 6 months since I started at CrossFit. I've met some of my favorite people in my classes, and I look forward to the workouts, the laughter and the sense of community. I find that CrossFit makes me calmer, happier and more patient with my children. I feel better about myself and can be better to those around me.

Marcela is teaching me so much about nutrition, and I'm almost ashamed to think about what I used to feed my husband, my kids and myself. My children understand the joy of running till their legs shake, doing wall-walks and planks, and jumping rope as fast as they can. As a family, we've eliminated most processed foods and eat more vegetables and fresh fruit, and when another mom cheerfully asked my 5-year-old son if he'd like to have McDonald's for lunch, he solemnly said, "I can't eat that. My family doesn't eat garbage food." (I'm not sure he'll ever be invited back, but whatever.)

I can now rock 50 sit-ups while holding an 8-kg weight above my head. I can run around the block and do kettlebell swings with the 12-kg kettlebell. I can do box jumps! And I am almost incredulous that I, Julie Olson, am training for a 150-mile bike ride for charity this summer. I have collarbones (who knew?) and muscles I didn't even know existed! I still get a little twinge of pride and accomplishment when someone asks me where I work out and I get to say "with Marcela Perea at CrossFit 100." I beamed (and couldn't stop smiling all day) when the bike-shop guy said, "Oh, you probably don't need interval training or spinning. You're way ahead of the game if you're doing CrossFit. Those are some serious workouts."



Don't let the smile fool you—this woman won't let anything get in the way of her CrossFit workouts.

Marcela recently mentioned we'll be learning rope climbing, and that nervous, nagging little voice in my head told me that I could never do that ... And then I heard Marcela's voice telling me that something is only impossible until you do it.

Quite simply, CrossFit and Marcela Perea have changed my life. I have come a long way, and while I still have a long way to go, I know I can do it.

And for that I would like to say thank you.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Rebuilding Hackleburg

A deadly tornado decimated Hackleburg, Ala., and one nearby CrossFit affiliate owner aims to help it rebuild.

Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

May 2012



All images: Shannon Wells

It was a “normal” tornadic storm, Brad Thompson said.

In northern Alabama, such weather events are par for the course.

1 of 4



One of the deadliest tornadoes in American history completely destroyed the town of Hackleburg.

"We get that often here. We get a lot of F1s. No big deal," he explained.

Those little funnel clouds typically don't manifest into anything. But around 3 or 4 p.m. on Wed., April 27, 2011, Thompson saw "the clouds moving in the wrong direction, graphically."

**"It was just a nightmare."
—Hackleburg Councilman
Barry McCarley**

"We really didn't know the full effect until the following day—how devastating it was," said Thompson, who lives in Florence, Ala.

The Devastation

The next day, not knowing the severity of the damage in Hackleburg, Thompson went about his usual business. He showed up to teach his math class at the University of Northern Alabama in Florence.

One of his students had survived the storm about 40 miles south.

"I said, 'Was it that bad?' She just looked at me, blank," he said. "She said, 'I'm just kind of in shock. My house is gone.' About a week after, they found her blanket and some of her pictures in a town about 100 miles away."

Eighteen people died in the 1,500-person town. The twister ranked among the deadliest tornadoes in American history, according to the National Weather Service. The strongest winds were estimated to be up to 210 miles per hour, the weather service said. The tornado that lasted all of about 30 seconds leveled much of the city. Five days later, the Red Cross declared Hackleburg 75 percent destroyed.

"It was just a nightmare," said Hackleburg Councilman Barry McCarley. "It was like a nuclear war zone or something. Everything was virtually gone in a matter of seconds."

"It's a *Friday Night Lights* kind of town. They don't have a movie theater, they don't have a bar. Their source of entertainment is church and football."

—Brad Thompson

Both his brother-in-law and second cousin died in the twister.

A year later, Hackleburg is still recovering and rebuilding.

"I know enough about a town like that in Alabama because I've lived in them before," Thompson said. "It's a *Friday Night Lights* kind of town. They don't have a movie theater, they don't have a bar. Their source of entertainment is church and football."

There are some bright spots. Hackleburg's largest employer—the Wrangler plant—recently announced it will rebuild its facility larger than before.

"They're busy getting everything together for the municipal function. They're getting the utilities back ...," Thompson said. "But nobody was looking at that source of entertainment as something they needed to be looking at."

Enter Thompson and his affiliate, [CrossFit Shoals](#).

An Idea

His idea: build a community gym.

"The high-school weight room was not much bigger than your bedroom," Thompson said. "So I thought, 'Well, my area is, well, building a gym, so why don't I volunteer a way to make enough money to do that?'"

Thompson received donated land on which to build a 1,500-square-foot gym not only for the high school's use but also for the community's, he said.

"Everything is about the high school," Thompson said. "It'll be bigger and better than what they had."

To raise the money, he has big plans: a nationwide fundraiser.



Even now, a year after the tornado hit, Hackleburg is still in the process of rebuilding.

The soft launch was slated for April 27—the one-year anniversary of the tornado. From there, the effort will last six months, he said.

The goal: \$200,000.

“There’s no way, without livin’ through it, there’s no way to even dream to describe what those people went through.”

—Chuck Rumbley

The workout idea: 30 seconds on, 30 seconds off for each of the people who died in the storm.

“The other thing I thought would be cool ... since we’re honoring the dead, it would be nice to do it silently,” Thompson said.

The goal is to help Hackleburg get back on its feet, said CrossFit Shoals co-owner Chuck Rumbley, who is also president of Hi-Temp Inc., a manufacturer of rubber bumper plates in Tuscumbia, Ala. Rumbley is hoping for support on a national level.



The fundraiser WOD will include a round for each of the 18 people who died in the storm.

“There’s no way, without livin’ through it, there’s no way to even dream to describe what those people went through. ... I couldn’t even tell you what it would have been like to go through. I’m just happy that we didn’t,” Rumbley said.

Thompson emphasized that Hackleburg is far from normal.

“They’re still recovering. The damage is off the charts. We went down to volunteer our backs a few times. And (there are) still people doing it. It’s still being rebuilt,” he said. “They lost everything. Their downtown was completely destroyed.”

Hopefully the gym will encourage other developers and residents to return to Hackleburg to rebuild, McCarley said.

“It’s a good stepping stone. It will help our town, especially our students,” he said. “It’ll be great.”



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author

*Andréa Maria Cecil is the North East Regional Media Director for the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games. She spent nearly 13 years as a professional journalist, most recently as managing editor of the **Central Penn Business Journal** in Harrisburg, Pa. The 33-year-old is a native of New Orleans who lives in York County, Pa. There, she’s been doing CrossFit since 2008 at **CrossFit York**. Additionally, she dedicates three days a week to training in Olympic weightlifting at **McKenna’s Gym**.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Shabazz Muhammad: Top Basketball Prospect, CrossFitter

Considered one of the best young basketball players in the country, this teenager got bigger, faster and stronger through sport-specific CrossFit training. Dan Edelman explains.

By Dan Edelman

May 2012



The mayhem of March Madness is long over, and if you're into college hoops, you probably watched the Kentucky Wildcats defeat the Kansas Jayhawks for the NCAA title. Some of you have also probably heard of Shabazz Muhammad.

Muhammad is a senior at Bishop Gorman High School in Las Vegas and has committed to play basketball at UCLA next year. By most accounts, he is considered one of the best high-school basketball players in the country (2,3,4).

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What caught the interest of CrossFit Kids HQ was the fact that Shabazz has been CrossFitting since 2010 at [CrossFit 702](#) in Las Vegas under the guidance of box owner Jared Glover.

**By most accounts,
Muhammad is considered
one of the best high-school
basketball players in
the country.**

Glover's background in basketball as a standout in high school and a coach at Nevada Basketball Academy, where he began learning the art and craft of training adolescent athletes, made him an ideal CrossFit trainer for Muhammad. Glover generously took the time to shed some light on the training of a teen athlete who seems bound for the professional level.

Glover says "one of those six degrees of separation deals" brought Muhammad into CrossFit 702 where, after introductions, Glover was chosen to be his local trainer. Shabazz and his brother, Rashad, receive private training from Glover. The 702 owner also trains Muhammad's sister, Asia, a professional tennis player, and the basketball star's parents also work out at 702.

About Jared Glover

Glover graduated in 2005 from Bonanza High School in Las Vegas. He was a star basketball player and also excelled at track and field. Glover attended the University of Nevada, Reno and began honing his coaching skills at the Nevada Basketball Academy under the tutelage of his uncle, Jason Glover, a former coach for the Minnesota Timberwolves and current associate head coach of the Reno Bighorns. Among other things, Glover learned how to assess middle-school, high-school, college and professional athletes. After graduating from college, he returned to Las Vegas and opened CrossFit 702 with the goal of developing young athletes for collegiate and professional sports.



Courtesy of Jared Glover

Glover schooling his athletes on the art of the mixed-grip deadlift.

In 2009 and 2010, Glover trained the semiprofessional Las Vegas Blackjacks rugby team, which went on to win a national championship. He now runs a robust wrestling-specific program for a top-notch local high-school team. Despite this—and the fact that he also trains other basketball, tennis and lacrosse players—Glover says Las Vegas prep athletes receive a surprisingly small percentage of college scholarships. He notes that local high-school-level strength and conditioning is well behind the curve, and he sees his job at CrossFit 702 as helping young athletes achieve their goals of becoming top performers.

Glover's goal has been to prepare Muhammad for important tournaments and games, particularly key showcases against the best athletes in the country in front of top college coaches.

The Programming

Glover prefers to keep the details of Muhammad's programming under wraps, but in general he designs CrossFit-based WODs that feed the teen's insatiable appetite to improve his basketball game. This includes a strength component, plyometric work and Olympic weightlifting.

Glover's program is divided into "in season" and "light offseason." Although it should be understood that between high school and AAU basketball, Muhammad never sees a true offseason, a common circumstance these days. Given that, Glover's goal has been to prepare Muhammad for important tournaments and games, particularly key showcases against the best athletes in the country in front of top college coaches.

In Season

During the high-school season, Shabazz hits two to three 5 a.m. workouts a week, depending on his game schedule. Glover considered this a maintenance phase centered on linear progression for strength using a variety of lifts and shorter workouts to minimize fatigue. The rower figured importantly during these sessions given its low impact and ability to sustain Muhammad's conditioning.





A better squat translated to a stronger defensive position on the court for Muhammad.

Glover also makes a lot of use of bands via banded box jumps, band sprints and lateral band sprints. He says Muhammad grasps the more technical movements with relative ease; his favorite lift is the power clean. And as you might expect, plyometrics are right in Muhammad's wheelhouse. A warm-up might involve seated box jumps that have him sitting on a 12-inch box and jumping up to 56 inches.

At 6 feet 6 inches, Muhammad is challenged by squats. Early on, he had a hard time achieving depth without a profound pitching of his knees over his toes. Glover recognized the correlation between the basic air squat and a basketball defensive stance and knew that getting Muhammad to squat correctly would allow him to sit lower in his defensive stance, which would allow for more speed and agility against opponents. Glover used a variety of stretching, mobility and core-focused exercises to increase Muhammad's range of motion and improve his movement; in particular, better hip and hamstring flexibility has greatly enhanced Muhammad's squat and translated to a stronger defensive position on the court. The teen understands the importance of flexibility and has become pretty familiar with the foam roller and MobilityWOD.com. He takes care to warm-up and cool down with various stretching and yoga movements, which not only help his squat but also support injury prevention and post-game recovery.

Nutrition can be a vexing issue for any client, and Glover understands the importance of not overwhelming young athletes with a lot of dogma and detailed explanations.

He addresses small aspects of Muhammed's diet that can be easily adjusted when on the road and in season. For example, Muhammad has switched from Gatorade to coconut water during games and has found he is no longer troubled with cramps or dehydration. He also tries to steer clear of fast food and soda and eats more protein at his meals. It remains an ongoing project that Glover works on step by step.

Glover said he is pleased with the progress Muhammad has made since training began in 2010. At the outset, Muhammad managed 3 pull-ups in a max set and 8 reps of a 135-lb. bench press in a max set. A retest seven months later saw an improvement to 13 strict pull-ups and 20 reps of bench press. Muhammad's proficiency with the power clean allowed him to move from 75 lb. to 155 lb. in workouts in eight months, and his weighted squat has increased from 115 lb. for 5 reps to 205 lb. plus 50 lb. of chain for 8 reps. Muhammad box squats because of his hip flexibility and in deference to the amount of stress his knees are subjected to on the basketball court.

To reiterate, because of their lack of utility for Muhammad, Glover does not allow the teen to attempt 1-rep maxes. But Glover suggests that a good indicator of increased sport-specific power and explosiveness might be discerned from the fact that Muhammad arrived at CrossFit 702 at 185 lb.; eight months later he weighed 225 lb. and accumulated 10 dunks in a single game.

What the Trainer Has Learned

CrossFit Football creator John Welbourn impressed upon Glover the responsibility of a trainer when it comes to identifying and addressing deficiencies of long-standing clients before they get injured on the field of play. Glover says he approaches the training of all his young athletes with that in mind and asserts that it is central to his approach with Muhammad. This is certainly in line with the CrossFit Kids principle of "first, do no harm" when it comes to training kids—whether an exceptional athlete like Muhammad or your typical weekend rec-leaguer.

Training an athlete of this caliber has refined Glover's coaching eye in that he has had to focus on every aspect of the young star's basketball game to gauge the intensity of his workouts and determine what he needs to reach his potential. Glover says, "It's those fine points that mean the difference between being the best and being the other guy."

Calling CrossFit “a phenomenal fitness program, the best out there specifically in regards to results and community,” Glover acknowledges he must take care to pull from the program only those elements that benefit Muhammad in terms of upping his basketball game. He must leave behind things that might overly tax the muscles and joints that Muhammad uses most on the court, whether practicing or competing. Further, Glover has had to expand his knowledge base and build on his programming experience to find creative ways to motivate an athlete who is already highly self-motivated.

