

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

August 2010

TITLE	AUTHOR
CrossFit Lessons Outside the Box	Joulwan
Fear and Loathing in L.A.	Daigle
Working out for Two	Joseph
Truly Special Populations	MacDonald
APFT A-OK	Lopez
No Excuses	Needham
Why'd You Miss?	Barnett
An Affiliation Journey—So Far	Saliba
Great Intro. Now What?	Ames
Coaching Correct Technique in the Split Jerk	Takano

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit Lessons Outside the Box

Former rollergirl Melissa Joulwan learns CrossFit's lessons can be applied long after the WOD is over.

By Melissa Joulwan

August 2010



David Humphreys

I recently endured a personal crisis that brought me down like a 20-lb. medicine ball slammed into my solar plexus. For a while, my days felt like this:

All-day AMRAP of:

Feel despair

Cry intermittently

Embrace anger

Smash something

1 of 6

While med-ball slams performed with a stereo as stand-in for the ball were wildly satisfying in the moment, they didn't provide lasting relief. I needed a more productive solution.

One of the many valuable lessons I've learned through CrossFit is that the stories I tell myself during a workout affect not only the success of that particular workout but also how I feel about myself after the last barbell has dropped to the floor. Throughout grueling workouts, I've picked up valuable tips for how to endure, even when I think I can't possibly muscle through another rep.

I started at an outdoor bootcamp
and truly believed
on that first morning
that the warm-up was
the workout.
Yeah, I was *that girl*.

After this recent, nasty one-two punch from the universe knocked me on my keister, I realized that if I used the same tricks in life that I learned in the gym, I just might sucker-punch the universe right back.

Here are a few of my favorite personal mind games that help me power through my workouts, along with the explanation of how I extend them outside the gym to call "time" on personal challenges, too.

3-2-1... Go!

I was introduced to CrossFit after I retired from the Texas Rollergirls Flat Track Roller Derby. Hanging up my skates left a void in my physical training, and years of being bashed around on the track left me feeling like I needed something beyond a regular workout class.

But I wasn't always like that.

I spent my childhood parked under a tree with a book, and my record for demolishing bags of Doritos as I turned the pages was well documented. After college,



David Humphreys

Melissa tries to teach the med-ball who's boss during Fight Gone Bad.

I learned enough about basic nutrition and exercise to teach aerobics classes and participate in a few triathlons and endurance bike rides. Then I discovered Roller Derby and became a badass on wheels.

None of that prepared me for the rigor of CrossFit.

I started at an outdoor bootcamp and truly believed on that first morning that the warm-up was the workout. Yeah, I was *that girl*.

David Humphreys



The author is almost brought to tears by floor wipers in Spartan 300.

I fell in love with bootcamp—the buckets of sweat, the intimidating workouts, the camaraderie, and the ritual of our coach holding up her stopwatch and shouting, “3-2-1... Go!” at the start of every WOD. Soon I was entertaining the idea of picking up barbells and learning to do kipping pull-ups. When our gym announced a Spartan 300 challenge, I signed up with dorky enthusiasm for my first workout *inside* CrossFit Central.

When the alarm sounded
each morning at the
appointed time, I literally
said, “3-2-1... Go!” and
started my Life WOD.

I reported to the gym at 7:30 a.m. for weigh-in, fat pinching and photos, trying to play it cool as I took my place in line. I was surrounded by CrossFit veterans

talking smack and psyching each other up for the challenge to come. All men. All ignoring me. All ratcheting up my anxiety, reminding me I had absolutely no business being there.

I quivered and tried to visualize the workout to calm my nerves. Robotically, I went through the motions of the warm-up and almost before I knew it, I was standing on a wooden box, hands on the pull-up bar, desperately wanting to get started so I could be finished. My palms were sweaty. My heart raced. And then a coach yelled, “3-2-1... Go!” and I was off—jumping, lifting, sweating, and grunting. What I was not doing was stressing. As soon as I heard those magic words—3-2-1... Go!—the anxiety disappeared as I focused on the tasks at hand.

So what needs to be done for “3-2-1... Go!” to work as a trigger for smoothing frazzled nerves?

Usually before we start a CrossFit WOD, we prepare our space: set out weights and other equipment, clear away anything extraneous, maybe even formulate a strategy for how to get through the reps most efficiently. We’ve defined a beginning and an end so we know when we’ve reached our goal. And we’ve surrounded ourselves—either physically or virtually—with other people who share our philosophy.

As it turns out, that's basically the best way to deal with a life crisis, too. When my life imploded, I decided to look ahead only three days at a time, and for each of those days I made a detailed plan: waking time, workout schedule, meals, day-job tasks and social activities. I included friends and family in my schemes, and when the alarm sounded each morning at the appointed time, I literally said, "3-2-1... Go!" and started my Life WOD.

Some days, it worked brilliantly. Other days, I faltered midway through the day, just like some days my plan to do 10 thrusters in a row devolves into cranking them out only two or three at a time. But just as each WOD makes us stronger for the next, each day I persevered made me better prepared for the next.

Use a Spotter

One of my defining characteristics can be called, at its best, "relentlessness" or "commitment," but that gift can also be transformed into its evil twin: pure bullheadedness. I often believe I don't need help and have been known to declare as much, usually in a bratty voice accompanied by a pout to drive the point home.

My first attempt at a 1RM back squat schooled me on the value of help in the form of a spotter.

I don't recall how much weight was on the bar. It was enough to make me pay attention, but not enough to really hurt me, or anyone around me. That morning, I was a dangerous combination of fear and bravado, and I didn't communicate clearly enough to my spotter about my intentions.

Somewhere in that dark place at the bottom of the squat where I always feel simultaneously weightless and weighted down, I lost focus. My core dissolved. I yelped like a little girl, and the bar see-sawed off one shoulder and onto a combination of my head and the rack. It was not the proud addition to my training log that I had hoped for, but it did teach me a valuable lesson: look my spotter in the eye, come to agreement, then trust my spotter to support me.

We CrossFit types tend to pride ourselves on self-reliance. We're renegades. We swim upstream. But in workouts and in life, insisting on rugged individualism at all times is not always the best strategy. The surest way to stand strong on one's own feet is to have supporters standing strong on their feet, too—in their own orbit, but close enough to lend a hand when needed.



David Humphreys

CrossFitter Blake Howard and the author at Fight Gone Bad 2009.



David Humphreys

Friends, spotters, zombie killers ... just before the Zombie Attack Preparedness Workout.

It's true in workouts; it's true in life.

I've learned through my personal crisis that a sincere request for help—not a self-indulgent, woe-is-me whine, but a true, sincere request for help—is an indicator of self-awareness and strength. That kind of honest vulnerability is almost always met with an equally sincere extended hand.

From the practical (my car battery needs a jump-start) to the emotional ("I can't bear to be home alone right now. Will you go to a movie with me?"), my requests were met with kindness and understanding—because even though we might feel alone in crisis, we're not. Everyone has struggles—an illness, an injury, a broken heart, an absent loved one. Everyone needs a spotter at one time or another. All we need to do to find our life spotters is look them in the eye, come to agreement and trust them to support us—then return the favor when they need us.

You Can Cry, Just Don't Be a Baby

I distinctly remember the first time a CrossFit workout brought me to tears. Our bootcamp had been moved to a rooftop parking garage, and the workout was a devastating combination of wall-balls and sprints up the garage ramps. Just as I thought the torture was winding down, our coach yelled out that we were doing one ... more ... round.

My inner 12-year-old roared up in fury at the outrage of this unfair and unexpected continuation. My eyes stung with tears of frustration while my cheeks burned with

shame at the waterworks. I obstinately slogged through the remaining reps, feeling put-upon and embarrassed the entire time. "This is so unfair," I raged in my head.

As we packed up our gear, I realized I had time-traveled back to junior high, to the time of splitting my shorts in front of the cheerleaders and being the fattest, slowest girl in our co-ed gym class. The tears dried up, but the embarrassment—from decades ago and that morning—remained.

My coach checked in with me to see if I was OK. Working around the lump in my throat, I explained my horror at crying during a workout. She shrugged, "You finished the workout, right?"

Since then, I've cried at the cold-heartedness of the pull-up bar, the viciousness of the wall-ball line, and—to my chagrin—the taunts of the mat that dared me to try somersaults and handstands. But each time the tears abated, I continued to slog away at whatever it was that brought on the crying.

My ability to do that goes beyond personal fortitude; it's physical. Tears produced in response to sadness, joy or physical pain contain more manganese (Mn) than our everyday "basal" tears. Manganese affects our moods, so crying out excess Mn reduces tension by helping our bodies' stress levels ease back into balance.

That return to balance is crucially important when dealing with stress in our lives outside the gym. When I feel sorrow or fear bearing down on me at unexpected moments, I let the tears flow. And when they stop, I continue with my plan for the day, just like I learned to do in my workout—crying, but not a baby.

Get Comfortable With Being Uncomfortable

About a year ago, I watched an online video tutorial about the front squat. Throughout the video, the narrator explained that the reason the front squat can be difficult is because it's so uncomfortable. He repeated that idea many times—so often that I totally bought into the message. By the time I loaded a bar to find my 5RM, I was 100 percent ready for the front squat to be really uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and possibly scary, and for that to be 100 percent OK with me.

I'd built it up so much in my mind, and when I actually did a few practice sets with the empty 45-lb. bar, I was able to acknowledge that it was, indeed, uncomfortable, that I didn't much care for it, and that if I was going to be



A CrossFit crew at the 2009 Bataan Memorial Death March in Las Cruces, N.M.

successful, I was going to have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I've learned this lesson before: on a 580-mile bike ride in California, when a run feels overly long, on Round 3 of a 5-round met-con, anytime a workout pushes me beyond where I want to go. Fighting against that discomfort gives it power. It's distracting and turns my focus on all the wrong things.

Just as the feeling of the
bar across my throat
during a front squat
eventually became familiar
and, therefore, less
uncomfortable, so too have
my intense emotions.

But I've learned during workouts that if I give myself over to the discomfort, if I accept it as my current state of being, then poof!—the uncomfortable feelings begin to diminish and are replaced with a glimmer of confidence. Discomfort is no longer a distraction or an impediment to what I really want.

Emotional pain is like that, too. Fight against feeling unpleasant emotions and they might just take a runner for now, only to come roaring back later when they're even less welcome. It can be very tough to do, but I've found if I accept the discomfort of emotional pain, sadness, doubt—really allow myself to feel those feelings for a time—they, too, diminish. They lose their power the moment I accept them as a state of being that's temporary and under my control.

Just as the feeling of the bar across my throat during a front squat eventually became familiar and, therefore, less uncomfortable, so too have my intense emotions. I recognize them, grant them a not-so-fond hello, allow them to run their course, and then move on, feeling more confident for having breathed through them.

Since starting this CrossFit adventure almost three years ago, I've learned that no matter how many times I do them, I hate thrusters. I've wondered why I can never

seem to master the technique for the power clean. I've cursed (and cursed and cursed) the pull-up bar and my annoying inability to kip properly. And yes, sometimes I've even thrown a hissy fit when the time limit ticked out before I completed the WOD.

But I've also celebrated the strength and beauty, inside and out, of the warriors who train at my side. And I've learned that if I put my heart into my workout *inside* the box, the rewards I reap and lessons I learn help me be stronger *outside* the box, too.



About the Author

Melissa (Melicious) Joulwan is a foodie who eats Paleo-Zone (most of the time) and loves met-cons but lifts heavy things, too. Her blog *The Clothes Make the Girl* is all about her Paleo-Zone recipes and her mission to become a super-fit, well-fed, dressed-to-kill, glossy-haired, rock-n-roll, tart-tongued detective. She's retired as a blocker from the Texas Roller girls Flat Track Roller Derby, but if you ask really nicely, she might knock you down anyway ... just for fun.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fear and Loathing in L.A.

The *CrossFit Journal* cut Kevin Daigle loose at the CrossFit Games and found him passed out in the parking lot days later. Here's what he can remember of the competition.



By Kevin Daigle CrossFit New England

August 2010



R. Lucas/CrossFit

My head was spinning.

After I made it to the West Coast, I had no idea what time it was. Honestly, I didn't give a shit. It was time for the Games!

The Lay of a Strange Land

Since I get into mischief like Tom and Jerry after a fifth of Jack, naturally the first thing I did was see how far I could poke before someone poked back. I checked in at the Home Depot Center on Thursday afternoon, at which point they handed me media credentials for the 2010 CrossFit Games. Poor judgment? Only time would tell. I went on an all-access self-guided tour of the facility, which I must say is world class. I was thoroughly impressed, and if you watched the live feed, you no doubt felt the same way.

Walking into the stadium,
your first thought is, “This
is gonna be bad-ass.”

Walking into the stadium, your first thought is, “This is gonna be bad-ass. Bad-ass like Chuck Norris on steroids fighting a rabid polar bear.” The set-up was sick; the venue was like nothing the CrossFit world had ever experienced. Sneaking down through the bowels of the stadium to the production area, I found the broadcast/production trailers, equipment and staff. It looked more like the guts of Cheyenne Mountain in there than a CrossFit competition. There was enough computing and electronics power in that place to give NORAD penis envy.

Just down the ramp from the production truck was a plethora of CrossFit celebrities covertly assembling equipment for the next day’s events. It was like a choreographed ballet of barbells, bumpers and other equipment, all orchestrated by Dave Castro and performed with the precision of prima ballerinas by the likes of E.C. Synkowski, Adrian (Boz) Bozman, Chuck Carswell, Dave Lipson, Dennis Marshall and many others. It was then that I understood how huge the event really was: it was going to be covered from every direction like a goddamn Sting concert. There were more cameras down there than at a porn set.



Somewhere in this epic shot, you'll find Kevin Daigle double-fisting beers while claiming to be hardcore Zoning "most of the time."



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

Tent City: Where the wild things were.

Although heavily jet-lagged and misty-eyed like a shorter, fatter Tyler Durden, I managed to stay awake for what seemed like three days and make it to CrossFit Los Angeles (at 10 p.m. EST). I was really excited to get a workout in and meet Becca Borawski, program director and trainer. We've been Facebook friends for a long time, and I finally had a chance to meet her and do a WOD at her box. I was excited and a little nervous: it was the first time I worked out at another affiliate while traveling. Yes, Daigle was a foreign-box virgin.

Oh—the WOD just so happened to be a 1-mile run, 100 burpees and another 1-mile run. I definitely almost displayed Larabars and other airplane food on the sidewalk. At this juncture, I was as alert as Dracula at 1 p.m. in an opium den, but the night was not yet finished.

