

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

June 2012

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

“He Will Find a Way”

Chris Spealler continues his preparation: He’s going to the Reebok CrossFit Games to win. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

June 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

There’s one reason Chris Spealler is going to this year’s CrossFit Games.

“Honestly, I’m going to win,” he said. “I’m not going to have fun.”

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After managing a third-place finish at the South West Regional with a performance nothing short of remarkable, the iconic CrossFitter is forging ahead in his preparation for his sixth consecutive Games July 13-15 in Carson, Calif.

**“But for me to see that stuff
and still compete with the
guys that I did, if anything, it
boosts my confidence.”**

—Chris Spealler

The Regional workouts were “definitely not programming that favors me (and) probably the furthest thing from what I hope to see come up,” Spealler said.

“But for me to see that stuff and still compete with the guys that I did,” he adds, “if anything, it boosts my confidence.”

On the final day of the Regional, Ben Bergeron, Spealler’s coach and the co-owner CrossFit New England, was in Massachusetts reading texts arriving by the second from James Hobart. The CFNE affiliate team member was at the event, giving Bergeron a play-by-play on Spealler.

Bergeron was nervous.

“As a coach to somebody that’s been to all the Games and this is the first time ... coaching him, there’s pressure on me, for sure,” he said. “If he doesn’t make it, is it my programming?”

Still, Bergeron said he was also “quietly confident.”

“I knew Chris had done the work,” he said.

Spealler did make it.

And when Bergeron found out it was official, he celebrated in his own way.

“I did a fist pump, hugged my wife, Heather, and then went outside and stared at the sun with my eyes closed,” he said.

The Road Ahead

For the period before the Games, Spealler will adhere to training similar to that of his preparation for the Regional.

“Maintain the strength, but try to work on weaknesses,” Bergeron said. “Keep the athlete confident.”

He continued: “For Chris, what kept him off the podium (in 2011) was heavier weights and higher loads. We attacked that really, really hard.”

In the two months leading up to the Regional, the programming changed to “try to get his met-cons back,” Bergeron said.

He also timed Spealler’s rest intervals and reviewed them in workout videos Spealler sent to Bergeron every day.

Spealler is “a good athlete,” Bergeron said, so he can lift heavy.

“(It’s) how quickly can you get through it,” he explained.

Generally, the focus will be on strength with programming that includes heavier weight at higher repetitions, followed by improving conditioning.



***Bergeron, top, is recognized as one of CrossFit’s
top coaches and programmers.***

"Working on weaknesses, but at the same time we want to maintain strength," Bergeron said. "Training for the Games is definitely like training for the Regionals. They're going to throw some stuff that's outside the box."

"I think there's still a lot of room for me to make some improvements before showing up at the Games. (I'm) trying to change up the stimulus."

—Chris Spealler

Spealler, meanwhile, said he still can make gains.

"I think there's still a lot of room for me to make some improvements before showing up at the Games," he said. "(I'm) trying to change up the stimulus."



Spealler's rapid-fire handstand push-ups earned him a first-place finish for Event 1, with a time of 1:52.

As for his coach, Spealler had good things to say about Bergeron, whom he spoke to shortly after his podium finish at the Regional.

"He was super cool, congratulated me and told me I definitely kept him on the edge of his seat," the CrossFit Park City owner said. "He's been great at setting some goals between now and the Games. We're going to try to move forward with the programming."

A Regional to Remember

Arguably, the South West Regional was one of the most competitive men's regions in the world.

Spealler entered the three-day event ranked second based on his Open performance, behind fellow 2011 Games competitor Zach Forrest. Patrick Burke and Matt Chan, who also competed at last year's Games, were vying for top spots, too.

After a then-record-setting time of 1:52 in the first workout—Diane—Spealler remained in second place overall. The performance was patented Spealler: lightning-fast. But the day's second workout would be different: a 2,000-meter row, 50 pistols and then the killer: 30 225-lb. hang cleans. In other words: 5-foot-5 Spealler would have to clean 72 lb. above his body weight from a less-than-ideal position. He finished the workout in 16:10, placing 13th in the event. Still, he held on to second overall.

"For Chris, what kept him off the podium (in 2011) was heavier weights and higher loads. We attacked that really, really hard."

—Ben Bergeron

Had it not been for Bergeron's coaching, as well as the bodybuilding and powerlifting regime to which he had been adhering for the months following last year's Games, Spealler wouldn't have finished that workout, he said afterward.

The next days wouldn't be any kinder to "an athlete Chris' size," Bergeron said at the end of Day 1.

Saturday brought one-armed 100-lb. dumbbell snatches and sprints. Again, Spealler managed the weight. It didn't look easy, but it didn't crush him. At 6:19, he placed 19th in the workout. The finish sunk him to sixth overall.

In the second event of the day—just like in the second event of the previous day—Spealler was calm and methodical in his approach. The medley of back squats, pull-ups, shoulders-to-overheads, front squats and overhead squats was a workout few men finished in the first three heats. Spealler came in second, behind Matt Chan, at 17:53. He bumped up one notch to fifth overall.

But, alas, there was still a day to go. And it was equally—if not, more—unforgiving than its predecessors.

**"Things were really difficult.
I was still ready."**

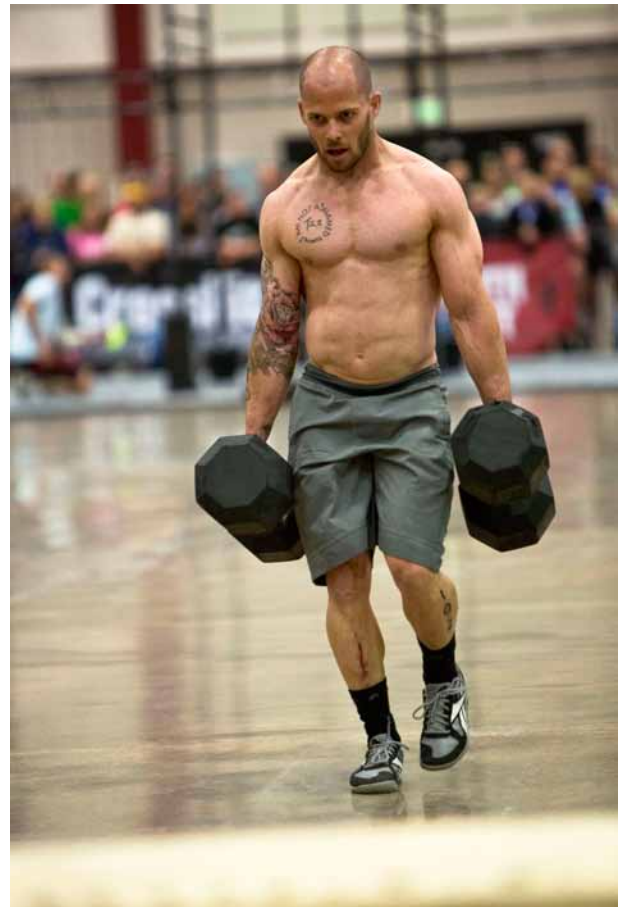
—Chris Spealler

First, a snatch ladder from 155 to 295 lb. Spealler hit 225 lb.—a 10-lb. PR—on his second attempt to roars of the crowd. He edged up to fourth overall. For the final workout, the brutality was: 3 rounds of 7 deadlifts at 345 lb. 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.

It was the event that had spectators both giddy with anticipation and anxious with thoughts that Spealler might not go to the Games for the first time. The result was impressive to witness.

It was clear something was different about Spealler. The deadlifts were heavy, but not impossible. The wall-balls were many, but smooth.

And although Chan outpaced him after the last set of toes-to-bars, Spealler caught up. As Chan rested between each of the last 3 muscle-ups, Spealler dropped his dumbbells and immediately jumped on the rings for three unbroken reps. The two men ended up tied for second in the workout at 15:24.



After setting a 10-lb. PR in the snatch ladder, Spealler knew he had a shot at the Games if he performed well in the grueling Event 6.

Chan won the Regional; Burke came in second.

"(There was) nothing more that I could have done (to) prepare," Spealler said in the week following the Regional. "Things were really difficult. I was still ready."

Although he knew he had a challenging road ahead after Day 2, Spealler said he never entertained the idea of not going to the Games.

"I was still hopeful," he said. "I knew that there was a chance."

And as riveting as the last event was, it wasn't the workout that would send him to California.

"The snatch is what made the biggest difference, for sure," Spealler said.

Going into the last day, Bergeron described his mood as nervous, once again.

"I knew the other guys' numbers," he said. "He had to hit 225."

As for the final workout, Spealler had already done it at his own box.

"So I knew what I was in for," he said. "It was still pretty nasty, though."

Plus, Bergeron had given him a strategy, of sorts, for the workout: "Don't worry about the last 3 muscle-ups. They're going to be there."

So they were.

Realistic Expectations

Spealler's best placing at the Games came in 2010, when he finished third and won the Spirit of the Games Award. It was the first time the legendary CrossFitter had reached the podium. But it didn't quell his desire for first place.

Hence, the bodybuilding and powerlifting routine that began shortly after the 2011 Games. It involved eating about 4,700 calories a day, as well as decidedly un-CrossFit-like exercises, such as the Tate press, biceps curls and lateral raises. At his heaviest, Spealler had gained 11 lb. At the Regional, he was 153 lb., 8 lb. heavier than he was at last year's Games.

**"Spealler finds a way. He
always finds a way."**

—Zach Forrest

"I think Chris still has a shot of winning the Games," Bergeron said. "Rich (Froning) is still (at the) forefront and a leader, and there's a few others that are really strong. A lot depends on the programming."

"Does he have the potential? Absolutely. But there's 10 to 15 guys who have that potential," said Forrest, who spends time with Spealler as a fellow HQ trainer. "He definitely has the potential (to podium), but I don't think it's going to be as easy as it was in previous years."

Having said that, he added that he looks forward to training with Spealler because "you're always going to learn something."

Undoubtedly, he will be one of the most exciting athletes to watch at this year's Games, Forrest noted.

"There are times when you think, 'Oh my God, this is going to crush him,' and he kills it. Spealler finds a way. He always finds a way," he said. "If it's possible, he will find a way."



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

CrossFit Changed My ... Wife?

Corey Lapell explains how he revitalized his marriage by introducing his partner to CrossFit.

By **Corey and Sunghee Lapell** CrossFit Vancouver

June 2012



All images: Courtesy of Corey and Sunghee Lapell

I never imagined my wife as a CrossFitter.

Born 1967 in Seoul, South Korea, Sunghee's only exposure to athletics growing up was gym class. Sunghee is an art teacher by training and profession, and sports did not become part of her life until after we were married in 1998. In fact, on our first date I took her for a walk in North Vancouver's Lynn Canyon, and she barely made it up the steps climbing out of the canyon!

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In 2001, Sunghee got involved in dragon boating on recreational teams—her first sporting experience—and in 2008 she became a certified hatha yoga instructor. By that time, I had been CrossFitting in my garage for a couple of years, and though she had joined in a couple of workouts, I didn't see evidence that she had the fire or desire for high-intensity training. Her yoga kept her fit—or so we thought.

Certainly, Sunghee's yoga practice provided her with an excellent functional range of motion, but it did not help relieve chronic back problems. The cause: lifting our then-4-year-old son. Hundreds of chiropractic and massage dollars later, her back remained problematic, and the shallow lumbar curve of her spine left her no margin for error.

By winter 2008, we had an additional problem. Besides reinjuring her back, Sunghee was suffering from severe fatigue necessitating daily afternoon naps and significantly cutting down on her productivity and enjoyment of life. After a trip to our family doctor and some blood work, Sunghee returned with a label of "borderline anemic" and a prescription for iron supplementation.



Yoga did nothing to relieve Sunghee's chronic back problems, fatigue and anemia.

"The motivation to introduce my wife to CrossFit came about instead as an attempt to revitalize our marriage."

—Corey Lapell

Sunghee: "I thought playing with my son would tire him out enough so that he'd take a nap. Instead, after our play sessions I found myself exhausted and I was the one napping."

None of Sunghee's problems appeared to me to be treatable through exercise. In fact, I would have at that time recommended against high-intensity training that might reinjure her back and would certainly deplete what limited energy stores she possessed.

The motivation to introduce her to CrossFit came about instead as an attempt to revitalize our marriage.

"Here, Drink This."

In January 2009 I had begun regularly attending group classes at CrossFit Vancouver, and I was completely in love with the people and the vibrant community. I would return home flushed from another brutal WOD to my aching, tired and uninspired wife only to rave on about my coaches and classmates. I would talk about who did this, who said that, etc. Pretty soon I started noticing Sunghee tiredly rolling her eyes as I launched into another post-WOD tale as she tried to feign interest.

Sunghee: "I felt like Corey was living in a different world. Corey would return home so energized, and I couldn't relate. It seemed like he was living in a vibrant world that I could not imagine."

After a decade of marriage, there was no doubt that we were drifting apart. CrossFit Vancouver had given me a new life, a life that Sunghee just wasn't a part of. That was my eureka moment. I knew for certain that if only she could meet the great folks of my newfound community that she would be just as enthusiastic as I was.

I was by that time already a Level 1 CrossFit coach, but recalling my failed attempts as driving instructor from early in our marriage, I had a moment of uncommon wisdom: I decided to hire an outsider to safeguard our marriage and get Sunghee through her personal-training sessions.

I chose veteran CrossFit Vancouver coach Chris (The Shepherd) Saini, an energetic, fun-loving, caring, people person I knew would take care of my wife without letting her slack off.

A Cleansing by Pukie

In March 2008 I recall my wife returning home after her intro session.

"How did it go?" I asked.

"I puked," Sunghee answered, "It was awesome!"

I knew then that there was hope.

Sunghee: "I felt like I already knew all the characters at CrossFit Vancouver thanks to Corey's daily sharing. The workout was so hard, but it felt cleansing, like a new start to my life."

When Sunghee first joined me for some home WODs, she needed to do her push-ups standing against the wall because she wasn't strong enough to do them from her knees or on a bench. By December 2008, after just nine months of CrossFitting, she completed all Murph's 200 push-ups from her toes. It was one of those defining CrossFit moments.

"I puked. It was awesome!"

—Sunghee Lapell

Veteran CrossFit competitor Jen Dober described watching Sunghee struggling for one last good push-up, failing and trying again as one of her most inspiring CrossFit moments.



Sunghee puked after her first WOD, but that didn't stop her.



Her health problems disappeared after a few months of CrossFit, and 43-year-old Sunghee says she now has the energy of a 20-year-old.

Sunghee: "My last push-up took what felt like 20 minutes. I'd completed 199 full push-ups and just kept failing on the last one, but I was determined to finish! I had to get up and walk around the gym before coming back to get that last push-up."

New Life, New Energy

Sunghee and I continue to build our lives and that of our son around the great community that owner and scotch-bottle-saint Craig Patterson has built for "his people."

Our son is 8 years old now and must weigh in excess of 60 lb., and my dainty, darling, petite wife, now also a Level 1 CrossFit coach, can haul his sleepy, sagging body from car booster seat to bedroom without any help from me and without any pain in her previously troublesome back. She sports a healthy and attractive lumbar curve that makes her more functional today at 43 than she was when I married her almost 13 years ago.

And what about her low energy, borderline anemia and iron supplements? Within her first month of CrossFit training, there was no trace of any such issue. Afternoon naps are a rarity, iron pills are no longer on our shopping list, and she has more energy than the girl I married ever did—even after completing her daily WOD.

Sunghee: "I feel 20 years younger. I couldn't imagine having this much energy or good health. I believed that fatigue and loss of function were inevitable results of aging. CrossFit gave me the life I always wanted. Every CrossFit workout is like my life in microcosm as I face the challenge of getting to the gym and getting through another brutal WOD, but when I am done—the sense of accomplishment! The rest of my day is easy; I am ready for any challenge. CrossFit has taken (and continues to take) my life to new levels."

CrossFit and the CrossFit Vancouver community have given us a level of health and function we never imagined possible.

“Soon it’s all we were
talking about at home
around the dinner table:
CrossFit stories and stories
about CrossFitters.”

—Corey Lapell

And what about our marriage? Sunghee loved the CrossFit Vancouver community every bit as much as I did. Its members are some of the best people we have met in our lives. Pretty soon it was all we were talking about at home around the dinner table: CrossFit stories and stories about CrossFitters.

Sunghee: “Wherever I go I talk about CrossFit, I feel like a walking, talking CrossFit advertisement.”

It was so bad that her sisters—Team Princess—were soon curious enough to check it out and see what all the fuss was about.

And what happened when the lovely and fragile Korean princesses stepped into CrossFit Vancouver’s rough industrial playground? Well, that’s a story for another article.



About the Authors



Corey Lapell is a Level 1 CrossFit coach and the first graduate of CrossFit Vancouver’s Apprenticeship Program. Outside CrossFit training, he is part owner of [Delta Kaigan Judo](#) and of [Epic Nutrients](#), a company that provides premium-grade fish oil specifically for CrossFit athletes. As a Blauer Tactical-certified PDR coach, Corey also acts as a director and instructor for the Canadian Personal Defence Institute.



Sunghee Lapell is a Level 1 CrossFit coach, a certified hatha yoga instructor and laughter-yoga leader. She is the owner of [Forthejoyofyoga.com](#).

THE CrossFit[®] *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

LEMON LEGS

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

overview

This tangy delight will have your kids asking you to make it again and again. Just be sure to have plenty of napkins ready for their lemony little paws!

1-2 legs per serving

ingredients

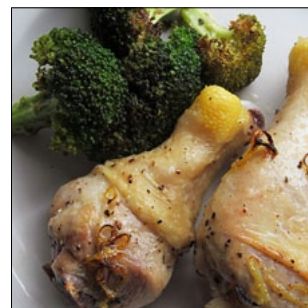
2 lb. of chicken drumsticks
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
2 tbsp. olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

notes

Serve with a side of your child's favorite vegetable.

directions

1. In an 8 x 8 glass dish, combine the lemon zest and juice, olive oil, salt, and pepper.
2. Add the drumsticks and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
3. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Toss the drumsticks to coat again. Bake for 40 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 160 F.
4. Enjoy!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Sleeping for Performance

How much does sleep affect your athletic performance?

Martin Rawls-Meehan explains the science behind getting enough rest.

By Martin Rawls-Meehan

June 2012



All images: Pascal Shirley

Think back for a moment to what your life was like before you were introduced to CrossFit.

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What did you eat? How did you work out? How did you measure your fitness from one week to the next?

Good sleep is one of the most important elements of health maintenance, as well as athletic performance and improvement.

If you're like most of us, you probably thought about what you ate a bit. Maybe your diet was based loosely on some nutritional tips you'd picked up along the way, but it probably wasn't based on sound science. The same probably can be said for how you worked out. You used

the machines that were available and probably picked up workout tips from friends, coaches, magazines, etc. Chances are you never did a squat snatch before CrossFit, nor did you stay away from bread and grains in favor of lean meat, nuts, seeds and veggies. Now compare your level of fitness and health now to then. Big difference, right?

CrossFit's workout methodology is based on science. Like science, it is continually evolving. Similarly, Paleo nutrition principles are based on science and an evolutionary framework. Workout methodology and nutrition are two essential elements of fitness and general well-being. When you follow scientifically sound principles that are consistently tested, proven and refined within a large community of experimenters, you are going to see strong results. For many of us, the results have been quite amazing.

Sleep: Another Key to Fitness

How much do you think about how well you sleep? How important do you think sleep is to your CrossFit performance? What about your general health?



Stay up too late watching a Real Housewives of Orange County marathon, and it will haunt you during your WOD.

If you're like most, you probably don't think much about how well you sleep. All know they feel better when they sleep more, so you probably want to sleep well and are upset when you don't sleep as much as you want.

Exercise, nutrition and sleep make a virtuous circle comprising the three essential elements of fitness.

But getting good sleep is more than just sleeping more, and it does a whole lot more for you than make you feel a little better during the day. Good sleep is one of the most important elements of health maintenance, as well as athletic performance and improvement.

Like the science of nutrition and exercise, sleep science has been undergoing a revolution over the last few decades. Researchers are beginning to understand how sleep impacts our performance over the short term and long term.

Just how much can sleep impact you as an athlete? Consider the following:

- Researchers conducted a study of over 30 years of National Football League game data and demonstrated that teams that traveled three time zones to play night games experienced disrupted sleep and exercise schedules and were 67 percent more likely to lose even when the point spread was factored in (1).
- Studies have shown that athletes who consistently get around 10 hours of sleep per night show marked improvement in strength, speed, agility and reaction time (2).
- Athletes who get around 10 hours of sleep demonstrate significantly better muscle memory for movements learned the day before (3).