**“It’s those fine points that
mean the difference between
being the best and being
the other guy.”**

—Jared Glover

For Glover, the most gratifying part of coaching athletes is watching them at their chosen sport and seeing the direct connection between their performance and their training. This season, in his senior year, Muhammad helped his high school win the Nevada State Championship, was selected as the McDonald’s Player of the Year, and played in both the McDonald’s All-American Game and the 2012 Jordan Brand Classic. He was named MVP of the former event and co-MVP of the latter.

With Muhammad, there is every chance Glover might someday watch his young client playing at the highest levels.

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Courtesy of Dan Edelman

About the Author

Dan Edelman is a CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids trainer at CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif.

THE CrossFit[®] *kitchen* K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



CAULI-CRUST

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

You can never go wrong with pizza or—better yet—foods that look like pizza! This is a great way to fill your kids up with vegetables without them even knowing. Load the healthy crust up with their favorite toppings or try the kid-friendly sweet-and-salty Hawaiian mixture of pineapple and ham!

4 kid-sized servings

ingredients

crust

1 head of cauliflower, steamed and crushed into cauliflower “rice” (approx. 2 cups)

2 eggs

½ cup almond meal

1 tbsp. oregano

½ tbsp. garlic powder

½ tbsp. crushed red pepper flakes

1 tsp. salt

2 tbsp. olive oil

toppings

½ cup pizza or marinara sauce

1 cup diced pineapple

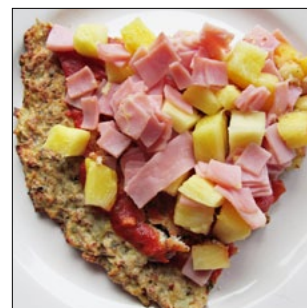
8 ounces of sliced ham, diced

notes

Experiment with any and all toppings!

directions

1. Preheat oven to 450 F.
2. In a large bowl, mix together cauliflower rice, eggs, almond meal and spices.
3. Grease a large cookie sheet. Place cauliflower mixture on the sheet and shape into a large, thin circle a half-inch thick.
4. Brush the top with olive oil.
5. Bake in the oven for 20 to 25 minutes until the top is brown and crisp.
6. Remove from oven and immediately spread tomato sauce on the crust.
7. Cover the cauli-crust with the toppings and place under a broiler for 3 minutes to heat the toppings.
8. Serve and enjoy!



THE CrossFit LIFE

CrossFit Kids Community Series

The *CrossFit Journal* presents a collection of brief CrossFit Kids updates and stories from around the world.

May 2012



Thad Wheeler

CrossFit Kids is growing, appearing in schools, boxes and on practice fields across the globe. As the CrossFit Kids community grows, it improves the confidence, athleticism and health of kids everywhere. Here are some of their stories.

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Michelle Van Buren

Rancho High School is going to need more space for all the students interested in its CrossFit Kids program.

CrossFit Kids Gone Wild—Michelle Van Buren, Rancho High School, Las Vegas, Nev.

Michelle Van Buren, head varsity softball coach and physical-education teacher, started a CrossFit program at Rancho High School in Las Vegas, Nev., in September 2011. Van Buren began by offering just one class—she wasn't sure if anyone would be interested. Her class is now capped at 32 students, with a long waiting list. Students frequently stop her in the halls asking if they can join her class. Due to overwhelming demand, Van Buren will be offering five CrossFit classes in the 2012-2013 school year.

Van Buren has also been using CrossFit to train the spring athletic teams over the winter. The coaches and players love it, and they have already seen positive results.

No Rower, No Problem—Thad Wheeler, Bristol Public Schools, Virginia

One day, middle-school teacher and CrossFit Kids trainer Thad Wheeler of Bristol Public Schools in Virginia used a small, four-wheeled cart in a WOD. The small scooter gave Wheeler and his colleague, Andrew Belcher, an idea. The school doesn't have any rowing machines, so the two men hit on the idea of taking the scooters and securing a jump rope to the gymnasium bleachers to create a rower. The contraption immediately intrigued the students. They had a blast mimicking the rowing movement by pulling themselves to the bleachers with the jump rope and then using their legs to push away—and they got a good workout to boot.



Thad Wheeler

Patent pending?



Dan Cerrillo

Blake Johnson (first) trains hard at Dan Cerrillo's CrossFit Bellevue.

Wheeler also met with local community-based organizations and the Bristol Public Schools superintendent to discuss CrossFit Kids. The administrators loved what Wheeler is doing and expressed interest in implementing CrossFit Kids in their after-school programs before the children hit their homework. Representatives of the alternative detention center and parks and recreation also said they would like to institute CrossFit Kids as part of their programs.

Look for more about Wheeler's experience integrating CrossFit Kids into his physical-education curriculum down the road.

Developing Champions—Dan Cerrillo, CrossFit Bellevue, Washington

Blake Johnson, an 18-year-old senior and honor student at Mercer Island High School in Washington, just won the 160-lb. Washington State Wrestling Championship. He attributes his victory in part to his training at CrossFit Bellevue under Dan Cerrillo.

A member of CrossFit Bellevue's Youth Athletes Class, Johnson says CrossFit provided him with the cardiovascular and muscular endurance and strength necessary to excel in his sport. The Youth Athlete's Class is for teens whose parents see fitness as fundamental to athletic success. Cerrillo's programming for the class is a hybrid of the Wendler and Hatch strength programs and delivers strength, conditioning, speed and agility work Monday through Friday.

Johnson has wrestled for seven years, and he and his family have been training at CrossFit Bellevue for just over a year. Johnson participated in the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open and finished 239th in the North West despite being in the middle of wrestling season.

CrossFit runs in the Johnson family. Cerrillo also helped prepare Johnson's brother for his crew season at Stanford University, and Johnson's mother and father are avid CrossFitters. Johnson enjoys being a part of the CrossFit Bellevue community.

"The staff is excellent and the fellow CrossFitters are great to be around," he said.

Johnson "is a tremendous young man from a great family. He is humble, personable and hardcore," Cerrillo said. In the fall, Johnson will be attending Oregon State University, where he has been invited to walk on to the wrestling team.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Sport of Fitness: Canada West

Mike Warkentin presents photos from the
2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Canada West Regional

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

May 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal





THE CrossFit JOURNAL

A Partnership Made in Heaven

A CrossFit gym inside a church? That's exactly what Frank Shirvinski and Nick Stavlund did in Scottsdale, Ariz., to the betterment of both communities.

By Frank Shirvinski and Nick Stavlund CrossFit Chaparral

May 2012



All images: Adrienne Arnes

No one is thinking about paying rent, electric bills or insurance costs when the clock is counting down from 10. In that moment, the only thing that matters is the WOD. Everything else associated with running the box and creating this moment fades. And that is a good thing.

However, when the WOD is over and everyone is on the floor stretching, the reality of business returns. You have to cover your costs. You have to pay your overhead. But you do not have to do it alone.

What if you could share the burden so you could focus more of your time and resources on your athletes? What if you could open your own CrossFit gym and split the rent with a second party? Maybe we can help you think outside the box.

Here's our story.

The Genesis of CrossFit Chaparral

CrossFit Chaparral opened its doors in January 2010 as a public, nonprofit CrossFit box. Each week we transform a 1,100-square-foot building on the campus of Chaparral Christian Church in Scottsdale, Ariz., from a classroom into an affiliate serving more than 100 athletes. Before we became a CrossFit affiliate, we were just a bunch of guys working out together on the church campus every Tuesday and Thursday. We were having fun, getting in shape and varying our workouts. Yet, we wanted to take our fitness and our community to the next level. Our desire: we not only wanted to ratchet up our intensity but also safely include more folks from the church and neighboring community.

**CrossFit Chaparral and
Chaparral Christian Church
combined resources to
create an affordable,
professional and high-
quality CrossFit facility.**

Enter CrossFit.

Within a month, a beautiful partnership was forged. CrossFit Chaparral and Chaparral Christian Church combined resources to create an affordable, professional and high-quality CrossFit facility.

It's been our experience that we as a CrossFit community share more than a building with another community. While our relationship started with the practical matters of sharing physical resources, over the course of the past year, we have seen a number of exciting and unexpected spinoffs from this new partnership that have benefited both organizations.

**You wouldn't even know
there's a CrossFit gym in the
building Monday through
Saturday unless you noticed
the 25-foot pull-up bar
and the faint aroma of
determination and victory.**

From Bible School to Back Squat

Picture the scene: There are eight large, round tables encircled with chairs meticulously placed around a 1,100-square-foot, box-shaped room. The scent of freshly brewed coffee, perfume and baked goods fills the morning air. At the front of the room, standing on a small platform, a speaker is referring to a projected image of ancient Israel while a capacity crowd listens, takes notes and enjoys the morning. Can you picture it?

This is what happens in our facility when we're not blaring music and tearing through a WOD. Every Sunday from 7 a.m. to noon, our box transforms into a classroom for more than 200 people. You wouldn't even know there's a CrossFit gym in the building Monday through Saturday unless you noticed the 25-foot pull-up bar and the faint aroma of determination and victory.

Early Monday morning, before the 6 a.m. CrossFit session, the classroom becomes a facility suitable for executing WODs. The room is cleaned by the church's maintenance team and equipment is unloaded from the closet—more than 2,000 lb. of plates, dumbbells and kettlebells, along with medicine balls, PVC pipes, rings, rowers, mobility gear, ropes, motivational banners and wall-ball targets.

To help with the weekly transitions and to strategically use storage space, everything has been carefully engineered to be tightly nested and easily moved. Our plyo boxes are stackable. The 12-foot banners we hang from the top portion of the wall—wall-ball targets—are secured with a strip of Velcro, making them easy to put up and take down. All our bumper plates are secured to a large steel cart that can be quickly rolled in and out of the equipment closet. Only two pieces of equipment do not get stored: the indoor/outdoor pull-up bar and the outdoor rope-climb and muscle-up station. Initially, we designed the pull-up system to come down each week, but ultimately the church approved of us leaving it up on Sunday.

**We have helped rescue
people from marathon
training, treadmill walking
and weight machines,
calling them out of darkness
and into the marvelous light
of CrossFit.**

Benefits of Sharing Space

What does Chaparral Christian Church gain?

Here are three benefits:

- First, the church staff now has a free workout program, as in companies that offer free fitness programs to their employees.
- Second, the church has an added service to offer its surrounding community.
- Third, the perception that the church is only concerned with the soul and not the body can be rebuffed.

Aside from these reasons, other more universal reasons abound.



***Would you be able to resist knocking out a few pull-ups
mid-lecture?***

We have helped church members with chronic knee and back pain enjoy life free of pain. We have encouraged folks to create healthy eating habits. We have taught them do a pull-up, to clean and more. And perhaps most importantly, we have helped rescue people from marathon training, treadmill walking and weight machines, calling them out of darkness and into the marvelous light of CrossFit. Those with ears, let them hear.

Most churches, synagogues and faith communities throughout the country do not have the facilities to offer large recreation programs, such as basketball or softball leagues. However, nearly every faith community that operates a facility or campus has large meeting rooms like fellowship halls, large classrooms, even a narthex, not to mention parking lots and open fields. These spaces tend to remain underused throughout the week. So sharing space with a CrossFit box helps the host organization make better use of existing resources while offering an elite fitness and community-building program for its members and local neighborhood.

Just last month, the teen doughnut booth, stationed outside of the sanctuary on Sunday morning, began offering almonds and other healthy snacks. Instead of serving mainly pasta at church dinners, we now offer healthy options as well. Plus, we have added "Paleo" to the church's vocabulary. CrossFit has had an enormously positive impact on all aspects of daily life at our host organization. You might say our church has begun serving the CrossFit Kool-Aid.

What does CrossFit Chaparral gain?

A CrossFit box can gain a lot by sharing its space with another community. We gained shared overhead costs, shared publicity and shared community efforts.



A deep breath or a quick prayer—whatever gets you through the WOD.

Sharing overhead costs means we pay less for things like utilities, cleaning and rent. As a result, we can charge our clients less while offering excellent coaching and top-notch equipment. Likewise, your partner also will benefit from having another party assist with overhead costs. The biggest challenge will be coordinating daily and monthly schedules. However, if everything is specified in writing up front and both partners want to see each other succeed, then scheduling is little more than practicing effective communication and mutual respect.

We also share efforts in the growing and building of our communities.

Sharing publicity comes in the form of advertising CrossFit events at church, and vice versa. For instance, when the church holds an outdoor movie on the lawn, we advertise it to our members and make it a CrossFit social event. When the church offers family events, cookouts and educational classes, our community enjoys full access to these great events as well.

But we share more than overhead costs and publicity with our host community. We also share efforts in the growing and building of our communities. Some of our clients find CrossFit Chaparral because they attend the church. Other times, thanks to the marketing power of CrossFit, people come to our gym and then begin attending the church. It's a win-win for both the church community and the CrossFit community.

Bottom line: any partnership has the potential for a variety of shared resources. Be creative and work together for the success of both organizations.

Matt, Tangie and Aaron

Meet Matt. Once upon a time, he played football at Stanford. For the last five years, he and his family have been members at Chaparral Christian Church. His workout program used to consist of lifting weights, running, hiking and playing basketball. Then he was introduced to CrossFit through CrossFit Chaparral. One of his first encounters was with a WOD named Kelly. Now he is a member of both CrossFit Chaparral and Chaparral Christian Church. Both communities are better places because of him and his family.