Where to, intrepid CrossFitter? Well, to Tinseltown. Where else? I was off to Hollywood at 10 p.m. local time (1 a.m. EST), and apparently there is fucking traffic on the highway in L.A. even at that late hour. Who knew?

CrossFit Football and Life As RX threw a pre-Games party at the Key Club on Sunset Boulevard, and I was tired and I had to be up around 5 a.m. for the beginning of the festivities at the HDC, so I was only going to have one or two drinks. That plan quickly went to shit when I met up with another CrossFitter from back east. We caroused like college kids with CrossFit dudes and chicks, some local, some from far-away lands. Most of the attendees were supporters of Affiliate Cup teams or competitors. I'm sure I didn't see any participating athletes ... right?

Courtesy of Kevin Daigle



The CFNE crew is hardcore and believes stadium seats are “for sissies and bodybuilders.”

I enjoyed talking to everyone, and by talking I mean yelling into each other's ears like a 120-year-old with dead hearing-aid batteries. Despite the Tower of Babel communication difficulties, I did manage to learn a few things:

1. John Welbourn is a gigantic human being.
2. We share the same love of cars and going fast (I'd love to get my Camaro next to one of his Shelby Mustangs on a dark, straight back road someday).
3. CrossFitters are about as capable of turning down a toast as they are a Fran challenge. Lining up 50-plus Jager bombs on the bar in front of that crowd was akin to one CrossFitter saying to another, “Well, this is what we did today” With a 3, 2, 1... Go! it was bottoms up, and people got pretty frickin' weird. As a community, we do everything to the extreme, so why not Hollywood? The next morning promised to be rough, and it was.

Games On!

The 2010 CrossFit Games arrived in a stretch Hummer limo with the entire fitness universe looking on. Early in the morning, the judges and volunteers were hard at work going over the format and the standards. Being the sneaky bastard I am, I continued to test the limits of my media credentials right away. I headed right over to the judges tent/athlete warm-up area by the track to peruse the goings-on in this fairly restricted area.

“If CrossFit was a girl,
wouldn't you wanna do
her right now?”

—Kelly Starrett



T. Campitelli/CrossFit



D. Re/CrossFit

TOP: Athletes delicately address the intimate elements of the buddy carry.

BOTTOM: Brian (Big World) Curley on his way to winning the Masters Competition.

The judging staff was going over the WODs and standards for the upcoming event. The people I spoke with, such as the famous Chuck Carswell, felt the new visual judging cues were a huge improvement over past years'. The excitement under that tent was palpable. After the announcement of Affiliate Cup Event 1 and the rising of the Southern California sun, which is hotter than the girls from CrossFit Central, the athletes were strategizing and breaking a sweat in the warm-up area. The buzz around the Affiliate Cup teams centered around the partner-carry portion of the event. Of course, the biggest concern was where your partner's crotch region was going to be placed during the run. I can say with a measure of confidence that this was the first time in the history of elite athletic competition that the strategy involved where ding-dongs and hoo-has were going to be located mid-workout.

I got an up-close and personal view of the distress and pain on the faces of the world's fittest women. Apparently they do feel pain, but they just choose to continue anyways.

I got see some amazing things that day, like our CrossFit New England Affiliate Cup team win the first event and our masters competitor, Brian (Big World) Curley, kick ass in the first masters competition.

As the sun set on Carson, I sat in one of the broadcast booths at the Home Depot Center, still reeling from the excitement of the day, but the beginning of the individual competition was still to come. After a fighter jet fly-over during the national anthem, athletes made entrances from the tunnel like superstars. It was more epic than when cavemen discovered ice cream (that's why it's Paleo). Being able to watch the competition under the

lights was something to behold, especially from a press box—the best seats in the house. The atmosphere of rising tension and falling temperatures touched off excitement and hard nipples unmatched since I first got my hands on a keg of beer.

When I ran into CrossFit Mobility magnate Kelly Starrett out in tent city, I think he nailed the sentiment of everyone at the Home Depot Center: “If CrossFit was a girl, wouldn’t you wanna do her right now?”

Kelly, if CrossFit was a girl, she wouldn’t touch me to perform CPR if I was in cardiac arrest, but you’ve perfectly captured how it felt to be in that moment.

Amazing Event, Amazing Grace

As I woke at the ass-crack of dawn on Saturday, the first thing I did was check the Games site for an update on the workouts, but alas, they hadn’t been announced. This would be an over-arching theme of the weekend and the source of much frustration for spectators—like when you keep checking your phone for a text from that hot girl (it’s not coming, dude). However, I’m pretty excited about how the unknown worked for the competition.

I decided to just hang out in tent city with our athletes and wait for the word, which we would soon get. The workout would be Pyramid Double Helen, or “Hell-In.” I hate Helen like Europe hates George W. Bush. Thankfully, I didn’t have to do it. Heather Bergeron did.

I was excited to see this thing go down at the track, so I trucked it there to catch the action. What I found was an impossible situation: a workout that took the entire track area to run and a voice in the back of my head reminding me that I had been sternly “asked” not to encroach upon the competition area. Hmm, that’s important. I didn’t want the brass to be pissed at me. I really wanted a closer look though, so I ducked the tape and walked around the barrier and out onto the edge of the track for a peek. I was happy to see that the all-access pass indeed worked, and I got an up-close and personal view of the distress and pain on the faces of the world’s fittest women. Apparently they do feel pain, but they just choose to continue anyways. They also look much better in their struggles than I do.



D. Re/CrossFit

Heather Bergeron finished 10th in the Hell-In event that had Kevin Daigle thanking his stars that he didn't have to run off a hangover.

The rest of the day Saturday would see the growth of tent city or, more specifically, the big-ass tent next to tent city. That monster was complete with tables, chairs, a full bar, and flatscreens displaying up-to-the-minute heat and results information for the competition, as well as the live feed of the Games broadcast. It was so exciting to have that going on: a live show chock-full of analysis, commentary, competition, etc. It was an expensive production of something everyone's world revolved around. That's like me having a live feed of people eating challenge burgers at Eagle's Deli in Brighton, Mass., with commentary and analysis from Emeril, Gordon Ramsay, the guy from *Man vs. Food*, and Kobayashi.

Beautiful people are not a rare sight at the CrossFit games, so it was surprising when something pulled in my attention like a tractor beam from across the tent city.

As the afternoon wore on and weary spectators had been seared to a golden, crispy texture by the apparent lack of a goddamn ozone layer in the L.A. area, many moved out of the stadium and track to tent city. People were sitting, imbibing and watching CrossFit. I mean, shit, it was just like watching Sunday-afternoon football with your friends—only it was fucking CrossFit! That was a completely surreal experience and a sharp contrast with what happened next, which was as real as it gets.

Beautiful people are not a rare sight at the CrossFit Games, so it was surprising when something pulled in my attention like a tractor beam from across the tent city. As I gazed through the rank smog and heavy air of the early afternoon, I spotted a bevy of beauties in bright pink bras. Did my eyes deceive me? Amazingly, they did not. It was the ladies from Mammograms in Action, a breast-cancer charity devoted to getting mammograms for women who need them. With their ravishing good looks, they talked me into doing Grace to benefit the charity. You chip in a 10-spot and crush clean and jerks for time like a Chinese weightlifter on repeat. The fastest dash of the day snagged you an iPod.

I was happy to make myself dizzy for a great cause. If you missed the update during the Games, find all the details [here](#). Of course, I got the *CrossFit Journal* to photograph my efforts. Like they say, "Pictures or it didn't happen."



S.Dy/CrossFit



Lured in by scantily clad women, Kevin Daigle (right) donated \$10 and sweat to the Mammograms in Action fundraiser.

Courtesy of Kevin Daigle



Randy's Donuts: Where CrossFitters go to sin.

Saturday evening felt altogether different. After two full days of CrossFit ass-kickery, I was used up like Jenna Jameson and decided to make an early night of it ... right after I indulged in the available delicacies of Southern California: In-N-Out Burger! Calling it a night just wasn't an option until I had my way with an Animal-Style 4x4 and Animal-Style fries, and washed it down with a Double-Double. Go big or go home. It's the CrossFit way, so it certainly didn't end there. Dreams of endless cheat meals and delicious treats came in succession like little cupcakes following the pied piper of baked goods.

One Epic Cheat

Instead of sleeping an extra hour and getting some much-needed rest, I got up at 5 a.m. and hightailed it to world-famous Randy's Donuts, oft seen in movies. Let me tell you this: it's every bit as good as it looks and sounds, and it was cheap. I had two donuts (chocolate glazed and old fashioned), a chocolate-chip cookie, and a coffee roll for just over \$3. Fuck Paleo ... until breakfast at 7 a.m., at which point I pounded down an omelet and some bacon before heading to the Home Depot Center for the final day of the 2010 CrossFit Games.

Getting back on site around other CrossFitters,

Paleo-phies, and the Steve's Club booth got the eating back on track, and then it was time for the big show: the final events. The humidity was gone and the atmosphere was electric, like that first warm day in May when you want to stay up all night just because it's so nice outside.

Speaking of electric, how about Dave Castro's announcement of the final masters event in typical matter-of-fact Castro-speak: "Masters, your WOD is Fran. Everyone else, come with me."

That announcement made the hair on the back of my neck stand at attention like the honor guard at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "Epic" doesn't begin to describe how sick that is for a final event. I know I'm supposed to be unbiased, but seriously, fuck that noise. Big Bri, our masters competitor from CFNE, was in third place, and Fran was in his wheelhouse, so we went shit-house. Upon the conclusion of that event, with Big World Curley setting a PR for Fran on his way to an overall win, I thought I'd test the clout of my media badge once again and headed down to the restricted area under the stadium to try and catch up with him. The celebration was intense but short, as he was quickly sequestered for the drug-testing procedure.

While I was beneath the stadium, something occurred to me. Something was missing that I couldn't exactly put a finger on. Then it hit me like a barbell to the chin during Isabel: a sweetheart of the Games hadn't emerged as in years past. Who among this cadre of elite women would step in to the spotlight? It was indeed a tight pair of Lululemon shorts to fill, as the lofty position was held in years past by the likes of Jolie Gentry. There was a buzz, though, about the crowd—the dudes, at least—as to who might be the perfect candidate. After communicating with people back on the East Coast about the very same topic, a clear winner had apparently already emerged with those glued to the live webcast. One competitor had endeared herself to the dilated pupils of male CrossFitters across the world: Camille Leblanc-Bazinet certainly made waves at the 2010 CrossFit Games.

Having heard the whisperings of the spectating hordes, I thought it warranted a closer look. I finally spotted this talented young lady in the stadium, and my first thoughts were, "Who's Jolie?" This amazing athlete (ninth overall) is not only a tenacious competitor but also friendly to boot (see her smiling pre-Games interview with Pat Sherwood [here](#)). This firebreathing Canuck is

one tough competitor, and she does it all while tickling the fancy of the viewing public the world over. Of course, this wasn't without some debate. A large contingent of fans was similarly enamored with Stacie Tovar as well. All competitors had their admirers I'm sure, but Ms. Bazinet's beauty, brawn and irresistible Quebec accent firmly cemented her as the darling of this year's Games. It *almost* makes me want to trade my Bruins jersey in for a Montreal Canadiens jersey.

**CrossFit New England
put several waitresses at
Chili's through Harvard
Law School with relentless
orders of nachos, buffalo
wings, burgers, ribs
and booze.**



Camille Leblanc-Bazinet caught the attention of CrossFitters all over the world.

Late in Sunday afternoon's waning daylight, the champions would be crowned, prizes would be awarded, and weary athletes and onlookers would stagger back to the hotel to pack. After that though, it was on like *Donkey Kong*. CrossFit New England put several waitresses at Chili's through Harvard Law School with relentless orders of nachos, buffalo wings, burgers, ribs and booze. Repeat. I counted at least five orders of nachos and three orders of boneless buffalo wings, and that was before we even ordered dinner.

After dessert (all of it), a bunch of jubilant and elated athletes (I was just being a fat-ass; they earned it) headed over for a small gathering with some of the guys from HQ. We shared some cold bevies with the crowd that made the whole thing happen. Tony Budding is a hell of a nice guy, and Dave Castro is a blast to hang out with, as I've learned on more than one occasion. After multiple warnings, the less-than-welcoming hotel staff booted us out of the bar area so they could close. The more responsible Budding and Castro retired. However, being prepared for the unknown and unknowable has its rewards: a duffle bag filled with beer appeared and we took the party to the hotel lobby.

Priorities shifted from movement standards and pistol technique to how abhorred the Californians are by the behavior of us "Yankees" ordering "Animal-Style" everything at In-N-Out Burger. Finally, the staff got sick of our shit and asked us to leave so they could clean up. After all, the CrossFit Games only last so long and the real world beckons.

Looking Forward to 2011

The athletes were certainly the stars of the event, but I'm not sure if they had more fun than the throngs of screaming fans who attended the event and those who watched online around the world. We all shared in an experience that will probably never be duplicated. It was CrossFit's coming-out party in front of the world.

Now our sport is for real, and the revolution in the world of fitness is blowing up like a haircut on the Jersey Shore—only we have way better fist-pounds.

All that was left was to catch a plane, nurse a hangover and sigh a wistful, "Next year ... "



About the Author

Kevin Daigle is a 29-year-old football player and coach turned CrossFitter from Dracut, Mass., who stumbled upon CrossFit while visiting a friend on Nantucket Island in the summer of 2008. After that first WOD he never looked back, seemingly finding the missing piece of athletics he'd lost after matriculating from football at Western New England College in Springfield, Mass. Within a year he met all the right people in the CrossFit community around Boston, began training at CrossFit New England under the tutelage of Ben Bergeron and Heather Bergeron, got his first taste of competition, and went to Aromas to see the 2009 CrossFit Games firsthand. This March Kevin placed 23rd at the New England Sectional in Milford, Conn., earning a spot at the Regional Qualifier at Albany, N.Y., where he finished 29th. Kevin enjoys omelets, writing (see [Daigle Breathes Fire](#)), drag racing and all types of ill shit.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Working out for Two

Lauren Joseph CrossFits throughout her pregnancy and is back on the C2 only a week after giving birth to a healthy baby girl.

By Lauren Joseph CrossFit Solano

August 2010



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

I started CrossFit after the July 2008 CrossFit Games. Before then, my husband was following the main site in our garage. I had originally found CrossFit to be intimidating and “not for me.” After seeing all the beautiful—not bulky—and strong women at the CrossFit Games, I decided I needed to give it a try. Prior to CrossFit I typically put an hour in on the elliptical and bounced around on a few machines at the local Globo Gym.