- People who don't get enough sleep are more prone to diabetes, obesity, hypertension and other various cardiometabolic and endocrine disorders (4).
- Researchers have shown that just a few days of little to no sleep impact the body's insulin sensitivity by more than 25 percent in normal, healthy people. This essentially brings them to a pre-diabetic state—the equivalent of gaining 18 to 30 lb. (4).
- Military research shows that sleep-deprived soldiers demonstrate decreased ability in marksmanship, judgment and overall performance in mental and physical tasks (5).
- People who don't sleep enough are often more irritable because the brain works differently when we are sleep deprived (3). An irritable athlete usually is not a positive athlete. Thus, sleep deprivation can rob you of the mental edge necessary for success.

To see significant improvements in performance, we have to train right and eat right. But without enough sleep, that work is wasted and could even be harmful for a body so sleep deprived it can't heal itself. Exercise, nutrition and sleep make a virtuous circle comprising the three essential elements of fitness. You can't achieve your body's maximum potential in athletic performance or be at peak levels of health unless you pay attention and work hard at all elements.

The good news is that ... there are ways for you to improve your sleeping habits and realize your maximum potential as an athlete.

The good news is that—like nutrition has Paleo and exercise has CrossFit—there are ways for you to improve your sleeping habits and realize your maximum potential as an athlete. But before we get into that, let's delve a little deeper into the science behind why sleep is important to health and athletic performance.

The Four Stages of Sleep

Sleep occurs in cycles throughout the night, with each sleep cycle taking approximately 90 minutes. Our body's biological clock controls all of this, and technically the sleep cycle is one of our many circadian rhythms. There are four identifiable stages in each sleep cycle; each has a significant impact on athletic performance and improvement.

- Stage 1: Lasts for about 20 minutes and is the stage where the heart rate slows and the body temperature begins to cool. Brain activity during this time shows up in "spindles," which are essentially tightly packed brain-wave patterns. These spindles have been linked to muscle memory and internalizing movements learned during the day (3,6).
- Stages 2 and 3: Stage 2 is the transition from light to deep sleep, and Stage 3 is complete deep sleep where the body produces very slow delta waves. This stage of sleep is often called "slow-wave sleep," or SWS. During this stage, human growth hormone, or HGH, is released and blood rushes from the brain to the muscles to initiate recovery and re-energize your body (3,4). Up to 70 percent of the body's daily production of HGH might occur during this state (7). Additionally, elements of the parasympathetic nervous system are triggered while the sympathetic nervous system is suppressed. All this supports immune function and normal glucose metabolism during the day (4).
- Stage 4: Otherwise known as "rapid-eye-movement sleep," or REM. This is the stage where we dream. Our arms and legs are paralyzed, and this is the only stage of sleep where the body doesn't actually move. This stage of sleep is associated with learning and memory retention, where the hippocampus transfers and filters the day's information to the neocortex (3), kind of like a computer uploading information and clearing its RAM onto a hard drive.

During the first few cycles, deep-sleep periods are longer and REM periods are shorter, but after the fourth cycle, REM periods become much longer and the deep-sleep phases much shorter.

Important Benefits of Slow-Wave Sleep

- Maximum natural production of HGH: This is a hormone that the body naturally produces. If you want to get stronger and faster, then you need your body to maximize natural production. You only can do this by getting adequate amounts of deep sleep. While it is true that most of the HGH released during the night is released in the first few sleep cycles, research has shown that sleep deprivation can throw this off and eliminate the HGH bursts we get in the first few cycles of sleep (3).
- Suppression of cortisol production: High levels of cortisol in the night create insulin resistance in the morning, and it is linked to cardiometabolic disorders such as Type 2 diabetes, as well as memory loss and cognitive impairment (3,7). Additionally, if you are a Paleo and/or Zone practitioner, it will significantly throw off your body's ability to process glucose throughout the day.
- Suppression of sympathetic nervous system in favor of parasympathetic nervous system: The sympathetic nervous system is what is activated under stress, whereas the parasympathetic nervous system is what the body activates to recover and recuperate (4).
- Release of prolactin, which has been shown to be connected to proper immune system function (4).

Insufficient REM sleep has a negative impact on the brain as a whole and causes it to function abnormally.

Important Benefits of REM Sleep and Stage 1 Sleep

Spindles are critical to the brain's ability to transfer learned muscle movements to permanent memory (3,6).

It is the period where the hippocampus transfers information to the neocortex, allowing us to recall information, motor skills and other important information when we wake up (3). Without enough REM sleep, we can't remember and internalize important movements. Therefore, athletes in sports that require highly skilled movements—like the snatch, clean and jerk, and muscle-up, where fractions of an inch are the difference between success and failure—need enough REM sleep to maintain and improve performance.

Insufficient REM sleep has a negative impact on the brain as a whole and causes it to function abnormally. As a consequence, the hippocampus works less and other parts of the brain, like the amygdala, work more. Because the amygdala is associated with rage and aggression, sleep-deprived people often are more irritable and moody (3). Because a positive attitude is so important to a sport like CrossFit, athletes simply can't afford lapses that will cause them to lose their positive edge.

Steps to Sleeping for Performance

Make a decision here and now that sleep is an integral part of your training and that you are going to take it as seriously as exercise and nutrition.

**Block out at least nine hours
a day for sleep—ideally 10
hours. You might not actually
sleep that long, but that
should be your goal.**

Block out at least nine hours a day for sleep—ideally 10 hours. You might not actually sleep that long, but that should be your goal. We often fall short of what we set out to do, so if you set out to do nine, you might only get eight, which basically is the minimum for an athlete. That said,



***"You were up late reading CrossFit Journal articles,
weren't you?"***

everyone has unique sleep needs. If you think you need nine and half hours a night to perform at a peak level, then find that out. How do you know if you are sleeping enough? If you consistently wake up feeling good without an alarm clock, that is a strong sign you're close to where you need to be in terms of sleep.

The Do's

- Eat better. Better nutrition helps sleep. In turn, sleep helps metabolism. It's a cycle. To maximize the benefits of nutrition and sleep, you need to do both well.
- Give up smoking or any other form of tobacco (3).
- Perform WODs in the late afternoon or early evening, finishing the workout before 7:30 p.m., if possible. Your circadian rhythms prime your body for peak performance during this time. In contrast, early morning and late night are the circadian-rhythm low points for performance. If you do multiple workouts in a day, try to put the hardest one in the late afternoon or early evening and avoid doing any workouts too early or too late in the day.
- When doing particularly hard workouts during a day or the course of a week or month, be sure to get extra sleep during that time to maximize your gains.
- Keep your room dark, quiet and cool at night. Light, hot temperatures and noise can disrupt sleep patterns and cause you to sleep poorly.



Sleeping like a fit, well-tanned baby.

The Don'ts

- Avoid caffeine after the early afternoon (3,8). Caffeine can keep you up and shorten the length of time you sleep (9).
- Do not eat a big meal or have alcohol within 3 hours of going to bed (3,8).
- Avoid taking long naps during the day. Sometimes it's unavoidable, but try to keep them under 30 minutes to avoid throwing off your biological clock. Taking long naps can have a similar effect on the body as jet lag. If you need to take a nap that is longer than 30 minutes, try to get in at least one full sleep cycle—about 90 minutes—to avoid feeling groggy.
- Don't wake up early to do a workout and keep yourself from getting enough sleep. You are moving backward, not forward. The body needs sleep like it needs water. You wouldn't deprive yourself of water so you could work out, right? Of course not; it would be counterproductive.
- Do not watch anything on an electronic screen right before bed. These screens emit blue light, which essentially inhibits production of melatonin and prevents sleep. If you need to watch TV, etc., before bed, then buy a pair of blue-light-blocking sunglasses for a few dollars and wear them while watching. You'll notice the difference in sleepiness right away.

Sleep Systems

For a good night's rest, you need a good sleep system. Full disclosure: I helped found a company that sells sleep systems.

You spend one-third of your life in bed, so it's worth it to get the right system. Disruption of sleep—be it tossing and turning or actually waking up—throws off your sleep patterns and deprives you of the true benefits of sleep. Many people wake up and toss and turn because they sleep on an uncomfortable surface that cuts off circulation to their muscles during the night.

Here's what I recommend:

- A mattress made primarily of natural materials. Synthetics, including urethane and memory foam, might emit harmful volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that create an unhealthy environment around the bed.
- A mattress that creates airflow from top to bottom. Airflow keeps you cool at night. A cool sleeping environment helps you sleep better and undisturbed.
- A mattress with softness/firmness you can customize.
- A foundation with head and foot adjustability to allow for relaxation and a comfortable sleeping position. Ideally, the foundation would have a massage feature to help break up lactic-acid build-up and improve circulation while you are resting.
- A pillow that is as soft/firm and thick/thin as you like it to be.

Sleep Well, Train Hard

At this point you probably are worrying you aren't reaching your full potential because you're not sleeping enough. That's a good thing because it's probably true. But keep in mind that sleeping better isn't difficult; it just takes some effort and discipline. Yeah, I know: 10 hours sounds like a lot of sleep. Trust me, as an athlete you probably need it if you want to maximize your gains. The good news is it's the easiest way to see significant improvements in performance. So by just following some of the above tips, you should be well on your way to better health and better fitness.

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About the Author

Martin Rawls-Meehan is co-founder of *Empire City CrossFit* and a former Division I sprinter at Princeton University. He is a member of the Specialty Sleep Association and a founding member of The SSA Green Advisory Board. He holds more than 12 patents for sleep products. In 2003, he helped found Reverie, a brand of customized sleep systems. Rawls-Meehan can be reached at martin@reverie.com.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Fit After 40

Candy Rice had never been an athlete. Then she discovered CrossFit, and everything changed.

By Candy Rice

June 2012



All images: Brian Sullivan

A few years ago I was a typical mom, running kids here and there. Taking care of myself was last on the long list of things to do. I had always been thin and never really worried about my weight or what I ate. I would grab food on the go and never really read labels. I never had to.

Then I turned 35. Friends warned me that my body would change, but I never took them seriously. But then it happened. I started noticing that I wasn't looking as fit as I had in the past. I felt like I was going backward instead of forward, and I went up a size or two in clothes. Again, I was not overweight, but I was looking in the mirror at someone I didn't recognize. It hit me that there was a difference between thin and fit. And I was thin. Not fit.

I decided I was not going to continue on this path. I called a few friends and challenged them to get fit with me. We all took our "before" pictures in bikinis. We promised to never show a soul and started taking notes in our personal journals. Well, that lasted about a month, and then we all got busy again. We pretty much all gave up in one form or another. It was so much easier to give in, to put it off until tomorrow.

Once again, the day came when I looked in the mirror and said to myself, "No, you can do better than this." That's when I set up my weights in the garage. I was never one to go to the gym. I didn't want to do anything in front of anyone. So I suffered in the 100-degree heat with fans blowing and washcloths dipped in ice water to make it through. I did that every night until I thought I would be sick. Finally, I started seeing a change in my body.

Not long after that, a friend told me about P90X. I ordered it right away and saw results immediately. I worked out at home doing that for two more years. Finally, I was back to what I thought was a healthy, new me. But I was far from it ... until the day I decided to try CrossFit in September 2011. I had heard of CrossFit before, but for some reason I thought it would be hardcore, military-style workouts. I had heard of these "terrible injuries" and women getting "too bulky." But I was curious. I wanted to see what it was about.

Here I was, 41 years old. I had never been an athlete in my life. I had never even run a mile, much less sprinted.

I still remember my first day at CrossFit Centex in Belton, Texas. I walked up with butterflies in my stomach, thinking I was a joke.

"Here I am with people half my age, trying to do things I couldn't do when I was 20, much less 40," I thought.

But I refused to give up without trying. The first day was tough. The second was tougher. But the third day I will never forget. We did box jumps. I could not do anything more than a few weights stacked on top of each other. And even then, I was slow and uncoordinated. I remember thinking to myself that I was going to leave there and never look back.

I did not ever want to feel like that again. I was humiliated. As I did those baby jumps, I watched the hardcore CrossFit athletes doing 24-inch box jumps, pull-ups and handstand push-ups. If there was a back door I would have slipped out, but I was also intrigued and inspired.

I remember thinking, "If I can make it for six months, I am better than I have ever been in my life."

I had a lot of doubt when my on-ramp was over, but I decided to commit. I wrote down my workouts, my diet and even the negative things. I felt better than ever before and had more energy than I could imagine. It was amazing the support my CrossFit box offered to me both outwardly and by just setting examples. I wanted to be like them, those hardcore athletes who worked so hard.



Fit, fabulous ... and 40.

As time went on, I started to feel stronger. I set goals and would not give up until I met them. Months went by and I started to actually look forward to the workouts. I never missed a day, and still hate to unless I absolutely have to. I now look ahead.

Now I can jump on that 24-inch box without a worry, but I think I have a smirk when I do it. I want to continue to get stronger, increase the weight on the bar, decrease my time on my WODs, get a muscle-up and possibly compete in my age group at some point. I want to be healthy and active as long as I can be.

I haven't forgotten what I went through to get there. It finally hit me the other day when someone asked me, "What do you do to stay in shape?"

I was excited to share with them my story and how CrossFit truly changed my life. I don't want to be an Olympic weightlifter. I will never compete in the CrossFit Games. But I am strong. I am healthy. I am 41 ... and I am fit.

If I can do this, anyone can. It will change your life forever.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Competition for the Soul

Front Range CrossFit focuses on getting its athletes to compete.

Head coach Skip Miller says it's key to greatness. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

June 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Skip Miller believes in competition.

At the 2012 South West Regional, held May 4-6 in Castle Rock, Colo., his affiliate dominated the individual women's category. All three podium finishers—Colleen Maher, Jasmine Dever and Becky Conzelman—were from Front Range CrossFit (FRCF), and one of two FRCF teams finished second in the affiliate competition. The other was 10th. Last year, the gym's team came in second at the Reebok CrossFit Games, behind CrossFit New England.

1 of 6



Skip Miller believes competing gives his athletes specific goals.

All told, the Denver box has sent 26 athletes to the Games since 2008. But competition is about more than just accolades for Miller. Mentally, it offers an intangible that can't be had any place else, he said. In other words, "what it does for you as a person," he explained.

"That's the focus of our gym: not the CrossFit Games, specifically, but competing. I think it's really important to have goals—at all levels—and something to shoot for in terms of competition," Miller said. "We just compete a lot. And not necessarily just in CrossFit and not necessarily just (certain) athletes."

"Everybody Wants to Be a Part of It"

For starters, FRCF has an Olympic-weightlifting team.

Maher, the 17-year-old who won the South West Regional, took gold in the National Junior Weightlifting Championship in the 63-kg weight class. Miller himself won silver in the 2010 Master's National Weightlifting Championship in the 105-kg weight class. The same year, his wife, Jodi, also won silver in the Master's National Weightlifting Championship in the 58-kg weight class.

She also qualified and competed in the American Open in December 2010 as one of five master lifters.

And FRCF members compete in kettlebell events and running races.

"We really try to get people involved—at whatever level they want—in something," Miller said.

A three-time Ironman finisher, Miller said the notion of competition being good for the soul was one he learned as a kid.

"We want you to compete at something, at anything you choose to do," he wrote in an April 2011 blog post. "We want you to compete because it brings out the greatness in you."

In 2008, Miller started the Front Range CrossFit Event Series, which includes seven events throughout the year. It includes winter and summer training camps, spring and summer weightlifting camps, the Colorado Open, Master's Championships and Weightlifting Championships.

This year, the Colorado Open, a competition with 228 athletes, sold out in less than one hour. Additionally, more than 40 athletes of each sex are on waiting lists.

"If you weren't sitting at your computer, you didn't get it in," said Thad Eshelman, who co-owns Glenwood Springs CrossFit, more than three hours outside Denver.

"I think it's really important to have goals—at all levels—and something to shoot for in terms of competition."

—Skip Miller

"Everybody wants to be a part of it."

And not just athletes.

"Everyone kind of comes together ... to help," Conzelman said of the FRCF community. "It builds a sense of family and unity and purpose."

After moving from Virginia to Colorado shortly after competing in last year's Games, Conzelman has been training at FRCF since the summer.

Unlike other boxes, where the community is grown through social gatherings, there are no picnics or BBQs at FRCF, Miller said. Still, the sense of family is strong.

**"It builds a sense of family
and unity and purpose."**

—Becky Conzelman

"I don't have a good answer. I don't think it's anything that we do," he said. "We just have a great group of people."

The act of CrossFitting certainly makes for a tightly knit group, too.

"It's group suffering," Miller said. "You suffer as a group and you become tighter."

A lot of these shared experiences are very intense, so you just get closer through that."

"That's Just Good Coaching"

FRCF opened in April 2006 as the 55th affiliate.

The experience of its coaching staff and athletes is "insane," Miller said.

"Everyone knows what they're supposed to do."

Conzelman echoed that sentiment.

"They have such depth from the coaching staff to the athletes," she said, referencing the rowing specialist and gymnastics specialists FRCF has on staff.

Besides the Regional, Eshelman has also judged competitions in the FRCF event series. Likewise, he's gotten to see Miller in action.

"He's constantly coaching his athletes at competitions. He doesn't yell at them. You can tell that his athletes have prepared for everything that they're going to see," Eshelman said. "When the Regional workouts came out ...



Before Regionals, FRCF athletes had tested the workouts and knew exactly how to do them.

his athletes had done the workouts and they knew what to expect. And that's just good coaching."

Plus, FRCF doesn't overcomplicate the programming, he added.

"They keep it simple. They don't try to reinvent the wheel. They do simple met-cons and they lift," Eshelman said. "That keeps them from overtraining and being hurt. They're not doing 40-minute met-cons every day."

Those workouts are determined by whatever competition is on the horizon, Miller said.

"Programming at our affiliate revolves around the next upcoming event. And that might be a CrossFit event, that might be a weightlifting event, that could be kettlebells, that could be a running race," he said.

**"They keep it simple.
They don't try to reinvent
the wheel."**

—Thad Eshelman

"We have 200 athletes that work out with us; 40 of them compete. And the rest of them are there to be fit and have a good time and take advantage of all the good things CrossFit brings to the table."

Of late, the programming was focused on the Regional and now on the Games.

"I believe that if the CrossFit Games is the pinnacle of fitness, then why wouldn't I program it that way?" Miller asked.

Miller described FRCF's programming as "completely backwards from everybody else."

Each training day, Regional/Games competitors do a warm-up, spend time on skills work and then do a met-con that ranges between eight and 10 minutes. Afterward, athletes go into a separate weight room and do either a general Olympic-lifting workout or one that is individually tailored, Miller said.

Likewise, FRCF competitors typically are at the box from 5 to 8 p.m. five days a week, he adds.

There also are reoccurring dinners for athletes who compete.

"I just really could tell when I walked in that they run a unique gym," Conzelman said. "I would sum it up as a dedication of the Front Range CrossFit staff and its members in all that they do."



In competition, there's no substitute for teamwork based on smart training.



Incredibly, FRCF swept the women's competition at the South West Regional.

The 40-year-old joked that when she first walked into the 9,500-square-foot facility with 12 lifting platforms and enough equipment to train 36 athletes at one time, she thought she'd arrived at the country club of CrossFit boxes.

She thought to herself, "This place is amazing. I actually might get soft here."

Conzelman added: "But given how much competition there is, that didn't get me too soft."

Like Outlaw CrossFit in Virginia, where she trained before moving West, Conzelman said the Millers are dedicated to producing the best athletes possible.

"Everything they do, they do with excellence," she said. "They take pride in everything that they're doing, but they're not prideful people—they're not arrogant—and I really respect that a lot."

"Lucky to Be a Part of That"

As for the Games, Miller didn't venture any predictions for his athletes.

"The CrossFit Games literally comes down to ... whose weaknesses are exposed the least," he said.

As is often said, it will all come down to the programming, Miller stressed.

"They take pride in everything that they're doing, but they're not prideful people—they're not arrogant—and I really respect that a lot."

—Becky Conzelman

"We got second last year and there's a bit of a hunger there to not let that happen again," he said of the Affiliate Cup.

The team has trained together for 10 months and is "really motivated" to snag that top ranking from CFNE.

"There's a bunch of really strong teams. It's just going to come down to who's having a good weekend and the programming—that's going to determine who wins. We're one of the top teams, but I wouldn't say that any one of us is the front runner," Miller said. "We just go out and let our experience that we have on that team kind of do what it does, and we'll see what we get."

He gave the same "we'll-see" answer in regards to how Conzelman, Dever and Maher would perform in July.

"As a coach, I learn something at every CrossFit Games," he said.



With a huge crew heading the CrossFit Games, the FRCF athletes will have team support throughout the competition.

Eshelman noted that both Skip and Jodi Miller “care a ton” about their athletes.

“Skip has a father-daughter relationship with a lot of the women in his gym,” he said.