Meet Tangie and Aaron. They joined CrossFit Chaparral in the middle of 2010 after moving back to the greater Phoenix area. They were looking for both a fitness community and a church community when they joined CrossFit Chaparral. Later, they began attending services at Chaparral Christian Church. Now they are members of both communities and are just one more example of the win-win partnership between our two communities.

The Bottom Line

Many years ago, a small, poor village was anticipating the visit of a world-renowned teacher. It wanted to offer its honored guest a great banquet, but it had very few funds in the treasury. Therefore, it decided if every person in the village would share a little bit of food and drink from his or her tables and wine cellars, over the coming months, they could gather enough for a great celebration. Each evening after dinner, families would bring their bottles of wine and pour it in a great vat made for the occasion. Then, one evening, a town elder thought, "If everyone else was putting in their supply of wine, who would notice if I filled my bottle with water and added it to the vat?" The vat was so large, perhaps no one would notice.

**Be creative and work
together for the success of
both organizations.**

Sure enough, no one was the wiser. When the day of celebration arrived, the honored guest was seated at the head of the table while the entire village gathered around. With great pride, the town mayor strode to the vat and cracked the tap, and out poured a stream of pure ... water. Everyone was supposed to give wine, but because nobody saw the community vat as their vat, there was only water.

Partnering with another community could be a risky endeavor. All parties must be 100 percent invested, and they must relentlessly seek the success of the other. It boils down to investment. When both parties become invested in the health and well-being of each other, then the other community becomes my community. "Theirs" becomes "mine," and the community vat gets filled with wine instead of water.



About the Authors



Frank Shirvinski (top) and Nick Stavlund are co-owners of CrossFit Chaparral in Scottsdale, Ariz. Shirvinski is a master scuba diver and holds a black belt in jiu-jitsu. He also serves as the senior minister at Chaparral Christian Church. Stavlund serves as a U.S. Army chaplain in the 19th Special Forces Group (ABN) and as executive minister at Chaparral Christian Church.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

The Toss-Across Dice Game

Lori Parsons describes a fun carnival-style game to get your kids moving.

By Lori Parsons

May 2012



Conan Bruce

Equipment

- 1 pack of plastic plant pots
- 1 pack of Wiffle-style balls or ping-pong balls
- 1 cardboard box
- 1 die

Set-Up

First, decorate the box if you want. I used Gorilla Tape I bought at Home Depot. You can also use the tape to attach cardboard strips to the sides and back of the box to keep the ball in play (not pictured). You can place the box near a wall or between plyo boxes to keep the Wiffle ball in play.

Turn a pot upside down on the box and trace around the edge of the pot. Trace out all the holes before you cut.

Cut the holes with a sharp knife, but do not cut on the lines. Cut well inside the lines so the pots will not fall through the holes.

Place the pots in the holes, label the holes with exercises, and get ready to play.

Rules of Play

I always order the kids from youngest to oldest. Older children have more patience.

Each kid rolls the die to determine the number of reps they will do as a class, then tosses the ball onto the box to see which exercise they are going to do.

If they land on "run," drop everything and run 100 meters.

I designated two holes each for burpees and running, and I designated one each for sit-ups, squats, star jumps and push-ups.

You can make the exercises harder for the teens by adding pull-ups, thrusters, deadlifts, etc.

This game is a favorite in our classes. Have fun!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Going Heavy at Regionals

Olympian Chad Vaughn offers tips for attacking the heavy dumbbell snatches and hang cleans at the Reebok CrossFit Games Regionals.

By Chad Vaughn

May 2012



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

I remember being very surprised when the Regional events included heavy dumbbell snatches.

My trade is, of course, getting a barbell over my head with two hands, not raising a dumbbell with one, so I was actually unsure that I could even handle the 70-pounder. Obviously, I had no choice but to try, and in the end it actually wasn't that bad. It was mostly just a matter of comfort with the movement. But I can definitely understand why so many have struggled, though many more have handled the 70s and 100s far more comfortably than I would have predicted. In the end, I believe 70 and 100 lb. were the right weights—and great separators.

To me, the weight used on this exercise is a statement of what HQ is looking for in the CrossFit Games: the truly fit. First, we really didn't see very heavy weights in the Open, though Event 12.2's heavy snatches certainly tested those who were able to get to them. But in the Regionals, there is a complete lack of mercy with the loads in some workouts. They are heavy—love it!

**I believe 70 and 100 lb. were
the right weights—and
great separators.**

CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman wrote this: "We'd not trade improvements in any other fitness metric for a decrease in work capacity." With that in mind, you had to

have ridiculous work capacity to even survive the Open and get through to Regionals. I know many athletes who didn't qualify for the Regional fun but could have fared very well at the events. But you have to make it there first. It's great if you are capable of all the skills, but if you are unable to make it through the Open, then you have work to do in the area that CrossFit holds dearest.

At the Regionals things got heavier, but the requirement for huge work capacity didn't change. Let's see if you're strong as well!

How about a bunch of Energizer Bunny, bulletproof tanks at the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games? That should make for a great show!

Snatching a Dumbbell

As for technique with a movement like the one-arm dumbbell snatch, is it important? As always, absolutely! But, with all variables involved, being able to "muscle" the weight if needed gives one a huge advantage.



After setting up with hips lower than shoulders, athletes should use an aggressive "elbow-out position" followed by an aggressive punch to lockout.

First of all, all the basics of the two-arm barbell snatch are the same for the dumbbell version of the lift: the back is tight, and the set-up finds the hips lower than the shoulders (to involve more of the legs). The dumbbell needs to stay close to the body throughout the movement, and power needs to be exerted through an arm that stays straight to full extension: hips completely open, heels lifted, shoulder shrugged and torso slightly leaning back. That extension is followed by an aggressive elbow-out position leading to an aggressive “punch” to lockout overhead.

There are some key differences between the barbell and dumbbell snatches, starting from the floor. Your foot position will be a little wider than normal in the dumbbell

snatch. Your feet might even be slightly outside your squat stance because the dumbbell will need to be set lengthwise (as a barbell) between your feet. Your body will be lower, of course, because the dumbbell sits lower than a loaded barbell, but the back position should be at least comparable between the two movements. Exact foot-and-back-position differences are dependent on overall body type, limb lengths, etc. But you have no need to overthink the positions: just set your feet comfortably outside the dumbbell to leave plenty of room for the load to travel between the knees. Set your back with the feel of your regular barbell set-up in mind.

As you stand, fight hard to keep the dumbbell close to your body all the way up—actually between the legs during the leg drive. With a barbell, we want to position the knees back to create vertical shins by the time the barbell clears the knees to keep the bar in a straight path, but with the dumbbell it's OK and maybe even necessary for it to pass at least slightly between the knees to help keep it closer to the body.

The more important thing is that you keep the shoulder over the dumbbell and even exaggerate the position to bring the shoulder slightly in front of the dumbbell up past the knees. That will allow the use of more posterior chain to get the dumbbell overhead. If the back is too erect and the shoulder is behind the dumbbell too soon, you'll be using more quad and less overall body power. You'll also be forced to use more muscling with the arm, which can result in less control and a less solid landing position with the weight overhead.

In comparison to a barbell, where we want contact at the lap in extension before the arms pull the body under the bar to lockout overhead, you want to keep the dumbbell as close as possible without this contact. With the use of only one arm and the awkward shape of the dumbbell, any contact will be far less smooth and create an increased chance for the load to be knocked off an ideal straight path. But as the weight moves further away from the body, extra muscling will begin.

The body should extend up and back in the finish. If the body is only straight up, then the dumbbell will have to go out and around, which will either leave it forward or create some unwanted backward momentum as the dumbbell goes overhead. The body should also be leaned slightly to the side opposite the dumbbell as only the loaded shoulder shrugs to aid in the heave and the directing of the dumbbell overhead.



The dumbbell should stay as close to the body as possible throughout the entire lift.

Staff/CrossFit Journal

In the dumbbell snatch, especially for reps, you will use far more muscling and far more upward pulling of the weight with the arm. In the dumbbell lift, there is much less pulling under with the body than in a normal snatch, which you want to ride down to as deep a squat as possible. In the Regional lift, the dumbbell should be caught only with a slight breaking of the knees and nowhere near that full squat—provided you have the strength and power to get the dumbbell up high enough to catch it with a slight break of the knees.

Shoulder stability for this movement is key and will be the first thing to go.

Shoulder stability for this movement is key and will be the first thing to go. Conservation of this much-needed element will likely take place with a higher catch and a slight drop under the weight. But consider that if the arm and/or shoulder lack the strength to 100 percent muscle the dumbbell overhead with no drop underneath (at least while fresh), is one prepared to drop under the weight? And then what happens if you have the strength when fresh but then fatigue and have to start dropping under?

In addition, to aid in stability overhead, I recommend keeping the feet—or at least the toes—in contact with the floor. With a barbell, most will benefit in many ways by picking up the feet and putting them back down in an exaggerated and aggressive fashion as they go under the barbell. This resetting of the feet is mainly for better extension, speed under the bar and achieving the best deep-squat/catch position.

With the dumbbell, I still feel it's necessary to extend up onto the toes to better adhere to the all-important core-to-extremity principle, but the feet leaving the floor any more than this is much less necessary because the feet are already wider than normal and the body hopefully won't be dropping with blinding speed too far under the dumbbell anyway. I'm not saying you should be moving slowly, of course, but the drop under the load requires more speed in a barbell lift than in the dumbbell variety. So, most importantly, with the feet staying more in

contact with the floor, the catch will be much less jarring on the shoulder and will have a much better chance of being solid.

Finally, don't forget about the proper completion of the lift, which will help maintain the dumbbell's proper line of action as it goes overhead and further contribute to the best possible shoulder stability. Remember to direct the dumbbell in this path by aggressively flaring the elbow out and up as the dumbbell stays in, and be sure to punch the lockout.

The dumbbell snatch is definitely a fun and interesting yet evil movement. Good stuff! Jon Gilson and the Again Faster crew put together a great tutorial on the Again Faster website. Watch it here: <https://www.againfaster.com/en/blog/2012/05/01/single-arm-dumbbell-snatch/>.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

Triple extension of knees, hips and ankles will transfer maximum power to the dumbbell. Vaughn recommends keeping the toes in contact with the floor at the end of the lift.



Mike Workentin/CrossFit Journal

Vaughn recommends using a hang power clean rather than a squat as long as the athlete has the power to allow reception in a quarter squat or higher. When fatigue sets in, a hang squat clean can become more efficient.

Cycling Heavy Hang Cleans

Workout 2 of Regionals finishes with 30 heavy hang cleans at 225 lb. for the men and 135 lb. for the women. There are two things I want to discuss and hammer in for this movement: the importance of mimicking the ideal positions with a clean from the floor and maintaining a quality reception of the bar.

Those ideal positions that you are trying to create from the floor are all about keeping the bar in line and activating the posterior chain for the most possible power. As you set up from a standing position with the bar in your hands for the hang clean, you want to keep only a slight bend in the knee while pushing the hips back and leaning over the bar with the shoulders (all while locking the back in of course). This is correct whether it's necessary for you lower the bar down the leg one inch or all the way to the knee. Once in the right position, explode from there.

If you have an efficient squat clean, then why not go the smooth route and use your legs as shocks rather than brakes?

If the back stays erect as you excessively dip with the legs, or if the knees bend too much and create a forward angle in the shin as the bar slides down the leg, then the bar and body will likely have forward momentum as you return to extension. Also, from this position you will be using more of the quads. The quads are very strong, yes, but by creating more tension on the hamstrings and tying the hips in with a tight back (posterior-chain activation), you are in a better position of power and can take advantage of the so-called rubber-band effect.

From the floor, most people either don't know how to create these specific positions or struggle to do so. If you know these positions, they are definitely easier to get into from up top as you are learning. In fact, it's not uncommon for beginners, intermediates and even some vets to lift more from the hang than from the floor, so take advantage of this set-up in the hang cleans at Regionals.

(Please see my *CrossFit Journal* article [Oly Optimization](#) for more detail on how to stand and explode from these positions.)

With regard to the reception of the bar in the hang clean, the question is whether to catch the weight high in a power clean or to sink to the squat clean. I think most would want to stay high and save the legs for overall energy conservation, but is this really the case? You have to consider how the body reacts as the weight gets heavy or as one wears with high reps: the feet typically jump out further and further, the body drops lower and lower anyway, and the rest of the body begins to contort. What this means is that you are using up more energy than you think in fighting against yourself.

Heavy or tired power cleans are very jarring on the body when the body is in inconsistent positions. If you have an efficient squat clean, then why not go the smooth route and use your legs as shocks rather than brakes? Think about which makes more sense athletically: the energy consumed out of less than quality positions far outweighs the extra leg work with a full squat.

My recommendation to some of the competitors was to use the hang power clean as long as they could do so with good quality. I defined quality as movement in which the feet do not jump outside the athlete's normal squat stance and the reception of the barbell is no lower than about a quarter squat. Otherwise, just sink.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Chad Vaughn is a two-time Olympian, a seven-time national champion and an American Record holder in the sport of Olympic weightlifting. He was introduced to CrossFit in 2008 and began working within the community in early 2010. Chad is now part owner at CrossFit Centex, where he holds weekly weightlifting classes while doing occasional seminars throughout the U.S. Chad has a natural, matured understanding of how the body best moves and is highly motivated to help anyone interested find his or her "perfect snatch" and heaviest clean and jerk.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Lost Boy Found

A young man finds passion, purpose and a way out of the dark with CrossFit. Rosemary Campbell reports.

By Rosemary Campbell

May 2012



All images: Craig Johnston

Paris Edward Little walked into CrossFit St Kilda (CFSK) in Melbourne, Australia, nearly two years ago. It was a weekend, and we were doing the CrossFit Total.



At one point, street fights were Paris Little's only form of physical expression.