After a couple of Garage WODs I quit the Globo Gym.

I was your typical Day 1 client: I didn't know how to do pull-ups, I had to do modified push-ups, and I didn't know my jerk from my snatch. The only thing I had going for me was running, which I discovered I could improve on. I found CrossFit to be fun and addictive, and I enjoyed working out with my husband and friends in our garage. Our addiction to CrossFit soon spread to others, and we quickly outgrew the garage. In October 2008 we moved out of our garage and into a 700-square-foot box. With our friends' help, we became affiliated and opened CrossFit Solano.

WODs With Baby

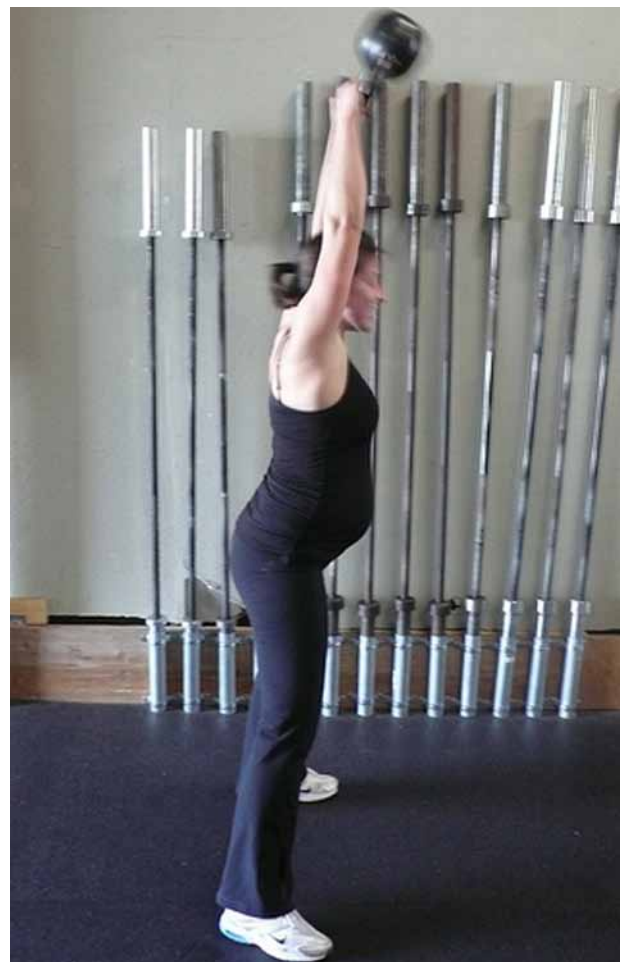
To give you some history, my husband and I have always wanted a family. The bad news was that I was told in spring 2008 I might have some problems getting pregnant due to ovarian cysts. Several doctors and several ultrasounds confirmed the same diagnosis: there was a lot of damage to my uterus, and only time would tell if I could get pregnant. At the time of this news, my husband and I were not married and decided we would deal with it later. In spring 2009, we were married and decided we would start trying to have a family because we didn't know how long it would take. By this time, I had been CrossFitting for just shy of a year and following a strict Zone/Paleo diet. Within two months of being married we were pregnant!

I also wanted to have a story to tell my daughter. I wanted her to know that her mother was strong and healthy during her pregnancy.

Upon finding out I was pregnant, I knew a lot of research had to be done. I began by searching through the popular [CrossFit Mom website](http://www.crossfitmom.com) and reading anything I could on the topic of "being pregnant and working out." I didn't want to do anything that could hurt the baby, but I also knew there was no way I was going to be able to train clients at the gym and not get my name on the whiteboard!

I started out slow; I didn't want to raise my heart rate or my core body temperature. I never did WODs that involved finding a 1-, 3- or 5-rep max. On those days I used CrossFitMom.com for substitutions.

I loved all the workouts CrossFit Mom provided. I never felt like I wasn't getting a workout; however, I missed working out alongside my clients and friends. After the first trimester and a few doctors appointments to explain exactly what CrossFit was, I started following the WODs posted at our gym. I still had to make substitutions—no GHD sit-ups, no handstand push-ups, no AbMat sit-ups and no sprints. All the trainers and my husband had to get used to the fact that I had to talk or sing during my workouts to force myself to maintain a slower pace/heart rate.



After consulting with her doctors, Lauren Joseph carefully started doing CrossFit WODs while pregnant.

Courtesy of Dustin Joseph



The author was preparing to endure the pain of childbirth, so a bloody toe wasn't going to stop her from finishing a half-marathon.

In the beginning of this transition from CrossFit Mom WODs back to the main-site WODs, I kept the weights on the workouts light and continued to talk to my doctor, who by now had gone to peak her head into a local CrossFit gym. As my pregnancy progressed, I started to add weight and do most workouts as RX'd with less intensity. The focus was more on form and completing the task at hand. Throughout the months of my pregnancy I completed the following benchmark workouts in the following times:

7 weeks pregnant—Cindy: 13 rounds RX'd
8 weeks pregnant—5K: 31:20
10 weeks pregnant—Randy: 12:20 RX'd
12 weeks pregnant—Nancy: 21:20 RX'd
17 weeks pregnant—Karen: 13:54 RX'd
19 weeks pregnant—10K: 56 minutes
24 weeks pregnant—Helen: 12:43 RX'd
28 weeks pregnant—Nancy: 23:35 RX'd
30 weeks pregnant—Grace: 6:37 RX'd
36 weeks pregnant—Griff: 17:24 RX'd
37 weeks pregnant—Fran: 7:34 RX'd
38 weeks pregnant—Fight Gone Bad: 257 RX'd
39 weeks pregnant—Helen: 13:04 RX'd

At around 28 weeks pregnant I decided, with my doctor's blessing, to sign up for a half-marathon. I had read several *CrossFit Journal* articles, as well as affiliate blogs, in which other non-prego CrossFitters had entered full marathons and ultra-distance runs using only CrossFit training methodologies, so I decided to give it a shot. To prepare for my half marathon, I did nothing but follow CrossFit programming. I did no extra running, no specific endurance training—just CrossFit WODs.

My goals were simple: I wanted to complete the run in the time limit provided, I did not want to walk or have to stop, and I wanted to finish. I wanted to participate in this run because I wanted to show my clients, friends and family what CrossFit could truly do. I wanted to prove to myself that I was mentally and physically strong enough to finish this run. I also wanted to have a story to tell my daughter. I wanted her to know that her mother was strong and healthy during her pregnancy, but I also wanted to show all those people who are intimidated and overly cautious of CrossFit that *anyone* can do it. You don't have to sign up for a half-marathon, but anything can be scaled and any WOD can be finished.

I finished the half-marathon in just over two hours with my shoes covered in blood thanks to a blister that exploded in Mile 4.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

The extra weight of a growing baby made workouts a challenge for Joseph, but she did almost all of them as RX'd.

Pregnant and Fit

Throughout my pregnancy and especially while I was doing CrossFit workouts, many people questioned what I was doing. I often had to explain that I had my doctor's blessing and felt that what I was doing was "safe" for both my baby and me. With the big skeptics of CrossFitting while pregnant, I had to drive home the point that I could complete any WOD on the board as long as my heart rate was controlled, I stayed cool and hydrated, and I made the appropriate substitutions.

My personal opinion is it would have been unsafe for my baby and me to take 40 weeks off of CrossFit, gain unhealthy weight and, for lack of a better term, be like most mothers in America and "let myself go." During my pregnancy I had a few clients who were new to CrossFit come into our affiliate for our Introduction to CrossFit program. Some of these new clients would look at me and want to train alongside me or be trained by me. A few people who walked in to see me doing pull-ups, kettlebell swings, cleans, overhead squats, etc. stated that they were initially intimidated and overwhelmed by this sight. When I asked them why they felt this way, they stated that when compared with their own level of physical fitness they realized they could not keep up with an obviously pregnant lady.

During my pregnancy I managed to never miss a day of training. I continued to follow three days on and one day off during the months of my pregnancy. While out of town I visited other CrossFit affiliates just to make sure I didn't miss a day (thank you CrossFit One World, CrossFit Orange Coast and CrossFit Vallejo for your hospitality). I often heard on those visits that I was the first pregnant woman to work out in their box.

Most folks were astonished that a pregnant lady was still working out because a typical perception of pregnancy is that of inactivity until after the baby is born. Hearing I was supposed to be inactive or stop training from various folks is what made me want to write about my experience. I want women to know you can still work out and be pregnant, you can still run a 5K at 39 weeks pregnant, you can still watch what you eat, and you can still do pull-ups! I am not suggesting a woman already pregnant start CrossFitting now, but for those who have been CrossFitting and become pregnant, please consult your physician and continue at a rate at which you feel comfortable.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

The author together with Caden Ansley, future firebreather.

I want women to know you can
still work out and be pregnant,
you can still run a 5K at 39
weeks pregnant, you can still
watch what you eat, and you
can still do pull-ups!

Thankfully, I never had any problems with my pregnancy. My morning sickness lasted about a week and was over with before I really suffered. I gained moderate weight (33 lb.), was never anemic, never had swelling or discomfort, never battled fatigue and managed to train our clients until the day I gave birth. I attribute all of the above to CrossFit, Paleo/Zone eating habits (which I maintained while pregnant), and the support of my husband, family, friends and clients.

Labor Is Just Another Workout

Truly CrossFit-style, my water broke at the gym mid-WOD. I was three days past my due date and decided to go work out. The WOD was Jackie, and I wasn't feeling 100 percent or too energetic. I decided with a friend, Seth, we would split the WOD. I would row 500 meters, he would row 500 meters. I would do 25 thrusters, he would do 25 thrusters. I would do 15 pull-ups and then he would do 15 pull-ups. To make things fair, he would wear two weighted vests for a total weight of 40 lb.

Everything was going smoothly until 400 meters into the row. My water broke! I stopped rowing, told everyone I had to use the bathroom and excused myself. Everybody was used to my frequent potty breaks due to the fact there is so much pressure on the bladder during pregnancy. Seth finished my remaining 100 meters and then rowed his 500. Due to a previous false alarm, I didn't want to alert anyone, so I came out from the bathroom and finished my thrusters and pull-ups! I then left the gym, loaded up the car and drove myself to the hospital.

**Everything was going smoothly
until 400 meters into the row.
My water broke!**



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

One would guess carrying a new baby isn't a challenge for a woman used to hoisting kettlebells and barbells on a regular basis.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

The CrossFit Solano team.

Once there it was confirmed my water had in fact broken, and I called my husband at work and asked that he join me. He was shocked. He knew that I had been at the gym and expected a call from every trainer and client there.

My contractions were painful but manageable, perhaps due to all the grueling workouts I had done. It only took five hours from the time my water broke to the time my daughter, Caden Ansley, was in my arms. I was able to deliver my daughter through a natural vaginal birth with no medication. I was in good spirits throughout most of the birth and attribute my physical condition to my CrossFit WODs.

Baby's First WOD?

Two days later, Caden and I were sent home from the hospital. One week after birth I was able to sneak away to the gym while she slept and row a 2K. I gradually worked my way up to a 5K, and only 2 weeks later I participated in regular classes with my doctor's approval. I am not as fast as I used to be as I need to rebuild my endurance, but I am proud to say I have not lost any of my strength.

Our daughter is adjusting well to the world. My husband and I now take her to the gym with us and she loves it. She might actually take her best nap there. The loud music and weights don't startle her but are more like a familiar sound. I can't wait until she is doing burpees, squats and pull-ups, mimicking our clients, our friends, her dad and me.

I don't recommend someone who has never CrossFitted start doing WODs when she finds out she's pregnant. However, to those who have been exposed to CrossFit, I encourage you to continue doing so with your doctor's approval and while listening carefully to your body. I owe my pregnancy, delivery and recovery to CrossFit.

Thank you, CrossFit.



About the Author

Lauren Joseph is Level 1 CrossFit trainer. She, along with her husband and a few friends, owns, operates and trains at [CrossFit Solano](#). She looks forward to seeing her daughter compete in 2030 CrossFit Games and seeing the CrossFit community continue to grow.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Truly Special Populations

Josh MacDonald uses a host of methods to help children move better, and he's finding CrossFit is a great tool for a pediatric occupational therapist.

By Josh MacDonald

August 2010



Courtesy of Josh MacDonald

Wheelbarrow walking works on both coordination and strength. It can be graded by holding the child's knees or thighs.

CrossFit is the use of constantly varied functional movements performed at high intensity. For most of us, this means spending some time becoming competent at mechanics but focusing mostly on consistency and intensity.

But what if you couldn't even manage the "mechanics" part because of a faulty nervous system or underdeveloped musculoskeletal system? For these clients, CrossFit is still an invaluable tool for progress and improvement.

Helping Kids Move

As a pediatric occupational therapist, I work with children with a wide variety of diagnoses, including autism, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and developmental delay. While each diagnosis is unique, many share some common characteristics. Many of these children have movement disorders that stem from muscle weakness, sensory-processing disorders (see sidebar on Page 4), and severely reduced muscular and cardiovascular endurance. The result is children who struggle to interact with their world independently and safely.

CrossFit-style movements and programming have provided me with a valuable tool for improving the lives of children with disabilities.

As an avid CrossFitter of almost two years, I quickly saw how a focus on quality functional movement patterns could benefit these kids on my caseload. I started dabbling in the use of some of the movement principles and simple workouts during my sessions. But I knew I needed more training and information if I was going to make the most of CrossFit at our clinic. I decided to go to a Level 1 Certification and a CrossFit Kids Certification to make sure I was using the right cues, movement progressions and workouts. Attending these two certifications was well worth the time and price. I learned countless techniques and strategies and developed the ability to adapt CrossFit for use with children. What I had to figure out for myself, however, was how to adapt all of that information to the special-needs population.

In pediatrics, occupational therapy focuses on improving a child's ability to engage in normal, daily activities. This includes, but is not limited to, self-care tasks (i.e., bathing and grooming), visual motor tasks (i.e., handwriting), motor coordination, and sensory processing. For many of my patients, their ability to make progress in these areas is significantly limited by neurologic and/or muscular dysfunction. This means they are unable to move efficiently, and any new skills are based on an inaccurate foundation. My job is to help these children correct existing errors and guide their acquisition of new skills through the correct stages. This is where CrossFit fits in nicely.