**“As a coach, I learn something
at every CrossFit Games.”**

—Skip Miller

At the Games, the three FRCF women will have something most other athletes there will not: each other.

“In the competition, having three women that genuinely like each other, genuinely are rooting for each other,” Miller started, “in a competition environment, it’s a gigantic advantage because you’re not alone.”

In the warm-up area, in the holding areas, they will be amongst friends.

“Everybody (is) so dedicated to achieving the common goal,” he explained of all his athletes. “More than anything, that’s the big deal, we’re just ... lucky to be a part of that.”



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author

Andréa Maria Cecil was 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](#).

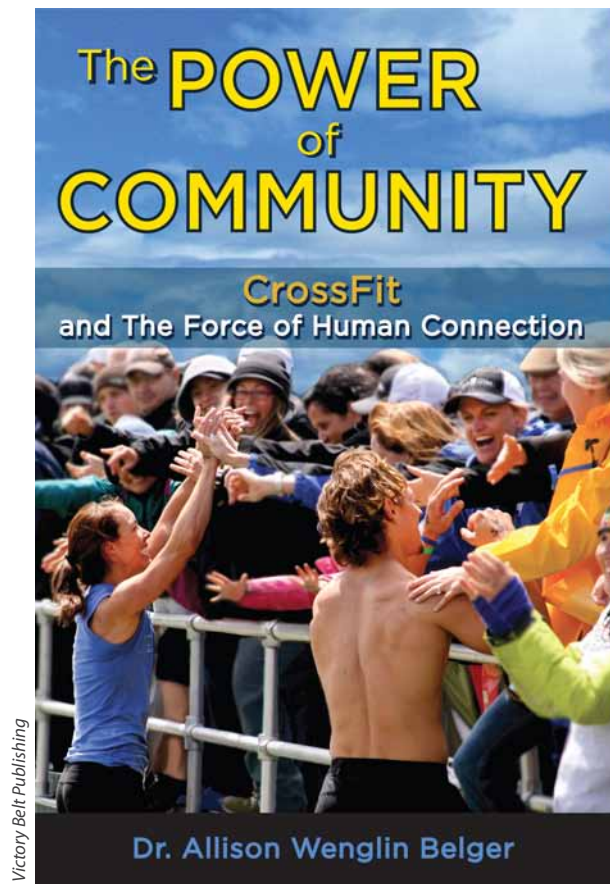
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Ties That Bind

T.J. Murphy reviews Dr. Allison Belger's new look at the bonds formed in the CrossFit community.

By T.J. Murphy

June 2012



The Power of Community: CrossFit and the Force of Human Connection, by Dr. Allison Belger. 272 pp. Victory Belt Publishing. \$24.95.

Saturday morning, April 28, 2012, standing on the gritty blacktop at San Francisco CrossFit (SFCF), I watched a carnivorous-looking row of Cat 330D L Hydraulic Excavators, 79,700 lb. apiece, lowering multi-joint booms with pulverizing hammers into Doyle Drive, an elevated road that formerly connected the Golden Gate Bridge to central San Francisco.

The percussion unleashed into the earth ran up through my skeleton, and it felt like I was under the dentist's drill. Sections of the highway were crushed one at a time, leaving behind chunks of ripped up-rock with vascular metal piping protruding from the gashes. A shower of mist was arced into the air from an orange cylinder to dampen down the steady explosions of concrete dust.



Dr. Belger competing in the 2009 CrossFit Games held at The Ranch in Aromas, Calif.

Separating SFCF from the demolition was a chain-link fence and a few hundred feet. It was sunny, and a burning smell hung in the air. The roar of jackhammers and the grind of the diesel engines drowned out the rap music the gym was playing through outdoor speakers. I was doing burpees next to a SFCF storage container. The demolition didn't scare many off from the morning WODs. The gym was brimming with more than 20 CrossFitters.

***The Power of Community* by
Dr. Allison Belger delivers an
authoritative perspective.**

One of the SFCF coaches, Angel Orozco, a San Francisco native in hooded SFCF sweatshirt and sunglasses, saw me in my moment of awe and joined me to watch.

"This," Angel said with a broad smile, looking at the crew of athletes working out with the visual and sonic backdrop of the demolition, "is what CrossFit is all about."

The Power of Community by Dr. Allison Belger delivers an authoritative perspective on why this is so.

Belger is a psychologist and co-owner of four CrossFit affiliates in Marin, Calif., with her husband, T.J. She was also on the team from T.J.'s Gym that won the 2011 NorCal Regional. In *The Power of Community*, Belger submits her professional perspective on the mechanics underlying the community-building reputation that CrossFit has crafted in the last decade since the template was cut by Greg Glassman's original Santa Cruz gym.

Belger's perspective though, is not that of the outside-looking-in academic. Rather, to illustrate her points, Belger weaves in stories she's witnessed firsthand as an affiliate owner or from the CrossFit world:

- Margie, a distraught woman in the midst of a family emergency, does something completely out of the ordinary for her and reaches out to her new CrossFit community for help. She receives an outpouring of support even from members she hasn't met.
- Olivia, 16 years old and 227 lb., joins a CrossFit community and transforms her body, becomes an athlete and recharges her self-esteem. She now helps coach a CrossFit Kids program.
- Matt, a father of two, fell 60 feet from a cliff when mountain biking and suffered a shattered pelvis, myriad broken bones and a punctured lung. During Matt's unsurprisingly difficult rehab period, the members of his gym were there in full support, helping his family at home, delivering dinners, helping move furniture, constantly checking in on him.

Belger reports stories from a variety of worlds CrossFit has affected, from the military to the corporate to the addiction-rehabilitation communities.

**"It's got to be something that
ordinarily would be too hard
to do alone."**

—Dr. Allison Belger

With contrasting research that suggests communities in the United States have suffered immense decline in the last half-century, Belger describes why CrossFit is seemingly moving against the stream. Writes Belger, "Life in the trenches involves intense situations at physical, emotional, hormonal, and interpersonal levels so life-altering, even life threatening, that they are the natural building blocks for bonding with others."



C.J. Rendic/TJ's Gym

"Having a pal at your side makes it possible." —Dr. Allison Belger

At a speech delivered to a group of designers interested in the correlation between community and habitats, Belger talked about how the direct relationship between "levels of suffering" fuels community cohesiveness.

"It's got to be a little gritty," she said.

That's just like the scene at SFCF with CrossFitters working out at high intensity alongside a major road-demolition project.

"It's got to be something that ordinarily would be too hard to do alone, and that having a pal at your side makes it possible," Belger added.

Belger asked the audience to consider the most powerful experiences of their lives and asked if they were enabled by a group dynamic. Everyone raised hands. This is the key, Belger says, to CrossFit's life-changing dynamic.

According to Greg Amundson, who joined Glassman's CrossFit gym in December of 2001 and saw the community aspect of CrossFit develop before his eyes, Belger's point was as true then as it is now.



Matt Barnes/TJ's Gym

Dr. Belger knows CrossFit because she does CrossFit.

"It was a magic place," Amundson says of the facility—the size of a one-car garage—that lived at 2851 Research Park Dr. in Santa Cruz. "With the WOD, in the gym, you had an honest-to-goodness fight on your hands. You finished the WOD, and you really accomplished something. You're sweating, your throat's burning, you have calluses."

But what earned you status within the gym was not whether you finished first or last, and your status outside the gym had no bearing on the degree of your belonging.

"The only thing that mattered was effort. That's what drove the community. That's how you earned status."

Jim Baker, who was in his 50s at the time and one of the founding members of the gym, recalls the unique effect of this brand of inclusiveness.

"I was 30 years older than the others, like Mike Weaver, who were doing the workout," Baker recalls. "They finished the WOD and could have gone out and got coffee and come back before I was finished. But there they were, clapping for me and helping me finish."

Now a co-owner and coach at CrossFit Santa Cruz Central, Baker says their new T-shirts are inscribed with the phrase, "Victory is in the Effort."

A personal moment that caught me off guard illuminated the power Belger, Amundson and Baker speak of. I recently moved from San Diego, and on Feb. 28, my last day at CrossFit Elysium, I sat near the workout area with coach Paul Estrada and a few of my gym mates after the WOD. We spoke a bit about perfunctory things, but it was mostly quiet in a sad way. A month before, I had told everyone I was leaving, and through to that moment I had a strange feeling I'd never come close to experiencing in terms of a gym: grief.

I felt grief in leaving behind the band of brothers and sisters I'd become a part of. Sitting there with Coach Paul and the others, the distinct feeling in the air was loss. Belger helped me understand that the reason I felt the way I did is that the glue that binds people together—the work, pain and shared sense of accomplishment—is especially acute in the CrossFit world.

For CrossFitters reading Belger's book, they'll see stories and patterns that will remind them of their own experience at their affiliates, and the book will lend a historical perspective and analysis from a psychologist who knows CrossFit inside out. She also offers insight on why community is a dangerous thing to lose in our world.

What I found the book wanting was more critical analysis from her unique position. With CrossFit growing at such an exponential pace, what are the keys for affiliate owners to keep in mind in balancing growth and the retention of the community energy? What are the threats? When a box begins to boom and class sizes go from 5 to 25, can the community power she speaks of be sustained? Because we can assume that CrossFitters consider their local affiliate as they would a church, retaining these qualities is an emotionally charged issue.

In the chapter "Team, Competition and Community," Belger has nothing but positive things to say about the rise of the Reebok CrossFit Games and the increase in the number of small competitions, like local throwdowns, that can be assumed to be affecting the programming and atmospheres of at least some affiliates. But how will these relatively new forces in the CrossFit world impact the spirit Amundson and Baker talk about? How do we ensure the drive for competition results never erodes the simple and essential respect for effort that has been a part of the DNA of CrossFit since the beginning?

In the epilogue, Belger cites one of her reasons for writing the book: "My hope is that you've been inspired by the narratives of ordinary people doing extraordinary things," and that you may be fired up to "take in the power of community and make positive changes in your life."

Belger absolutely achieves this mission. I hope we can look forward to further writings by Belger where she can further develop this important discussion.



Courtesy of Dr. Allison Belger

The Belger family.

About the Author

T.J. Murphy is the editor-at-large for Competitor Magazine. His writing has appeared in Outside Magazine, Triathlete and Inside Triathlon.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Ball Hunt

Hunt for a ball, find burpees—and fitness. Crisa Laurette explains.

By Crisa Laurette

June 2012



All Images: Christian Dickinson

We run this game while teaching P.E. to 30 to 40 kids. We have a large area to utilize (a parking lot), but the game can be played in almost any space. The kids ask us to play it almost every day, and they work together and encourage each other more while playing this game than they do during anything else.

1 of 2

Equipment

- 25-30 cones
- Small balls (quantity and colors depends on number of teams/players and how hard you want the kids to work)
- Hoops (equal to number of teams)

Set-Up

Set the cones randomly in a large area. Under the cones, hide four or five balls (random colors), leaving three or four cones empty.

Fifty to 100 meters from the “playing field,” place hoops, which act as bases for teams. Each team is assigned a color, and that is the only color of ball they can bring back to the base.

Teams are told the number of balls they must retrieve. Ideally, we provide at least two balls per player.

Rules of Play

One player from each team sprints to the field and chooses a cone to look under. Players take only one ball



If the athlete finds the right ball, it's a sprint back to his or her teammates to tag the next player.



If kids don't find the right ball under the cone, they have some work to do.

of the appropriate color and sprint back to the base to place the ball in the team's hoop and tag the next player. Players who do not find a ball of the correct color under a cone must immediately perform 3 to 5 reps of a movement (e.g., burpees, jump squats, push-ups). The trainer may determine these movements beforehand or call out different movements throughout the game. After completing the movement, players are allowed to search under another cone, but they will perform the movement again if they do not find a ball, then return to base and tag the next player.

No team-to-player communication is allowed from base to field. The players can strategize at the base, but any yelling out to the field other than encouragement is prohibited.

Players receive penalties (e.g., burpees) for the following infractions: looking down through the tops of cones, ugly form, and leaving the base before the ball is secure within the hoop or before being tagged.

The cone must be left standing after a player looks under it.

Trainers can offer tips; e.g., try not to let the other player on the field see the balls under the cone you are checking.

As a twist, the next player in line could perform a plank hold until the hunter returns from the field.

The first team to find the required number of balls and return them to the hoop wins!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

God of the Grill

Nick Massie tells you how to prepare the perfect steak over an open flame.

By Nick Massie

June 2012



All images: Nick Massie

It's possible that nothing more closely ties us to our Paleolithic ancestors than cooking over an open flame. Ever since tongues of fire licked the first piece of meat, we have craved to indulge again and again. Through the years, we have improved on the practices of our primal forefathers in many ways, but meat cooked over an open flame has remained virtually unchanged.

1 of 4



A simple recipe for Massie's "secret sauce."

As summer rolls around and we fire up the grill, it's time to take a look at one of the simplest and tastiest of culinary delights: the grilled steak. In this article, I'll teach you how to grill a restaurant-quality steak that will impress your friends and make you the envy of the neighborhood.

Simplicity, I believe, is the key ingredient in food preparation, and this certainly holds true for grilling a steak. I've provided four guidelines and one basic recipe that will turn you from a grilling greenhorn to a guru in no time flat:

1. Temper your meat—Allow your meat 30 to 60 minutes at room temperature before grilling. This ensures even cooking by preventing temperature shock from the drastic temperatures of the refrigerator and the 500-plus F of the grate on your grill. If you consider that you need to bring a refrigerated steak from 40 degrees to 125 degrees for medium rare, you are doing 35 percent of the work by bringing it to a room temperature of 70 degrees before grilling.
2. Make sure your grill is hot—I use an infrared thermometer, which registers between 500 and 800 F, depending on the power of the particular grill I am using. There are other factors that will affect the amount of time a steak takes to cook—namely, the under-grate structure—but a hot grate is important to get a good sear. The sear provides the highly desired grill marks and flavorful caramelization.
3. Use a coarse ground salt—I prefer kosher salt when grilling. It's available in most supermarkets, and it's cheap. You can use sea salt, Himalayan crystal, Hawaiian, etc. But please do yourself, and your steak, a favor: don't use iodized salt.
4. Use grill juice—What? What's grill juice? Halt not hither . . .

Secret (Simple) Sauce

Ah, the grill juice.

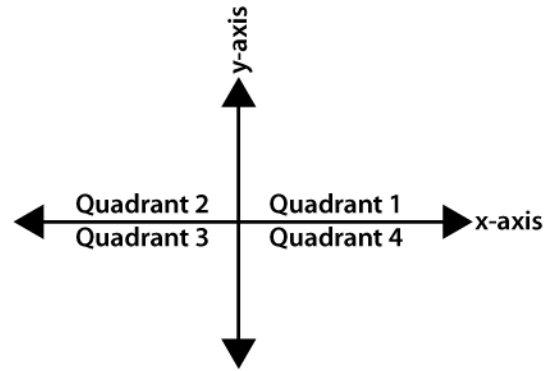
This recipe consists of three ingredients, for which we will use the acronym SOW. The ingredients are soy sauce, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce, which are used in a 3:2:1 ratio. So, if you can remember SOW and 3:2:1 and can match the numbers with the letters, you've memorized the recipe. We do this sort of thing a lot in CrossFit, so I'm confident that you can handle it.

For four steaks or less, I use 3 ounces of soy sauce, 2 ounces of olive oil and 1 ounce of Worcestershire sauce. However, it is efficient to make a large batch of this every couple of months. The large batch acts as a “grill-juice well” from which you can fill your “grill-juice bucket” when necessary.

I recommend using a baker’s brush to apply the grill juice. You can use a silicone brush, but, due to the high quantity of oil, the silicone repels the juice and the effort becomes silly. A baker’s brush holds the juice like a paintbrush holds paint; just keep in mind that the bristles will melt.

Grilling Instructions for a Medium-Rare, One-Inch-Thick Ribeye

1. Temper the meat by pulling it from the refrigerator 30 to 60 minutes before grilling. Place paper towels below and on top of the steaks to wick away any excess moisture.
2. Preheat the grill.
3. Prepare the mise en place: salt, olive-oil spray, grill juice, brush, tongs and a plate.
4. Head to the grill.
5. Remove the paper towels from the steak and season the top side with salt. Hold the salt 18 to 24 inches above the steak, as this will give the most even spread. I like salt, so I use a liberal amount. Keep in mind that soy and Worcestershire sauces are both high in sodium. At this point, only season one side of the steak.
6. Clean the grates of the grill, spray the seasoned side of the steak with olive-oil spray, and place the seasoned side down on the grill at a 22.5-degree angle. The goal is to make a diamond-shaped grill mark, which is achieved through this angle. If you go 45 degrees, the marks will be square, and if you offset them from the rectangular or square shape of the steak, they will appear to be diamonds even though they are not. A 22.5-degree angle is “prescribed”; any other angle is “scaled.”
7. Cook for 1 minute to allow the salt to adhere through searing, then brush the back side of the steak with grill juice two times. For this, I use a combination of a dab and a stroke. You want the brush to absorb some of the soy and Worcestershire, when all that it wants to do is soak up the oil and leave the S and W behind. So, make sure to get some S and W involved.
8. Cook for 1 more minute after brushing with grill juice. This will give us our first grill mark in 2 minutes and two brushes of SOW. Then, pick up the steak with the tongs and move it to a different, hot section of the grill on the opposite 22.5-degree angle. Think of the algebraic quadrants: you started in Quadrant 1 (upper right), with the steak pointing 22.5 degrees to the right of the Y-axis. Now, you are going to point the steak 22.5 degrees to the left of the Y-axis, which will put you in Quadrant 2 (upper left).
9. Again, brush the top of the steak with grill juice and allow it to cook here for 2 more minutes. You can brush the steak every minute on the minute (EMOM) from this point forward.
10. When 1:45 has elapsed, salt the top of the steak and prepare to flip it over. At 2 minutes, flip the steak, placing salted side down on a 22.5-degree angle on a new, hot area of the grill. This is where you will see your beautiful diamond-shaped grill marks, which will be enhanced with the application of the grill juice. You are a seasoned pro at this point, applying the juice EMOM.
11. When 2 minutes have elapsed, think quadrants and make your move. That’s right: 22.5 degrees on a new, hot area, and get that brush going.
12. After the final two grill-juice applications and the final 2 minutes, remove the steak from the grill and place it on the plate.
13. Allow the steak to rest for 5 to 10 minutes, during which time you can apply a little more grill juice if you’d like. Then serve it up!



Where math and steak collide: the formula for perfect diamond-shaped grill marks.

Make a note of the doneness and adjust the time for future grilling sessions accordingly. I could explain how to know doneness by touch, but practice is best for learning this skill. I've seen attempts to teach this through touching the palm of your hand, the tip of your nose, your forehead, earlobe ... the list goes on. Again, the tenderness of these body parts varies and, when I was learning, these methods didn't work for me. What do I recommend? Practice. Grill a thousand steaks and you'll figure it out.

So, with the onset of summer, let your culinary juices flow, plan a Paleo potluck and fire up your grill. I know Carl the Caveman didn't have grill juice, but if he had, I'm certain he would have preferred his steaks prepared in the above manner. And, just as the members of his cave cohort would have envied him, follow the above instructions and you'll soon be the talk of your block.

Let me know what you think of this preparation in the comments section of this article.



Perfection.



Hyun Sim

About the Author

Nick Massie has earned his living as a cook for the past 17 years and has been involved in CrossFit since 2008. He runs a website, PaleoNick.com, where his mission is to combat the obesity epidemic, fuel firebreathers and help people "keep it Paleo." After struggling with nutrition for nearly four years, Nick hopes to help CrossFitters by sharing his experiences and acting as their guide to culinary fitness. Nick holds a CrossFit Level 1 Certificate, with CrossFit certificates in Basic Barbell, Gymnastics, Kettlebell, Movement and Mobility, Rowing, Olympic Weightlifting, and CrossFit Kids. He also holds a USAW Club Coach Certificate. Nick currently lives in Moorhead, Minn., with his wife, Jessica, and their two boys, Samson and Jonas. He is a trainer at Wild Knights CrossFit.

THE CrossFit LIFE

The Year of Change

Inspired by her nephew, Tammy Mendenhall made a promise that 2011 would be the year she got in shape.

By Tammy Mendenhall

June 2012



Laradene Murphy

It all started last fall when my sister and my 31-year-old nephew, T.J., started CrossFit. Listening to them talk about the workouts was pretty interesting and kind of annoying at the same time. T.J. would always say, "I missed you at CrossFit today, Aunt Tamo."

That is all he would say. He would say that every time he saw me. I got to thinking that if T.J. the computer kid actually liked working out, then this had to be some great thing.