Little timidly introduced himself and progressed through the back squat, strict press and deadlift. He chatted quietly, gently assisting and encouraging the others as he did. He lifted well, and even though he didn't post the highest score of the day, we all stood around wondering who the sweet boy was after he left with a polite "Goodbye," and "Thank you for having me."

Soon, Little became a regular at the 7 a.m. class. He would jog down the driveway into the gym, rosy cheeked, hair tussled, straight out of bed. He would smile and politely greet everyone. His boyish good looks and impeccable manners were a direct hit to our hearts, and we loved him instantly. As the weeks passed, we gathered snippets of information about him: he was 20 years old, he had recently returned to Australia, he worked part time at a call center. He usually diverted conversation away from himself and ended up chatting about the WOD and training, then he'd jog off back down the driveway.

As Little trained more at CFSK, we saw his talent for gymnastics develop. He devoured everything the coaches said, every cue and tip, practicing long after the session had ended, always asking me if he was in the way as I

vacuumed around him. His strength developed and his endurance increased. His dedication to his training was palpable, and he soaked up CrossFit knowledge wherever he could. Soon he was able to answer any CrossFit question and was well versed on the stats, times, weights and bios of the elite CrossFit athletes.

In an attempt to alter his diet, he organized a nutrition consultation with Bjorn Albrecht-Walker, our coach and in-house nutritionist. Albrecht-Walker became a mentor to Little, and in the consultation Little confided his desire to one day become a CrossFit coach. Little asked me if he could exchange cleaning and general maintenance work for the chance to become a CrossFit coach intern. I couldn't have been more pleased. It was then that I began to learn his story.

When Little was 8 years old, his family left sunny Australia for Bedfordshire, England. Little had loved his life in Melbourne, and with his long, blond, curly hair, Australian accent and the name of Paris, he was instantly laughed at and bullied by the local kids. The social groups at school were well established. They were suspicious and protective of their turf and intolerant of difference of any kind.

Life in Bedfordshire was tough. The community was small and parochial. Little soon learned to fight back and worked out that his life was more bearable when he was the bully and not the bullied. He shaved his head, assumed their culture and survived as best he could. His parents were working long hours trying to establish themselves, and Little was bored with school, so it wasn't long before he found himself part of a gang. He skipped school, drank, smoked and got into frequent and often fierce fights. He was continually hiding from the police and social workers. He recalls most fights were to protect a friend or to stop a perceived injustice. Fighting made him feel good and made him feel that he was doing something, achieving something, defending some misguided honour.

At age 14, Little was asked to leave school. His parents tried to find him work as a laborer. The work was physically hard, tedious and often dangerous. After some time, he just stopped going and was quickly absorbed back into the streets.

Little's body reveals hints of what his life was like; the lower part of his left ear is missing—bitten off in a fight. He has a scar on his top lip, permanent marks and scars on the backs of his hands, and a tooth missing on his left jaw. Stretch marks on his skin reveal a history of being overweight from a bad diet and binge drinking.

Finally caught by the local welfare department, Little was sent to Grey's Education Centre, a special school for kids like him who had been kicked out of a number of institutions. Of course, being with like-minded kids only made things worse. However, it was at this school that Little was introduced to weightlifting and fitness training.

After Little finished school, he was at a loss as to what to do next. A family member suggested he try the military, and he signed up for the preparatory course, which he loved. The training, the discipline and the camaraderie all suited him well, and he felt he finally he could be happy somewhere. Unfortunately, due to his police record and lack of formal education, the rules of entry required he wait another year before joining. With utter despair, knowing he couldn't survive another year with nothing to do, he returned to Australia.

Little found that things in Australia were not as he had left them as a boy. Many of his friends had moved, and nothing was how he remembered it to be. Going back to school was not an option, and before long he joined a gang. Their nights were spent drinking and looking for fights, and their days were spent finding ways to pay for alcohol and drugs.



Little's run-in with the law almost cost him his freedom, but his potential earned him a second chance at life.

"I would wake up and the first thing on my mind would be, where will we be drinking today?" Little recalls.

Hoping for a new start, Little moved in with an old family friend affectionately known as "Nan." She welcomed Little warmly and offered him a tiny room in her apartment. But Nan was busy working and assumed Little was big enough to take care of himself. Things didn't come together as quickly as he would have liked. Many of his old friends had moved on. Soon, Little was wandering the parks and streets of Melbourne. The days passed into weeks with nothing to do. Fighting was the only form physical expression he knew.

One day, Little was drunk on a train with his crew. A guy, a junkie, started harassing the girlfriend of his mate, asking for cigarettes, putting his hands on her, being persistent and annoying. Little pushed the junkie away, telling him to back off. Little's mate pulled out a knife and plunged it into the abdomen of the junkie, and together they pushed him off the train. The train sped on. Injured, the victim was left to get off the tracks on his own. It could have been fatal.

Little was summoned to court, facing very serious charges of intention to cause harm and reckless conduct to endanger life. He was placed on parole in the custody of Nan. The terms of his parole were a daily curfew between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Little was required to attend a course in drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and he had to find a job. The enormity of these conditions was exacerbated by the fact that he didn't drive.



With life turned around, Little is now the head coach at CrossFit St Kilda.

No longer able to spend his days drinking in the park, Little had a lot of free time. He went to the local community gym and started training again. Looking for different tips and training techniques online, he stumbled upon a website where workouts were posted every day. He started picking through the site, finding workouts he could do with the little equipment he had.

Little had found CrossFit. After following CrossFit.com for a couple of weeks, he realized there was a CrossFit affiliate in Melbourne. As luck would have it, Little inherited a small amount of money from a much-loved grandfather. He spent it all to get his CrossFit Level 1 Certificate. At 19 years old, Little found a job at a call center and moved into a small apartment in St Kilda.

This was when we met him. This was why we only saw him in the mornings and why he didn't talk much about himself. It was during this time his court case came up.

It was up to the judge to determine if Little would go to juvenile prison or adult prison. By some great chance, the judge saw all the goodness and potential in Little, and he understood that a boy could get caught up in all the wrong circumstances. Little received a suspended sentence with many restricting factors and a commitment to continue with the changes he had made, which the police would monitor. With sheer relief and amazement, Little went home.

Little, now 22 years old, is the head coach at CFSK. He has completed many CrossFit certificate courses, including Olympic Lifting, the Coach's Prep Course and CrossFit Kids. Little manages the website and programs for the kids, who adore and aspire to be like him. He follows a strict Paleo diet, trains hard and rests sensibly. Little monitors trends in CrossFit and stays current with debates and theories surrounding his profession.

But Little is more than his history and achievements. He represents what a community can do for an individual. CrossFit offered him a fresh start, a daily challenge where he could see and monitor his own progress and equally enjoy the success of others. Every day, he was in contact with people who valued him for what he could do and what he offered them. He became respected and part of a team. He was surrounded with solid male role models and a CrossFit community in which achieving and winning are shared experiences.

It's about trying, where failing is success and satisfaction at the same time, where the last one struggling to finish is the hero, and where incremental growth and change result not in perfection but in a desire to continue to grow.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Running the Bars

Aja Barto snatched every bar in Workout 5 of the South Central Regional.
Olympian Chad Vaughn explains how he did it.

By Chad Vaughn

May 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

There are quite a few things that Aja Barto did really, really right that significantly helped him not only complete the snatch ladder but also make 295 lb. look light!

1 of 5

The base of his success, of course, is technique. Barto was maintaining and creating all the right angles and positions as the bar traveled up the legs, where he then fully extended with hips open and arms straight before those arms pulled and pushed the body under the bar. His body moved around and underneath it to lock it out overhead. All these positions help keep the bar closer to the body and the bar path in line, and they set the body up to exert the most possible power by activating the proper parts at the right time for a smooth, powerful, fast lift.

Many of the competitors were power-snatching as many bars as they could, and many failed at the weight that forced them to start dropping under.

Barto was also consistent in his movement: he squat-snatched every rep from 155 to 295 lb. Most of these weights would be easy power snatches for him, so some might wonder why he wasted his legs and didn't choose the squat squat snatch only when necessary. Really, it's all about preparation and insurance. The whole body is engaged differently in the two receiving positions: think about the shoulders, hips, wrists, knees, ankles, width of the landing, etc. If you are trying to put the most weight overhead, you want the muscle memory to be wired into what you'll be doing with the heaviest weights as much as possible.

Many of the competitors were power-snatching as many bars as they could, and many failed at the weight that forced them to start dropping under more. It's a fact that most, especially while learning, can power-snatch more than they can lift in a full snatch for many different reasons. It's mainly due to a subconscious hesitation to use a weak or non-existent catch/bottom position, but this should not be the case at the regional level. Actually, many of the culprits missing bars were ones I've seen use the squat snatch very well many times!

Were they trying to save the legs and conserve overall energy? If so, you have to consider how the body reacts as the weight gets heavier and heavier in a power snatch. The feet jump out wider and wider to the point of creating

an excessively wide landing, the body begins to contort more and more, and the bar lands shorter and shorter for tough press-outs—if you're lucky enough for the bar to land overhead. All these movements are very inefficient and create a lot of unnecessary energy consumption as one fights against the positions.

How about starting to drop when the power snatch starts to break? That's still not good enough because the body is not prepared and typically says "no!" That's especially true in a workout like this, where you have only 50 seconds to perform double-unders and then a lift. You don't really have time to adjust with a miss. As I watched the South Central Regional, it happened time and time again: as the competitors decided to or were forced to drop lower, the weight typically won!



Aja Barto's snatches looked very similar from the opening bars to 295 lb. at the end of the ladder.

I would say that squat-snatching all bars—even if the technique is not needed—would add at least one or two more successful lifts to an athlete's score.

Rip from the floor with a heavy weight and you'll most likely be decelerating—that bar ain't goin' up!

Mirror, Mirror

In addition, Barto's snatches were a mirror image of one another in regards to rhythm, speed and the height at which the bar was met with the legs to receive. Again, it all comes down to preparation with practice and consistency so the body knows how it will need to move with the heaviest loads.

For the rhythm, we are talking about the entire process from ritualistic set-up through the actual lift. If this changes and is rushed, there is greater potential for something basic to be missed (tightness, bar closeness, etc.), and that can leave a lot of ground to be made up with a load that's



Barto's pulls were deliberate and controlled, and his ideal positioning allowed him maximal speed on extension.

already a challenging weight. This is typically when you see the weight go up and over the top to fall behind the lifter. On the other end, at this point it becomes easier for negative thoughts to sneak in and bring hesitation, usually on extension or the drop under. Typically, you'll see a dump forward when an athlete hesitates.

The speed of the bar is part of the overall rhythm as well. The entire pull should be in rhythm and not just a rip from the floor with a dive and a prayer. Barto was calmly controlled as he initiated the lift and then built the speed through extension.

The lift is not made with speed from the floor! Deliberateness is important to ensure tightness, positioning and bar closeness. In addition, you will have a higher chance of positive acceleration on extension if that effort to build speed is at least slightly held off. Rip from the floor with a heavy weight and you'll most likely be decelerating—that bar ain't goin' up!

As a note, while you are learning it will not hurt and is usually necessary to go excessively slow all the way up to the power position (at the lap with a slight bend in the knees and the shoulders over the bar). Think about this: the slower you go, the more likely you are to maintain tightness, positioning and overall quality. On the other hand, the faster you go, the greater your chance for error. You can always speed up later as you learn and build comfort, but your speed should never be to the point of ripping and outside of acceleration at extension.

Barto was controlled on the heavy weights to ensure the tightness, positioning and speed of extension, and on the light ones he had used the same rhythm and speed as optimal preparation for the heavy bars.

As we drop to the overhead-squat position to receive the bar, it is important that we use our legs as shocks and not as brakes or as nothing at all. If we use the legs as brakes and stop the body right where we meet the bar and come up from there, it is very jarring and hard on the body, and it gives up a lot of potential. If we use the legs for no real purpose and drop straight to a rock-bottom position without interacting much with the legs, it creates a lack of control and doesn't leave much room for error.

Pull up a video of a world record—an admittedly extreme example—and it looks as if the lifters are indeed shooting straight to the bottom position. Slow the video down and you'll see the arms locked out overhead with the squat height at about parallel. So, just like Barto did, the body begins to slow the bar in this part of the reception and then rides it down smoothly to a deep, flexible, strong and seemingly relaxed and comfortable bottom position. So, for Barto, this was necessary to control the heavy weights, and it was necessary on the light weights to reinforce that specific height of reception and a portion of his overall timing.

In a squat that is anything above rock bottom, there is usually no saving a lift.

Love the Bottom

Finally, let's examine Barto's bottom position with the bar overhead and his body at its lowest point in the squat. I love it! I spend so much time every day teaching this position and talking people into it, which is complicated due to all the misconceptions about squatting below parallel and as low as possible. I noticed how Barto had a slight pause down there, particularly with the heaviest bars. Most of them were slightly forward but were nowhere near a problem because of Barto's bottom position. He simply sat, relaxed, and easily pulled it back in, probably without many even noticing.

In a squat that is anything above rock bottom, there is usually no saving a lift: it's either over the top of you, dropped behind or you are attempting to run forward underneath. One of the best things that you can do to improve your overall potential for the snatch is snatch-grip overhead squats with a 3- to 5-second pause in the bottom on each rep—and strive to go lower and lower. Most will need to spend a lot of time here to even begin to open up flexibility (ankles, hips, shoulders, etc.) and create awareness to work toward a lower and lower position.



By riding the bar down to a deep squat (Frame 2), Barto was able to stabilize the heavy load before standing under control to complete the lift.

In either case, you have to get to the point of excess strength and comfort here because this will help erase that subconscious hesitation to go there. The body will instinctively use strengths and comfort zones—so create some!

Also, rock bottom goes hand in hand with weightlifting potential and the flexibility development associated with the best overall athletes. This is why I recommend squatting in a way that will work flexibility on every rep and not lock it. Reinforce low and upright positioning every chance you get, on all types of squats.