CrossFit's nine foundational movements provide an excellent starting point for working on body awareness, basic strength and coordination. Adding those elements into a simple and short workout improved these children's neurologic and muscular endurance, as well as provided the psychological benefits we all get from slaying our favorite WOD: confidence, persistence, a sense of accomplishment. With some small adaptations, CrossFit-style movements and programming have provided me with a valuable tool for improving the lives of children with disabilities.

The Program

My primary focus has been the squat. It is not only the first of the foundational movements, but it is also the logical starting point for teaching controlled, distinct movement. When children lack motor control and coordination, their movements are a controlled chaos. Children are labeled as clumsy, they fall easily, and they run into others without realizing it. Like a spinning top, it is easier for them to stay upright in constant motion rather than a controlled, static position. Using the squat as a starting point allows me to work first on achieving static stability in the starting position. This, in itself, is a challenge for many of these children.



Courtesy of Josh MacDonald

The bench gives a specific reference point for finding the bottom of the squat.

Learning the squat-width stance, and holding it, requires more midline stability and body awareness than some of these children have. Once a child can hold the top and bottom positions for 3-5 seconds each, I move on to the ability to slowly lower to the bottom of a squat without collapse. To accommodate this I use a simple bench placed behind them as a target and a security against falling. Initially I allow them to actually sit on the bench to give them a more firm understanding of the bottom position. This prevents them from bottoming out and squatting too far down without stability. All of this is done with the use of "butterfly hands," as taught in the CrossFit Kids class and *CrossFit Journal*.

Once they can maintain midline stability through the lowering and standing portions of the movement, we work on a touch-and-go on the bench, then remove the bench and focus on stability through the full range. One major point of challenge is the balance and stability needed to squat with active extension of the trunk and weight on the heels. Usually a significant forward lean needs to be addressed with cues such as, "Head up," "Keep your butterflies high," or "Stay tall." This progression may take weeks of work, and it always occurs during a one-on-one therapy session. Once this process is completed, however, significant gains are usually seen in the child's overall motor skills and body awareness.

I then progress on to the front squat, then the deadlift. Each of these lifts (performed with only a PVC pipe) helps to establish a firm base of support and midline awareness. Because so many of these children have no awareness of where their bodies are, I only introduce overhead movements when they demonstrate a basic ability to maintain midline and shoulder stability.

The shoulder press is the first step toward overhead movements. When performed without weight, the press is still an effective tool for teaching these children how to use their hands overhead without collapsing at their trunk. I reserve the overhead squat for only the highest-functioning clients. This movement is very complex and requires a high level of control and body awareness. Once a child is capable of an overhead squat, he does not usually need my therapeutic services much longer.

Once a child is capable
of an overhead squat,
he does not usually need my
therapeutic services
much longer.

WODs

While I don't use benchmark Girls or Olympic lifts, I do use a variety of WODs. I focus on skills and elements that challenge the child's specific needs, but I also adjust reps, rounds and time frame to meet a child's metabolic and physical capacity. I won't begin to use a movement in a WOD until the child has demonstrated consistency with the mechanics. That may fluctuate daily, as a child may need review of a previously mastered movement if he or she is having an "off day."

Typical CrossFit scaling is used (i.e., knee push-ups or varying height of boxes for jumps), but I also use substituted items if a child cannot complete the suggested element. For example, I may replace a balance-beam walk with walking on a brightly colored line of duct tape. Or I will use a light medicine ball slam ball instead of wall-ball if the child cannot safely manage the overhead challenge. Regardless, the focus is on tailoring the workout to the child's specific needs and addressing his or her unique goals.

My WODs are usually a set number of rounds, around three or four, but I am always ready to change the parameters in the middle of a workout if the child is too challenged or if I underestimated his abilities. Because these workouts are usually set up as a game, I often tell the children we are going to work on an obstacle course without specifying rounds or time frame. It is then up to me to find the delicate balance between challenging appropriately and overstressing the child. If I do my job right, the kids usually have a blast moving quickly from one activity to the next and trying new and exciting physical challenges. For these kids, like most of us, CrossFit is hard work hidden by tons of fun.

For these kids,
like most of us,
CrossFit is hard work
hidden by tons of fun.

Sensory Processing Delay

Our brains are constantly receiving information from our bodies and the environment, then processing the data to make accurate responses and adjustments. That information comes to our brain in a variety of formats: touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, and via the proprioceptive and vestibular systems. The five major senses are fairly straightforward, but the last two, proprioceptive and vestibular, are vital to body and environmental awareness.

Proprioceptive information comes from receptors in the joints and muscles. This is the data that tells your brain where your body parts are at any given time. Vestibular information is your sense of balance. This tells you where your body is in space (i.e., upside down, on your side, bending over, etc.).

A sensory processing delay occurs if a child's body, or brain, does not correctly process all of this incoming information. Such children cannot accurately react to changes in their body or environment. They may over- or under-react to new information, looking clumsy or uncoordinated.

There are also neurologic links to emotional and regulatory centers of the brain. Without accurate, consistent information, the brain may stay either too active or underactive. In both cases, motor coordination is affected and inaccurate.

For these children, learning a complex movement like the squat or deadlift can become a very complicated process. It can become difficult for them to copy the small subtleties needed for safe, coordinated body movements. It becomes my responsibility to break down these movements into simple, distinct parts that can be more easily understood and repeated. I may need to add more physical cues (a bench to squat to), verbal cues or visual cues. Children with sensory processing delays struggle with motor coordination, but the process of learning basic, foundational movement skills can help. Not only do they learn safe and effective movements, but the process also itself carries over to improve general coordination and sensory-processing skills as well.

—Josh MacDonald

Here are a few examples of some of my workouts:

4 rounds of:
10 push-ups
Sprint 30 feet
10 box jumps (12 inches)
Bear crawl 30 feet back

8-minute AMRAP:
5 box jumps (10 inches)
Sprint 30 feet
Agility ladder out and back
Sprint 30 feet back

3 rounds of:
Crab walk 20 feet
10 squats
10 push-ups
10 sit-ups

3 rounds of:
10 squats
Heavy bag pull hand overhand (20 feet)
Heavy bag drag over shoulder (20 feet)

Goals

CrossFit's focus on measurable, objective outcomes fits perfectly with the therapy setting. One of the practice guidelines for occupational therapy is the use and monitoring of short-term and long-term goals. With each patient I set initial goals based on an evaluation. Every three months, those goals are reviewed and progress identified. As the child progresses, new goals are established or goals are revised if they remain unmet. This ensures effective treatment and quantifiable progress.



Courtesy of Josh MacDonald



This 50-lb. bag provides an external load that requires midline stability and body awareness to pull and drag.

Through the progress seen in quarterly goals, I have been able to track the benefits of a CrossFit program with my patients. While I do work on a lot of areas beyond the CrossFit approach (i.e., self-dressing and handwriting), I have been able to track the benefit of CrossFit on both the predicted areas and some unexpected gains. For example, many of my patients develop improved coordination and awareness of their body. As mentioned earlier, these kids were clumsy and fell a lot, but a CrossFit approach helped them reach goals like: *Patient will demonstrate motor planning and body awareness sufficient for completion of a 3-step obstacle course without falls or loss of balance, 90% of trials.*

When a child is clumsy or weak, he also usually has poor metabolic conditioning. It is hard to improve respiratory or metabolic capacity when all available efforts are directed at basic coordination. Through the use of regular workouts, a commonly achieved metabolic goal is: *Patient will engage in 15 minutes of therapeutic exercise without signs or symptoms of fatigue, 90% of trials.*

I also saw gains in some unexpected areas, like attention to task and following directions. It is common for these kids to be unable to focus on normal tasks (i.e., schoolwork) for more than two or three minutes, and they have a hard time following basic directions. The structure of typical CrossFit workout provided quite a bit of help in these areas. I start with couplets and simple rep schemes but provide lots of cues when the child's attention or memory fades. Then I progress to triplets or chipper WODs that have slightly more complicated elements, and I adjust the amount of cues to match the child's ability to remember and follow the steps of the workout. When the child is able to remember the parts of a workout, he also began to demonstrate an improvement in the ability to follow other verbal directions. After several progressions, these patients have made progress on goals like the following: *Patient will follow 2-step directions with only 2 cues, 80% of trials.*

Not only do I see improvements in
physical aspects,
but I also see gains in
psychological, cognitive and
emotional areas as well.

These children also improved in their ability to attend to focused work when finished with a small workout. Lots of research has linked exercise to cognition (*CrossFit Kids Magazine No. 38 and No. 40*), and I began to see it happen in my clinic, too. My patients could stay on task with work at a desk or other focused tasks for much longer periods after completing a WOD. I had several children meet the following goal: *Patient will attend to seated task for 8 minutes, without additional cues, 3 out of 4 trials.*



Courtesy of Josh MacDonald



This is a 12-inch box jump and can be used for challenging the child's power and coordination while stressing the cardiorespiratory system.



Courtesy of Josh MacDonald

An 8- or 4-lb. slam ball and hop along the dots require a lot of physical awareness as the child manages an object overhead, and it's fun for the kids to throw it as hard as they can.

The Rewards

Each of the objectives listed above are specific goals that were met with different children who were exposed to the CrossFit approach. While this was not the only method for therapy used with these children, the benefits and application of CrossFit are unmistakable. Learning new skilled movements and completing challenging workouts benefit these children in very clear and quantifiable ways. Not only do I see improvements in physical aspects, but I also see gains in psychological, cognitive and emotional areas as well.

It is incredibly rewarding to see children's excitement as they progress from a discoordinated eight-inch box jump to a 16-inch box jump at 33 percent of body height, or to watch them learn to string together three single jump ropes after three weeks of frustration and failing. What is even more gratifying, though, is when the parents tell me success stories about how their child falls less, pays more attention in class, keeps up with siblings and, in

general, has more confidence and seems much happier with life. Like most trainers, I truly love watching my clients as they grow and improve their physical skills. I have the added benefit, however, of watching the quality of life for the child and family improve dramatically as they regularly reach therapy goals. CrossFit has become a big part of making that happen with many of my patients, and I am thankful for the opportunity to use CrossFit to help these families.



About the Author:

Josh MacDonald received his master's degree in occupational therapy in 2001 and has nine years of experience working with children with special needs in both outpatient and inpatient neuro-rehabilitation. He is the pediatric therapy manager at Arizona Orthopedic Physical Therapy—Kids Place in Goodyear, Ariz. Josh works out at CrossFit Fury, where he also runs the CrossFit Kids program. Josh is a Level 1 trainer and CrossFit Kids trainer.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

APFT A-OK

Two U.S. Army platoons use CrossFit while a third uses traditional PT. When physical testing rolls around, one group sees impressive improvements.

By Sgt. 1st Class Rafael C. Lopez II

August 2010



All images courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Rafael C. Lopez II

I am a sergeant first class in the United States Army and platoon sergeant in an Aviation Task Force that consists of 30 UH-60 Blackhawk, AH-64 Apache and CH-47 Chinook helicopters. We are stationed out of Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Ga., but are currently deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. I would like to give you some of our history with CrossFit and some tabulated data from what we have done.

A New Way to Train

We received a new battalion commander prior to our deployment. Since the first day he took command, he preached to us about combat-focused physical-fitness training (PT). He came to us with kettlebells, burpees and box jumps, and we were convinced he had lost his mind. I mean we believed that his thought process was in the right spot because our normal physical-fitness regimen only taught us how to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) but would be useless to us in combat. But the hard pill for us to swallow was this: “How is swinging a weight around, jumping up on boxes and performing short but fast runs going to help us on an APFT?”

We were sure that this “combat-focused PT” was going to doom our soldiers. As I stated earlier, we understood our commander’s philosophy clearly, and it made perfect sense for preparing a soldier for combat, but as a platoon sergeant in charge of 30-plus soldiers’ careers, I did not want to abandon traditional PT styles in fear that I would soon have an enormous amount of soldiers failing the APFT.

I have always spent time in the gym, not as a muscle-hungry beast but more as someone just trying to increase my strength and be fit—at least according to how I used to judge a level of fitness. I used to take every top supplement on the market and read all the top muscle magazines, and I browsed multiple “fitness” websites to find the next new mono-joint exercise to try out in the gym.

This deployment started just like every other I have been on: get to the gym, scope out the equipment, and figure out the best time to go. I linked up with another platoon sergeant and another soldier in the company. “This is it! I have my gym group! I am ready to go!” I thought.

A couple of months into the deployment, they closed the gym down for about a week to rearrange the set-up to allow for better maneuverability around the equipment. I was devastated. What was I going to do? The gym was my staple for six days out of the week. Then I received an e-mail from our sergeant major pertaining to CrossFit. A DVD followed shortly with clips downloaded from the exercise section of CrossFit.com.



CrossFit's minimal equipment requirements have made the program a great fit for deployed soldiers.

We started with leg day (three rounds of 100 feet of lunges, 50 air squats and 25 back extensions), and we were instantly hooked.



No one ever said a medicine ball has to be round.

I was instantly intrigued by what I saw and decided I would give it a try. I talked with the other platoon sergeant who was a gym buddy, and we decided we would give it a go. We started with leg day (three rounds of 100 feet of lunges, 50 air squats and 25 back extensions), and we were instantly hooked. For the next week, our legs reminded us of the brutal beating we had put on them.

This turned into a passion for us, and we were anxiously checking the CrossFit website to see what new ways we could “beat the crap” out of ourselves. With each workout we both agreed that we had never been that sore by just lifting weights in the gym. Soon, we started using our sub-par engineering skills to build devices of torture. In a short time we had our own pull-up and dip stations, and we even built a makeshift GHD machine from wood, tape and foam.

Fit Enough to Fight?

About two weeks after we began our new CrossFit lifestyle, we had an APFT in the company. The results were horrid. Since we deployed to about 7,000 more feet in altitude, soldiers might as well have been running with straws in their mouths. They could neither breathe nor perform. As a result, about 75 percent of the company failed the APFT. When this happened, it was an instant red-flag emergency that we had to do something.

This was the birth of CrossFit for our two platoons. We knew it was time to introduce our soldiers to the pain that we had been putting ourselves through on a daily basis.

This was the birth of
CrossFit for our two
platoons. We knew it was
time to introduce our
soldiers to the pain that
we had been putting
ourselves through on
a daily basis.



*Creative soldiers solved their equipment problems ...
and their fitness problems.*

I cannot express enough
how pleased I am with
these results. They
demonstrate the significant
benefit to core strength and
cardiovascular endurance
that CrossFit provides and
traditional PT cannot.