On Dec. 1, 2010, I made a promise to myself that next year was my year to get into shape and lose weight. I was 48 years old, and I needed to change something. My promise consisted of these items:

1. No more soda. I was a Diet Coke queen and drank at least six every day.
2. No more fried food of any sort.
3. No more sweets. I was running to the bakery every day to get a maple bar.
4. I would join CrossFit and do it at least three days a week. I told myself that if my sister—who is six years older than me—could do it, I could too. I was the athletic one in my family, and I wanted to get that athletic ability back.
5. Drink more water.



Courtesy of Tammy Mendenhall

The former “Diet Coke queen” on the run.

On Jan. 3, 2011, my friend Emily Shumway told me what time the newbie class started at Bear River CrossFit in Preston, Idaho. She said she would be there for my first time to help me out. I was so out of shape I had no upper-body muscles—or any kind of muscles. I felt like a beached whale. I could not even do a knee push-up, so they modified my push-ups for me.

I was so sore that when I woke up the next morning I could hardly move. I told myself I would rather be fat and unhappy than feel so sore. I said I wasn’t going to go back.

I went back the next night. And the next. I kept going, and I am still going four to five times a week to this day.

I don’t own a scale, so I’m not sure what I weighed when I started. It took me two weeks to work up the courage to ask Phil Archibald, the owner of Bear River CrossFit, if I could weigh myself at the gym. On Jan. 15, 2011, I weighed in at 242.8 lb.

I knew I was big but not that big. I thought, *Holy cow! I’ve got some work to do.* But I was going to do it. I had no problems giving up soda and sweets. It was like a switch had been turned to off position and I had no desire to drink a Diet Coke or eat sweets or chips. This was my time to take care of myself. It was time I moved myself to the top of my priority list.

I would get winded just from going up and down the stairs from doing laundry, and I hated to walk anywhere. My balance was terrible. My cholesterol was high, and the doctor wanted me to go on meds. I told him I would start exercising more and eating better. This was the year before I started CrossFit. So I went a whole year with high cholesterol—a walking potential heart-attack victim.

I had been going to CrossFit for little over a month when I went to the doctor again. I had been losing about 2 lb. a week, and I was very excited to find out my cholesterol numbers and see my doctor’s reaction when he saw I had lost some weight. My cholesterol had dropped to two points below the high mark, and I had lost 10 lb. My doctor told me to keep doing what I was doing.

I asked him if my heart sounded good, because I wanted to really step it up more at CrossFit.

“Your heart sounds great. Your blood pressure is good. Go for it!” he told me.



Courtesy of Tammy Mendenhall



Tammy Mendenhall dropped 105 lb. and 16 pants sizes to reclaim her life.

I could see and feel a difference as the weeks went by. My shirts were starting to hang on me and my workout shorts were falling off. I knew I was losing inches and not just weight. I wrote down everything I ate, how many calories and how much water I drank. I also kept track of my workouts. Now I'm 100 percent Paleo with one cheat meal a week.

I have lost 105 lb. and dropped 16 pants sizes. I am not the fastest or the best CrossFitter, but as long as I finish the whole workout I know I have done the best I can do. That is all that counts.

It feels great to be healthy. Too bad it took me until now to realize that I needed to do something with myself. I should have been taking care of myself when my kids were young, but I put myself on the back burner and put my family first. Little did I know I was hurting my family more than I was hurting myself.

It is a great feeling to know I have accomplished a huge goal. My next goal is to run a half marathon. If I can get my mile down to at least 10 minutes, I would like to run the Epic, a team relay race from Logan, Utah, to Jackson, Wyo.

Bring on 2012! I have so much I want to do.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Tour de Force

Europe's vibrant CrossFit community was out in full effect at the CrossFit Tour stop in Copenhagen, Denmark. Mike Warkentin reports.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

June 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

In 2009, CrossFit Games competitor and Princeton grad Blair Morrison told the *CrossFit Journal* that he was moving to Europe to pursue a master's degree.

That was shortly after Mikko Salo had won the CrossFit Games and young Annie Thorisdottir had served notice that she'd soon be a very elite CrossFit competitor.

We leaned on Morrison because we viewed him as our man at ground zero of the fitness revolution that was about to happen, and we named his first article [CrossFit Europe—Part 1: Adaptation to a World Without Boxes](#). The subhead continued: “CrossFit Games competitor Blair Morrison is living in Europe and trying to stay fit on a continent that’s just discovering CrossFit.”

**“This community is very,
very special.”**
—Greg Glassman

If the CrossFit Tour stop in Copenhagen, Denmark, proved anything, it’s that Europe has very much discovered CrossFit. In fact, CrossFit in Europe is thriving.

CrossFit founder and CEO Coach Greg Glassman definitely agreed. When addressing the assembled crowd after Day 2 of the Regional, he was very clear that he viewed Europe as one of the key areas for CrossFit, and he specifically singled out Denmark as a prime nation in the development of the sport.



Coach Greg Glassman addresses the crowd after Day 2 of the Europe Regional.

“This community is very, very special,” he told the crowd of about 700 at the Ballerup Super Arena.

Competition and Celebration

The CrossFit Tour first visited Australia in February and then Texas in March, and the third stop coincided with the Europe Regional, which found a host of nations gathered in the Danish capital from May 25 to 27 to select its representatives for the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games. Looking through the athlete list was like flipping through an atlas: Italy, England, Hungary, Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Norway, Greece, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ireland, Spain, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Malta were all represented, and many North American expatriates could be found on the roster as well.

The diversity was on full display at the afterparty on Sunday night at Pakhus 11, where CrossFit staff mingled with athletes, coaches, spectators and Tour attendees from a host of countries. With a DJ playing and well-earned celebratory drinks flowing after a buffet dinner, Europe’s best athletes hung out and discussed the sport they love as part of the international relations of fitness.

Jonny and Helzy Smyth from CrossFit Northern Ireland, “doublefisting” Tuborg beers, explained that a pair of beverages is simply a requirement.

“It’s the bare minimum!” Jonny said with Irish mirth.

The party, of course, had only just begun, and it ended well into the wee hours as athletes who train for the very peak of fitness allowed themselves a rare night of excess.

“You only speak one language?” a European asked an American incredulously. She spoke no less than four different tongues, but most people didn’t have a lot of trouble making themselves understood throughout the weekend. Many Euros spoke English very well, and those who didn’t knew a few key words like “burpee” and “snatch.”

Indeed, the sport is spreading around Europe, and while countries such as France don’t have a huge CrossFit presence yet, countries like Denmark and Iceland are packed with athletes who are well acquainted with Fran, Cindy and Murph.

Salo himself, injured this year and unable to compete in the Regional, works for Rogue’s European arm, helping to get equipment to the new affiliates that are springing up across the region.



Defending CrossFit Games champion Annie Thorisdottir (left) was the guest of honor at the afterparty at Pakhus 11.

"I'm fired up," Salo said before the Regional. "Today when we were talking with the athletes before the start, I was like, 'I should be there.' Of course I want to be on the other side of the wall. That's my stuff," he said while gesturing at the athletes warming up inside the railing. "CrossFit is my life."

The good news is that Salo had surgery on his knee late last year, and while the Finn is avoiding running and box jumps for the moment, he's back in the gym testing his legendary work capacity.

"Things are really good, at the moment. I've been training really hard," he said in what is probably an understatement for the stoic Games champ.

Salo might be Europe's first face of CrossFit, but others are turning heads as well, and many are from Iceland. Annie Thorisdottir, the smiling 2011 CrossFit Games champion, competed in the Europe Regional and won for the fourth year in a row. She'll be heading back to the Games to defend her title, and she'll be accompanied by a strong Icelandic contingent. The nation qualified three individual women, one individual male and two teams.

After his team won five of six events, Evert Viglundsson of CrossFit Reykjavik said, "Watch out, L.A.! Iceland is coming for you!"

"Everywhere we go in the world, we find the same great people. Different languages, same community."

—Paula Gravatt

Similarly, Numi Snaer Katrinarson, who qualified only after an unbelievable come-from-behind win in Event 6, was thrilled to have a chance to compete in the Games and see Los Angeles.

"The venue is fantastic," Tour organizer Paula Gravatt said on Day 1 of the event as the athletes were attacking Event 1. "It's wonderful to mix the Tour with the competition. Coach Glassman had that in his mind. People are very excited to see us here."

When asked about the differences between the people at the Tour stops so far, Gravatt laughed.

"It's actually not different," she said. "We intuitively know this, but everywhere we go in the world, we find the same great people. Different languages, same community."

Primal Movement, Primal Food

Before the event, CrossFit staff went to boxes in Sweden and Denmark, including CrossFit Malmo and CrossFit Butcher's Lab. One of the latter gym's members is Thomas Rode Andersen, who's a renowned chef—and a CrossFitter.

Andersen is the head chef at Kong Hans Kaelder, and he's kind of a big deal. Actually, he's a celebrity chef in a country that cares a great deal about food, and like anyone in the service industry, he knows what happens when a fast-paced job combines with stress and late-night partying to leave you something less than fit.

"My story is that I met a beautiful girl ... 14 years younger than me, and I was living the celebrity-chef rock-star life: too much alcohol and a little too little sleep and too much coffee—no focus on nutrition whatsoever," Andersen recalled. "Just doing these beautiful dishes for the guests. And I found that she was so much younger than me and I wanted to be attractive to her, so after watching my nipples jiggle in front of a mirror while brushing my teeth, I thought, 'I've got to do something.'"



Numi Snaer Katrinarson (third from left) celebrates qualifying for the Reebok CrossFit Games after a dramatic come-from-behind win in the Regional's final event.



Martin Moller (right) flexes a giant calf alongside Kasper Hansen. Both will compete at the Reebok CrossFit Games with Team Butcher's Lab.

When a friend came back from the United States with dreams of opening a CrossFit gym, Andersen became a guinea pig, and it wasn't long before he was chasing performance in WODs.

"After two or three months of pain and soreness, finally I come to the progression where I felt I was in better cardio shape and I was getting stronger slowly," he said.

After more training, he became one of the better athletes in any group and regularly held his own against special-forces soldiers and firebreathers who were far younger. In 2008 he started working out at CrossFit Copenhagen and now trains at CrossFit Butcher's Lab and CrossFit Butcher's Garage.

Now, at 43, he's in the best shape of his life.

"Actually, I gained 20 lb. and lost three sizes in the waistline," he laughed.

Andersen was connected with the CrossFit Tour through Regional Director Oliver Amdrup, and Andersen said it was important to him that he provide attendees with something other than a burger and fries. He is, after all, a CrossFitting Paleo chef who's also behind the primal fast-food restaurant [Palaeo](#).

"To be able to serve a nice meal for the man who actually started all this was a great honor."

—Thomas Rode Andersen

"For me it was important that on an occasion like this people could get something nice to eat rather than the usual shit," he said on Day 3 of the Regional, after serving Danish beef jerky, nuts, a *fiskefrikadelle* (Danish fishcake), coleslaw with pulled beef brisket, and *Skyr* (an Icelandic yogurt) with blueberries and coconuts to the attendees shortly before Coach Glassman spoke to the crowd at the end of Day 2.

Andersen also had a chance to host Coach Glassman at the Kong Hans Kaelder during the Regional, and he served CrossFit's founder an all-natural meal free of flour and starch. On the menu were steak, lobster, oysters and sugar-free Paleo dessert.

"For me it was like the perfect circle to be able to serve a Paleo meal for the man who actually brought me into all this," Andersen said. "And I've been a gastronomical geek for 25 years, and then suddenly all my friends are CrossFitters. They train. All the chefs who drink alcohol and go out all night, I don't see them anymore.

"To be able to serve a nice meal for the man who actually started all this was a great honor."



By 3 a.m., the food tables had been replaced by dancing CrossFitters.

Andersen plans to get more good food out into retail because he's passionate about fitness and he's discovered that working out is only half the battle.

"I'm very committed to this Paleo lifestyle, and it's a big concern of mine," he said.

Europe: CrossFit Hotspot

If the Europe Regional and the CrossFit Tour stop proved anything, it's that CrossFit is growing fast in Europe on the strength of an outstanding community. For three days, that community came together to compete, cheer, eat Paleo and then have a few Tuborgs to celebrate a year of hard training.

And now European CrossFitters will be invited across the Atlantic for the next CrossFit Tour stop, which is set for July 13-15 at the CrossFit Games, where Iceland Annie Thorisdottir, Frederik Aegidius, CrossFit Reykjavik and company will compete.

After the amazing Tour stop in Denmark, North America is going to need to step up in Carson. Copenhagen certainly knows how to party, and we can't let the European community down in July.

For more info on the CrossFit Tour, visit Tour.CrossFit.com. The fifth CrossFit Tour stop is Aug. 10 to 12 in Big Sky, Mont.



About the author

*Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the **CrossFit Journal** and the founder of CrossFit 204.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Banality of Elitism

Dan Edelman urges parents and grown-ups everywhere to resist the urge to adult-erate youth sports.

By Dan Edelman

June 2012



All images: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

As a CrossFit Kids trainer, what do you do with a larval-stage firebreather?

Before answering, remember that this is CrossFit, which, as we know, forges elite fitness. “Stronger, faster, better” is our credo, but only if we are pushing the envelope of our comfort, programming, experience. Taking a broader cultural view, this is the U.S. This is our postmodern, digital world. A 10-year-old with a butterfly kip and muscle-ups? Ho-hum. Examples of the ever-more incredible, extreme and, in some cases, disturbing are at our fingertips at all times. We are fast becoming numb to instances of the common executed uncommonly well. And significantly, instant gratification is the status quo.

This sort of cult of the extraordinary manifests in, among other ways, the idolization of the celebrity athlete-entertainer, exacerbating flaws within our youth sports system, which has been subject to critical scrutiny almost since its inception more than a century ago (24,34). An accelerating trend toward early sport specialization (24,30,37,39,49,53,55)—marked by highly competitive, intensive year-round participation—characterizes a system that dangles promises of turning our children into superstars by way of a feeder system comprising “elite” club and travel teams and exclusive secondary and higher education athletic programs.

Even some of those parents who recognize that specialization's opposite—sport sampling—is the way to go are perhaps even more excessive by pushing their kids to participate in only select programs, which essentially amounts to highly competitive, intensive year-round participation in multiple sports. This ever-earlier quest for elite-level athleticism more often than not fails to produce truly elite athletes. What we have developed is a dysfunctional youth sports caste system biased toward early bloomers and those families that can afford to pay for these types of programs. Meanwhile, we fail to properly identify genuine talent or foster long-term physical fitness in the vast majority of children (24).

It is within this environment that the CrossFit Kids program unveiled the Teen Challenge, a first-of-its-kind team exhibition involving adolescent CrossFitters, ages 13 to 18, that occurred at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games. In October 2011, Jeff and Mikki Lee Martin, the founders of CrossFit Kids, followed up with the first Gauntlet competition. The one-day event saw individual teens competing in novice, junior-varsity and varsity divisions for bragging rights at CrossFit Kids Headquarters' home box, CrossFit Brand X, in Ramona, Calif. The second Gauntlet went down Jan. 28-29, 2012, at the Los Angeles Fitness Expo. The third was March 4 at the Arnold Sports Festival in Columbus, Ohio. As of this writing, two more events are scheduled for the year. CrossFit Kids HQ hopes to see this expand internationally in scope and magnitude. We envision these teen competitions as someday evolving into a full-blown youth sport with recreational and prep-school organization.

This ever-earlier quest for elite-level athleticism more often than not fails to produce truly elite athletes.

At CrossFit Brand X, we have seen tremendous growth in all our classes, including an influx of enthusiastic adolescents to the Teen/Advanced class, many of whom participate in other sports—some at advanced levels—and who have become hooked on CrossFit. We love that. And we love that a lot of the kids and a lot of the parents are as excited about the Gauntlet as we are. Many of our young clients are chomping at the bit to compete. My son included.



The author's firebreathing son, sporting very festive socks.

Here's where we need to step carefully.

That's Entertainment

The temptation to "open 'er up and see what she can do" with a talented preteen CrossFitter is a strong one. That inclination is consonant with the common wisdom to "start them young," an idea with empirical roots in the "10,000-hour rule" (21,28,48) and one that certainly fits with the deeply entrenched sentiments guiding youth athletics as alluded to above; to wit, the earlier kids are immersed in sports, the better they'll get.

In general, the idea of early exposure makes sense to me. It makes sense to CrossFit Kids, too, as the existence of the Preschool class indicates. And we are aware of what Infant Swimming Resource (35) is accomplishing. Very young children are highly capable of learning stuff, of skill acquisition, of accomplishment. It is entirely natural at that stage of development. The problem is qualitative in the sense that what children can learn—are supposed to learn during the course of normal development—differs markedly from what adults—particularly us as often-overzealous if well-meaning sports parents—often expose them to (e.g., 27,46).

Chronologically speaking, my son is 10; he's prepubescent, which means, when we're talking about sport-specific skill acquisition or general physical preparedness, his body will respond to only certain kinds of stimuli (17,23,27). For example, in terms of resistance training, his body is not ready to benefit from heavier loading (23), despite his ostensible technical capacity to handle heavier loading.

Physically, cognitively and psychosocially, children are not adults. Duh, right?

Physically, cognitively and psychosocially, children are not adults. Duh, right? Well, we adults have a tendency to chuck that obvious understanding out the window when it doesn't suit our particular agenda. And this sort of agenda is often found in the world of youth sports, a realm of sociocultural dysfunction and deep psychodramatic poignancy for adults, and a realm that CrossFit Kids has gingerly entered.

Enemy Mine, Enemy Me

What do I mean by "sociocultural dysfunction and psychodramatic poignancy?" Let's look at it this way: what is the No. 1 problem in organized youth sports?

Us. Adults.

That's idiotic; where would youth sports be without adults?

Some might argue that kids' sports would be right where they ought to be: in backyards, parks and sandlots. I don't know that I agree with that idea entirely—I think there's a lot of good in organized youth sports—but I get the sentiment. Kids should be having fun. Sounds pat and politically correct and just a bit saccharine, but ultimately I believe it's true. And I believe the vast majority of adults involved in organized youth sports buy into that as well. So what's the problem?

Well, despite promises to ourselves not to forget what it's like to be a kid, as we age, an inexorable creep seems to open a gulf between adulthood and childhood. And so? And so check this out:

My son's 10U travel baseball team is currently ranked No. 7 in the nation. The team was No. 1 for a moment, having earned that distinction on the strength of a tournament championship over the 2011 Thanksgiving weekend. The victory also secured the team a berth in the USSSA's prestigious [Elite World Series](http://www.ussabaseball.org/the_elite_world_series.htm) (http://www.ussabaseball.org/the_elite_world_series.htm) at Disney World in Orlando, Fla., wherein the top 32 (i.e., the Elite 32) will vie for a spot in the USSSA's week-long MLB-sponsored and nationally televised National Youth Championship in Cordova, Tenn. Winning, right?

Well, soon after that my son's coach told us to hold our horses. Looks like he'd prefer to participate in [TravelBall Select's](http://www.travelballselect.com/) (<http://www.travelballselect.com/>) first annual invitational National Travelball Championship, which promises not only national television, Web and other coverage, but also, in consideration of the "financial impact" on parents and coaches of such a tournament, a six-game minimum and as many as 10 games in four days. Got pitching? Holy overuse, Batman.

Kids should be having fun. Sounds pat and politically correct and just a bit saccharine, but ultimately I believe it's true.

My son's coach told the kids in a pre-practice pep talk that they are going to win. There's too much money at stake, so they had better win every game, and playing time will be according to a player's ability to contribute to wins. And, just to be fair, he thought it right to mention to the parents who pay more than \$1,000 a year—not including tournament fees and attendant costs, including upward of \$3,000 for the Travellball Select (TbS) trip—that the roster is not frozen; if he can find a new kid who will help the team win, he's going to grab him. Oh, by the way, TbS provides team rankings. Did I mention my kid's team is No. 7 in the nation? At least according to TbS and at least for this week; USSSA has the team ranked 50th.

Getting the picture?

Process v. Outcome

Travel baseball has hollowed out our local rec league in Ramona. In fact, a sister league in a nearby community has been so gutted it has to send its three teams up to our league to have a season at all. I don't know about other sports, but I figure the situation is similar; see, for example, [AAU Boys Basketball](http://www.aauboysbasketball.org/) (<http://www.aauboysbasketball.org/>) or [National Soccer Rankings](http://www.nationalsoccer-ranking.com/) (<http://www.nationalsoccer-ranking.com/>).

The professionalization of youth sports is a symptom of adults imposing their idea of fun on children.

You look at these sites and your first impression might be, "How cool! A little like the pros." A little too much like the pros. The professionalization of youth sports is a symptom of adults imposing their idea of fun on children. Resorting to a bit of wordplay, one might characterize this

professionalism as an "adult-eration" of youth sports in America. Adults think they're making youth sports more fun. The question is for whom?