Again, Barto's performance was very impressive, especially within the timed ladder set-up. Congrats to all the competitors at the South Central Regional, and thanks for a great show!

Hit me up on [CrossFit Centex's Facebook page](#) for a few pointers.



Aja Barto: locked and loaded.



Mike Markentin/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Chad Vaughn is a two-time Olympian, a seven-time national champion and an American Record holder in the sport of Olympic weightlifting. He was introduced to CrossFit in 2008 and began working within the community in early 2010. Chad is now part owner at CrossFit Centex, where he holds weekly weightlifting classes while doing occasional seminars throughout the U.S. Chad has a natural, matured understanding of how the body best moves and is highly motivated to help anyone interested find his or her "perfect snatch" and heaviest clean and jerk.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

How We Teach

Coaching children requires different vocabulary and delivery. Jeff Martin explains.

By Jeff Martin CrossFit Brand X

May 2012



All images: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

People come to CrossFit from many backgrounds.

Often, everything about CrossFit is new and, if we are honest, learning the simplest things is often comical as we move toward mastery of the movements. Similarly, CrossFit trainers frequently have varied backgrounds and must learn skills on the job. Often, they don't have a defined way of teaching and can go about it haphazardly. This can be disastrous when working with children. Not only will the information not transfer effectively, but if the method of transmission is not efficient, one will not hold the attention of the kids. At CrossFit Kids, we have a clearly defined way to teach that is effective and efficient.

1 of 5



When teaching kids, every movement must have a reason. Why do we deadlift? To safely pick up heavy objects and get beastly strong.

We begin with a demonstration of the movement from different angles at full speed. Say we are teaching the snatch to a group of pre-teens. We bring out one of our teen firebreathers and have him or her snatch a moderate weight. We get a couple of very important things out of this.

Explaining the movement isn't just about hitting the points of performance ... It's also about providing a reason why kids should want to do the movement.

First, the pre-teens idolize the teen firebreathers. Every one of them wants to be that firebreather. If he is snatching, then they want to—have to—snatch. They are almost shaking with anticipation.

Second, because we have demonstrated the movements from different angles, we are able to note the key points of performance we want the kids to understand. Kids hear about those points, but they also see their role model doing those things we say are important. This could result in the triggering of mirror neuron mechanisms that can aid in the transformation of these observations into future action (1); i.e., this can facilitate learning.

A cue is short; it is something you, as the coach, and the client agree means something. Cues can be words, gestures, or even grunts or looks.

After demonstrating the movement, we explain it. Explaining the movement isn't just about hitting the points of performance, though that is critically important; it's also about providing a reason why kids should want to do the movement. They already want to do the movement because their role model is doing it (2), but let's cement that.

"What is a deadlift, guys? It's how we move something from the ground to our waists in a safe manner."

"What is the hang clean? It's how we move something from our waists to our shoulders efficiently."

"Why do we deadlift? To get beastly strong."

These are just some of the short, simple statements you can make that will provide kids with a practical reason to perform the movement.

Cue Is for "Quick"

We next have the firebreathing role model slow the movement down so we can begin to attach cues to the points of performance. We had a very good coach who, for all his talent, often cued people cleaning with something like, "I need you to keep your midline stable while jumping the weight through the range of motion." Folks, this is a paragraph, not a cue. A cue is short; it is something you, as the coach, and the client agree means something. Cues can be words, gestures, or even grunts or looks.



Keep cues short, simple and specific, especially when teaching kids: “Chest up!”

We once had a young female client who was born with hip dysplasia in her right hip. If she didn't concentrate on pushing her knees out while squatting, her right leg would flop in. At first, I had to stand next to her and say, “Courtney, knees.” As time went on I could stand across the room and make a gesture with my hand and she would fix the knee. Eventually, all I had to do was raise my eyebrows. My raised eyebrows became the cue, “Push your knees out.”

Telling a child to place his feet shoulder width apart can bring hilarious results.

If we are teaching the air squat, we might point out that the weight is in the heels. We might say, “We want your weight to stay on your heels. If your weight moves to the middle of your foot or toes, you will hear coaches say,

‘Heels.’” For the new kids in class, “heels” becomes the cue. We do this with all the primary points of performance.

Start, Go, Finish—Landmarks to Proper Execution

Whenever we introduce a new movement, we want to teach three things:

- Where we start.
- Where we go to.
- Where we finish.

We want to be very definitive with kids about what we expect them to do. By telling them where we want them to start, go to and finish—i.e., count the rep—we remove the anxiety some children feel in learning new things by being very exact about three important points in the movement.

Where We Start

This seems straightforward enough. If we are teaching the squat to adults, we can say, “Put your feet shoulder width apart.” With kids, it's just not that simple.



A well-defined start and finish position will help kids count their reps and maintain good form.

Telling a child to place his feet shoulder width apart can bring hilarious results. Some kids don't know where their shoulders are, and you cannot blame a child who defines his feet as the ends of his toes. Go ahead right now: stand up, place your toes at your shoulders and try to squat. We would first define for the kids what part of their foot we want lined up with their shoulders.

"These are your heels. These are your shoulders. I want you to match your heels to your shoulders. Very good. Look down at your feet. This is where your feet need to be when you squat."

Or make it more interactive: "Where are your shoulders? Where are your heels? Match your shoulders to your heels. Look down at your feet. This is where your feet need to be when you squat."

We can't be finished yet, though. We have to follow up with something like, "Stand up straight." Then we can say, "When we squat, this is where we start."

Where We Go

If we are teaching the shoulder press, we have the kids "hold up the sky."

The sky is directly overhead. And it's heavy. The kids straighten their arms and push the sky up to support that heavy, heavy weight. When they are in this position, we can tell them, "This is where you go to!"

Once we have defined where to start and where to go to with the shoulder press, how easy is it to define the path between those two points? "Start with your hands at your shoulders. Now hold up the sky." Pretty easy to get a straight path out of that.

Where We Finish

But we are not done yet.

Being definitive about where we want the kids to finish is a critical piece to the lesson. Where we finish is where we count the rep. This might be self-evident to adults, but it is not to younger children. Defining where we finish does two very cool things.

First, very young children generally don't have the ability to count in a one-to-one relationship. In other words, if you tell a 4-year-old boy to do 10 squats, he will often simply squat a couple of times while counting to 10 as fast as he can. Defining where we finish and the idea that we count a rep at the finish point helps young children learn and apply a one-to-one relationship between a number and a rep.

Better mechanics lead to increased efficiency and higher outputs displayed in better times.

Second, for older kids, and especially teens using weight, defining a finish point as the place we count the rep can stop common problems before they occur, as well as help establish and maintain good mechanics throughout even the most demanding WODs.

Take the thruster as an example. One of the most common problems we see is "crashing." Crashing is receiving the bar as you descend into the squat portion of the movement. As the WOD drags on, the bar is caught lower and lower. The person slams into the bottom of the squat with the midline in a compromised position, lungs compressed, the knees traveling in and the elbows ending up pointing at the ground. Screwed-up mechanics. It's not effective, it's not efficient, and it's probably unsafe.

With the thruster, CrossFit Kids defines the finish position as the point where the bar returns to the start position; i.e., knees and hips fully open, bar held in the rack position at the shoulders. By telling kids that they count the rep at this point and that if they bypass the point the rep does not count, we completely eliminate one of the most prevalent problems seen in the movement. Lest one think we slow down the WOD by demanding this, we have a clocked a 2:30 Fran from a 17-year-old using this technique. Better mechanics lead to increased efficiency and higher outputs displayed in better times.

Finally, we have the kids begin the movement at slow speed. Generally, we will create a stopping point at the three primary points: where we start, where we go to, where we finish. As the kids work through the movement, it gives the trainers a chance to assess movement. Individual trouble spots can be discussed and addressed. The whole process generally takes 5 to 8 minutes, and then the kids are on to the WOD.

Having a structure for teaching will help with any kind of training, but it is particularly important when working with kids.

By design, our framework dovetails with one of CrossFit's fundamental training precepts: mechanics, consistency, intensity. When training children, mechanics are where we start. We head toward consistency. And we finish with intensity. This is how we teach.

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Alfa Tellez-Hernandez/CrossFit Brand X

About the Author

Jeff Martin owns and operates *CrossFit Brand X* with his wife Mikki Lee Martin, and they founded CrossFit Kids together. Jeff is Director of Youth Training for CrossFit Headquarters and holds the distinction of being one of a handful of instructors in the world to have been accorded the title CrossFit Coach. His kids are surprised each morning that he can dress and feed himself.

THE CrossFit[®] *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

TUNA STUMPS

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Take your tuna and stuff it! This recipe can be as simple or elaborate as you like. Simply make the tuna, prep the cucumbers and stuff them. Then watch as your kids stuff them in their hungry mouths.

feeds 3-4 hungry lumberjack kids

ingredients

- 1 or 2 organic cucumbers (depending on size)
- 2 cans solid white albacore tuna in olive oil (drain 1/3 of the oil)
- 1.5 green onions, chopped
- Juice of 1/3 of a lemon
- 1.5 tsp. capers
- Salt and pepper to taste
- A few sprinkles of dried oregano and basil

notes

The longer the tuna sits, the more the flavors combine. These are also great served as high-protein appetizers. The leftover cucumber balls can be soaked in rice wine vinegar for a tangy and tasty salad on the side!

directions

1. In a small bowl, mix tuna, onions, lemon juice, capers and spices.
2. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.
3. Slice cucumbers into a variety of 1- and 2-inch rounds, leaving the skin on.
4. With a melon scooper, remove the inside of the cucumber, working carefully around the bottom and sides. Use a sharp knife to make the inner walls smooth.
5. With a small spoon, stuff tuna into each cucumber round and top with green onions for garnish.
6. Serve chilled.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Deadlifts and the Strength Athlete

Bill Starr explains why all lifters should do deadlifts.
Then he explains how you should do them.

By Bill Starr

May 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

It seems that there are two distinct schools of thought when it comes to deadlifts.

On one hand, there are those who believe that the lift is a necessary part of the process of getting stronger, while another group of coaches and athletes shun them altogether, stating that the slow movement does not carry over to high-skill movements like the clean and snatch. That latter group believes that instead of laboring over a heavy deadlift, athletes should be doing dynamic exercises like power snatches and cleans and snatch- and clean-grip high pulls.

In many collegiate and scholastic strength programs, the athletes are not allowed to deadlift because the coaches consider it too dangerous for younger athletes—too risky to the lower back. This is still the opinion of many authorities in strength training: better to do an exercise that is safer than one that puts the body in peril. The truth of the matter is that any exercise can cause harm when it's done improperly, and almost any exercise can be beneficial if it's done correctly.

I believe that it's imperative to know how to lift a heavy object off the floor the right way.

(I say almost any exercise because there are a few that I never recommend doing, such as presses behind the neck or chinning behind the neck. These force the shoulder to be placed in jeopardy because the shoulder joints are not designed to handle those positions, especially when there is added resistance.)

I use deadlifts in all my strength-fitness programs. In fact, it's one of the very first exercises I teach anyone, young or old, male or female, aspiring bodybuilder or fledgling Olympic lifter. I believe that it's imperative to know how to lift a heavy object off the floor the right way because, throughout our lifetimes, all of us are required to do this thousands of times. And this isn't restricted to those who lift weights regularly. Everyone, without exception, is going to lift a box of books, overloaded bag of groceries, case of motor oil or heavy bag of junk off the floor just going about daily life, and knowing how to do so correctly can mean the difference between lifting the weight smoothly or incurring a dinged back.



When setting up for the deadlift, the bar should be tucked tight to the shins. If it swings away even an inch, you're giving away precious leverage.

As for the deadlift being a higher risk movement than the more dynamic lifts, that's not really true either. The deadlift is a static movement where the joints stay locked in place, while the explosive exercises like full snatches, power cleans and high pulls involve many joints that are placed under a great deal of stress. Of course, when faulty technique is used on the deadlift, even with light poundages, an injury can occur, and because a great deal of weight, relatively speaking, is often used, any injury that is sustained is usually going to be more severe. This is why it's important to learn how to do deadlifts using perfect form.

Dead to Rights

This article is aimed at Olympic lifters and those following a program that involves high-skill exercises. Powerlifters are already believers in the deadlift, and they must do them regularly if they want to excel in the sport.

When I first became interested in weight training, I had the barest of equipment to work with. For the first three years I trained, all I had was a standard bar, lots of plates and two adjustable dumbbell handles. From that I built my program, staying with very basic movements out of necessity. My two primary hip and leg exercises were the back squat and deadlift. I set up all my programs, using as my guide a booklet I bought mail order from George Jowett while I was in high school. When I started lifting after I joined the Air Force, I didn't have the booklet, but I remembered what I had read. He recommended 3 sets of 10 on the various exercises, so that's what I did.



Bill Starr believes deadlifts can actually help you become a better Olympic lifter.

I only weighed 135 lb. at the time and certainly wasn't gifted in the strength department, so all I could handle on the squats and deadlifts were rather light weights. This, as it turned out, was the best way for a puny individual to get started in strength training. I was also power-cleaning the bar to do overhead presses and jerks, so the two exercises fit together nicely. The power cleans helped me learn the line of a long pull so that when I deadlifted, all I had to do was concentrate on that first and second move. And because I could do deadlifts in a very deliberate fashion and was using fairly high reps, I never had any problems.

I discovered that all the heavy pulling movements I had been doing to improve my cleans and snatches carried over nicely to the deadlift.

However, what happens in many cases currently is that youngsters try to see how much they can lift off the floor. This is usually a result of some dare from peers, and if there isn't an adult around to monitor the workouts, injuries can happen. So these are my basic rules about deadlifts in regards to younger athletes: they can never do them unless an adult is present, and they should not be allowed to try a max single. There's plenty of time later on to do that. The priority should always be safety, and supervision is a necessary part of that.