We knew our No. 1 issue was going to be equipment, so we started looking closely at the types of exercises that were on the Crossfit website and then got busy with more building. We retrieved some old tires from the battalion motor pool for tire flips and for sledgehammer work. Then we got as many pieces of plywood as we could get our hands on to build plyo jumps.

Then we had to worry about weight. We only owned two kettlebells, and there was no way we were going to support 50 soldiers with that. We compensated for our weight crunch by rounding up numerous ammo cans and filling them with sand and rocks to get various weights. We even took our duffle bags and crammed them with sand and rock for more weight. I don't know what we are going to use to get our personal equipment home now, but we'll deal with that later.

We talked with the local nationals to attempt to get basketballs to use as medicine balls. In a couple of days we had four rugby balls, so our medicine balls are a little oblong, but if you are ever up for a hardcore football game, we have just the ball for you. And then came the power of the Internet, where we went on a shopping frenzy: medicine balls, jump ropes, rings and anything else we could get away with buying and having shipped overseas. With a good rotation of exercises between the platoons, we have managed to obtain enough equipment to support all the soldiers with what is needed for our WODs.

My fellow platoon sergeant and I did our own programming for the soldiers and ourselves. We beat ourselves up Monday through Friday and then licked our wounds on Saturday and Sunday. As for the troops, we only had them do CrossFit on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Soon after the initiation, we might as well have started receiving death threats from the soldiers. They were hurting and we loved it. Nevertheless, the greatest reward came down the road when they saw another company doing traditional PT and collectively stated, "Man, I hope we never do that useless crap again." We had them hooked, and they could not get enough of it.

I recently purchased two bingo hitters and wrote exercises on all the balls in one hitter and numbers of reps on the balls in the other. When the soldiers had the look of worry on their faces, I told them not to worry because they play bingo in nursing homes. Unfortunately, this did not ease their minds any.

Measurable Results

The battalion commander was ecstatic to learn that we had finally embraced his philosophy with open arms and were charging full steam ahead with it. He would constantly send us updates about CrossFit and shoot us new ideas to try out. In February, we heard there was going to be a Crossfit Level 1 Cert in country, and our eyes instantly widened in hopes that we would be able to attend. Unfortunately, we were only allotted one slot for the cert and the other would be an alternate for the cert. Unfortunately for my brother in arms, the cert landed at a time that he would not be available, and I was able to attend.

The cert was amazing. It was full of information presented by a great staff of trainers, and I had an overall great time. If my love for CrossFit was not large enough to begin with, the cert inflated it even more. I went back to my camp and just engorged myself with as much CrossFit knowledge as I could get my eyes on.

If you are unfamiliar with the APFT, soldiers are required to perform a certain amount of push-ups and sit-ups in a two-minute period based on their age. The final event they must do is a 2-mile run for time. Again, your score is based of your time for your age group. As I stated earlier, the company took the APFT in March and the results were not good to say the least. Two of the three platoons have been doing CrossFit since that time, while one platoon continued to do traditional PT.

Two months later the company took another APFT, and the results were great. Most scores shot through the roof. The group that performed CrossFit consisted of 46 soldiers. The platoon that continued with traditional methods consisted of 34 soldiers. There were some variances in both groups of better and worse scores per individual, but overall the results spoke for themselves. Just to reiterate, these numbers are based on the same style of test given in the same environment.



Luckily, old tires were not hard to come by, and soon the soldiers were flipping and hammering them for time.



Just about any object can provide a workout if you're creative in your programming.

We'll call the group that performed two months of CrossFit Group A, and we'll call the group that performed traditional PT Group B. Group A had a total increase of 149 push-ups, with an average increase of 3.24 pushups per individual. There was an increase of 190 sit-ups for Group A, with an average increase of 4.13 sit-ups per individual. Group A also had a total time decrease of 45 minutes and 53 seconds on the 2-mile run for the group, with an average decrease of 54 seconds per individual.

As you can see, CrossFit made a substantial difference for this group within only two months. Group B had different results.

There was an increase of 122 push-ups for the group, which averaged out to an additional 3.59 push-ups per individual. There was a decrease of 26 sit-ups for the group, which averaged out to -0.76 sit-ups per individual. And there was a cumulative decrease in the 2-mile run time of 3 minutes and 30 seconds for the group, which averaged to only 11 seconds per individual.

I cannot express enough how pleased I am with these results. They demonstrate the significant benefit to core strength and cardiovascular endurance that CrossFit provides and traditional PT cannot.

More Improvements to Come

Our future with CrossFit is still ongoing. I would be more than happy to give you an update when we take another APFT so you can see the stats after more time with CrossFit. I will be starting an additional PT session with soldiers who are still having problems with their 2-mile run. I have searched through CrossFit Endurance to get some ideas of what we can do with these soldiers, so five days out of the week we will work on drills that I have found on the website.

We are also planning to make teams and do our own CrossFit Games here in Afghanistan. The bingo hopper will be used to create the majority of the workouts, but we will also devise our own WOD and end it with starting an IV on a casualty for time.



Even equipment for austere training needs a bit of character.

I appreciate all of the work that has been put into the CrossFit program, and it speaks for itself through numbers. I myself, at 33, am in the best shape of my life, and between CrossFit and the Zone Diet, I have lost 38 lb. and 8 percent body fat in just a few months.

So to all the other units out there, if you do not already implement CrossFit for your physical-fitness training sessions, it is definitely something to look into.



About the Author

Rafael C. Lopez is a platoon sergeant in an Aviation Unit Maintenance Task Force in the United States Army. SFC Lopez has dedicated his time to developing combat-effective soldiers through CrossFit by implementing it in his physical-fitness training after his Level 1 certification course. He aspires to continue studying CrossFit and obtain his Level 2 certification, and he wishes to open his own CrossFit gym.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

No Excuses

George Peeko is a special athlete, but he'll tell you he's just another CrossFitter who gives his all in every workout.

By James Needham

August 2010



All images courtesy of George Peeko

George Peeko is a CrossFitter.

1 of 4

His times and stats are impressive. He is 5'5" and weighs 154 lb. He can squat 345, press 155, bench 275 and deadlift 355. His times on some of the benchmarks are as follows:

Fran: 4:14

Grace: 3:29

Linda: 21:01

Angie: 14:03

Lumberjack 20: 24:00

As notable as these stats are, it's important to put them into the proper perspective: George does all his workouts with one hand.

Most would consider this a handicap. George would rather you not consider it at all. George would be the last to shine light on himself, but because of his amazing ability to overachieve I felt he deserved some recognition for his efforts. It wasn't until after some coaxing that I was able to talk him into this acknowledgment.

I have never thought of George as being any different than anyone else. In fact, I have always had high expectations for him because he has such high expectations for himself. I can feel his frustration if his efforts are anything less than 100 percent. To George "scaling" means lowering the "competitive standard"; i.e., taking himself out of the race. He will often ask me, "Do we scale the running WODs down for the strong guys? Do we tell the CrossFit Endurance guys you don't have to lift as much because you are runners?"

**"Do we scale the running
WODs down for the
strong guys? Do we tell the
CrossFit Endurance guys
you don't have to lift as
much because you
are runners?"**

— George Peeko



George Peeko's rugged determination allows him to overcome challenges and complete WODs as RX'd.

as much because you are runners?"

His point is simple: we all have obstacles that need to be overcome. Some are just more noticeable than others. George has made me wonder if a "handicap" is truly a handicap if it motivates a person to constantly push harder than if he or she didn't have the perceived disability.

When I hear of George's workouts, I'm reminded of my own genetic weaknesses and how little they are compared to legitimate genetic limitations some people have. It's one thing to say, "No excuses." It's another thing altogether to perform well in spite of true, legitimate challenges.

I look at George the same way I look at a leader. The determination George displays is something that can only be described as inspiring. I'm writing this about George to bring awareness of what can be accomplished when intensity and desire are present. I push myself harder because I know I can. George shows me how.

I realize all CrossFit WODs are scalable, I realize "high intensity" is a relative term, and I realize it's ultimately "you against you," but true competitors accept no scaling and offer no excuses. The only acceptable scaling option is one that is across the board and fair. This is George's attitude.

When people ask him why he works out in an environment that will just showcase his inabilities, George finds it difficult to respond. You cannot explain the competitive fire to someone who is not competitive.



Peeko's committed efforts are an inspiration to CrossFitters who are always pushing their own limits.



When people ask him why he works out in an environment that will just showcase his inabilities, George finds it difficult to respond. You cannot explain the competitive fire to someone who is not competitive. Competitors want to compete. Competitors also understand that the competition is never over. They realize that success is a constant progression toward a worthwhile goal—and what better goal to have than ultimate fitness? George is no different.

There are always going to be people who can't wait to pull you down and use every excuse as to why CrossFit is not for them. Then you will come across someone like George, who sees what CrossFit is and says, "Yeah! Let's go!"

I know all kinds of CrossFitters have all kinds of limitations. I am no exception. We should all take a moment, however, to put things into perspective. But please don't put things into perspective by comparing yourself to George. Put things into perspective by placing yourself into the same category as George—CrossFitter—and then compare all CrossFitters to the rest of the world. And keep striving to be the best that you can be. George will be.



About the Author

James R. Needham served six years in the United States Marine Corps and was honorably discharged as a sergeant. For 10 years after the Marines, he worked full time in health clubs and personal-training studios as a nationally certified personal trainer with ACE (American Council on Exercise), AFAA (Aerobics & Fitness Association of America) and the NSCA (National Strength and Conditioning Association). He is currently a CrossFit Level 1 certified trainer and a sergeant with the Cranston Police Department in Cranston, R.I.



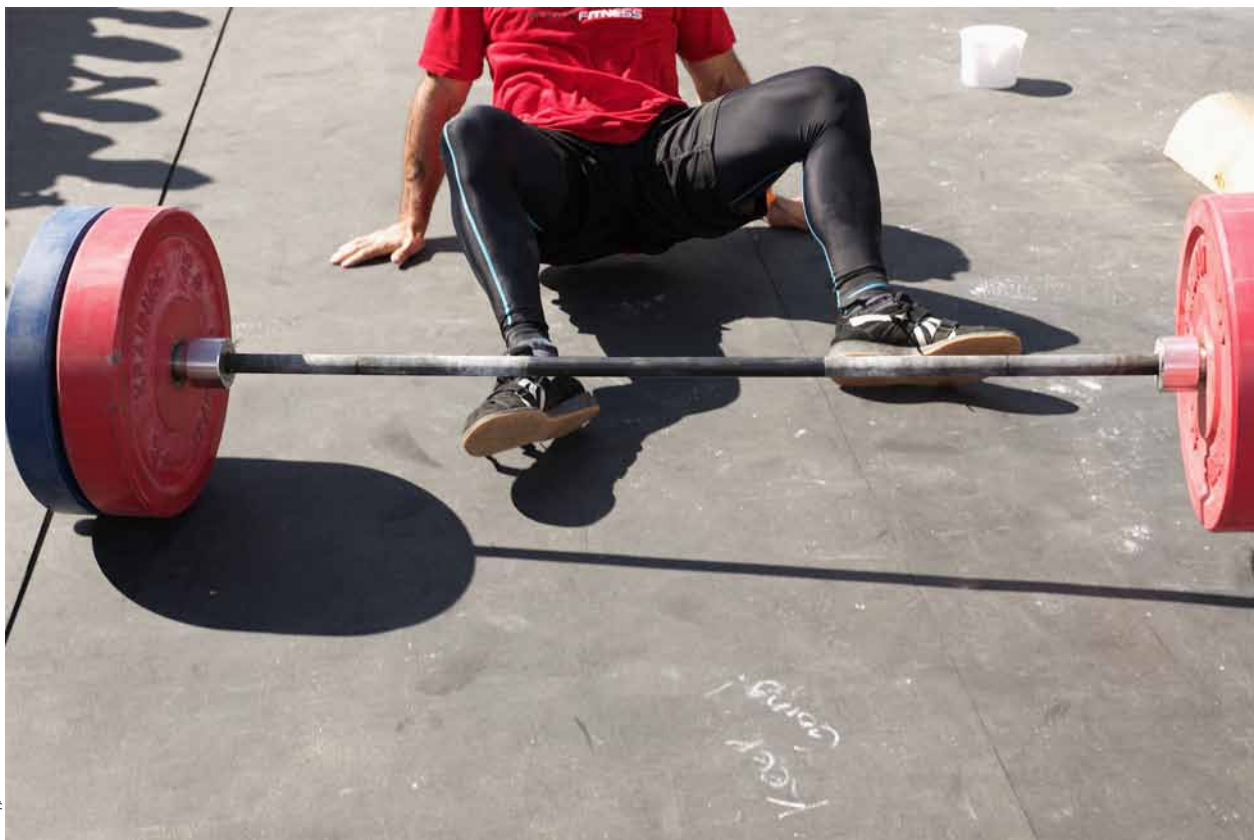
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Why'd You Miss?

Maybe you weren't strong enough to make the lift, or maybe something else went wrong. Jeff Barnett offers a non-exhaustive list of reasons why the iron didn't move.

By Jeff Barnett CrossFit Impulse

August 2010



Staff/CrossFit Journal

A missed lift is a wonderful opportunity. It's an opportunity to test your limits, to build character through willingness to fail and to examine what went wrong.

Many proficient coaches have said that you should plan your lifts carefully such that you never miss. Perhaps their theory is correct when dealing with professional lifters. However, I am a relative novice, and I am in the business of training novices. I generally think that if you haven't failed, then you haven't pushed yourself far enough. There are exceptions, of course, but missing a lift is generally a natural, expected and productive part of strength training. I can't fathom how you'll ever surpass your limits if you never actually know them.

Fully training at your limits, however, is necessarily difficult. You've undoubtedly stared at the bar and bumpers on the floor and wondered why you couldn't nail that load when everything indicated you should have been able to. Perhaps these 10 ideas will help you find the reason and correct it to ensure success on your next attempt.

You aren't physically capable

While the psychological, speed and coordination aspects of strength training can't be ignored, at some point you just aren't strong enough to complete the lift at a given load. The bad news is that this is reality for everyone at some load. The good news is that it probably isn't reality for you at the load you think it is.

You didn't work up to the load properly.

My body doesn't like to jump from 80 to 100 percent of my one-rep max (1RM) between lifts. Every athlete is different, but I know that I am slave to this phenomenon, as are many other athletes. Whether it's mental confidence or true physiological limitation, I work best when I creep upward in 5-10 lb. increments. I do this rather than jumping to a load I am fairly certain I can hit because the shock of not having handled similar loads on my way up may cause me to fail.