The Hebbian (33) idea of fostering an auto-association between activities and fun is a simple notion that is in play everywhere. It's certainly given lip service with respect to my son's team: "As long as the boys are having fun." But such parental utterances are accompanied by a certain dissonance haunting the eyes. From where I'm sitting, it becomes difficult to ignore the sense that, at this so-called elite level, the overarching goal is to pair baseball not with fun but winning. Why is this problematic?

Winning = Outcome

The CrossFit Kids Trainer Course's most important takeaway is the linking of fitness and fun—and not just fun but broad, inclusive, general (BIG) fun (43). At first blush, the notion seems clever, maybe even a bit facile. But I'd like to put a finer point on the fitness-fun connection. Really what the Martins are after is a link between BIG fun and the pursuit of fitness; that is, to guide children toward a lifetime interest in understanding fitness and being fit or, if we think in terms of the fitness continuum (below), in seeking out and holding onto super-wellness. The implications are obvious.



Our assumption is that if everything we can measure about health will conform to this continuum then it seems that sickness, wellness, and fitness are different measures of a single quality: health.

To put this objective in another more basic way: CrossFit Kids' mission is to make kids move better for life. For children in particular, better movement requires that trainers be staunch devotees to teaching mechanics.

Mechanics = Process

**Training of any kind that
focuses heavily on winning
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American sports.**

Why Is Winning Losing?

I'm not naïve: winning is way better than losing. And competition is an important dimension of athletic and child development. But training of any kind that focuses heavily on winning now is wrong for youth athletes, athletic development and American sports (8).

Anxiety tied to competition is a rich research area (29), having been identified in youth sports since their early-20th-century organization (29). We understand that simply competing against others generates some stress. Take that competitive stress and parboil it in a win-win-win culture, and you have the fixings for withdrawal or burnout (27, 32, 42).

"When the desire to win—to be successful—dominates the thoughts of young-adult athletes, it can create performance anxiety or a sense that all the practice and preparation are mere drudgery" (27).

The authors of that sentence are referring to collegiate athletes here, but I see these dynamics working at younger ages because adults bring all the trappings of higher-level athletics to the junior elite stage, including a culture centered on winning. This kind of culture situates performance only and ever in the now. 3, 2, 1 ... win or fail!

Bases loaded, two outs, full count, down by a run, 0-2 on the day, the No. 9 hitter desperately waves his arms at a little bender on the outside corner, no hips, completely flat

footed, and chips a dying quail over the outreached glove of the first baseman to drive in two runs. The parents go wild. Tournament champs. Hero.

Bases loaded, two outs, full count, down by a run, 0-2 on the day, the No. 9 hitter is fooled by a little bender on the outside corner, but he executes the active take he's been working on all month, keeps his elbow and hands in, stays behind the ball and rips a rocket line drive—right at the second baseman. Game over. Tournament runners up. The parents groan—there goes the team ranking. Goat.

Now I guarantee you that more than one person told that second kid, "Nice try." And those people might actually have meant it, having recognized the quality of his performance. But I also guarantee you that, if a culture of winning prevails, the kid feels like he failed. And if asked, he would say he'd rather have fisted a tepid little flare into right field for the win than hit the ball with technical excellence for an out.



***We must be careful not to destroy the sense of joy kids feel
as they try new things.***

Along similar lines, in the CrossFit competition context, most reps are scored by satisfying the range of motion as set forth in the standards; that is, the athlete need only be effective. A competitor is not typically held to any efficiency standard. I get it, it's go time and issues of efficiency should've been resolved in training—otherwise, a flare off the end of the bat gets 'er done. Valid reasoning in the heat of battle for experienced athletes. Valid, too, in a winning-centered culture.

To children and teens, fitness means what CrossFit Kids trainers say it means.

But significant in the quote above is the idea that when winning is first and foremost, practice and preparation can become a chore. How counter to the CrossFit Kids culture is that? Utterly. Because when you think about it, the soul of CrossFit Kids is practice and preparation over time (43).



The overarching goal of CrossFit Kids is to pair fitness with fun.

Why Is Process Better?

We know CrossFit is referred to as the sport of fitness. Efforts to establish it as a legitimate competitive sport in the eyes of society are ongoing and accelerating. I see this as positive growth that adds breadth and depth to the community—generally speaking.

A CrossFit Kids program that becomes preoccupied with the sporting side of CrossFit will subvert the Martins' long-standing and meticulously tended culture of pursuing fitness. If we allow that to happen, the sport of fitness, despite all its current momentum, can fail.

Foundational to the CrossFit Kids methodology is the principle of mechanics-consistency-intensity, or MCI, which is essentially a practice-and-preparation approach to any activity. MCI affords the program an opportunity to define success in terms of stepwise goals and incremental gains. Over time. The sweetness of the eventual victory is tied to the hard work and persistence applied along the way. Kids learn that short-term setbacks are not failures or losses but a normal part of any worthwhile pursuit.

This is critical. CrossFit Kids' overarching aim to pair fitness with fun is itself inextricably tied to its core mission of making kids move better over the entire life course. We do this by emphasizing mechanics. MCI might more accurately be MMM—mechanics-mechanics-mechanics. Even in the Teen/Advanced class, when competition becomes an intrinsic component of the fun for kids, we remain, for all intents and purposes, in a practice-and-preparation mode to ensure fidelity of movement. CrossFit Kids goes to great lengths to normalize this for our young clients. We have to if we are to execute our main mission.

To children and teens, fitness means what CrossFit Kids trainers say it means. If your program de-links fun from the pursuit of fitness and links it to competition—i.e., the pursuit of victory—you end up sacrificing technical excellence on the altar of intensity. In this environment, kids will never attach a value to learning movements no matter how much lip service is paid to points of performance prior to starting the clock. Critical opportunities to influence the quality of movement (4,6,7,9,12,46,51,55) will be lost. CrossFit Kids' critical mission will be a loss.

The Sport of Fitness Has Arrived

Let's imagine an established nationwide year-round youth CrossFit competition circuit with local throwdown leagues; sectional, state and regional qualifiers and/or invitationals; and a prestigious national and even international championship that coincides with the CrossFit Games. Imagine this circuit has developed into a CrossFit Games feeder system with CrossFit Kids programs in affiliates or schools acting as the main engines of talent development. Imagine a multi-tiered ranking system for these programs and the emergence of an interlocking directorate comprising regional sanctioning bodies that dictate the nature of the circuit. Imagine the concomitant political-economic forces coming to bear to drive down the age of participation such that divisions from 7U to 18U exist.

Imagine that.

The pairing of fitness and fun is eschewed for the pairing of the sport of fitness and fun.

CrossFit Kids' overarching aim to pair fitness with fun is itself inextricably tied to its core mission of making kids move better over the entire life course.

CrossFit Kids classes are CrossFit practices. Clients, or should I say team members, learn how to competitively CrossFit during class time. Given the year-round competition schedule, trainers focus on game-day preparation; that is, teaching kids to meet the movement standards so they can go as hard as they can without getting dinged with a "no rep." Each program boasts a "team," but these young athletes all must compete against each other for a starting slot, and you never know when the trainers will bring in a new firebreather; the program will only put the best out on the field on game day when rankings and qualifications are at stake. The best are the fastest and the strongest. So CrossFit Kids trainers turn their attention to identifying and cultivating talented CrossFitters at younger and younger ages.



What would happen if CrossFit Kids became as competitive as many other youth sports, with national rankings and travel teams?

Enthusiastic parents perceive that the only way their talented kids can become corporate-sponsored professional CrossFit athletes is for them to specialize in CrossFit.

These proud parents huddle together and commiserate about the costs of year-round competition: program fees, event fees, equipment and attire, nutrition, travel, sport and injury-rehab massage, private sessions. They discuss fundraising and fret cliquishly about the new kid who might bump theirs from the team for next month's elite invitational in How-Cool-Is-This-Even-Though-We-Can't-Afford-It, Calif.

Game-day sights and sounds might include a leaderboard, an 11U kid in tears as her hand gets taped up after ripping on the first WOD, a mother berating a judge for stealing a rep, a father screaming at a 10U kid to "get on the bar!"



CrossFit Kids is built on the idea that all children should have an opportunity to be active—no matter their athletic ability.

BIG Mission Failure

Dissecting this scenario exposes a couple of all-too-familiar problems:

1. Overtraining, overuse injury and burnout are the three horsemen of year-round participation and early specialization (3,10,11,13,14,25,36,37,40,41,45,55).
2. The best right now are selected out. The rest are excluded (8,16,24).

None of this bodes well for youth sports in general, but these issues are absolutely anathema to CrossFit Kids. See, the program is evolving into a unique entity within the realm of athletics as both a strength-and-conditioning program and a sport. It is poised to address these problems from within the U.S. youth sports system because its principal strength-and-conditioning role allows it to operate on the frontlines of injury prevention while its secondary role as a burgeoning sport means kids can get into a new game that will also help improve their main sport. Both dimensions soften the negative physical, social and psychological impacts of sport specialization.

CrossFit Kids can't do that if it takes on the structural model prevalent in U.S. youth sports and becomes a part of the problem.

But on a more fundamental level, allowing the program to decouple fun from the pursuit of fitness and turn its attention toward CrossFit competition and talent development directly violates the spirit of the program. The fact of the matter is that talent identification is problematic (1,2,54). The U.S. system of talent development is deeply flawed (24), as reflected in the scenario above. Pressures to build a winning team right now will likely drive CrossFit Kids trainers to privilege the naturally athletic and, more disturbingly, the early bloomers over other kids. Broad, inclusive, general fun? Not so much.

Basically, the organization of the current system is designed to tell the less athletic and the late bloomers that sports ain't for them (24). It is a kind of disenfranchisement that can lead to a life-haunting choice of physical inactivity, improper nutrition and poor health (for some, super-unwellness). These are the very public-health and social problems on which CrossFit Kids sets its sights. These disenfranchised are the very children CrossFit Kids exists to serve. A properly run CrossFit Kids program offers all kids a safe and encouraging place to be active, discover athleticism and bloom.

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Eliding Elitism

Of course, my scenario above reaches quite a bit, but as the Gauntlet competition series matures, we expect local CrossFit Kids throwdowns and other competitive events to become commonplace, and the expansion of the sport becomes less farfetched.

Fun might change over time, but expressions of fun are universal in the sense that children seeing adults enjoying themselves will want in on the action. Just because an enthusiastic 10-year-old tells you she wants to CrossFit like the grown-ups doesn't mean she ought to. However, at CrossFit Brand X, one way we allow all the teens in on some of the adult fun is to program scaled versions of the CrossFit Games Open WODs during Teen/Advanced class.

We must take care to keep younger yet talented children engaged in class. Allow them to demonstrate movements during the WOD explanation and focus/skill work, let them work out front and center with the varsity-level teens, and/or challenge them with increased reps or difficulty in movements in the WODs rather than increasing loads no matter how tempting that sounds. If your program has the resources, provide these hard chargers with extra skill work; e.g., gymnastics progressions.

Enthusiastic teen CrossFitters and their parents must learn early on about the importance of rest and recovery.

Within the framework of the class, we need to downplay some of the advanced sport moves like the butterfly kip for pull-ups or the kipping muscle-up and stress the importance of basic strength development. For example, we should definitely train the standard kipping pull-up, but the butterfly kip should be reserved for occasional WODs and only for experienced varsity-level kids. Remember, children see something cool and they want in on it. But allowing kids to learn the butterfly—which they do very easily—and rely on it exclusively in every workout can short circuit sound development of the shoulder girdle. The strict pull-up can appear in any segment of a class as a way to build basic strength in the shoulder girdle, which will translate to a higher capacity for CrossFit's default kipping pull-ups and provide a solid foundation for the muscle-up, while also playing an important role in injury prevention.



Kids often learn new skills when playing around before and after class. Great things can come from this low-pressure, try-anything atmosphere.

But here's the thing: my young son learned the butterfly kip through observation. This occurred before and after class when he and the other kids were hanging out. Same as his muscle-up. Essentially playing. Before and after class are great times for the kids to explore things freely with minimal structure. They play on the monkey bars and rings, practice their double-unders, and get upside-down and work on handstands and handstand walking. Casual achievements—and authentic athletic development—spring from intrinsically motivated fun with peers. The obvious caveat is that this cannot be wholly unsupervised; safety must be considered (e.g., maybe no first attempts at a ring handstand push-up suspended over the concrete floor).

As CrossFit Kids trainers, few things are as satisfying as hearing that a child client loves CrossFit so much that he has chosen it as his main sport. It's a stroke to the ego seeing such a client at every Kids class you offer. That might mean six days a week. That might be too much—and too much like what troubles American youth sports. Enthusiastic teen CrossFitters and their parents must learn early on about the importance of rest and recovery and that while CrossFit Kids strongly encourages children to explore all kinds of sports, we do not advocate early specialization or anything resembling year-round intensive participation in a single athletic activity.

CrossFit's growth as a sport in the mainstream means new clientele and the emergence of some tangential issues for a CrossFit Kids program. At the Teen/Advanced level, such growth might manifest in an influx of non-Cross-Fitting parents who take for granted that their all-star-club-soccer-travel-baseball-playing kid will breathe fire by default, whose perspective derives from their child's lifetime of "elite-level" sports participation (and the kid might assume the same thing). These parents might first cheer on and coax their kids; then there might be a bit of chiding if their children are not "winning" the WOD. The worst-case scenario has these parents coaching their kids at home. This can be handled beginning with up-front and clear communication to incoming families regarding the CrossFit Kids mission. Those who don't appreciate the message or find it onerous to watch their offspring not be exalted as all-stars might pull their kids, or the kids themselves might not like starting as a novice. It is an unfortunate occurrence, but we're dealing with powerful forces (adult psyches) that must be met with firm adherence to the CrossFit Kids mission.

CrossFit Kids encourages all kids to level up to the highest division in which they can safely handle the RX'd weights and movements.

Following this, if you are running an extracurricular event, CrossFit Kids mission integrity can be maintained through a strict lower age limit of 13 for judged competition. The preteens and younger children can get the opportunity to shine with CrossFit Kids trainer oversight in WOD demos, obstacle courses and low-skill challenges such as sled drags or bag carries where kids can try to beat their own times.

We want it understood that the Gauntlet—and by extension any extracurricular event related to CrossFit Kids—is not about elevating teen CrossFitters to rock-star status or inflating children's egos under false pretenses. On one level, our interest is demonstrating the program's capabilities—mechanics-consistency-intensity; effectiveness-efficiency-safety. On another level, we want to showcase individual

achievement under rigorous competition conditions. CrossFit Brand X has a couple of highly experienced 13-year-olds who could dominate the novice division; we won't allow them to compete at that level. We want them to view the Gauntlet as all about the battle, not the score. CrossFit Kids encourages all kids to level up to the highest division in which they can safely handle the RX'd weights and movements. Frankly, it's all about keeping it real, about trying to teach kids that the reward is in the process, the hard work, the genuine accomplishment, rather than in the appearance thereof (18).

Process trumps outcome because process produces outcome. What outcome do you want?

The Banality of Travel Baseball

A couple of years ago, my son was on a local "travel team" comprising most of the top 9- and 10-year-old players in Ramona. A couple of disgruntled dads whose kids were not part of that team put together their own club to feature their two boys. Whenever I ran into them at the fields, they'd be scheming about this new team. I remember them being particularly stoked about the color of the team's uniforms. They built a team around their sons and went "down the hill" to play in a Friday-night league for travel clubs. Looking sharp under the lights in their crimson-and-gold colors, and with their sons batting and fielding in key spots, they lost every game by double digits. The team folded following the league, and some of those kids don't even play baseball anymore.

In Southern California, baseball is year-round, so it's no surprise that my son's current team participated in a Christmas tourney. These tournaments cost a team anywhere from \$475 to \$600-plus. I believe this one cost the team \$660. Their second game of pool play was against a team calling itself the So-and-So Elite. The team hailed from a well-to-do community of San Diego. They showed up in style—top-drawer uniforms, warm-up jackets and custom gear bags in team colors. Most of the parents were sporting So-and-So Elite hoodies.

The So-and-So Elite just came off a 15-0 defeat, getting mercied in two innings. My son's team took exactly two innings to mercy them 17-0. So for all that money, the So-and-So played four innings total that day, gave up 35 runs and managed never to bat through their complete lineup across two games (their two opponents likewise only got two innings out of the debacle). But they looked the part with "Elite" emblazoned across their jerseys.



Forget about elite—to the author's son, CrossFit Kids is pure fun.

By the way, my son's team used to be known as the San Diego Whatzits North. Recently, the coach declared that the team would henceforth be known as the San Diego Whatzits Elite. The team has not won a tournament since the name change.

**To my son, CrossFit is pure.
Baseball, however, has come
to mean too much to him.**

Loaded Fun

One time, when trying to help my son with a case of pre-game jitters, I suggested he think of how he feels just before starting a WOD. With a little fire in his eyes he stabbed me with an incredulous look and snapped, "How is that going to help? CrossFit doesn't mean anything!"

Wow. I've thought about that for some time, and I want to take an idea out for a spin:

To my son, CrossFit doesn't mean anything, just like whiffle ball on the driveway doesn't mean anything, like pickup basketball on a Saturday afternoon doesn't mean anything. To my son, CrossFit is pure. Baseball, however, has come to mean too much to him. I would venture to say—though he might not be aware of it—for my son, the game has been adult-erated. And my heart has maybe broken a little bit.

So I'll ask again: As a CrossFit Kids trainer, what do you do with a larval-stage firebreather?

You never forget that you are dealing with a preadolescent, prepubescent child.

You never forget the physiological significance of that from a strength-and-conditioning standpoint.

You never forget that safety always comes first in a CrossFit Kids program.

You never forget that although CrossFit Kids' overarching goal is to pair fitness and fun, such fun belongs to the kids, not the adults.

You never forget the CrossFit Kids mission is making kids move better now so they move better throughout their lives, embrace a healthy lifestyle now so they embrace a healthy lifestyle throughout their lives, and pursue fitness now so they pursue fitness throughout their lives.

You never forget that CrossFit should never mean anything to a child, and in that way it will forever mean something.

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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



BREAKFAST SPROUTS

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

overview

It's breakfast. Wait, they're Brussels sprouts. No, they're breakfast sprouts! Your kids will never know what hit them with this flavorful breakfast dish peppered with bacon and disguised with an egg.

serves 3

ingredients

1 lb. Brussels sprouts
3 slices bacon
3 eggs
1 tbsp. olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

notes

This dish also makes an excellent lunch or dinner.

directions

1. Chop off the ends of the Brussels sprouts and cut them in half or dice them. Steam the sprouts until desired tenderness.
2. Cook bacon in a skillet until crispy, and then chop it up into small pieces.
3. In a large bowl, mix together Brussels sprouts, bacon, olive oil, and salt and pepper.
4. Divide the sprout mixture between three plates.
5. Use the skillet to cook the eggs as desired. We find sunny side up is delicious with this dish.
6. Place one egg on top of each serving of Brussels sprouts and serve immediately.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Diet Secrets of the Tupperware Man Vol. 2

Original Firebreather Greg Amundson draws a correlate between physical and mental nutrition.

By Greg Amundson CrossFit Amundson

June 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

In December 2003, in lieu of a traditional CrossFit WOD, Coach Glassman gathered the 6 a.m. "Team Six" athletes around the whiteboard for a lecture on the theoretical development in the hierarchy of an athlete. This lecture, like most of the conversations, seminars and interactions I had with Coach Glassman, proved to be life changing.

Coach explained that if he intended to forge the ultimate athlete, he would start with nutrition. Coach believed that nutrition was so important in the development and sustainment of an athlete that in a perfect world he would put an athlete on an island for 30 days with nothing to do except eat the right way. During a previous lecture from Coach in February 2002, I had learned that by “eat the right way” Coach was referring to a special balance of 40 percent carbohydrate, 30 percent protein and 30 percent fat that would yield a balanced hormonal response in the athlete and ultimately result in leaner muscle mass and increased athletic capacity in the gym.

(For a detailed description of the author’s experience with the Zone Diet, read [Diet Secrets of the Tupperware Man](#).)

Coach provided several compelling reasons for the focus on nutrition. The first was a simple rule he called the “1 to 23 Rule.” Coach proposed that most athletes train in CrossFit approximately 1 hour a day. This left 23 additional hours during the day in which the athlete would have to make a choice: would he or she use the time outside the gym to support or unravel the hour that had been invested while inside the gym?