After I got my hands on a couple of issues of *Strength & Health*, I became intrigued with the three Olympic lifts and changed my program around to give them priority. Still, the back squat and deadlift remained cornerstones in my routines. But when I got out of the service and enrolled at Southern Methodist University and started training with Sid Henry at the Dallas YMCA, I followed the routines he laid out for me, and they never included deadlifts. So for three years they were not a part of my strength programs, except for when I would go to some odd lift meet in Texas that included deadlifts. I discovered that all the heavy pulling movements I had been doing to improve my cleans and snatches carried over nicely to the deadlift, and I always placed highest in the deadlift at those meets.

It wasn't until I left Texas and entered graduate school in Chicago that I discovered the deadlift was a valuable exercise to help me become a more proficient Olympic lifter. It wasn't something I thought out; it came about clearly by chance.

From January till May there were meets held at one of the YMCAs in Chicago nearly every week. This was a welcome change for me because it required a very long drive to get to a contest in Texas, and they were held few and far between. The sites in the Windy City, on the other hand, were just a few minutes away. After each Olympic meet there was always a physique competition, and in most cases also some sort of strength test—curls, bench press and deadlifts were the favorites. And as most know, those odd lifts evolved into the sport of powerlifting. I usually entered these because they gave me the opportunity to pick up another award, which was my primary motive for lifting in the first place.

Near the end of the season, in May, it was announced that the deadlift would be tested after the Olympic meet was finished. I decided to give it a try, mostly because I was curious to find out just how much I could move in that exercise. I hadn't done a deadlift in about two years, but my pull was strong that day. I had done well in the snatch and clean and jerk. Because I had absolutely no idea what I was capable of, I ended up doing 525 lb. As soon as I did it I knew I had a lot more left in me, but it was too late to think about that. I ended up taking second behind Ernie Franz. I was pleased because he was already regarded as one of the strongest lifters in the city.

The meets were always held on Sunday, and when I woke up on Monday, my entire back was sore to the touch. It was the kind of deep soreness that makes you grunt when you walk up stairs or sit down hard in a chair. This wouldn't have been so disconcerting had I not already entered another Olympic meet for the following Saturday in Moline, Ill. The deep soreness hung around through Wednesday, and my training was terrible. I considered bailing out, but I had promised Bob Gajda I would go with him and help pay for the gas. In addition, I had recruited two brothers, Tom and Rick Holbrook, to make the trip as well. I had taught them the Olympic lifts at the Park Ridge Y, where I was the youth director. They had lifted in a closed meet, which I held at Park Ridge, but this would be their first experience in an open contest. I couldn't back out.

The four of us crammed in Gajda's VW and headed west. I was just hoping I wouldn't fall flat on my face. To my utter delight and surprise, I broke my snatch and clean-and-jerk record and posted my first 800-lb. total, a benchmark for the 181-lb. class at that time in the pre-steroid days.

The only thing I had done differently going into that contest was deadlifts. Everything else was the same, so it didn't take a Rhodes Scholar to figure out that it was the heavy deadlifts I had done that made my pull stronger. Soon after that contest in Moline, I moved to Marion, Ind., to become youth director at the YMCA there, and I started adding deadlifts into my program. I'd do them once a month and only did 5s, never going after a max single.



A lazy back position (bottom) will not help you move the weight. By locking your back in place, you'll be set up to lift the load.



In a good set-up (top), the frontal deltoids are slightly in front of the bar. With shoulders behind the bar, you are not set up for a strong, efficient pull.

There were lots of powerlifting meets in the state as well, and I would enter those mostly for fun. My deadlift was always strong, and I set a state record with 575 lb. in the deadlift without any serious training on the lift. And whenever I moved my deadlift higher, my clean went up. And vice versa.

My next stop was York, and I quickly found that none of the lifters living and training there did any deadlifts at all. Except for Homer Brannum and Ernie Pickett, and neither of them did any in training. Rather, they would go to powerlifting meets and be able to move big numbers on the deadlift due to all the heavy pulling movements in their routine. Homer was the first athlete to win both the Senior Nationals in Olympic lifting and powerlifting in the same year. Ernie won the Junior Nationals and came in second in the Seniors two weeks after he earned a spot on the '68 Olympic team.

Bill March, Tony Garcy, Tommy Suggs and Bob Bednarski never did any deadlifts. They opted for the more dynamic movements, as I did as well in training. But when Ernie started going to power meets in the off-season of Olympic lifting, the summer, I would go with him. We never got too serious about these contests. We would only enter meets that were close to the Jersey Shore so we could party there after the contests. We always went heavy in the York Gym on Saturdays anyway, and the power meets were so much easier than the Olympic contests, and we got in an excellent workout in the charged atmosphere.

There were quite a few Olympic lifters in the mid-'60s who also competed in powerlifting, and when powerlifting became a full-fledged sport in the AAU, a great many of them, usually those who were not really good Olympic lifters, switched over to the new, much-less-complicated power lifts.

When strength training for football became extremely popular across the country in the early '70s, none of the programs included deadlifts. This was primarily because those who had been chosen to train professional teams were all Olympic lifters: Louis Riecke at Pittsburgh, Dr. John Gourgott at New Orleans, Tommy Suggs at Houston, and myself at Baltimore. So the high schools and colleges followed what we were doing for the most part, and our programs didn't utilize the deadlift.

It wasn't until I signed on at the University of Hawaii and began coaching some Olympic lifters along with all the other sports teams that I began inserting the deadlifts back into some of my athletes' programs.

And at Johns Hopkins, I used that lift much more frequently for my advanced athletes, whom I had taught the snatch and clean and jerk. I recalled how the lift had helped me during my competitive years and was of the opinion that, when done correctly, it is, along with the back squat, one of the very best exercises for building greater strength in the hips, legs and back. I had all my Olympic lifters do them, as well as many of my advanced athletes. Because they had all started out with "The Big Three"—back squat, bench press and power clean—they picked up the form easily. That's one reason I like to have all beginners learn how to do the power clean correctly from the very beginning. Then, he or she can move to high pulls, full snatches, full cleans, power snatches and shrugs without any difficulty.

But for these athletes, I only had them deadlift once a month at most—the exceptions being those who planned on entering deadlift or full power meets. Then I had them deadlift every other week.

I believe that it's imperative to know how to lift a heavy object off the floor the right way.

The Why and How of Deadlifts

Whenever the subject of deadlifts as a strength movement comes up, it is assumed that they only have value when they are done with very heavy weights. This is not the case. They are very useful when done with light or moderate weights for higher reps. This is particularly true for older athletes who are no longer interested in seeing how much they can move off the floor for a max single. Their goal is overall strength fitness, and deadlifts are great for keeping the back, hips and legs strong even when the athletes have started drawing Social Security.

Two or 3 sets of 20 reps with a weight that forces the athlete to fully extend himself will carry blood and nutrients to all parts of his body and not be stressful to his joints. Some older athletes have written me and said they're doing very high reps—50s and 75s—with very light weight, and it does wonders for their rheumatoid arthritis and any other malady of the joints. There is really no reason to try a maximum effort on any lift when your joints are in peril. The ultra-high reps are most useful; low reps are foolish. Former national-champion powerlifter Hugh Cassidy said it best when he told me, "If I want to move 500 lb., I'll get a forklift." I agree 100 percent.

Whenever an athlete thinks of the deadlift, he usually only imagines doing the lift in one way, what I call the "conventional style"—feet set close together, arms outside his legs, with the bar pulled upward close to his body. However, there is another way to do full deadlifts that is just as productive and in some cases fits the needs of the athlete even better than the conventional style. Sumo deadlifts

work all the same muscle groups as the conventional ones yet in a slightly different manner, and they are also valuable in strengthening weaker groups that are not as involved in the conventional style. Primarily, I'm talking about the adductors. While these groups do play a role in conventional deads, they are of much greater importance when the sumo style is used. In my opinion, both need to be incorporated into a strength routine.

The styles for the two forms of the lift need to be perfect, so I will go over the form points for both. I'll address the conventional style first because I believe it's smarter to learn that lift before moving to the sumos.

Unless you are doing reps of 20 or higher, use straps. The straps will allow you to lock on firmly to the bar and not have to be concerned about your grip. All your concentration can be centered on proper technique. There are, of course, plenty of commercial straps you can purchase online or at sporting-goods stores, but nothing can beat seat belts. They'll outlast the ones bought 10 times over. Cut them out of the back seat of some clunker. No one I know uses them anyway, and cut them to a length of about 22 inches. Better to make them too long than too short. You can always trim them down if necessary. Throw them in a washer for five or six cycles to soften them. The pair I had was used by nearly every athlete at Johns Hopkins for over 10 years, and I still have them. To say they have been durable is a gross understatement.



Starr recommends lifting with straps, and old seat belts are just as effective as the store-bought variety.



In the sumo deadlift, Starr recommends you point your toes forward and keep the weight on the outsides of your feet throughout the lift.

Even if you feel that you don't need the straps for the warm-ups or with lighter poundages, use them anyway. It takes some practice to figure out how to wrap them so that they're snug but not so tight that they cut off circulation. And if they're too loose, they'll take some hide off your wrists when handling a heavy poundage.

The basic rule on any pulling movement is that your hips and the bar must move upward at the exact same rate.

Your grip will be the same as you use for power cleans, full cleans or clean high pulls. If you've never done any of those exercises, just extend your thumbs on an Olympic bar until they touch the smooth center. Your feet should be at shoulder width or a bit closer than that. The best way to find your ideal foot placement is to shut your eyes and

pretend you're about to do a standing broad jump. Tuck the bar in tightly against your shins. This is very important because if the bar starts away from your legs, even so much as an inch, or moves out front during the execution of the lift, you're giving away leverage, and that will make it much harder to do the movement with any amount of weight.

The eyes should be set straight ahead, and your back should be flat. Make sure your frontal deltoids are a bit in front of the bar. This is another key form point. When your deltoids are behind the bar you do not have nearly as much thrust at the start and the tendency is to continue to pull the bar backward. You don't want that to happen so pay attention that your deltoids are always slightly in front of the bar from start to finish.

Those who have been lifting for some time can set their hips fairly high, even as high as a position that puts the back parallel to the floor. This provides a longer lever and is most beneficial if—and this is a critical if—you can hold that position during the start. The basic rule on any pulling movement is that your hips and the bar must move upward at the exact same rate. For most who are learning how to deadlift, it's better for them to lower their hips until they feel they're in a solid position.



If you use sumo deadlifts exclusively, make sure you work your lumbar with extra exercises such as reverse hyperextensions.

In order to handle heavy weights in the deadlift, you must maintain a flat back throughout. The best way to achieve this is to pull your shoulder blades together and keep them locked during each set. While learning the technique on the deadlift, do not allow your back to bow at all. But once you have the form down and have built a solid foundation, it's OK to round your back some. Not in the beginning, though. Flat back elevating the bar, and flat back while lowering it back to the floor.

When your set position is right, take a deep breath, make certain that every muscle in your body is tight, then do this: instead of just pulling the bar off the floor, think about trying to push your feet down into the floor. When you do that the bar will glide off the floor smoothly and in the proper line. Many beginners try to jerk the bar off the floor, hoping to jump-start the movement, but this doesn't work when the weights get demanding. Also, jerking the weight off the floor will invariably cause the bar to travel forward and cause your back to round. Both are form faults, so practice the lift correctly and you'll be way ahead when you go after the bigger numbers.

Another mistake beginners make is they try to bring their arms into the mix. Your arms are no more than connecting links, which I compare to powerful chains. If they bend, you lose upward thrust, so they need to stay straight from start to finish.

When the start is done correctly, the middle generally takes care of itself. It's the finish that causes the most trouble because lifters wait till the very last moment to involve their traps. There's no reason to wait to contract the traps. When the bar reaches mid-thigh, squeeze your traps dynamically. This will elevate the bar a few crucial inches. Then all you have to do is drive your hips forward and the lift is completed. Those who wait till the very end to utilize their traps usually end up trying to jerk the bar home to the finish. This is not a valid deadlift, and in a contest it would be disqualified.

After you have completed the lift, take a breath and lower the bar back to the floor while keeping a very flat back with the bar still close to your legs all the way down. Don't get in the habit of letting the bar crash down to the floor. This can be traumatic to your wrists, elbows and shoulders, and it throws the bar way out of line for your next rep. Also, lowering the bar deliberately works like a negative and helps you gain even more strength.

When bumper plates are used, it's very tempting to rebound the bar off the floor after each rep because that makes the start much easier. However, even if you use good form on the lift itself, you're still cheating yourself. Because you're not doing much work for the start, those muscles and attachments that are responsible for that first move are being ignored. Hence, they will not be strong enough when you go after a max triple, double or single. Do every rep from a dead stop, and you'll be way ahead of the game.

Now for the sumo-style deadlift. Most find that sumos are easier to learn than the conventional style. It's basically a shorter stroke and puts less stress on the lower back, which makes the lift quite attractive to older athletes. The sumo style is done with a wide stance, and the grip is between the legs rather than outside them. How wide should the stance be? This depends on your height, but my rule of thumb is about 3 feet apart. You will need to experiment with your foot stance and grip until you find the one that fits you.

Another big difference from the conventional style is that your feet must be pointed straight ahead, and during the lift all the pressure is placed against the outsides of your feet. In the conventional deadlift, the pressure shifts from the front of your feet to the back as the bar travels upward, but in the sumo style, the pressure starts on the outside and stays there throughout the movement.