For example, even though I know I can hit a 320-lb. back squat right now, I won't skip directly from 275 lb. to 320 lb. If I am trying to hit 320, then I will hit 295 and 310 in between. If you know what load you plan to hit, plan your approach in advance. You don't want to move too quickly, but you also don't want to perform too many lifts above 90 percent of your 1RM.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Strength is a key part of moving iron, but technique and mental state are also important in making a lift.

Take the time to walk across the gym to get the correct weights. Don't load a 5-lb. plate on each side of the bar when you really need 2.5-lb. plates.

Many successful powerlifters swear by research from Soviet sports scientist A.S. Prilepin. Prilepin studied data from over 1,000 professional weightlifters and determined you shouldn't lift more than 90 percent of your 1RM more than 4-10 times in a workout. He found that exceeding this threshold delayed recovery and did not cause any further strength gains. However, you can be a little loose with the rule because it's for professional lifters who know their true 1RM to a high degree of accuracy. In comparison, you're most likely a novice who is not reaching your body's true potential. It's OK. I am too. Most of us are. Therefore, we can get away with a few more than 4-10, but don't push it too far.

Oh, and take the time to walk across the gym to get the correct weights. Don't load a 5-lb. plate on each side of the bar when you really need 2.5-lb. plates.

You didn't religiously check your set-up.

It happens to everyone. You didn't take the time to ensure that your hands were symmetrically spaced on the bar, or that the bar was low enough on your back or close enough to your shins, or that your hips were at the correct height, or that your shoulders were correctly aligned with the bar, or that your stance was the correct width—and so on. Be like Santa Claus: check it twice. And if you unrack or address the bar and discover something isn't right, don't be impatient and attempt the lift anyway. Re-rack the bar, fix it, and get back to business the right way.

You stopped pushing/pulling through the middle.

This applies to almost any lift involving a barbell and often happens as the load gets heavy after working up through much easier reps. You were able to complete the rep with lighter loads just by exploding at the bottom and letting momentum carry you through the rest of the lift. To complete lifts at your true 1RM, you have to explosively start the bar without quitting or reducing your effort until locked out at the completion of the rep. The same effort you applied for one second you must now apply for three or four seconds. Bands and chains are often used to teach lifters to accelerate the bar and push all the way through a lift.

You were too slow getting under the bar.

Speed is a critical component of the Olympic lifts: the snatch and clean and jerk. As the load increases, you can no longer pull the bar up to your chin, giving you a large window of time to pull yourself under the bar and complete the lift. As the load gets heavier, the bar is pulled lower and lower, and that time window becomes narrower and narrower. You must focus on not only applying maximal effort to the bar but also quickly reversing course and pulling yourself underneath it. You may find a scenario where you can easily complete the lift if you only move quickly enough to get underneath it. You've got precious little time. Be fast—fast extending your hips, fast pulling your torso under the bar, fast planting your feet, fast to receive the bar actively ... fast everywhere.



Lindsey Smith missed 130 lb. at the 2009 CrossFit Games before coming back strong and nailing the lift to tie for third place in the max-snatch WOD.



Once the bar goes outside your base of support the lift is usually over. That doesn't necessarily mean you weren't strong enough. It probably means you need to work on your technique.

You weren't willing to get under the bar.

This also happens to all of us. No matter how tough you think you are, if you aren't the slightest bit apprehensive about throwing a heavy load into the air and then jumping underneath it, then you probably aren't wired correctly. Courage is not the absence of fear but the will to act despite the presence of fear. What's the worst that will happen if you don't catch it? The bar and bumpers will clang to the ground—a missed lift. Big deal. What if the bar hits you? Well, it just doesn't happen that often.

As much as we're wired to not throw a heavy load into the air and then jump underneath it, we're also wired such that once we've committed to throwing that load into the air, we don't just give up on it and let it pummel us without protest. If you fail you'll almost certainly fail to the front or rear, getting out from under the bar. On the one-in-a-million chance that you don't get out from underneath the bar, you'll probably be trying your best to lift the bar, and it won't fall as damagingly as you think. Finally, if it does fall, hit you uninhibited and knock you down, it's probably not the end of the world. You can lie under a bar loaded with bumpers. You will fit. Try it.

I keep using the term "probably" because I don't doubt that injury is possible. That's the nature of strength training.

If the bar does fall, hit you uninhibited and knock you down, it's probably not the end of the world. You can lie under a bar loaded with bumpers. You will fit. Try it.

However, I've never seen it happen in this manner. And remember, your strength training is designed to help you avoid injuries. Avoid strength training and your injury might happen at an unpredictable moment in the real world, not in the predictable confines of the gym.

You moved too quickly and relaxed your core and shoulders.

This primarily applies to the back, front and overhead squat but can also happen in the deadlift and the Olympic lifts. Keeping everything tight throughout the squat is crucial. This includes your core, shoulders and hamstrings/glutes as you descend. Sometimes in your haste to get through a painful moment more quickly, you may rush the eccentric portion of the squat and try to sink to the bottom quickly by relaxing your core. This does indeed get you to the bottom of the squat quickly, but that's as far as you'll be going.

Now that your core and shoulders are relaxed, several factors are working against you. You no longer have a solid shelf for the bar. The bar may no longer be correctly aligned over the mid-foot. Most disastrously, your relaxed core is not able to transfer the force you are applying with your legs onto the bar. Instead, your core is absorbing all the energy by bending. In the squat, your legs and hips are the motor and your core is the transmission. If your transmission is sloppy, then your motor can produce as much power as you want and you'll still be unable to move.

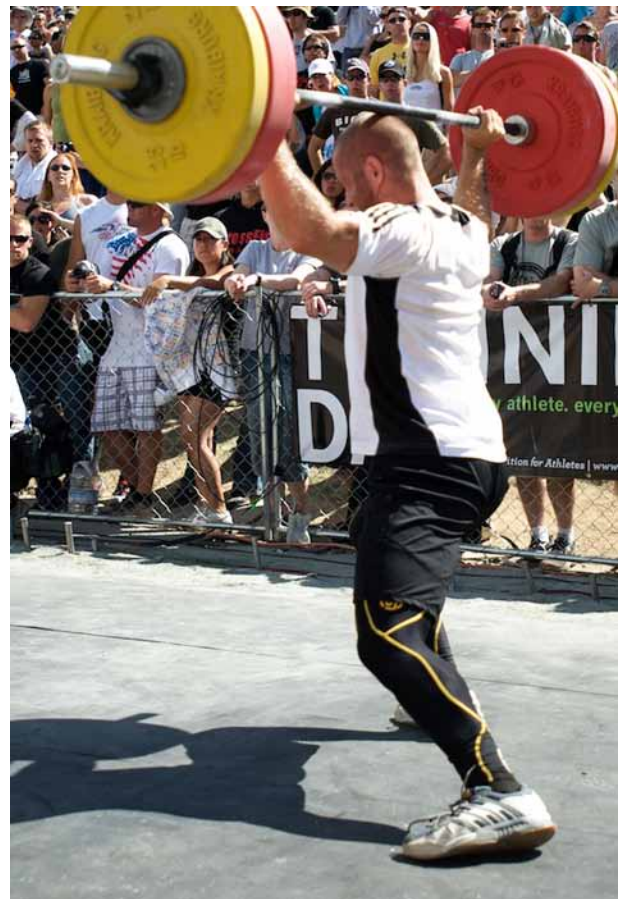
Sometimes you need to listen
to your body, and sometimes
you need to tell it to piss off
and do what it's told.

Take the eccentric portion a little more slowly. Keep your hams and glutes tight. Take advantage of the stretch reflex you get at the bottom by quickly reversing course on those tight hams and glutes, and then transfer it all through a tight core!

Keeping the core tight during deadlift is difficult when your mind is preoccupied with moving a massive load. After setting up I recommend gripping the bar and pushing your butt backwards to pre-load your hams and glutes. This should also cue you to contract the erectors of your lumbar spine. When you give your posterior chain the signal to reverse course and contract, you'll be well

prepared to get the bar moving. You should also ensure you take up all the slack in your arms before you begin, lest you try to rip the bar off the ground with your arms, which won't go very well. This is akin to trying to push a car by getting a long running start and then barreling into the rear bumper at full speed. A more efficient method would be to tightly brace yourself against the car and then begin moving it. This means pulling your arms to full extension against the bar.

Similarly, in the Olympic lifts, speed and acceleration are important, but so is a tight core. You wouldn't try to move a heavy rock with a lever made of rubber, so don't try to move a heavy barbell with a flimsy core.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

***Even the fittest man on Earth misses a lift once in a while, but
Mikko Salo has the mental toughness to bounce right back.***

You didn't plan on making the lift.

Maybe you said, "I'll try it and see how it goes." Maybe you felt obligated to try it because you were progressively hitting lifts, but you really didn't want to go any further that day. For these and a million other reasons, sometimes we line up over/under the bar expecting failure, and that expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You must begin the lift with every intention and expectation that you will complete it successfully. Doubt your success and your body will yell, "Screw this! All this effort for something I don't believe is possible? I give up!"

Now don't kid yourself. The lift will be difficult. It will take everything you've got. But you've done difficult things before, haven't you? Sure, and you can make this lift—but only if you believe you can. Believe it. It's not just psychobabble bullshit. You really must believe it or you might as well wait until you do.

You quit on it.

Sometimes an athlete looks like he is going to power through a lift with ease, and then he suddenly fails. Why? Simply, he quit. His body started screaming that his levels of effort and discomfort were unsustainable, and the lifter listened. Sometimes you need to listen to your body, and sometimes you need to tell it to piss off and do what it's told. Be willing to endure that discomfort for just a little longer and finish the lift. Don't stop pushing/pulling with everything you've got until your direction of movement starts to reverse and go the wrong way. Then, and only then, do you know it's over.

You didn't complete the required range of motion.

Whether it's getting full depth in a squat, standing up underneath a jerk, extending your hips on a deadlift or simply locking out at the bottom of a pull-up, if you didn't complete the movement by the definition of the movement, then it doesn't count. Sure, you'll be stronger for having done the partial range of motion, but you'll be stronger if you put in that extra 1 percent and ensure that you nail it.

This really matters if you're the type to keep score, as CrossFitters often are. We all have to live by the standards, so if we don't meet them, bad on us, not the standards. And when comparing scores with those outside watchful eyes, be aware that many are more concerned with anonymously posting a big score on the Internet than building their fitness and competing on a level playing field. You'll learn which sources you can trust and which you can't. So don't be discouraged if your numbers seem smaller because you're going well past parallel on squats.

Work up smartly, know and believe you can hit your lift, and then unleash hell's fury and don't look back.



Jason Khalipa takes a moment to refocus after a miss at the 2009 Games. The 2008 champ got it together shortly afterward and later snatched 225 lb.

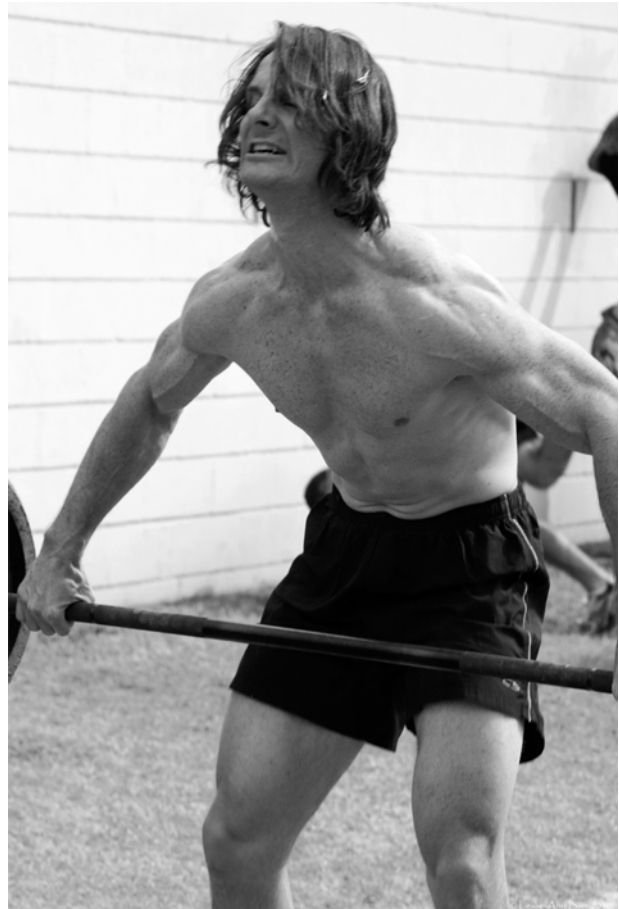
To paraphrase something I read from an experienced CrossFitter, "Unless every rep is scored by a judge on the same day, in the same place, under the same conditions, then it's anybody's guess who would actually win."

Believe

Athletes miss lifts for innumerable reasons. Often it's a combination of reasons. But it's important to remember that many factors outside raw strength influence your success: speed, coordination and especially your mental game. Dialing in your mental game is the single quickest way to immediately improve your success in a variety of areas. Even the physical factors covered here can often be traced back to lack of confidence, focus or mental preparation.

Work up smartly, know and believe you can hit your lift, and then unleash hell's fury and don't look back. Resolve that you may scream, cry, spit and slobber while your heart feels like it will explode from your chest and send your kidneys out your ass, but you will apply every ounce of energy to the lift and you will not give up until you've reached success.

Say it. Believe it. Do it ... and succeed.



Leslie Ann Barr

About the Author

*Jeff Barnett is a mechanical engineer and co-owner of [CrossFit Impulse](#) in Madison, Ala. He served as a United States Marine officer from 2003 to 2007, including combat duty in Fallujah, Iraq. He has been a guest op-ed columnist for the **New York Times** in its [Frontlines](#) and [Homefires](#) columns. He placed sixth in the Deep South Sectionals in March and will be competing in the Southeast Regional. When he's not training clients or training himself, you might find him wakeboarding, eating meat off the bone or finishing an MBA at the University of Alabama Huntsville.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

An Affiliation Journey—So Far

Chris Saliba affiliated in March of 2009.

Just over a year later he looks back on lessons learned and challenges overcome.

By **Chris Saliba** Coastal CrossFit Queensland

August 2010



All photos courtesy of Chris Saliba/Coastal CrossFit Queensland

"Hi, Chris: On behalf of CrossFit, we would like to offer our congratulations and to let you know that we would be honored to have you join the CrossFit family of affiliates."