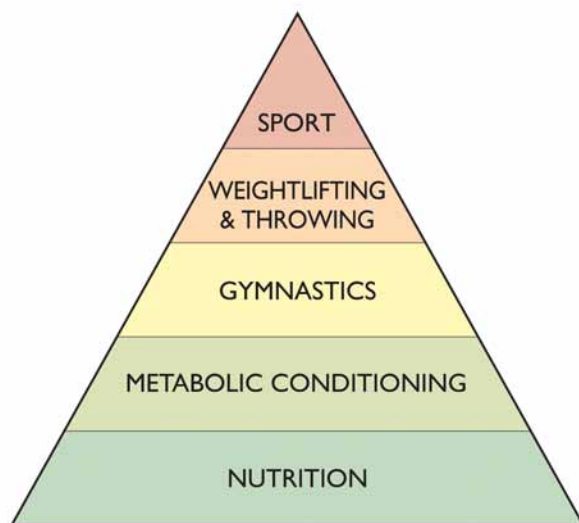
Coach proposed the best way to support the invested hour was with nutrition. After all, with the recommendation of the Zone Diet, most athletes would eat between four and six times during the day. This simple ratio of time spent

training to time spent eating was compelling enough for me to realize that making conscious choices about my food intake was absolutely essential in my development as an athlete.

1/23

What will you do with the other 23 hours outside the gym?

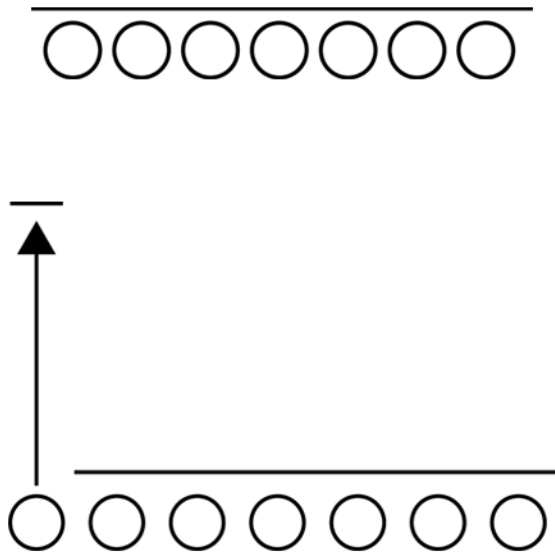
The second example Coach used was referred to as the “Glass Ceiling Rule.” In this example, Coach used my personal experience and the experiences of the other athletes from Team Six to make his point. Coach drew seven circles in a row on the whiteboard and explained that each circle represented one of the athletes of Team Six. He reminded us of our accomplishments and ultimate plateau in the gym only one year before. Indeed, each of the athletes had seemed to reach an invisible ceiling, and our performances in the gym had all tapered off. We were finishing the WODs within a few seconds of each other, with no athlete ever achieving complete dominance over the workouts. Coach had recommended the implementation of the Zone Diet, and I had been the first athlete to use the diet for two weeks with complete accuracy and discipline.



Nutrition is the foundation of the pyramid for a reason.

In just two weeks, I had noticeably increased my athletic performance, body proportions and mental clarity relative to the other athletes who had not yet started the diet.

On the whiteboard, Coach drew an arrow from the circle that represented me straight up so that my circle was now approximately six inches above the other athletes. Coach explained that given the fact that all other variables were constant, my increased athletic performance had been a direct result of my change in nutrition. Coach was indeed correct.



The Glass-Ceiling Rule: If all athletes are equal (top), improving the diet will give one a huge boost in performance.

In just two weeks, I had noticeably increased my athletic performance, body proportions and mental clarity relative to the other athletes who had not yet started the diet. Coach then drew another arrow from one of the remaining six circles straight up, now even with my circle. He explained this circle represented the infamous Brazilian jiu-jitsu world champion Mike Weaver, also a loyal member of Team Six. After witnessing my improvement, Mike had been the next athlete to use the diet—with similar astounding results. Coach then drew arrows above all the remaining circles, explaining that as each of the Team Six athletes started to eat the right way, capacity in the gym dramatically improved.

After thoroughly convincing us of the importance of nutrition as the foundation in the development of an athlete, Coach moved on to the next building block: metabolic conditioning. After an athlete had the right fuel in the body, it was time to start to burn the fuel and get the body systems moving. Metabolic conditioning referred to modalities such as running, cycling, swimming and rowing.

Next in the development of an athlete came gymnastics, and this is where Coach's eyes really lit up. Coach had a deep love and respect for gymnastics, and his definition of gymnastics skills was broad and inclusive. By "gymnastics movements," Coach explained any skill that used the body's own weight as a means of resistance fit his definition. Pull-ups, push-ups, rope-climbing, handstands, squats (body weight and single leg), dips and L-sits were among some of his favorite physical examples of these skills. Coach was adamant that athletes even remotely interested in achieving elite fitness should begin with a solid foundation of being in control of their body in space and time.

Next in the theoretical development of an athlete came weightlifting. The next logical progression once body control was achieved was control over an external object. By weightlifting, Coach referred to compound/multi-joint movements that did one thing: moved a large load a long distance quickly. Again, Coach's voice picked up in excitement and passion as he explained with a mathematical equation the potential for movements—such as a snatch, clean and jerk, and deadlift—to create power that was rivaled only by an animal: a horse!

Coach used me as an example to demonstrate the potential I had to produce power during a workout such as Fran. By measuring the distance my center of mass (my belly button) traveled during the thruster and pull-up (nearly 4 feet per repetition), as well as the distance the 95 lb. barbell traveled per repetition (nearly 6 feet), Coach explained that in approximately 3 minutes of work I would produce and sustain nearly two-thirds of one horsepower. Coach explained that the significance of this power output was that it equaled CrossFit's definition of intensity, and that intensity was "the independent variable most commonly associated with maximizing the rate of return on favorable adaptation to exercise." (That was a direct quote from Coach that I had written in my journal during his lecture that day!)

$$\text{POWER} = F \times D / T$$

One of CrossFit's most important equations.



Amundson found an improved diet clearly equaled increased work capacity.

Finally, after an athlete had built a solid foundation in nutrition, metabolic conditioning, gymnastics and weightlifting, it was time to have some fun and express our newfound capacity in sport. Keep in mind these were the days before the formal development of the CrossFit Games. Coach's belief was that fitness should be expressed by constantly learning and playing new sports. Again, Coach's view of sport was extremely broad: he encouraged his athletes to rock climb, scuba dive, surf, bicycle race, train in martial arts and, of course, continue to achieve more work in less time during the classic CrossFit WODs.

Coach then warned us that at any time our capacity in sport (the WOD or a sporting event outside the gym) should start to suffer or see retrograde performance, we had to immediately return to the foundation and refocus our attention on nutrition. Indeed, nutrition was a direct representation of an athlete's potential for elite performance in any sport or physical endeavor.

I sat on a medicine ball that day in front of Coach and the whiteboard and took pages of notes in my fitness journal. I was captivated by the notion that nutrition would play such a significant role in my development as an athlete. What was most exciting about the prospect of Coach's lecture was that I retained complete control and influence over what I ate during the day. The choice was entirely mine; all it took was conscious decision making every time I sat down to eat.

The Amazing Paradigm Shift

A little less than three months after I heard Coach's lecture on the theoretical development of an athlete, I found myself on a Greyhound bus on my way to Fort Sill, Okla., for Army Basic Combat Training. After working as a deputy sheriff for several years in Santa Cruz, Calif., I felt compelled to serve concurrently in the Army and had decided to enlist in the Army National Guard. As I sat quietly in my seat, several thoughts went through my mind, but the loudest and most constant thought was, "What in the world am I doing in Oklahoma?"

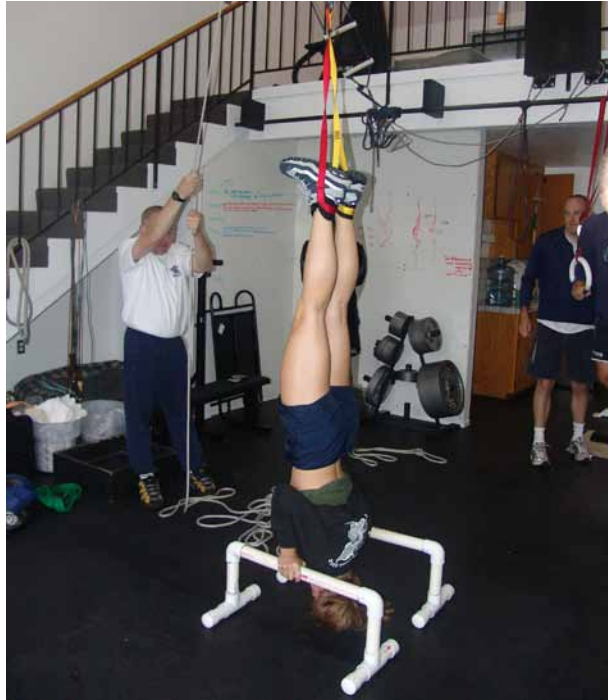
I was 24 years old when I went through boot camp, which at the time was considered "old" for initial training and enlistment. On the bus with me on that lonesome drive were 17- and 18-year-old kids, some between their junior and senior year of high school, and some having just graduated. I knew the power of staying positive in thought and word from previous life experiences with CrossFit and working as a deputy sheriff, but the other future soldiers apparently did not. On the bus that day I heard a never-ending stream of statements that revolved around fear, anger, depression and anxiety.

**"Your thoughts will become
your words, your words will
become your actions."**

—Staff Sgt. Oliver

Finally, the bus rolled to a stop inside the gates of Ft. Sill. Immediately a sea of drill sergeants surrounded the bus and began taunting us with menacing faces and gestures. Two fierce-looking drill sergeants stormed onto the bus and screamed, "Get off my bus right now and line up on the yellow lines!"

I stumbled off the bus and quickly stood at attention on the yellow lines painted on the cement in front of the barracks. The yellow lines served a purpose, as they allowed new recruits with no military experience to quickly assemble into a formation. Suddenly, my senior drill instructor walked in front of the formation and called the group to attention. I will always remember him and the first few words of wisdom he shared with me and the other future soldiers on that day.



Coach Glassman (left) teaching gymnastics in the original CrossFit box in Santa Cruz.

"Listen up, privates!" said Staff Sgt. Oliver, who would not call us "privates" for nine more weeks until we had graduated boot camp. "Boot camp will be hard enough physically, so don't beat yourself up mentally."

Hearing these words, I leaned in and paid close attention. His advice seemed familiar, almost like something Coach Glassman would say.

"In my Army, I want warriors, and warriors think a certain way," Oliver said. "In boot camp, your thoughts will become your words, your words will become your actions, your actions will become your habits, your habits will become your character, and your character will determine your destiny. And I want warriors!"

The staff sergeant's words resonated with me. I knew he was right: in order to be successful at boot camp, I had to remain positive in thought and word.

That night as I lay in my bunk bed, I could not sleep. I thought about my friends at CrossFit Santa Cruz and all the catching up I would have to do when I got back. I pulled the wool blanket up over my head and turned on my little red-lens flashlight so I would not disturb the guys sleeping next to me. I took out my training journal from CrossFit

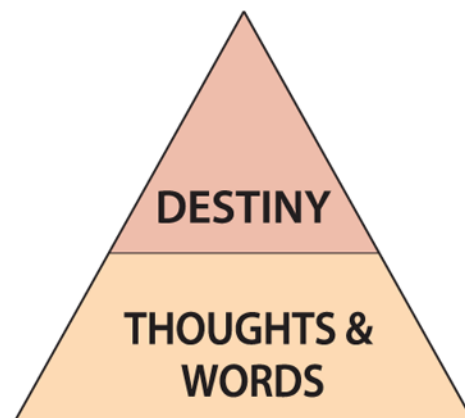
Santa Cruz and looked back over a few months of training data and notes. Suddenly, I came across the lecture and diagram from February in which Coach had drawn the triangle on the white board that explained the theoretical development of an athlete. In an instant I was wide-awake with excitement because I had one of those compelling light-bulb moments.

Looking at the diagram, I drew another diagram next to it. At the bottom, to represent nutrition, I wrote "Thoughts and Words," and then, at the top of the diagram, to represent sport, I wrote "Destiny."

I realized that in the same manner physical nutrition (the foods we eat) are the foundation of our athletic capacity, mental nutrition (our thoughts and words) are the foundation of our development as we strive to achieve our greatest self, both inside and outside the gym.

Thinking the Right Way

The Zone Diet, which Dr. Barry Sears introduced in his first book in 1995, is his term for proper hormone balance. He says that a 40-30-30 caloric balance of low-glycemic carbs (mostly fruits and vegetables), low-fat protein and fat has several great effects on the body. These include the release of moderate amounts of the hormones insulin and glycagon, resulting in the release of a flood of feel-good chemicals called eicosanoids, which do a bunch of good things: protect your heart, open the bronchi of the lungs and reduce inflammation. A secondary effect of importance to CrossFit athletes is noticeable fat loss and increased physical capacity.



Amundson discovered that "mental nutrition" helped him achieve his greatest potential.



Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right.

The important consideration that's often overlooked in the Zone Diet (or any diet for that matter) is choice. Every time we put food or beverage into our mouth, we are faced with a choice: will our physical nutrition support or unravel our investment of time in the gym? The best food choices in the world are good for us only in theory until the moment they are consumed. It is the conscious act of choosing and consuming the right physical nutrition that ultimately makes a positive difference in our lives.

Like most of the lessons of the CrossFit gym, I strive to draw a correlate between what is true inside the gym and what is true outside the gym. I realized with Oliver's mentorship that our thoughts and words are the nutrition of our lives and ultimately determine who we become and what we are capable of achieving.

Just like in our physical nutrition, which consists of three broad types of food in protein, carbohydrate and fat, with mental nutrition we have three broad types of thinking and speaking that can take place: Empowering Words, Mantras and Affirmations.

Empowering Words, Mantras and Affirmations

Empowering Words: Choosing the Right Mental Nutrition

When we prepare a meal, we have a choice about the types of carbohydrate we will consume. Although both cookies and apples are considered carbohydrate, we understand the benefit of choosing the apple instead of the cookie. Individual food choice is important, and we benefit from increased health and wellness when we choose the right foods. In this same manner, we have an opportunity to choose empowering words to consume as well. Refer to the list below:

Hard vs. Challenging

Injury vs. Resilience

Lazy vs. Determined

Weak vs. Strong

Sick vs. Healthy

Some of the most empowering words available for CrossFit athletes to "consume" are the 10 words associated with the general physical skills we train for in the gym. Although normally associated with physical fitness, each word also holds an important definition related to character development and the person we become outside the gym.

Endurance

Mental skill: The ability to maintain belief in self and others.

Stamina

Mental skill: The ability to create and maintain intense mental effort, focus and resilience.

Strength

Mental skill: The ability to maintain resolve of decision.

Flexibility

Mental skill: (1) The ability to independently choose an emotional reaction to a wide range of external circumstances. (2) The ability to apply versatile methods to the accomplishment of a fixed goal.

Power

Mental skill: (1) The ability to encourage self and others in the pursuit of a worthy goal. (2) The ability to immediately generate an intense state of motivation and positive expectancy.

Speed

Mental skill: The ability to make immediate command decisions in the face of opposition, challenge and uncertainty.

Coordination

Mental skill: The ability to invoke the most productive emotional response at a given time and place.

Speed Mental skill: The ability to make immediate command decisions in the face of opposition, challenge and uncertainty.

Agility

Mental skill: (1) The ability to support the needs of others while ensuring personal goals and challenges are fulfilled. (2) The ability to respond to environment and circumstance with deliberate attitudes and beliefs so as to achieve a desired end state.

Balance

Mental skill: (1) The ability to maintain individual physical, mental and emotional wellness. (2) The ability to maintain a state of mind or attitude regardless of external stimuli.

Accuracy

Mental skill: (1) The ability to set and achieve specific and concise goals. (2) The ability to listen and correctly identify internal thoughts, emotions and energies.

(For more information on the mental adaptation of these words, refer to [Forging Elite Leadership](#).)

Mantras: Developing Healthy Daytime Snacks

Once we have begun to consume the right food, it's time to start designing healthy bite-size snacks. A mantra is a short and concise conscious thought pattern or verbalized statement about something we want to express in the moment. One simple way to achieve this is to add the

words such as "I am" or "I have" before the 10 general physical skills. The beauty of this exercise is we are able to use a short, concise mantra to solicit a response both physically and mentally in the body.

For example, "I am flexible" or "I have endurance."

The one important consideration and rule for developing mantras is to stay in the positive tense. By positive tense, I simply mean to state in the mantra what you want as opposed to what you don't want or lack. For example, "Don't fall" vs. "Strongly hold" and "Don't trip" vs. "Retain agility."

One of the best examples of how easy it is to slip into the negative tense came during a CrossFit Goal Setting Course held in Colorado. One of the athletes in attendance had written on his red Inov8 shoes what he had originally thought was a good mantra. On the left shoe he had written, "Don't" and on the right "Stop." The intent was that during a workout or a long-distance run, he would look down at the mantra on his shoes for inspiration and would see "Don't Stop."

We discussed a more powerful word choice and mantra: "Keep going." With a laugh, he quickly lined through the old mantra and wrote in big bold letters, "Keep going!"



Original CrossFit Santa Cruz athletes training for 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Regional Event 3?

Affirmations: Building Complete Meals

Once we are consuming the right foods and eating healthy snacks, it's time to begin building complete meals. I refer to the complete meal as an affirmation. Affirmations are statements verbalized in the present tense about positive outcomes we want to achieve in the future. For example:

"I believe in myself and my ability to succeed."

"I am a natural athlete and quickly learn new skills."

"I always give my best effort during a workout and leave it all on the gym floor."

"I encourage myself and others by setting a positive example."

**At the same time you are
making conscious choices
about the physical nutrition
of your day, pay special
attention to your mental
nutrition as well.**

The Seven-Day Physical and Mental Challenge

Are you up for a life-changing challenge? This exercise is a practice in awareness and empowering ourselves to make conscious choices. For the next seven days, eat Zone-proportioned meals with only desirable macronutrient food choices. Consciously choose to consume fruits and vegetables as your carbohydrates, lean meats and fish as your protein choices, and monounsaturated fats as your fat choice. Be very disciplined: It's only for seven days, so give 110 percent effort. My recommendation is to prepare your meals in the morning and pack them in Tupperware for the day. Make sure you consume your allotted daily food intake—nothing more and nothing less.

At the same time you are making conscious choices about the physical nutrition of your day, pay special attention to your mental nutrition as well. Only consume positive words, mantras and affirmations during the seven-day challenge.

Here are the rules of the challenge:

With physical nutrition, there is no cheating allowed! Beverage choices are water, tea or coffee. No sugar to be added to the beverages, and extra cream, milk or half-and-half all "count" and must be factored into total allotment of daily food intake. If you have an undesirable meal, snack or piece of food, you must return to the beginning of the seven-day challenge.

With mental nutrition, there may be a tendency to briefly entertain a negative word or thought pattern. If this happens, first take a moment and congratulate yourself for having awareness of your thoughts. Next, immediately stop the pattern and substitute a positive word or statement for the negative one. Here is how this might play out.

Statement: "I keep getting hurt." Three seconds later comes the thought, "Whoa! I don't really mean that!" Then replace the negative statement with, "I am resilient and healthy."

If you were able to quickly replace the negative with the positive, continue onward with the seven-day challenge. These moments will come less and less, and you will become more and more aware and conscious of the thoughts and words you entertain and vocalize. If, on the other hand, after you verbalize or entertain any negative thoughts and continue down that dark road with thoughts or words like, "I must not be a good athlete" or "My luck is always down" or "Everyone is stronger than me," you must go back to the beginning of the seven-day challenge.

Final rule: the physical and mental challenges run simultaneously. If you restart in one, you must restart in the other!

An Empowering Consideration

When I started my CrossFit training, neither the CrossFit Games nor the sport of fitness had been fully developed. I felt no rush to achieve elite athletic capacity overnight and embraced the idea that CrossFit training was for life. I took a "longevity" approach to my training, and I understood that on my journey as an athlete and coach I had a lifetime of learning opportunities. This relieved a lot of pressure and helped me to enjoy the process of my development more than a hard attachment to any one specific outcome.

In my travels as a coach and during conversations with athletes at the CrossFit Goal Setting Trainer Course, one of the themes I hear is a sense of urgency to achieve success and dominance in CrossFit (or business, relationships, school, etc.) overnight. This self-imposed and completely illusionary time limit may actually hinder development and take away from the simple joy of the moments we spend in the gym.

Coach Glassman told me the day I started CrossFit that I would see 10 years of adaptation. My training journal is a testament to the wisdom and truth of Coach Glassman's statement. After nearly 12 years in CrossFit, I continue to refine my nutritional intake, improve my metabolic conditioning and enhance my gymnastic and weightlifting technique and ability, and I continue to set personal records in the gym along the way! And, most importantly of all, my love for the expression of fitness in sport or any other endeavor both inside and outside the gym remains constant.