The basic rules are the same as for the conventional deadlift: tuck the bar in snugly against your shins, get your frontal deltoids out in front of the bar, pull the bar smoothly off the floor, and keep it tight to your body all the way up. Here's what I tell anyone doing the sumo style for the first time: once you're in the correct set position, push your feet down into the floor and lean back. Like magic, the bar climbs right up to lockout. Again, lower the bar back to the floor in a deliberate manner.

Which style to use? Why not do both?

Sumo deadlifts are great for any athlete wanting to improve his adductor strength. That group is hard to hit if you don't have an adductor machine, but sumo deadlifts and wide-stance squats will get the job done.

Which style to use? Why not do both? They work the hips, legs and back somewhat differently, so you will achieve more complete development by including both in a strength routine.

One thing that should be noted concerning the sumos: they do not work the lumbar nearly as much as the conventional style, so when they're done exclusively, time must be spent doing a specific exercise for the lower back (good mornings, back hyperextensions, reverse back hypers or almost-straight-legged deadlifts).

There are some other variations of the deadlift that are most useful for strengthening a weak area, such as halting deads; low, low deads; and the before-mentioned almost-straight-legged deadlifts. I will go over these in a future piece, but for now learn how to do the two styles perfectly and you will be able to include them in your strength programs for the rest of your life.



Jody Foster

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 [The Aasgaard Company Bookstore](#).*

THE CrossFit LIFE

Breathe Deep

A chance viewing of the Reebok CrossFit Games on ESPN2 inspired Kevin Joyce to drastically change his health and his life. Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

May 2012



Steve Gregersen

Kevin Joyce was feeling terrible. He had struggled his entire life to do something most of us take for granted—breathe.

Doctors could never figure out exactly what was wrong. They told him he had exercise-induced asthma, but he always felt it was something worse. In high school, Joyce played football and basketball and would often push himself until he blacked out. He liked football best of all because he was self-conscious about his labored, heavy breathing, and the helmet covered up the noise.

"I didn't even want to hear my own breathing," Joyce said.

After high school, Joyce began working as a New York City carpenter, and that's when things deteriorated. He got weak just walking up stairs, and the dust at work aggravated his condition. Doctors told him he had fibromyalgia. Joyce wasn't sure what he was going to do. Work was making him even sicker, but what would he do without a job?



Steve Gregersen

Despite respiratory problems, Joyce has seen overall improvements in his body since he started CrossFit.

In the winter of 2011, Joyce reached a low point with his physical and mental health, and he became depressed. He happened to turn on ESPN2 one day and saw the rebroadcast of the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games. All those fit people climbing ropes and lifting weights sparked something in Joyce. He had heard of CrossFit, but "I never knew they had CrossFit gyms," Joyce said.

Right around this time, Joyce finally found a pulmonologist who agreed to run a battery of tests on him. "Most doctors wouldn't give me a pulmonary-function test," Joyce said. The doctor discovered Joyce had 50 percent less lung function than most people. He was officially diagnosed with chronic asthmatic bronchitis, one of the forms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. Joyce was given Prednisone, bronchial dilators and nebulizers.

This diagnosis, combined with worsening symptoms brought on by the dust and fumes at work, caused Joyce to go on lifetime disability in February 2012. Then, in March, Joyce gathered his courage and visited CrossFit KOA in Cranford, N.J.

Everyone is self-conscious when starting CrossFit, but Joyce felt more insecure than most because of his loud, heavy breathing. To make matters worse, when Joyce exerts himself he experiences immediate lactic-acid buildup in his muscles because of the lack of oxygen in his body. Imagine doing CrossFit workouts with half the lung capacity and your muscles burning from the minute you start.

But Joyce kept at it. After a few weeks, he started to see improvements.

"My wind was a little bit better," Joyce said. "I felt much better. The more you can push yourself, the less scar tissue you have in your lungs, so my doctor supported me doing CrossFit."

Once Joyce started building strength and lung capacity, other things in life improved as well. He didn't want to sabotage his hard work, so Joyce started eating Paleo about 80 percent of the time.

"I saw a big difference in my energy level," Joyce said. "And the cravings for sugar went away."



Joyce is proof that the Reebok CrossFit Games can inspire average people to take charge of their fitness and improve their lives.

Soon after Joyce started CrossFit, the owners of CrossFit KOA approached him about competing in Lift 4 Lungs, a local fundraising event to raise money for the National Lung Cancer Partnership. The second annual fundraiser and competition was in honor of Jeff Trojca, who lost his battle to lung cancer at age 48 in 2010, leaving behind a wife and three kids.

Joyce had only been doing CrossFit for about a month, but how could he pass up an event called Lift 4 Lungs? So on April 14, 2012, Joyce showed up at CrossFit ACT in Saddle Brook, N.J., for the Lift 4 Lungs event. The competition consisted of three workouts, with RX'd and scaled divisions. Joyce did the workouts scaled, but he was worried he wouldn't finish the first workout—a combination of deadlifts, bar-facing burpees and box jumps—under the time cap. Joyce did more than finish; he came in second.

The second WOD was a mix of running, rope climbs, pull-ups and wall-balls. This time, Joyce came in first. There was one workout to go. Joyce went to his car to change. Once he sat down in the car seat, "My body shut down," Joyce said. He was having trouble recovering from the lactic-acid buildup during the workout.

"I knew then it wasn't healthy to continue," Joyce said. He sat out the last workout and cheered on his fellow athletes, soaking in the atmosphere of his first CrossFit competition.

It probably won't be his last. Joyce just signed up for his Level 1 Trainer Course in July.

"I want to get involved," Joyce said. "I want to advocate for people who have struggles."

Beyond the money of the Reebok sponsorship and the flash of the big-name athletes, the CrossFit Games are about this: inspiring all of us to do more and be more—and to pass that gift along to anyone who will listen.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Intensity and Speal

CrossFit legend Chris Spealler stole the show at the South West Regional as he qualified for his sixth Games. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

May 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

If only one word could describe the South West Regional, it would be “intense.”

Spectator numbers peaked at more than 2,000 to watch 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games competitors Patrick Burke, Matt Chan, Zach Forrest and Chris Spealler battle for the top three spots at the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Castle Rock, Colo.

The individual men's competition proved to be riveting, with Spealler definitively grabbing a podium spot on Day 3 to the roars of the crowd and the entire CrossFit community.

"Just being there is a totally different experience—the intensity of workouts and the intensity the athletes bring, just how loud and crazy and emotional the crowd is about what they're seeing," said four-time South West Regional Director Skip Miller, who also owns Front Range CrossFit in Denver.

Day 1

As the Regional kicked off, there certainly was interest in how Spealler would perform.

After last year's Games, he put himself on a bodybuilding and powerlifting program for a few months. Then he enlisted Ben Bergeron as his coach. The CrossFit New England co-owner led his affiliate team to a first-place finish at the 2011 Games.

Spealler crushed the Regional's opening workout—Diane—with a then-world-record time of 1:52. The next-fastest came 26 seconds later.

Afterward, Spealler repeated his confidence in himself, saying he felt "good."

"I'm ready. Since this stuff is known, I can prepare for it," he said. "I'm ready."

But the second workout would call for the 5-foot-5, 153-lb. athlete to clean 72 lb. above his bodyweight for 30 reps.

He finished fourth in his heat and 13th overall in the event with a time of 16:10. And he was happy about it.

Had he not been preparing in the way that he had, he wouldn't have finished the workout, he said.

"Easily," Spealler added.

And that was with a hand that was bloodied by a ripped callus.

Spealler was in second place overall.

"So far so good," said a cautious Bergeron from Massachusetts at the end of Day 1. "We'll see what happens the rest of the weekend."

The two remaining days included workouts "not for an athlete Chris' size," he added. "I'm nervous about it, for sure."

Day 2

The second day started with 100-lb. one-arm dumbbell snatches and sprints. The time cap: 10 minutes.

Matt Hathcock—5 foot 9 and 210 lb.—and Nate Beard—5 foot 10, 205 lb.—tied for first place in the workout at 3:44. Spealler finished it in 6:19 without much fanfare, placing 19th in the workout and sinking to sixth place overall.

The day's second workout—a medley of back squats, pull-ups, shoulders-to-overheads, front squats and overhead squats—was a pacer, for sure. It was one many feared and few finished. In the first three men's heats, only two athletes finished within the 22-minute time cap.

But Heat 4—the last men's grouping of the day—had all the big boys: Burke, Chan, Forrest, Hathcock and, of course, Spealler. Surely most of them would finish within the allotted time. Plus, there were pull-ups—120 of them. Speal's good at pull-ups.

Sure enough: the first 40 he did unbroken. The crowd ate it up, cheering as he knocked them out, one butterfly after another.



Supplemental bodybuilding and powerlifting training added some size to Spealler's frame, and he was prepared for the heavy loads at Regionals.



When everything depended on it, Spealler pulled through and snatched 225 lb., a 10-lb. PR.

With a pace that looked relatively calm and methodical, Spealler moved on to each exercise thereafter, neck and neck with Brandon Mericle until finally edging him out during the front squats. Still, he was trailing Chan.

When all was said and done, Chan finished at 17:27 and Spealler finished 26 seconds later at 17:53—good enough for first and second place, respectively, in the workout. The next-fastest time was Forrest at 18 minutes flat.

Spealler was now in fifth place overall.

"Honestly, I think—if I'm real honest—I'm going to have to do something pretty outstanding on the snatch tomorrow," he said during a video interview at the end of the day, "and some of the guys in the top three are going to have to perform pretty poorly in the snatch tomorrow."

Day 3

By the final day, the men's competition had people on the edge of their seats.

There was talk echoing through the stadium that Speal might not make it to the Games for the first time in the history of the event.

On the [Week 2, Day 2 CrossFit Games Update show](#), Rory McKernan joked, "Rumor has it if Chris Spealler is not at the Games, they're actually going to cancel them this year."

Pat Sherwood responded: "I'd bet you would have a band of followers that would support that decision."

That might have been an understatement.

Around the world, pens and calculators were out in attempts to figure out how many points it would take for the CrossFit icon to continue his unbroken attendance streak started in 2007 at The Ranch in Aromas, Calif. And the question kept getting asked, "Is Speal going to the Games?"

So when he approached the bar loaded at 225-lb. for the snatch-ladder event, the audience held its collective breath. It was 10 lb. above his PR.

He missed.

Say it ain't so, Speal.

He approached the bar again.

And nailed it.

The typically even-keeled Spealler let out a roar and a nearly indiscernible fist pump that was met by the audience.

"(The workout) I thought that maybe he was not going to be in a position to make it matter was the snatch," Miller said. "That was the one that actually qualified him."

Yet one event remained, and it called for deadlifts. Heavy ones: 345 lb.

The workout was brutal: 3 rounds of 7 deadlifts and 7 muscle-ups, followed by 3 rounds of 21 wall-ball shots and 21 toes-to-bars, then a 100-foot farmer carry with two 100-lb. dumbbells, 28 burpee box jumps, another 100-foot carry with the dumbbells, and, finally, 3 muscle-ups.

After the announcer yelled, "Go!" all eyes were on Spealler.

The deadlifts clearly were heavy for him, but not so much so that they crippled him. He took a few extra seconds to set up than the bigger guys but managed the lifts fairly smoothly. The muscle-ups, as expected, were no problem.

Next were wall-balls. And if you didn't know any better, you'd say they were one of his strengths.

Forrest was first off the toes-to-bars, carrying his dumbbells down to the burpee box jumps. Chan blazed out afterward. Spealler reached the box once Chan was several reps in.

Forrest finished first with a time of 14:57.

Chan finished his second farmer carry and made it back to the rings, performing one muscle-up and taking a rest. Then another. Suddenly Chan jerked his head toward his left shoulder. Spealler had made his way back, dropped the dumbbells, immediately got on the rings and busted out 3 muscle-ups unbroken. The two men ended up **tying at second in the workout** with a time of 15:24.

The crowd erupted.

"Unofficial: #spealler third!!!!," was the tweet read around the globe from the official South West Regional account, satisfying the CrossFitters who had been incessantly hitting refresh for the tense minutes the event was being contested.

Officially, Spealler is going to the Games. All is right with the world.



Chris Spealler: unstoppable and unforgettable.

"That was impressive," Miller said. "You can't say more than what they're saying about Spealler right now. He did the right thing of putting himself in the right position in the right time. It was impressive."

Perhaps "intense" was wrong.

If only one word could describe the South West Regional, it probably should be "Speal."



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author:

*Andréa Maria Cecil is the North East Regional Media Director for the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games. She spent nearly 13 years as a professional journalist, most recently as managing editor of the **Central Penn Business Journal** in Harrisburg, Pa. The 33-year-old is a native of New Orleans who lives in York County, Pa. There, she's been doing CrossFit since 2008 at **CrossFit York**. Additionally, she dedicates three days a week to training in Olympic weightlifting at **McKenna's Gym**.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Sport of Fitness: SoCal

E.M. Burton presents classic images from the SoCal Regional in Pomona, Calif.

By E.M. Burton

May 2012



All images: E.M. Burton

My CrossFit Media colleagues on the field deliver the absolute best images of every exciting moment of the Regionals that lead up to the annual CrossFit Games.

Perhaps images of the action “off the field” capture moments that are not only reminiscent of another Games environment but also look forward to the main event in July in nearby Carson, Calif.

1 of 3

You could say the SoCal Regional captured a bit of the spirit of Aromas. If we pause for a moment and reflect, the scale of this growth is astounding. In 2009, just three years ago, the Games were held on Dave Castro's family farm—because they let CrossFit use it. The event rather felt like a sporting equivalent of a Grateful Dead show, porta-potties and all.

The SoCal competition at the Fairplex in Pomona, Calif., from May 11 to 13 marked my first time at a Regional event held outside, and the atmosphere really sparked excitement for the Games only a few months away. I understand Games tickets have been selling fast, and if the mood here was any kind of indication of what's to come, I can see why.