It was these few words read on March 25, 2009, that started the ball rolling, and as I sit here contemplating this article, I can't believe how quickly time has passed. With the flood of new affiliates joining the CrossFit family, I thought it might be timely to offer a personal journey from Day 1 through to the current time. This article is not intended as a success or failure story but is rather just a personal account of the highs and lows, challenges and rewards that the early stages of affiliation can provide.

From Bootcamp to Garage to Box

It wasn't long into my CrossFit journey that I knew I would affiliate at some stage. I didn't have a set time frame or schedule, but something inside me knew that I must act sooner rather than later. Our location, the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, had only one other affiliate nearby at the time, and I knew that I would forever kick myself if I didn't get into a virgin market before someone else did.

I visited our local affiliate (CrossFit Sunshine Coast) a couple of times prior to affiliation and each time left with even more enthusiasm and motivation for starting my own box. I had a pretty well-equipped garage gym at home, which mainly served for my own CrossFit training and a bit of personal training here and there, so I was able to take the first step with almost zero risk. There we were: Coastal CrossFit Queensland was officially an affiliate and I started coaching CrossFit in my garage. It was great but still just a small step toward my major goal of opening a large-scale box in the more populated suburb of Kawana on the Sunshine Coast.

I knew that I would forever
kick myself if I didn't get
into a virgin market before
someone else did.



In a year, Chris Saliba went from coaching CrossFit in a garage to training in a full-size box.

There was a hurdle that I had to face before taking the step toward a big box. I already had a successful bootcamp business and would be unable to commit myself totally to either business if I went to a large-scale CrossFit box. I had two choices: fold up my bootcamp business and say goodbye to my income or find another trainer with whom to share the workload. I chose the second option, but finding another trainer to represent your own business is like asking someone else to take care of your children.

Like many fitness businesses, the success of my bootcamp business relied totally on the quality of the training. Up until this point it had just been me, and any successes or failures could only be attributed to me. In my mind, there was only one man for the new training job: an ex-air-force colleague of mine who had a well-paying corporate job for Boeing Australia. How was I going to convince him to quit his secure and lucrative job to come and work for me for much less money and

security? Luckily for me, my friend's shared enthusiasm for all things CrossFit saw him take on the offer as an opportunity to learn the dos and don'ts of opening a new affiliate without the same level of financial commitment as if he was doing it himself.

We found a box of 209 square meters (2,322 square feet) of industrial space in Kawana, a much more populated area of the Sunshine Coast than the one in which we reside. Location was very important to us as CrossFit is in its early stages in Australia, and we knew that we would have a much better chance of success if we chose a central, more populated area. We signed a three-year lease at \$2,200 AUD per month, and we gave ourselves a month to outfit the box. Our official opening was advertised for Aug. 1, 2009, and aside from a few bootcamp clients who had already committed to making the transition, we were starting from scratch.



The Coastal CrossFit Queensland community is growing stronger as more and more Australians are finding out about CrossFit.



Getting the Message Out

It seemed logical to us that after spending so much money on starting up Coastal CrossFit QLD, we should commit a reasonable sum to advertising. We had always had a fairly good response from print advertising with our bootcamps, so we followed the same path. Our response was minimal. A few of my bootcamp clients had seen the ad, and even though they had an awareness of CrossFit, they didn't understand the "constantly varied functional movements performed at high intensity" quote included in the ad. This was disappointing. If people who already had some knowledge of CrossFit didn't get it, then what about the people with no prior knowledge of CrossFit?

We re-worded the ad with more plain English and even went bigger this time. The response: zero. OK, print advertising sucks; let's try radio. We surveyed our bootcamp clients as to which radio station they listened to and booked some advertising with that station. We advertised our opening day, and out of the 40-odd people who turned out for the day, two were as a result of the radio spots.

We had two choices at this stage: stop advertising and potentially watch our business fail or go for a larger campaign of advertising. We wanted to give radio advertising another go and booked 50 spots of advertising over the space of seven days at a cost of \$1,000. Our response: zero. By this stage we were three weeks past opening and had seen minimal growth in numbers. We had spent around \$3,000 in advertising and had yet to see any return. These figures would seem laughable to a big corporation, but for us every \$1,000 wasted represented more kettlebells, barbells, etc. and a bigger hole in our personal savings.

It was at this point that I started to question our actions. I had gone into this enterprise believing that a passion for CrossFit and the will to succeed would be enough to see us prosper. Had I been massively naive? The one thing I was sure of at this stage was that I was not going to, nor could I afford to, waste another cent on advertising. I decided the best thing to do was to concentrate on the foundations of building a good business, at this point believing—and hoping—that it would translate into numbers through the door.

Building Momentum

About four weeks after the opening of the big box, there seemed to be a small shift. A few more people came on board, and they told friends who told friends, and numbers started to grow. First, 10 people training in one day was a milestone, then 15, then 20 and 25. Our first major goal was to break even on a monthly basis. This required 22 people to be signed up for a month at the same point in time. From memory, we achieved this goal at around the six-week mark. OK, so the bank account was not going backward as quickly as before, but we were certainly not ready to go out and buy our first Ferrari.

**In my opinion, numbers
through the door are
a reflection of a job
well done.**



CrossFit intensity is the same from North America to Europe to the land Down Under.

The next step we took in the aim of boosting our clients' achievements and satisfaction levels was to start keeping attendance statistics for each and every person. This coincided with setting monthly goals. The benefits of this system were many: it created accountability as each client had to attend training frequently with specific improvements in mind. This also allowed us to keep accurate data on monthly totals, weekly averages and overall percentages for each individual, and it can also act as a first line of defense if a client is not achieving as expected. The system allows us to quickly identify and contact a client who has not trained for an extended period.

Although it may seem complicated, this process was quite easy to implement because we were already posting each client's WOD results on our Web site daily, so all we had to do was create an Excel spreadsheet and copy the data across. At the end of each month, the new data is printed and displayed for all to see, allowing each person to see how he or she compares to the others in the box. This is a system we still use and highly recommend to any affiliate owner.

Our growth in the nine months since we opened our big box has been cyclic. We may sit on a plateau for a few weeks, and just when you think something has

gone wrong there seems to be an unexpected wave of new inquiries. At first this cycle can be hard on the emotions, but we have learned to expect and live with it. Interestingly, almost all the other affiliate owners I have spoken to share a similar pattern.

We are currently approaching 60 members and average about 35 people through the door each day, running morning and evening sessions only. People often ask me, "How many members do you want?" For me, I have never set an upper limit, and I don't intend to. In my opinion, numbers through the door are a reflection of a job well done, and if it means that we have to hire more trainers and go to a bigger box, then I am more than all right with that.

Take risks that you can
afford and learn from them,
good or bad.

Learn and Believe

A big part of what prompted me to write this personal account was inspired by a talk with a friend who more recently opened a box. I asked him, "How are things going?" "Good," he replied—but I could hear some uncertainty in his voice. It wasn't until this point that I started to reflect on the emotions I had felt and suppressed not that long ago and realized it's in our nature to remain externally positive, even if we're not really feeling that way inside. Many times people had asked me the same question, and the response was always positive, but did I really believe it? Maybe this is just a self-defense mechanism, but if we can't pass on our personal experiences to others in the same situation, then they have no way of knowing whether the feelings they are experiencing are unique or common.

If I had to review the progress of Coastal CrossFit QLD at this point in time, I would say I am proud of what we have achieved and am quietly confident of bigger things to come. In hindsight, I wouldn't change a thing. Mistakes are a necessary part of the journey and allow us to prove to ourselves what works and what doesn't work in a given situation. Take risks that you can afford and learn from them, good or bad. If affiliation is a goal of yours, then gather as much information as you can from other affiliate owners and the broader CrossFit community. Get to know your local affiliate, attend competitions, read the *CrossFit Journal* and affiliate page, and back yourself 100 percent. If you truly have the passion and have created the right foundations for success, you will succeed.

CrossFit is rapidly gaining momentum in Australia at the moment, and I am thankful that I had the support and belief in myself to follow this dream.

For anyone who would like more detailed information on our affiliation journey, please don't hesitate to contact me at info@coastalcrossfit.com.au.



About the Author

Chris Saliba is the co-owner and head trainer of Coastal CrossFit Queensland along with his wife Marie. They have two children, Chloe and Jesse. Chris is a Level 1 CrossFit coach, has completed the CrossFit Olympic Weightlifting Cert and is an Australian Weightlifting Federation club-level weightlifting coach. Outside of CrossFit, Chris is an avid motocross rider and also competed in the 2010 CrossFit Games Australia Regional.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Great Intro. Now What?

Following up after a free intro session is critical to building a relationship with potential clients. Monique Ames explains how to do it.

By **Monique Ames** CrossFit Evolution

August 2010



Staff/CrossFit Journal

During a great intro, you have shown the prospective member exactly what you've got and also where they stand in the grand scheme of CrossFit in your gym. Whether they join or not, there are things you should do to continue building the relationship you just started.

Nothing is easier than a simple log. It will keep you on track when you are too busy to remember the details. Everyone that comes to [CrossFit Evolution](#) for the first time gets entered onto the Free Intro Log, a.k.a. the Intro Tracking form found [here](#). This handy little log keeps track of prospective new members and the various little things that need to be done with each person to ensure that you stay connected with him or her and follow up after the WOD.

Intro Log Layout



The form from the link above is the most current Free Intro Log in use at CrossFit Evolution today. Once the actual intro is completed, that document and its corresponding waiver get placed in the "Recent Intro" file. Filed away, it is easy to locate when the athlete decides to join or when I decide to start making some calls. However, it is also out of place (not on my desk) and out of mind. This is why a checklist or log is crucial for follow-ups.

Remember: just because
they didn't join today
doesn't mean they will
never join.

In the first block, record the date of the intro and the prospective member's name. Note: when switching to a new month, leave a space after the last entry or keep one page per month. This will make it easier to see how many intros led to new members. You can also see your batting average this way from month to month.

Following are the check boxes. The first check box is for signing the waiver. Everyone who comes into your gym to work out or try out anything must sign a waiver. This check box reminds you of this important and necessary step. Did it? Good. Check the box. Thinking of skipping this step? Before taking that gamble, read [Protecting Your Business: The Waiver](#) and re-think your reasoning.



The second check box is for adding the person to Constant Contact or whatever e-mail marketing system you are currently using. Whether it's Constant Contact, iContact, or any other system—I personally highly recommend Constant Contact—an e-mail marketing system will keep you in contact with members, previous members and prospective members. Once you have added them to the database, check the box.

Welcome to Constant Contact, Monique!

Constant Contact

Home | Email Marketing | Online Survey | Event Marketing | **Contacts** | Images

Manage Contacts | Reports | Export | Manage Bounces | Activity | Join My Mailing List

Contacts : Add & Import Contacts (Step 3 of 3) ?

Exit

► **Enter Contact Details**

To add contacts and contact details, first select the details that you wish to add from the drop down box. You do the selected details for all contacts. To save your data, select the **Submit Data** button. We strongly suggest that

Note: If you have more than four detail fields to enter, we suggest using the file import option.

* Required fields

	Email Address*	First Name	Last Name	Home Phone	Cel
1.	anna@gmail.com	Anna	Banana	321-222-3333	321
2.					
3.					

Courtesy of Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

Not using an e-mail marketing system? Start now. This enables you to send **newsletters**, special-event notices, birthday wishes (along with maybe a special deal to join during the person's birthday month), happy-holidays messages (no specials, more of a "just thinking of you"), missing-in-action notes (for current members), etc. As long as the quality and content are good and you are not spamming them, you will get high marks with this system in place.

Remember: just because they didn't join today doesn't mean they will never join. Even if they go to another local CrossFit gym instead, they still may show up at your door sometime down the road. Disclaimer: I am not saying you should target other CrossFit gyms' members. That is wrong.

Sample situation: a person comes in and says she will be checking out a couple of gyms and gives you her e-mail address because she is interested in your newsletter. She decides to join the other CrossFit gym. Just ask her if she would like to be removed from the newsletter and special-event list. Most of the time, she will say she still wants your newsletter. So keep her there. I've had a fair share stay connected via reading our newsletters and then decide to join at a later date. Again, I am not targeting them, just staying in touch at their request. I think that is fair. What goes around comes around, so keep your business and actions clean!

As an aside, don't ever be rude to people who choose another gym. All CrossFit gyms are different and all clients are different. Each gym attracts and keeps a certain flavor, period. I'll be honest: when you are new, this is very hard to keep in mind. But there really are enough people to go around to all the CrossFit gyms. Remember, though: higher expectations from the consumer come with more CrossFit gyms, which is awesome. You'd better be ready to provide what the client is looking for or your competition will.

Checking Your Boxes

The next check box is to remind you to send prospective members the most recent newsletter. Once it's sent, check the box. Once it's received and opened, check the next box. This is one of the cool applications that comes with e-mail marketing systems. You can actually see when someone opened your e-mail.



Courtesy of Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

Caution: don't tell people (especially new ones), that you can do this. For some people it may be too "big brother." It really isn't. You can only "see" that they opened your e-mail and which links they clicked on in the e-mail. This feature is important because you want to be sure they are getting your e-mail, and you also want to know which links gain interest and which ones fall flat. This helps you to become better at conveying your message to your target audience. It will also tell you if your newsletter sucks so bad that almost no one is opening it.

Next up, the ZenPlanner check box. This is the database I use for automated payments, contract renewals, card-on-file expiration dates, etc. It's basically your customer database: everything you need to know about your members or prospective members in one place. This is where you would record their injuries or limitations and how they did in the intro. You would also record your recommendation for their next step. You can use other systems as well, like MindBody, or any of the others out there. Many will link the e-mail marketing with the customer database too. This is the one step you could skip if you are new. Others will disagree, but this is my opinion. When you are ready, add this in.