Amundson, left, in a classic shot from the early days of CrossFit.

Whether you are one week or several years into your CrossFit training, remember the original intent for the creation of the program: To develop ourselves both mentally and physically so that we may forge elite fitness for the rest of our lives.



Mike Markentin/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Referred to by his peers as the “Original Firebreather,” Greg has been training CrossFit for over 11 years. He owns the affiliate [CrossFit Amundson](#) in Santa Cruz, Calif., and is the founder of the [CrossFit Goal Setting Trainer Course](#). He is a Reserve Law Enforcement Officer in Santa Cruz and serves in the Army National Guard as an Instructor of CrossFit and leadership at the California Army National Guard Officer Candidate School (OCS).

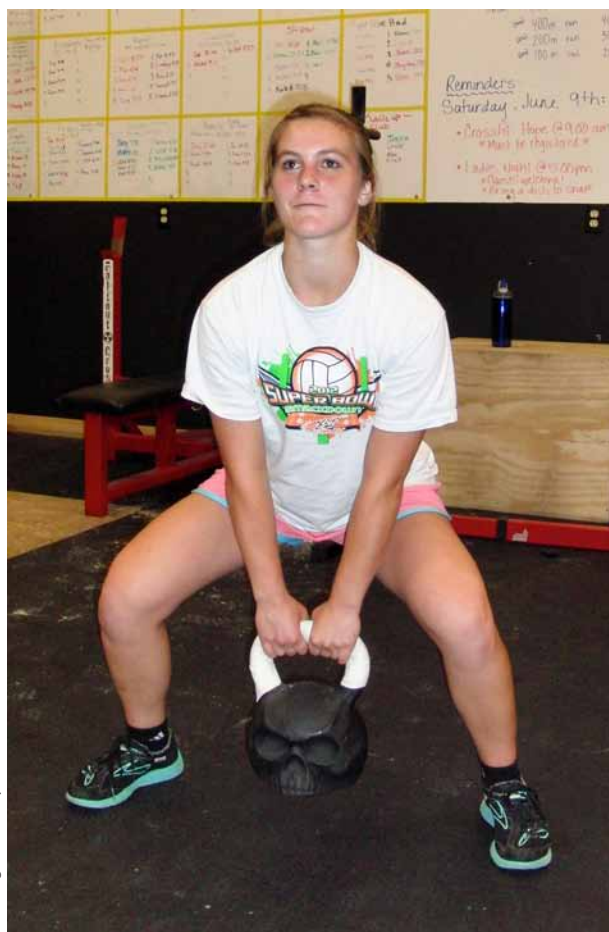
THE CrossFit LIFE

Ordinary Teen?

Emma Miles is a Washington teenager who's actually pretty extraordinary.

By Christopher Lucas

June 2012



All images: Christopher Lucas

In many ways, Emma Miles is a typical teenage girl. She is a 14-year-old middle-school student from rural Pasco, Wash. She lives with her family on a small farm. She's active in 4H, where she shows sheep every year at the county fair and loves riding her horses. She lives a peaceful country-girl life. Miles is also a dedicated volleyball player. She has played on club teams for several years, spending many weekends on the road going to various tournaments.

What is not typical about Miles is her new passion: CrossFit. She discovered CrossFit in the summer of 2011 after attending a CrossFit Kids program. It ignited a spark in Miles that has changed her life in many ways.

Miles is fun loving and a little goofy—she loves to laugh and joke—but when she starts her workout, she's all business. She attends Fallout CrossFit classes with her mom, aunt, uncle and cousin, making it a family affair. This is part of what she really likes about the CrossFit life: it's a big family. Unlike the people in most gyms, CrossFitters encourage each other to do their best and push each other to go beyond what they think is possible.



Miles lists Annie Thorisdottir as a hero and wants to run a CrossFit Kids program one day.

When asked what CrossFit has done for her, Miles will tell you that she now understands what it means to really work out versus attending typical sports team practices and workouts. She will also make note of her new “guns” and muscular legs. She’s proud of what her dedication to CrossFit has done to her body and performance. Her stamina is way above where it was a year ago, and her ability to perform in the sports she loves has increased noticeably.

Because of her newfound pride in her appearance and performance, she has also become very aware of what she puts in her mouth. She used to eat like a typical teenager: a junk-food diet with plenty of empty carbs and sugar. She has now taken on a healthy diet, which can be a challenge in the teenage world of fast food, but she maintains her drive to eat well and live a healthy life.

Because none of her friends in school do CrossFit, she’s sometimes asked curious questions about this thing she does with her free time. She tells her friends it’s different because each workout is a unique challenge. It’s nothing like going to a regular gym and running on a treadmill and lifting a few weights. Her friends have recognized the positive change it’s made in her.

Naturally an outgoing person who makes friends easily, Miles now aspires to become a trainer and run a Kids program to encourage others to become healthier via CrossFit. One of her heroes is Annie Thorisdottir, the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games champion. Miles has joined a small group in her gym focused on training for next year’s Games, and no doubt she will go far and be an inspiration to those around her.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Guy Who Almost Beat Spealler

When the final day of the South West Regional began, Matt Hathcock held the last Games spot and suddenly became the man Chris Spealler was chasing. Emily Beers explains.

By Emily Beers

June 2012



Courtesy of Matt Hathcock

CrossFit fans around the world held their breaths, incessantly refreshed their Internet browsers and anxiously awaited the fate of superstar Chris Spealler at the South West Regional in May.

1 of 4

Almost Beat Spealler ... (continued)

After winning the first event on Friday morning, Spealler notched 13th- and 19th-place finishes on the second and third events, which before left him outside the top three for most of the weekend. A CrossFit Games berth wasn't looking promising for the superstar from Utah as he entered the final event.

“I could see the pain and how he knew he needed to go faster but couldn’t.”

—Shannon Simpson

Matt Hathcock, owner of CrossFit Unbroken, held the final golden ticket to the Games heading into the last two events. On Sunday morning, the 26-year-old led Spealler by three points; after Sunday morning's event, he had Spealler by five. A Games spot was Hathcock's to lose.

But as the Regional's final heat lined up, all eyes were on Spealler, the obvious sentimental favorite. The CrossFit world wanted Spealler on that podium. Period.

Well, maybe not the entire world.

Hathcock Vs. Speal

Ninety-five percent of the eyes in the building might have been on Spealler, but Shannon Simpson's eyes were 100 percent devoted to Hathcock.



Courtesy of Matt Hathcock

Hathcock's back seized up early in the last workout, making the burpee box jumps slow and painful.

Simpson, Hathcock's girlfriend, vividly remembers those fateful 17 minutes.

"The crowd was going crazy, but once the workout started, I don't remember hearing anyone because I was so focused on Matt," said Simpson, who is heading to the Games in July to compete with her Front Range CrossFit team for the fourth straight year.

As a flurry of deadlifts and muscle-ups unfolded in front of her, Simpson knew pretty quickly that something was wrong.

"I knew there was a problem early in the workout when Matt had to do singles on his deadlifts with a weight that he's been able to move well in the past," she said. "With every rep, I could see his back getting more and more tight," she continued.

**"Physically, I just didn't have
enough left in the tank.
Spealler really dug deep ...
deeper than I did."**

—Matt Hathcock

After five tough events, Hathcock's back was tightening up, and he suddenly felt his trip to California slipping away.

Simpson felt her boyfriend's pain as she watched.

"I think watching Matt do the burpee box jumps hurt me as much as it hurt him. I could see the pain and how he knew he needed to go faster but couldn't," she said.

"As the time ran out, we were desperately trying to calculate the scores to see who had beaten Matt. I realized that too many people had passed him in that workout for him to maintain his third-place spot. My heart nearly dropped out of my chest."

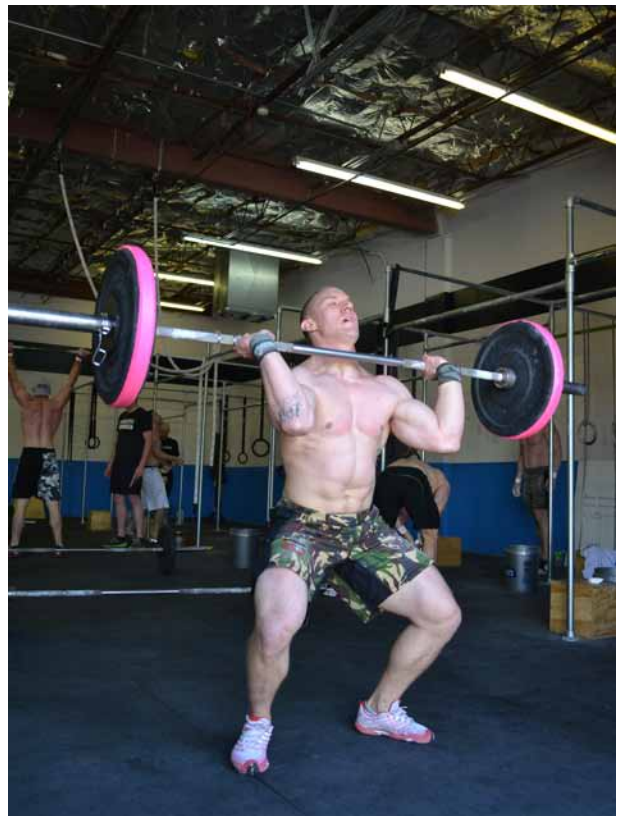
"I Was Even Rooting For Him"

Two weeks after the Regional, Hathcock had little regret.

"You know, it would have been cool to be the guy who beat Spealler," he said. "But physically, I just didn't have enough left in the tank. Spealler really dug deep ... deeper than I did."

"I didn't really think I would be able to beat him, to be honest. I knew his motor was bigger than mine. I knew I had to be faster than him. He definitely did something against all odds and showed that he can still do great things."

He paused for a moment and then added: "I mean, I was even rooting for him."



Courtesy of Matt Hathcock

Hathcock is on the Barbells for Boobs advocate team and will volunteer with the organization during the Games to help in the fight against breast cancer.

Hathcock is already thinking about next year.

Right after the Regional, he hired his girlfriend's coach, Front Range CrossFit's Skip Miller, to program and coach him heading into 2013.

"It has been hard to give up control of my own programming," Hathcock said. "But I trust Skip."

Miller's athletes dominated the Regional. Not only did a Front Range team qualify for the Games, but the top three women were also Front Range athletes: Colleen Maher, Jasmine Dever and Becky Conzelman.

Before Hathcock completely devotes himself to 2013, he has something just as important to do. He will head to the Home Depot Center this summer to volunteer with Barbells for Boobs, a nonprofit organization aimed at preventing breast cancer. And he will, of course, spend some time cheering on his girlfriend in the team competition.

Last year, Simpson's team placed second, behind CrossFit New England. This year, Simpson said their goal is to win the Affiliate Cup. That being said, Simpson admitted that just like the Regional, the Games will be bittersweet.

"I feel a huge emptiness knowing I won't get to compete with Matt in California," she said.

Disappointment aside, she said she is proud.

"He's not pouting about it," Simpson said of Hathcock. "He didn't throw a fit. He simply said the better athlete won and it's time to get back to training."

Hathcock hopes to secure a spot for next year's Games.

Until then, he said he has accepted the fact that he's the guy who almost beat Spealler.



About the Author

Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts WOD HOG, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness. She was the 2011 Canada West Regional Media Director and competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games with CrossFit Vancouver. She finished third in the 2012 Canada West Regional.



Shannon Simpson, Hathcock's girlfriend, at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Essential Architecture

E.M. Burton muses on the nature of the CrossFit box.

By E.M. Burton

June 2012



All images: E.M. Burton

A CrossFit box can contain an infinite variety of occupations, of uses, if not unknown and unknowable at least unpredictable.



The equipment at a CrossFit box is simple, effective and multi-functional.

Thankfully, it's also rather reductive in terms of programmatic requirements. Elegant in the mathematical sense, the nomenclature of the word "box" should suggest this simplicity. It is a space intended for temporary occupation where few things are fixed. After the permanent racks and other fixtures are put into place, it is an open space that can accommodate a wide range of human movement.

The archetype of a CrossFit box, the original from which all others are derived, is the garage gym, the formal and practical requirements of which were outlined by Greg Glassman in seminal *CrossFit Journal* articles [The Garage Gym](#) and [Garage Gym II: The Revolution](#). The invocation to hang inspirational artwork alone has generated material worthy of a large Taschen coffee-table book of beautiful imagery.

As CrossFit spreads across the globe, we are starting to see a lot of variety in the spaces in which athletes train. They're certainly inspired by their West Coast originals yet offer evidence of human ingenuity and adaptability. Some elements are common to all of them, however, and I find they all have more in common than not. In some ways, this is slightly reminiscent of 18th-century design pattern books that spread the type of church construction that originated in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square throughout the English-speaking parts of the world.

Perhaps it's more like the influence that *Western Living* had in a later time here on the West Coast on how we defined "house" and its role in quality of life. Wherever you find it, however, a CrossFit box is still very much like a gymnasium of old. I see the traces of the lineage that leads back to Greece and Rome, but as my companion said somewhat wistfully of the box we photographed for this piece, "It's like a college gym."

The original CrossFit box was in Santa Cruz, Calif. If you never had a chance to visit, it is pictured in *The Garage Gym* on pages 1 and 10 and in *The Garage Gym II* at the bottom of Page 6, images notable for their architectural interest as well. You don't often see these places empty. It's a warehouse space, yes, a garage, sure, but it's a garage that could be anywhere. It fits in and makes use of the space at hand, adapting as it goes.



In some regards, in its reductive qualities certainly, a “box” is like a stage—an ever-evolving, transforming and then recovering space of human movement, on which the entirety of humanity can be represented, at least in part, at least in theory.

The critical detail: the equipment used in CrossFit workouts is extremely durable, and much of it is forged. You couldn’t destroy it if you tried. The material quality of that and the movable equipment—the “miscellaneous basics,” the kettlebells, plyo boxes, rope and medicine balls—combined with the traces of human occupation make being in and working out in a CrossFit box rather unique among human experiences.

Jeff and Mikki Lee Martin, affiliate owners at CrossFit Brand X and directors of CrossFit Kids programming, graciously allowed me to photograph their space in those few moments that it wasn’t being used.



The CrossFit box is set up to accommodate the full range of human movement, to help people push the boundaries of what their bodies can do.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Baggage Beasts

You've seen your bags heaved into the plane at the airport. Now Mikki Lee Martin has your kids slugging luggage for fitness.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

June 2012



Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

Set-Up

Divide the class into two teams. Teams can be named after airlines, such as Delta and United. Place two cones for start position and two cones 25 feet away from that point. Position a stack of plates at the start cone, and position a prowler at the end cone. Teams line up behind the start cones.

Equipment

- 2 prowler sleds
- "Baggage"
- 2 25-lb. bumper plates
- 2 15-lb. bumper plates
- 2 10-lb. bumper plates
- 2 10-14-lb. medicine balls
- 4 10-lb. sandbags

Rules of Play

On 3-2-1 ... go! teams form circles and begin passing the "baggage" taken from the start position around as fast as possible. Encourage kids to move fast and be carefree like real baggage handlers (beasts).

All baggage must cycle five times around the circle, and it's OK for items to be dropped. Only medicine balls and sandbags may be thrown, and players can be skipped to speed the process.

Once the five passing/throwing cycles have been completed, all items must be carried by the team to the end point in any manner and any amount. Then they have to load everything on the prowler and push it back to the start point.

Only two players may push the loaded prowler back to the start position. The remaining players sprint back, line up behind start cone and sit down.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Won Two

Hilary Achauer gets to know Regional champs Azadeh Boroumand and Jon Pera, who have more in common than talent, determination and heart.

By Hilary Achauer

June 2012



B7Creative

Azadeh Boroumand was all Pat Sherwood and Rory McKernan could talk about in the CrossFit Games Update show at the end of the first weekend of Regionals.

The biggest story out of the South Central Regional was Boroumand, and Sherwood and McKernan delighted in pronouncing her name and reviewing her five first-place finishes.

1 of 7

Going into the weekend Boroumand was relatively unknown. However, it wasn't her first time at Regionals—she competed on a team in 2010 and placed sixth in the individual competition in 2011—but this year Boroumand came to play.

She took second in Event 1, her lowest placing in the entire competition. Boroumand won every other event, earning her multiple shout-outs from Sherwood and McKernan.

Not that Boroumand watched her moment of fame on the Update show.

"I can't get too caught up in everything," Boroumand said. "I like being in my own world and staying under the radar."

It's safe to say that's no longer possible in the CrossFit world.



Self-described late bloomer Azadeh Boroumand dominated the South Central Regional.

During the individual men's competition at the 2012 Southern California Regional, much of the attention was focused on Kenneth Leverich, Bill Grundler and Jeremy Kinnick. Meanwhile, Jon Pera spent the weekend putting in consistently strong performances and quietly took the first-place spot at the end of the competition.

"I thought there was no way a seven-minute workout would kick my butt."

—Azadeh Boroumand

"I stuck to the plan," Pera said. "There were no mysteries, no guessing."

Pera and Boroumand have something else in common besides their humble attitudes and impressive work ethic. Both are of Iranian heritage. Boroumand was born in Iran and moved to a small town in Canada when she was 3 years old. Pera was born in the United States, but his father came to the U.S. from Iran at age 6.

"He didn't speak English, his dad was a carpenter, and his mom worked in a factory," Pera said. "He ended up putting himself through medical school, practiced as a radiologist and is now the assistant dean of a medical school. He is living proof that anything is possible with hard work and dedication. He is my inspiration."

New in the Game

Boroumand didn't start to get serious about athletics until she was in ninth grade.

"I was always athletic," Boroumand said, "but I was a late bloomer."

When Boroumand became serious about volleyball, she took off. Her dad, a retired wrestling and P.E. coach, saw her potential.

"College and university scouts didn't come to our small town in Alberta, Canada, so my dad sent out videos of me playing volleyball," Boroumand said.



B7Creative

Boroumand knocking out her double-unders during the snatch ladder.

Boroumand won a full scholarship to play volleyball at the University of Pittsburgh, where she made 1,336 assists in 2004, the most of any sophomore in the university's history. She won numerous athletic and academic awards, and after graduation she moved to Texas to coach volleyball at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Then, in 2009, some of the women Boroumand worked with at the athletic department told her she should try CrossFit. They told her it would last for seven or eight minutes and she would die.

When Boroumand walked into Get Lifted Gym in El Paso, Texas, she wasn't worried.

"I thought there was no way a seven-minute workout would kick my butt," Boroumand said. "I was arrogant because of my experience with volleyball."

Paul Smith, the affiliate owner and a former NFL player, took her through the baseline workout, which started with a 500-meter row. She rowed the 500 as hard as she could, and "I almost passed out," Boroumand said.

"After I finished the workout, I couldn't see. It was the worst experience of my life. I had to stay in the gym for two hours because I couldn't even drive. Talk about being humbled," she recalled.

Of course, Boroumand was hooked. She soon got her Level 1 Trainer Certificate, but it took her three attempts to pass the written test.

"It wasn't until I understood the reason behind every question that I was able to pass," Boroumand said.

In 2010, Boroumand left her job coaching volleyball and became a full-time coach at Get Lifted. This didn't sit well with her father.

"I come from a traditional Persian family," Boroumand said. While her father had always encouraged her athletics, he imagined she would eventually abandon it for a more academic career, like her epidemiologist sister.

Boroumand made her first appearance at the CrossFit Games in 2010 on the Get Lifted team.



Boroumand nailed a 170-lb. snatch, which was just 5 lb. below the best score across all regions.

"We finished 38th," she said. "It was very humbling. It was an eye opener, and I knew I had some serious work to do."

In October 2010 Boroumand started doing two to three workouts a day. She made it to Regionals in the South Central region and placed sixth. Good, but not good enough for the Games.

"As soon as I left (Regionals) I knew I was not where I needed to be. I was 175 lb., and that made the gymnastics movements difficult for me. Moving that weight was hard," Boroumand said.

She focused on reducing her food portions, following the plan set out by the book *The Warrior Diet*, which advocates "under eating" during the day and "over eating" at night.

Boroumand got down to 150 lb., and saw her strength and overall performance improve. During the next year, Boroumand did two, three and sometimes four WODs a day five to six days a week. She worked on skill, strength and endurance, with everything programmed by Smith.

"I'm trying to catch up to girls who have been doing this for years. You have a year to catch up on skills so that everything becomes effortless," she said.

It was not an easy year.

"I would get so stressed out. So much of CrossFit is tough. You never know if you are ready. I just went crazy. I became obsessed," Boroumand said.

She placed first in five events and finished 28 points ahead of second-place Candice Ruiz. Not only did Boroumand dominate her region, but many of her scores also held up against women from other regions. Her time on Event 2, 12:07, was faster than Julie Foucher and Kristan Clever. She also snatched more than those women and bested Clever's time on Event 3.