SoCal CrossFit athletes gave it their all beneath the shadow of palm trees and a roller coaster.



Lack of shade and soaring temperatures didn't deter the spectators or the athletes.



CrossFitters on the lookout for free samples and the latest snatch jokes.

As in years past, the sound of a CrossFit event is awesome. The commentating is stellar and the music is loud. It's the best kind of sporting event I can think of: competition, of course, but also the spectacle of the crowd, complete with families, food, and ... shopping. We all need sustenance and adornment, right?

The site for the SoCal Regional was this great, retro-'70s theme park that was evocative of simpler days, a lovely spot on which to overlay our new millennium fitness agenda with old-school functional movements.

And if there's one thing I hope you can't miss in these images, it's that this is CrossFit—in Southern California.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Kids Travel

Mikki Lee Martin outlines a game that will set your kids on a one-way trip to fitness.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

May 2012



All Images: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

Set-Up and Equipment

Create two coned areas, about 8 x 10 feet, aligned next to each other 10 feet apart. For both teams, create a line of cones from the center of one edge of the 8 x 10 area. These lines should be parallel and measure at least 15 feet and up to 20 feet depending on class size.

"Baggage"

- 4 25-lb. bumper plates
- 6 15-lb. bumper plates
- 6 10-lb. bumper plates
- 6 medicine balls, 10-14 lb.
- 6 medicine balls, 4-8 lb.
- An even number of 5- to 15-lb. sandbags

Rules of Play

Divide the group into two teams, which might be named for destinations, such as Hawaii and the Bahamas. Teams line up along the coned line shoulder to shoulder, with all team members facing the same direction and both teams facing each other. All baggage should be in the 8 x 10 area.

On 3, 2, 1... go! teams pass baggage down the line. Every team member must hold and pass each object until all baggage has been offloaded to the end of the line ("Baggage Claim"). Baggage must be safely handled and piled neatly at the end of the line or the trainer ("TSA") may call a delay of 30 seconds for it to be put in order.

If a team member is skipped, that piece of baggage becomes "lost" and goes to an "unknown" area. The team will have to find it later and place it with the other baggage.

Once all baggage has been moved to Baggage Claim, the team runs 400 meters together. When the team returns from the run, the kids get back in line and return the baggage to the starting point.



Baggage handlers?



A 400-meter run gives kids a chance to practice sprinting to the gate when their parents are late for a flight.

Notes

Consider the size of kids when choosing teams. Teams should be relatively equal in size and capacity.

Music helps them move faster.

Have two trainers available for the run—one for each team. If staffing does not allow for this, other exercises can be substituted for the 400-meter run; for example, each child does 5 push-ups, one at a time down the line.

All team members must be back in line before the team can begin to move baggage back to the starting point.

If a team has any lost baggage, they must find it prior to lining up after the 400-meter run.

If any team members walk during the run, the team must do 10 burpees in line before returning the baggage to the starting point.

This WOD/Game can be repeated to extend the time. As a point of reference, our 6-person teams of 5- to 12-year-olds took an average of 5 minutes to complete 1 round.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Hey, Smoothie!

E.M. Burton and David "Chef" Wallach go over the finer points of a post-workout or meal-replacement shake.

By E.M. Burton

May 2012



All images: E.M. Burton

CrossFit teaches a way of eating that considers both macronutrient balance and food quality. As most athletes know, by weighing and measuring intake and recording it using various metrics, you can tweak your diet to check and improve its effect on your performance.

I have been blending up a version of this smoothie nearly daily for years, having discovered its overall benefits when I was focusing my nutritional goals in preparation for pregnancy. I like it at breakfast, but with some adjustments it could make the base for a recovery shake or mid-afternoon snack.

1 of 4

It's also good for people who happen to like blenders in general, or even those of us who just like to watch things spin around.

In the video below, I explore the humorous side of weighing and measuring and respond to the oft-heard comment, "Oh, I am so not gonna weigh and measure my food, dude," making a case for the necessity of measuring.

Video: [HD](#) [SD](#) [WMV](#)

Ingredients	Blocks
1 cup almond milk	1 CHO, 2 FAT
½ cup blueberries	1 CHO
3 inches of banana	1 CHO
21 grams protein, powdered (7 g = 1B PRO)	3 PRO
¼ tsp. sunflower seeds	1 FAT
2 tsp. pumpkin seeds	1 FAT
Fish oil (your daily dose)	

It's OK to go over on the fat blocks; I would triple those quantities. Also, if you're measuring your performance in any way, be precise with unfavorable carbohydrates (banana, for example) or eliminate them completely. Reintroduce them later and test your results against their inclusion.

Depending on your individual nutritional needs and interests, you can add just about anything to this as a booster. I often add a teaspoon of powdered minerals and a green powder, such as spirulina, and active culture capsules.

Protein Powder?

This smoothie makes use of protein powder, a substance with which many athletes are familiar, but to which I hadn't given much thought until recently.

Protein powder is derived from many possible sources, and one might consider timing as a factor in the selection of protein source. According to Wikipedia—and bodybuilders everywhere—whey-based protein supplements are best to take directly following a workout, while casein-based supplements are best taken before bed because they are more slowly digested.

I use whey protein powder, and it seems as if it's a general choice, as "hydrolysed whey protein is the most popular protein hydrolysate among athletes. Whey protein has been singled out as the ultimate source of protein on the basis of an excellent amino acid profile" (3).

I'm still curious, however. My friend David "Chef" Wallach knows way more about this stuff than I do, so I sought his wise counsel. He owns CrossFit Rubicon in Vienna, Va.

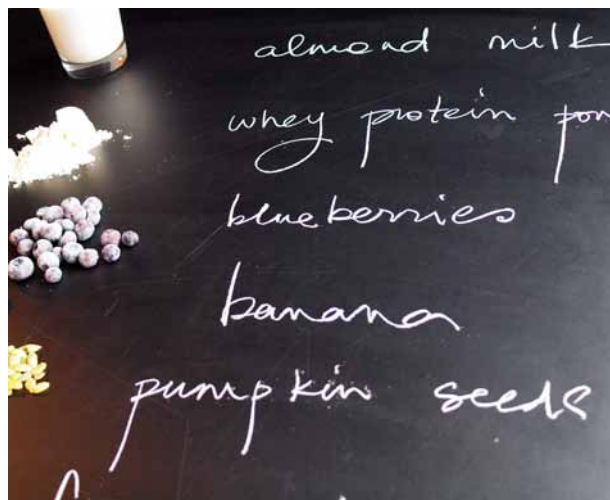
We come at performance nutrition from different backgrounds: he with his many years of clinical experience with performance nutrition, and I with all my years of experience eating. Together, we cover a wide spectrum.

I'm not sure, but I think I even taunted Chef with the mention of soy. I suggested that one could use soymilk as an alternate. What matters most was what he said next.

Chef: Why almond milk and not grass-fed, raw milk? If the option is available, milk is a far better choice across the board.

Me: Hey, wait. I thought dairy was bad and inflammatory and all that?

Chef: Dairy is inflammatory "and all that stuff" only when it's factory-raised, grain-fed dairy. Grass-fed dairy and its constituent fats are health promoting. And why are your ratios nearly even? Since when do CrossFitters eat balanced block ratios? In Nicole Carroll's *CrossFit Journal* piece [Getting off the Crack](#), she notes that as a population we would be far better off eating anywhere from two to five times the fat for a meal replacement (MRP) version of this shake. This particular shake at 3-3-3 is fructose-heavy and would have to be completely rewritten to be of use post-workout.



Just as you measure your workouts, so should you measure your nutrition.



For a post-workout shake, consider scaling down the fructose-heavy fruit and introducing some sweet potato.

Me: <Silent whimper>

(He's right, of course. I go way high on the fat for myself but was gunning for "pure" balance in the recipe.)

Chef: After a workout, you require a simple starch/sugar, the majority of which should not be fructose. Dextrose, waxy maize, sweet potato—all are fine, but not all fruit. PWO (post-workout) will also require no fat. Also, I tell my athletes daily that if they want to celebrate their diversity, they may use the word "smoothie" twice per class; otherwise, it's a "shake." And "shake" means creamy, smooth, frozen deliciousness—not room-temp, watery Neandercrap And for the love of all that is good and right in this world, please do not mix, eat or drink this in a locker room. I can think of a dozen better places to have my PWO nutrition than in a room full of naked, sweaty men. But if that works for you, fly your flag high.

Thankfully, Chef was happy to share his shake recipe.

Chef: Here is a quick and nearly perfect PWO choice that takes advantage of the heightened insulin sensitivity PWO, shuttling these structural and enzymatic proteins right to where you want them most. You want to avoid the preferred path of fructose right to the replenishment of liver glycogen and let the simple starch in the yam go to muscle-glycogen stores where you most need it. This starts the repair process and acts as the appropriate shuttle, preparing the cycle for the next workout directly.

Chef Shake

The ratio of carbohydrates and protein should reflect what kind of workout you just did. After a long-haul slogger that took an hour (like heavy Murph), go with 4:1. A max-effort deadlift day with a single Tabata session should be as low as 2:1. Duration, tempo, intensity, volume and load all play a part in choosing the right amount of protein and the right ratio.

Ingredient Choices

Whey protein or egg whites—Egg whites are the least expensive quality protein on Earth. Both can be grass-fed and eco-organic. If you choose freeze-dried animal protein, that's your call.

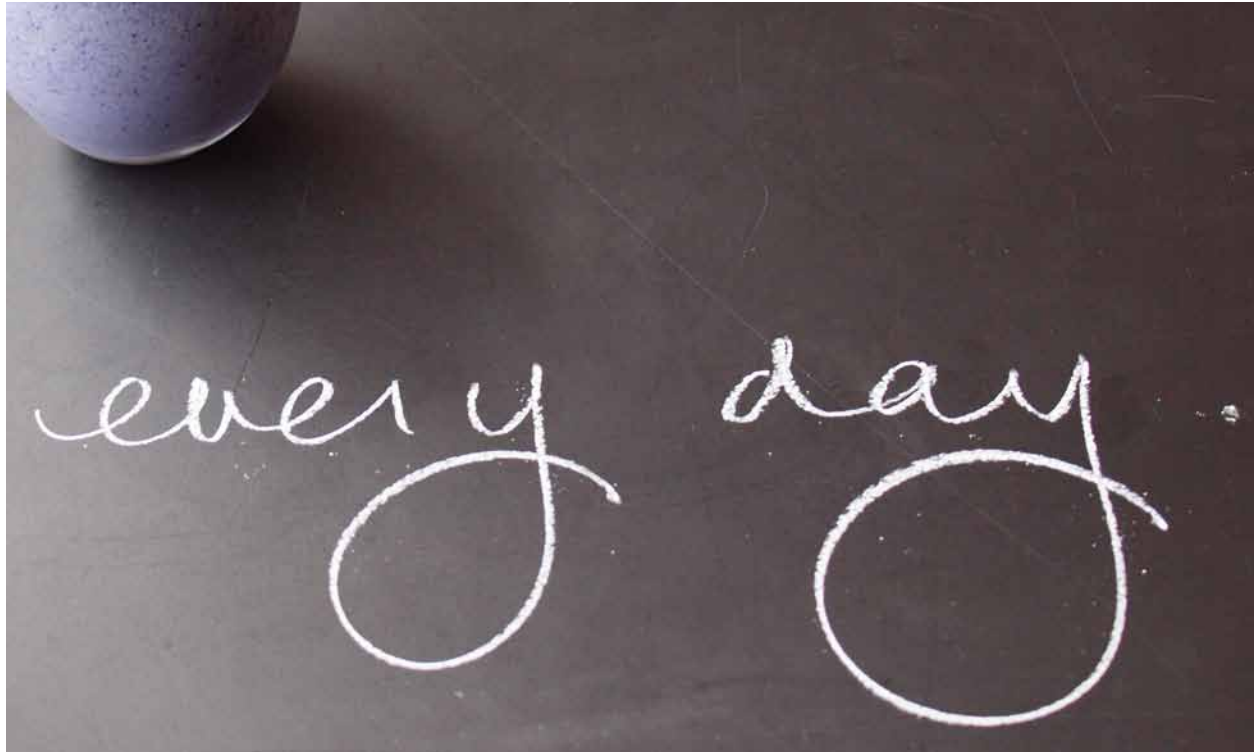
Sweet potato—The right kind of carbohydrate and happens to be delicious.

Coconut water—Not the perfect sugar, but its mineral balance is good, and it adds a lot of good flavor to the mix. Don't like this choice? Use plain water.

Coffee cubes—Do not throw out that last pot of coffee; freeze it into ice cubes. There is decent science that PWO caffeine can do good things with protein synthesis and act as both a vasodilator to get goodies where they need to go and cool you down faster. It's a minor benefit, perhaps, but a very real one.

Cinnamon—A whole teaspoon for flavor. Cinnamon tastes great and is a good glucose partitioner. Of course, you could do 60 mg of R-ALA 10 minutes before the shake and get the best legal glucose partitioner you can buy.

Flavors—Add a big pinch of dried orange rind or a tiny pinch of grated orange zest and you have a PWO treat.



If you change the ingredients depending on your workout, this smoothie can be a daily treat.

Notes

No fat in a PWO shake. An hour after your workout, sure, fat is your friend. But you do not want to slow down the gastric-emptying process PWO; it's the only time of the day you want to digest this luscious treat as fast as you can. If you want to get this engineered for an MRP-styled shake quickly, add your favorite fat. Most lean toward nut and seed fats, and macadamia butter is great with this one.

Chef: The fact that it's pretty damn primal is cool, too. It works, tastes great and avoids processed proteins and "value-added" crap that you don't need, as well as the huge profit made by those who process and market it for you. Be very careful taking protein-source advice from anyone who sells it.

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