Boroumand said she didn't expect to do so well.

"The outcome was surprising to me," she said. "I tend to doubt myself."

Now that she's focused on training for the Games, Boroumand says her biggest challenge is to remain calm. "I want to keep having fun," she said. "I'm not going to change too much, just brush up on things like muscle-ups."

Like any serious athlete, Boroumand's goal is the podium. She plans to go as hard as she can, but if she doesn't make it, "I won't let that define me or ruin my dreams," Boroumand said. "I'm still new in the game."

Low Profile

Jon Pera is a family man. So much so that when I called Pera for this article, his 5-year-old daughter answered. She commandeered his phone, and I had several sweet but confusing conversations with her until Pera finally retrieved the phone and called me back, chuckling.

**"I thought I was in shape—
I jogged and lifted weights—
but this was what I was
looking for."**

—Jon Pera

Pera is not new to CrossFit competitions, but he's made a career out of keeping a low profile.

Pera grew in Eureka, Calif., where he played football, basketball, baseball and track and field. After high school, Pera got his degree at Azusa Pacific University. Unlike many elite CrossFit athletes, Pera did not play sports in college, other than intramural sports.



Pera took first place at the 2011/2012 Next Level Invitational, a three-event series in Southern Calif.

After graduating, Pera joined the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, where he has worked full time for the past five years as a deputy. He first heard about CrossFit from a co-worker in 2009, who told him the goal was to "try to do the workout as fast as possible."

"It didn't make sense to me," Pera said of his first workout, but he loved it. "I thought I was in shape—I jogged and lifted weights—but this was what I was looking for."

Pera started doing CrossFit workouts in the gym at work, which had very limited equipment. Then, in February 2010, when he was taking his daughter to gymnastics, he saw the word "CrossFit" on a building across the street.

"I had never seen a CrossFit gym before," Pera said. "It was pretty cool."

Pera walked into the affiliate, CrossFit Rancho Cucamonga, and asked for more information. When he found out the price, he was a bit taken aback. His wife encouraged him to go for it, so he went right back and signed up.

He had only been doing CrossFit for about a month when the 2010 Sectionals came around. The owners of Pera's affiliate encouraged him to compete, but he said no at first because he was so new to the sport. About two weeks before the competition, Pera changed his mind. He finished 27th even though he had never done a double-under before. Pera joined the team for the 2010 Regionals, and they placed 11th.

That's all it took—Pera was hooked. He competed in the Next Level Invitational in August 2010 and took eighth place. Then came the 2011 CrossFit Games Open. Pera, who had been doing CrossFit only a year, placed 10th.

Going into the Southern California Regional, "I didn't have any expectations," Pera said. "I was still kinda new."

Pera placed second.

"I was surprised," Pera said. "I didn't think we'd end up there."

CrossFit Rancho Cucamonga



To his surprise, Pera placed second at the 2011 SoCal Regional.

CrossFit Rancho Cucamonga



Pera fits CrossFit training in between his full-time job and his responsibilities as a father of three young children.

Then life threw a slight—but happy—curveball to Pera. His wife gave birth to their son two weeks before the 2011 CrossFit Games.

"I got three hours of sleep before the swim workout," Pera said. "I was concerned about my wife, and that took a toll. I was not as focused as I wanted to be, but family always comes first."

Pera finished 41st overall, but that experience just made him hungrier for this year.

"I took care of the important thing, and I was so happy to be there. It was a great learning experience," Pera said.

Since the 2011 Games, Pera has kept a strict training schedule. He started out with a strength phase, then moved on to an Olympic-lifting phase and then a met-con phase.

When the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open came around, Pera tried not to let the Open workouts disrupt his training schedule. He did most of the workouts only once and finished the Open in third place in the SoCal Region.

At the Regional, Pera was disappointed with his performance on Event 1, Diane.

"I think it was the nerves, but I had done it 35 seconds faster in practice," Pera said. He took seventh place in that event but quickly pulled it together—that was the lowest he would place all weekend.

"I didn't let the first event affect me," Pera said. He went on to get second place in events 2 and 3, and third place in Event 4.

Event 5 was the snatch ladder, and it all came down to a battle between Pera and Kenneth Leverich. They worked their way down the bars, snatching 235 lb., then 245, then 255. Leverich moved on to 265 and missed the lift. Pera easily snatched 255 and then looked over to his coach, Dan Mielke, before moving on to the next bar.

His coach said, "Double-unders," so Pera deadlifted the bar, then picked up his rope and did 36 double-unders, giving him first place in that event. Pera said it's moments like that when it is so important to have a coach. As an athlete, his instinct would have been to attempt to lift the weight. But his coach knew that if he missed, Pera would have tied with Leverich. The double-unders gave him the advantage he needed to win.

Going into the last event, Pera knew he needed to get fifth place to hold onto first overall, and that's exactly what he did, earning a spot at the Games again this year.

Unlike many Games athletes who work at a CrossFit gym and can fit in training throughout the day, Pera has a full-time job, as well as a family. He says his wife is very supportive of his training.

"It's a team effort," Pera said. "She does a lot for me."

Pera's family also allows him to achieve a healthy balance in life.

"Whenever you have balance, your attitude is in the right place," Pera said.

Pera's goal for the 2012 Games is to make it to the last day.

"We'll see what gets thrown at us," he said. "I don't know what's going to happen, so I'm going to keep training like I've been doing."



Pera with his wife and two of his three children after winning the 2012 SoCal Regional.



Gary Allard

About the Author

*Hilary Achauer is a freelance writer and editor specializing in health and wellness content. In addition to writing websites, brochures, blogs and newsletters, Hilary is an editor and writer for the **CrossFit Journal** and contributes to the CrossFit Games site. She lives in San Diego and coaches and trains at CrossFit Pacific Beach. To contact her, visit HilaryAchauer.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL LIVE AND LEARN

By providing water and schools, CrossFit is changing lives in Kenya—and you can help. Mike Warkentin explains.



Mike Warkentin

BY MIKE WARKENTIN

Functional fitness is on full display in Kenya. Except it isn't about PRs and Fran times. It's about clawing out an existence in a country where many people can expect to earn far less than \$1,000 US a year.

Here, tires aren't flipped. They're repaired and resold in hopes of making enough money to buy life's necessities. Sleds aren't pushed to build strength and power. Rather, rickety carts are dragged over rough roads, and many of them are carrying the most precious cargo of all: food and water. Jugs, baskets and bowls are carried on heads while limbs are loaded with bags.

Large loads are moved quickly here, but they're moved with a sense of desperation that has nothing to do with the whiteboard.

But CrossFit is in Kenya, in the village of Dzendereni, just outside the crowded port of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean. In Dzendereni, children learn in the CrossFit school, a building filled with desks and equipped with a system to collect rainwater to replace the muddy river water students once had to drink.

According to CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman, CrossFit's presence in Africa is about more than learning to squat and deadlift.

"We'll bring fitness here, too," he said, "but there are some fundamentals that are going to have to come first."

CrossFit's famous pyramid bases sport, weightlifting and throwing, gymnastics, and metabolic conditioning on nutrition. It's a blueprint for elite fitness. But in many parts of the world, the pyramid looks very different and contains additional layers at its foundation.

"Below nutrition would probably be 'not succumb to disease or starvation or dehydration.' There are some pieces (of the pyramid) missing that we take for granted," Glassman said.

But CrossFit is supplying those pieces, and from May 28 to June 1, Coach Glassman took CrossFit staff to see the company's work in Dzendereni and take the message back to the global affiliate community.

"We're just starting," Glassman stated.

THE HARD ROAD

Along the roads of Mombasa, slight men and women are pushing or pulling two-wheeled carts loaded with bricks, stakes, logs, fruit and just about anything else you can imagine. Some of the carts are loaded with water, and its delivery is literally a matter of life and death. People are living day to day, and it shows.

A van packed with Kenyans is stuck in a pile of muck, its front bumper plowing a furrow in the

roadside mud as a team of men rock the vehicle back and forth in an attempt to free it. The van looks like it's about to roll off the road and onto the men.

The roads are clogged with cars, and no traffic lights govern the chaos. Huge trucks headed to the port play chicken with old vans and trucks, motorbikes, and small vehicles that look as if they'll disintegrate into rust at the slightest bump. There are no lanes, and traffic resembles a writhing mass of snakes as vehicles weave in and out and buzz pedestrians, roadside stands and untethered animals.

The potholes are many, and they're deep, even on the main roads leading to

According to WorldBank.com, a Kenyan earned about \$780 US in 2010. Salum Muruthi, a Tanzanian who works for CrossFit in Kenya, says it's less than that in the villages, where people might make \$1 a day.

The World Bank also says about 25 percent of Kenyans have access to the Internet, and that's a huge improvement over 2008 numbers below 10 percent. In the United States, the number is 74 percent.

According to Water.org, just over half the rural population of Kenya has access to improved drinking water, but it isn't the safe, sparkling liquid that flows out of North American taps and

“We'll bring fitness here, too, but there are some fundamentals that are going to have to come first.”

—GREG GLASSMAN

the airport and the port. The vehicles shake from side to side, and occupants take care not to let heads bounce off windows if they're lucky enough to have air conditioning. Most don't.

Further along, a man is rocking a cart loaded with small logs over a bump as he tries to cross bumper-to-bumper traffic. He's building momentum for a well-timed push that will send the cart shooting through a gap in traffic. A poorly timed push and someone's going to be impaled.

“Do you see how anything could be valuable to these people? Even a pen,” filmmaker Sevan Matossian says. He's been to Kenya before to see CrossFit's efforts.

“Our Western world isn't hard anymore,” Jeff Martin of CrossFit Kids says as he watches the struggles being fought around the vehicle.

Indeed, Martin is right. Though life can be challenging in the slums of any city, the Western world is easy for many when you consider that most have food, clean water and the opportunity for education.

bottles. It might be untreated, collected rainwater, but even that is a huge improvement over the cloudy water that comes from shallow wells, dirty streams and tiny lakes that are often contaminated with human waste that has nowhere to go in the high water table.

As the CrossFit convoy leaves Mombasa's gnarled traffic for the cratered, treacherous roads of rural Kenya, the nation's struggle intensifies. Out here, there are few vehicles. Who could afford them? The wilderness is vast, and the roads are bumpy, rugged and unpaved. Just a few weeks before, a bus accident left many dead.

No lions or wildlife are seen. All that's long gone. *The Ghost and the Darkness* was set close to here, but the descendants of the lions that terrorized the construction of the Uganda Railway in the late 19th century are on the verge of extinction. Less than 2,000 remain in Kenya, driven away from expanding human settlement and agriculture.

Once in a while, we pass small clusters of mud huts or shacks and a few villagers moving small herds of goats or cattle along the road.



Matossian marvels at how green everything is. It's the rainy season, and the sparse vegetation looks amiss to those who have seen the area when it's dry.

Villagers are also carrying water in jugs or pulling carts filled with water. Some will travel hours every day to get enough water to sustain life, and that time could be spent in school, working fields or finding some way to generate income.

CrossFit is going to help with all that.

CHANGING LIVES

Mnyenzi is the headquarters for Koins for Kenya, a group that's been working since 2003 to improve the lives of Kenyans via the construction of schools, desks, cisterns and anything that will make life better. At the Koins center, CrossFit's Dallin Frampton explains some of the projects that have been developed.

Self-reliant agriculture is a practice where chickens are cooped and fed

properly instead of allowed to run wild. Self-rotational gardens are set up by analyzing how many people need to be fed and allocating the right amount of land. Soil analysis is done, and the gardens are set up to produce a harvest every two weeks of something other than corn, a staple of the African diet. Greens are on the list, including spinach-like sukuma wiki, as well as tomatoes, cabbage and more.

Another project involves building a chicken coop over a two-foot-deep

hole measuring six by six feet. The hole is filled with water and tilapia, which are fed by the chicken droppings that fall in the water. The gestation period is about eight weeks, and the fish will be a valuable source of protein.

Frampton explains that there's a lack of knowledge because of desperation. For example, fruit trees are cut down to make charcoal. You can eat fruit, but you can sell charcoal, and the dilemma isn't an easy one to resolve.



“Every clean glass of water
is a victory”

—GREG GLASSMAN



CrossFit is hoping to connect the affiliate community with projects like this, where CrossFit will help affiliates select projects and raise money. A garden requires about \$3,000. A fish pond goes for about \$3,500, as does a cistern to collect rainwater. For \$10,000, affiliates can build a schoolroom. The village residents kick in 10 percent of the cost, giving them investment in the projects.

It's an endeavor that's close to Coach Glassman's heart. After meeting Frampton and hearing about the efforts in Kenya, Glassman and CrossFit built a schoolroom. After Glassman came and saw it, they upped the ante to four rooms and two buildings, plus a rainwater system. More projects are planned, and with the help of the global affiliate community, the effects can be tremendous.

“This is the cradle of civilization,” Glassman said. “Mankind started here. You've got a high water table, fertile

land, good growing season, and untold suffering. Let's see if we can make a difference. I know we have in the short term and for a small population, and every clean glass of water is a victory.”

Glassman says members of the affiliate community are already on board to help with the project, and more will join the work soon enough once they see the difference they can make.

“If you get everyone to see the before and after, you'll realize that education's not just about getting a good job. It's a matter of life and death,” he said. “These kids have a life expectancy absent of education in the mid-30s. They get to university someday and that figure becomes 50s.”

He continued: “What do we want to do in CrossFit? We want to give

everyone a chance. There are some prerequisites to the training program, and one of them would be adequate food and water, the basics of life to grow and develop. In the dry season here when water is scarce, workouts aren't possible. Their lives come to a screeching halt, and they sit in the dirt and look at each other. Think of what that does to education.

“And again, it's directly in the way of them having a better life. If we can assert ourselves here—and it's hard to get further away from home than this, it's hard to find a people more appreciative and in greater need of little things we can make a difference with—if we can do it here, we can do it everywhere.”

Everywhere is next. Dzendereni is first.

EDUCATION, WATER, FOOD

After another rugged drive from Mnyenzi to Dzendereni, the CrossFit convoy rolls up to a school come alive. The children are out in their brown shorts and shirts, and hundreds of people are there to greet Coach Glassman. Musicians in colorful clothing play instruments and dance, and head teacher Seif Mwachanyika greets Glassman at the car with a hug.

On a dry patch of dirt beside the old school—a broken-down building made off mud and sticks—the school-children do a workout involving skipping, push-ups, bear crawls and handstand walks. On command, a group of kids flip upside down and walks on their hands across the dirt as if it were second nature. It's magical.

“CrossFit affiliates are going to get involved,
and you can be sure lives are going to get better.”

—ANTHONY YAMA





Mike Warkentin



Mike Warkentin



Mike Warkentin

There's poverty here. That's obvious. But there's also joy—and hope. You don't have to look far to see the changes in the village. The old school is in disrepair, and at the height of maintenance it wasn't much to behold. It's rough and dark. The walls are made of mud. There are no desks. It's about as far from a classroom as you can get.

Just up the hill is the cistern, which can collect about 35,000 liters in 20 minutes of hard rain. Mwachanyika, Muthuri and another local CrossFit employee named Anthony Yama show exactly what the cistern means to the school.

Mwachanyika turns on the tap to release clear water while Muthuri pours out cloudy river water beside it. The two streams couldn't be more different, and the simple demonstration is more effective than any words.

Past the cistern is the school, where kids sit at desks branded with CrossFit's logo. The rooms are bright and airy, clean and dry. Kids are learning and thriving.

In fact, the school has the highest scores in the district and recently sent

a Grade 8 graduate, Loice Mwaka, to a national high school in Nairobi. The significance is immense: it had never happened before. But it will probably happen again now that people know it's possible. The children promise Coach Glassman that they'll work hard to do well in school.

"They don't make a dollar per day, but everyone knows to be free from poverty, you must get an education," Yama explains.

Yama himself comes from a family of 15, and his father sold everything and took loans to get Anthony to school. He eventually became a teacher and now works for CrossFit.

"Our life is a life of struggle," Yama says. "But what are our priorities? Education, food, water. ... I am what I am because of education."

As a reward, the school's four top students will be going to the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games with Yama and Muruthi, where they'll inspire the assembled community to help Kenya. Yama and Muruthi are going to receive a host of CrossFit training so they can instruct fitness classes back in Kenya.

Yama is clear that CrossFit's involvement is making a difference in lives, and he's thrilled to see what the future will bring.

"To see (Coach Glassman) getting involved in this and giving it a priority really, really motivates me and excites me," he said. "He's literally changing lives. ... Everybody wants to be embraced by CrossFit. Every village."

He continued: "What Coach did was a demonstration of the power of one that can change the lives of a community. CrossFit affiliates are going to get involved, and you can be sure lives are going to get better. Many people are going to get empowered, and lives will change."

"WE'RE JUST STARTING"

Outside the schoolroom, Coach Glassman is teaching children to squat.

CrossFit's founder pushes his hips back and down, and the kids imitate. He guides them up and down and spots those who roll forward onto their toes. With gestures, he cues them to push their knees in line with their feet and keep their chests up.



"They're asking me if I need a translator. I don't need a translator. Get your heels down!" Coach laughs, pointing at one kid who immediately shifts his weight back to his heels.

"Tell him to practice that every day and teach the others," Glassman says. "If they practice that every day, it will make them very strong."

Abruptly, it starts to rain, and everyone scatters indoors or to vehicles. The rain ends the visit, but it fills the cistern. Just a few months ago, that wouldn't have happened, and the sound of clean water running off the roof and into the concrete cistern is the sound of change.

As the CrossFit staff leave Dzendereni, they talk about the amazing experience and how they can get others to understand what's going on in Kenya. All feel as if they need to share the story in hopes that others will want to help with the project. All have plans to get their affiliate communities on board.

As the cars roll out of Dzendereni and back to Mombasa, Glassman's words echo through the minds of everyone who's seen what a few thousand dollars can do for an African community:

"We're just starting."



For more information on how you and your affiliate can help the CrossFit efforts in Kenya, email Dallin Frampton: Dallin@CrossFit.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THE CrossFit LIFE

The Three A's of Awesome

Life is short. Ryan Carbone reviews three ways to make it better—in CrossFit and beyond.

By Ryan Carbone

June 2012



Lynne Pitts

Like CrossFit, life is filled with complexities and convolutions that can often make it exceedingly difficult.

And yet, despite the difficulties that are inherent in our lives and in CrossFit, they can both still be awesome if you keep in mind three things: attitude, awareness and authenticity.

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I like to call these the “three A's of awesome.” Internalizing these ideas and applying them to your life and CrossFit can yield profoundly satisfying experiences in both.

Attitude

Our lives are inevitably going to be filled with the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. That's just how it is. None of us can predict the future, but we can say with absolute certainty that it's not always going to go according to plan, and at times it will suck.

Interspersed between successes and triumphs, we will have failures and disappointment. We will get new jobs and watch our kids graduate, and we will lose loved ones and have our hearts broken. When these inevitable hardships happen, keep in mind that you always have two choices: you can swirl and twirl and gloom and doom forever or you can grieve and then face the future with newly sober eyes.



Having a great attitude is about choosing Option 2 and choosing—no matter how difficult it is—to move forward and move on and take baby steps into the future.

It is the same in CrossFit. There will be days when you suck. You will fail on a lift that is 30 lb. less than your PR, and you will fall over doing a pistol. It happens. Take it for what it is: it's just a bad day, and you can always move forward from a bad day. Don't get stuck in a rut because you are fixating on a bad performance. Positive attitudes will beget positive results.

Awareness

If you have an opportunity, observe how young children see the world. They are constantly in awe because everything is so new. Awareness is embracing your inner child. It's about getting excited about new things and experiences. It's about being present in the moment and enjoying the little things in life, like the leaves changing color, a string of green lights on the way home or crushing a workout. Embracing these seemingly trivial moments will enable you to perceive the world in a different and better way. Don't finish a workout and think, “Wow, I definitely could have done that better.” Instead, bask in the success of having finished a grueling workout and making yourself better.

Authenticity

Be who you are and be cool with it. When you're authentic, you end up following your heart, and you put yourself in places and situations and in conversations that you love and enjoy. You meet new people. You do things you never thought you would, and you end up being very fulfilled.

There are so many things that make this world awesome, but we only have 100 years (at most) to enjoy it. Everyone that you know right now, undoubtedly, will be dead in a hundred years. Morbid, but true. Life is short, and we only get a very little time to enjoy all those tiny little moments that make it so sweet.

You will never be as young as you are right now, so you must, right away, endeavor to live your life with a great attitude, live with a sense of awareness of the world around you, embrace your inner child and be yourself.

Apply these three A's and you will create a richer experience both inside and outside the box.