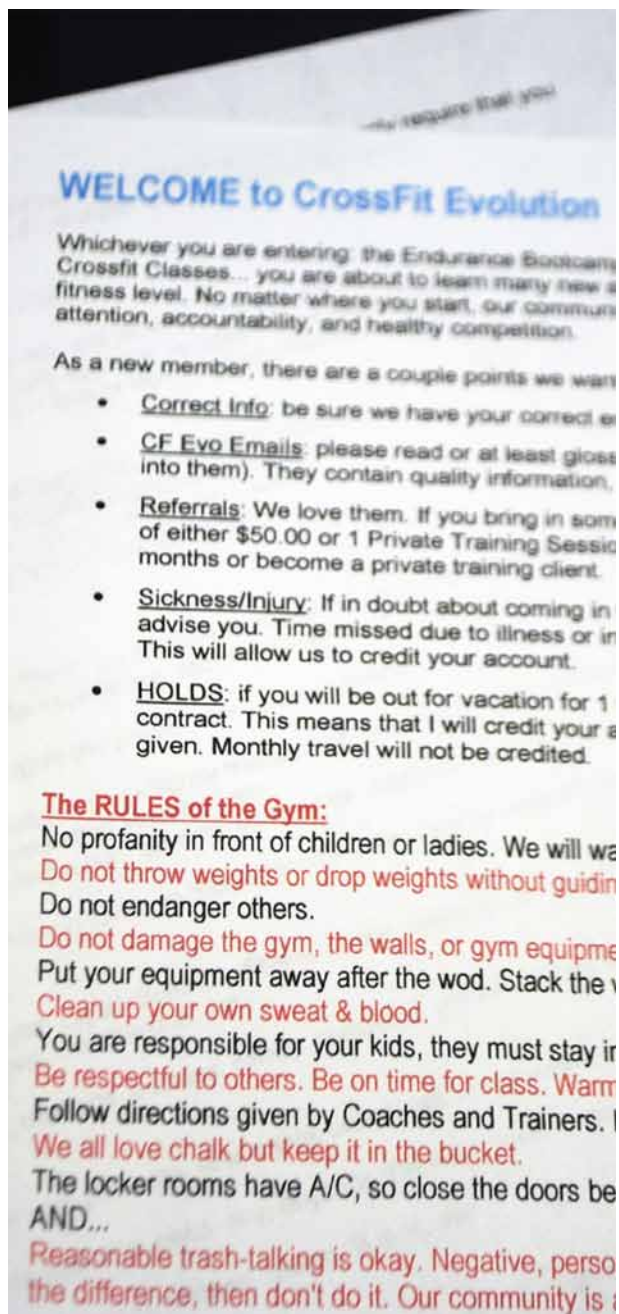
In the meantime, track your members on a simple Excel chart and record their payment pull dates on a separate calendar. Keep it simple and easy in the beginning stages.

The follow-up block has room for dates and times. You should always check in on intro participants after a couple of days to see how they are feeling from the WOD and ask about their experience. This is followed by the "join" check box. When they join, check the box. Again, this allows you to see your batting average per individual intro, as well as over the course of the month or a couple of months.

Note: the follow-up block is only to record the initial follow-up immediately after the Intro, which should be done within one week. After that, your follow-up efforts should be recorded on the Out-Going Call Log, found [here](#).

You should always check in on intro participants after a couple of days to see how they are feeling from the WOD and ask about their experience.

The last check box is for the welcome letter. I send out a special welcome-aboard e-mail to all new members. A good letter should include info on referral bonuses, spouse or family discounts, contract freezes, sickness and injury incidents, the rules and etiquette of the gym, member directory, basic website navigation, and lastly nutrition basics. Once you send it, check the box.



Courtesy of Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution



Courtesy of Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

Staying Top of Mind

You've already put so much effort and hard work into the intro, so don't forget to follow up with prospective members and keep in touch. Remember: just because they didn't join on the spot does not mean that they will never join. Keep in touch at appropriate intervals and always provide good content of high quality. This will help you avoid appearing pushy and sales-y, being accused of spamming, and looking like you're bordering on sad, pathetic and desperate.

Get your systems in place! Systems, like relationships, should be easy and relaxed. Nobody likes difficult. Keep it simple. Whatever you do in your business, be sure to do the same thing each and every time, and just record it as a checklist, chart or log.

Follow [this link](#) to download other free documents from CrossFit Evolution.

About the Author

Monique Ames is the owner of Crossfit Evolution, founded and operated by her and her husband, Leo Soubbotine, in Longwood, Fla. She is a coach and business manager. She holds certifications in CrossFit training, Olympic weightlifting and nutrition. Her expertise includes general sports conditioning, law-enforcement training, corporate and management training, and business management. Monique is a former U.S. Marine, law-enforcement officer and operations manager. She loves CrossFit training and the business of running a CrossFit gym. She was a speaker at FilFest 2010, held Feb. 19-20 in Miami, Fla.



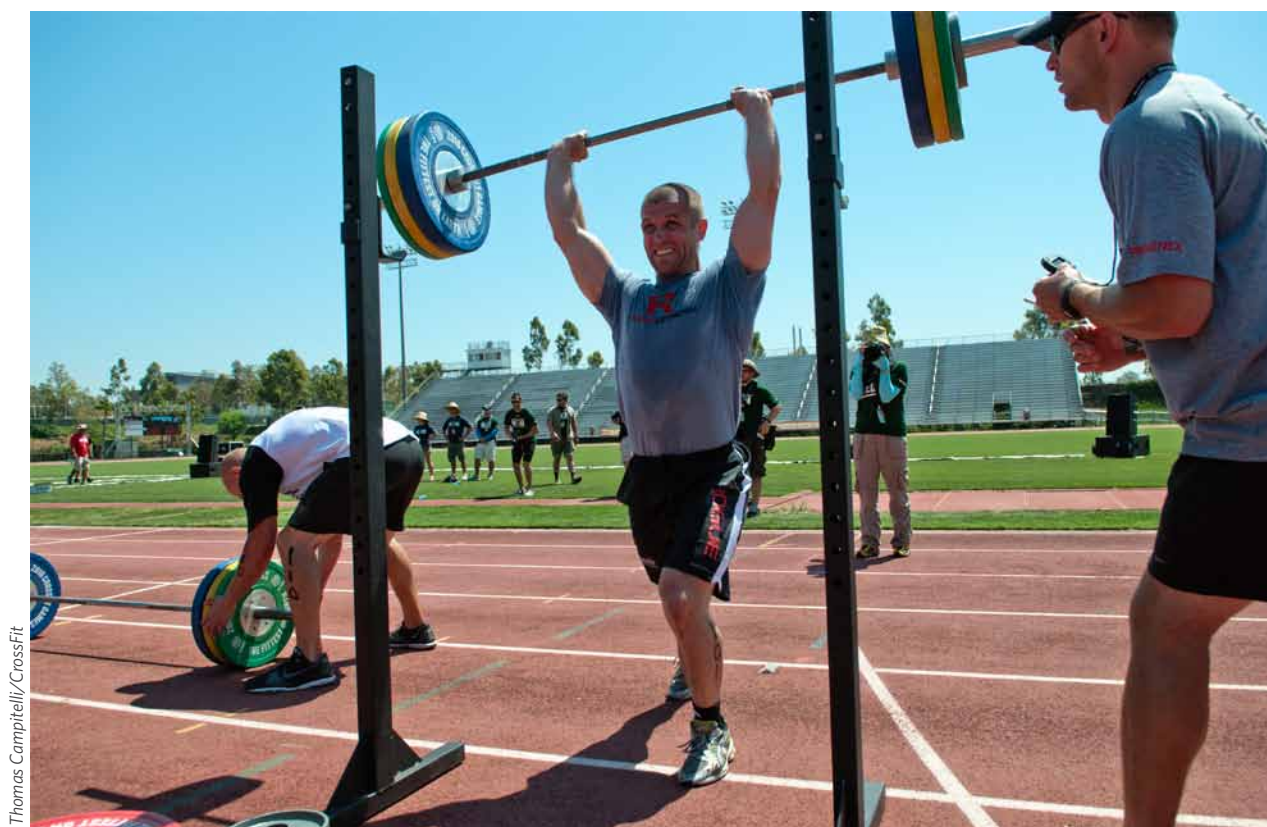
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Coaching Correct Technique in the Split Jerk

You just cleaned a huge weight—but can you get it overhead?
Hall-of-fame Oly coach Bob Takano explains how to correct errors in your jerk.

By Bob Takano

August 2010



In the CrossFit community (and in the weightlifting nation at large), most of the effort is being put into learning proper technique in the pull—and justifiably so. Correct pulling technique is absolutely necessary for the performance of the snatch and clean.

1 of 5

Within an Oly Cert, we focus first on the snatch, and then the clean. The split jerk is the last movement taught, and although many athletes learn it easily, others are especially frustrated trying to jerk a weight that is easily cleaned. This is especially unfortunate because weightlifting meets are won with successful jerks.

There are several problems that plague many athletes who find it difficult to master the split jerk. Some athletes have only one of these problems, whereas the unfortunate ones may have difficulty with two or more. In this article I intend to explore these problems and their causes, as well as their remedies. The squat jerk will not be covered as so few have the ability to perform it properly.



Courtesy of Bob Takano

The starting position for the jerk balance. The lead foot should be about 30 centimeters in front of the back foot.

Problem 1:

Limited range of motion at the shoulders

When jerking the bar with a slightly wider than shoulder-width grip, it may be difficult for many athletes to hold the bar directly overhead because of imbalanced development at the shoulder girdle or because of short clavicles coupled with excessive deltoid development. This is largely a stretching issue, and a couple of shoulder stretches will help greatly.

1. **Prone shoulder stretch**—The athlete takes a shoulder-width grip on a wooden dowel and then assumes a prone position on an exercise bench with the arms holding the dowel extending beyond the head. The elbows are fully extended. A partner lifts the dowel so that the extended arms are at parallel or above parallel to the floor. The athlete should ensure that the torso remains in contact with the surface of the bench. The stretch is held for 30 seconds or longer at a time.
2. **Supine shoulder stretch**—The athlete takes a shoulder-width grip on a light exercise bar and lies supine on an exercise bench. The athlete makes sure to keep the lower back, shoulders and head in contact with the bench and—while keeping the elbows extended—lowers the bar backwards and down beyond the head until it can lower no further. The stretch is held for 30 seconds or longer at a time.

Both of these stretches should be employed until the athlete gains enough range of motion to press a weight overhead and hold it with the bar, ears, shoulders, hips and ankles in vertical alignment and with no shaking or quivering.

Problem 2:

The athlete lacks the torso strength to transfer force from the legs to the bar

Remediation must take place to strengthen the torso musculature to keep it rigid as it transfers the force of the extending legs and hips to the bar. Two exercises are absolutely vital, while a third is certainly helpful.

1. **Military Press**—I included the word “military” here to emphasize the need for an erect posture while performing this movement. The shoulders must be pulled forward to form a platform on which to rest the bar before the pressing begins. The upper arms

must form an angle of approximately 45 degrees or slightly less with the torso before pressing commences. This may prove difficult for longtime bench pressers. The torso should remain erect throughout the movement as the bar is pressed overhead to a locked position and held briefly.

2. **Front squat**—The front squat may not appear to have a direct relationship to the jerk, but it certainly does. The front squat may well be a torso exercise if the legs are much stronger than the torso. The front squat should be practiced until the torso can remain erect (no forward flexion of the spine while a neutral curve is maintained) throughout the performance of the exercise.
3. **Jerk supports**—A heavily loaded bar should be placed in a power rack at a height a few centimeters short of the full height of a supported jerk. The lifter should stand beneath the bar, take a shoulder-width grip and bend the knees until the elbows are fully extended. The movement of the exercise is to straighten the knees.

It might serve the athlete with jerk problems well to work diligently on these exercises before beginning to learn the jerk proper.

Problem 3:

The ratio of humerus length to forearm length requires the athlete to support the weight at the shoulders with the humerus well beyond 45 degrees from the torso.

The athlete cannot use the arms effectively in driving the bar overhead. All of the drive must come through the torso. In addition, this athlete will either require the use of jerk blocks or spotters to do repetition movements from the front of the neck. Furthermore it may serve the athlete well to move the hands sideways during the course of the jerk to shorten the distance the bar has to be driven overhead. The following exercises will help in overcoming or minimizing the problem.

1. **Push press**—This is an excellent exercise to teach the athlete to employ leg drive. If insufficient leg drive is not applied, the weight will not go high enough to use the arms.

2. **Jerk drive**—In this movement, heavy weights are driven rapidly to the height of the forehead or higher. The athlete with the aforementioned condition needs to use this movement to get used to getting all the vertical drive out of the extension of the legs and hips with no assistance from the arms. Jerk blocks are very helpful with this movement.
3. **Jerk balance**—This movement, though helpful to all athletes learning the jerk, is especially helpful to those with the aforementioned condition. The lifter takes the bar from the rack with the weight resting on the deltoids, ready to jerk. The athlete then assumes a stance in which the lead foot of the jerk is approximately 30 centimeters or more in front of the rear foot. This is the starting position. The athlete then bends the knees slightly, drives the weight overhead and the front foot steps forward into the standard jerk stance while the arms lock



Courtesy of Bob Takano

The dip stage of the jerk balance. From here, the athlete drives the bar overhead and finishes by moving the feet further apart.



Courtesy of Bob Takano

In the finish, the hands move from a clean width to a snatch width, reducing the height that the bar must be driven.

overhead. Simultaneously, the hands move out to a snatch width, and this has the effect of minimizing the height to which the bar must be driven. Some athletes may need to perform this movement with the bar behind the neck during the learning phase.

An Approach to Dealing With the Problem Jerker

An effort should be made to make sure the athlete knows where to position the various parts of the body at the end of the movement before attempting to perform the movement, whether it be a snatch or a clean or a jerk.

The first step is to make sure that the shoulders of the athlete are loose enough to support a weight overhead. Apply the stretching exercises to make sure that the

range of motion is appropriate. Then teach the athlete to perform overhead lunges. The athlete holds a weight overhead with a shoulder-width grip and stands with the feet in line. The athlete then steps forward into a full, deep lunge with the lead leg and then recovers to the original position.

The second step is to make sure the torso is strong enough by performing presses and front squats, with jerk supports thrown in for additional work if necessary.

If both of these steps are not necessary, the jerk can then be taught by first employing the power jerk. In this movement, the athlete holds the weight at the shoulders in front of the neck and dips (bends the knees) and drives the weight overhead with leg drive, then re-bends the knees to drop under the bar and lock the elbows forcibly. This teaches the athlete the dynamic of thrusting upward and then immediately dropping down to catch the weight.

Once the power jerk is mastered, the transition can be made to the split jerk by employing the jerk balance. The jerk balance differs from the power jerk only in the footwork—both the starting stance and the finishing stance.

After the athlete becomes familiar and comfortable with the jerk balance, the progression to the full split jerk can then take place.

At this point, the athlete should have assimilated the concept of driving the weight primarily with the legs, as well as how to move the feet to land in a stable split position. A good athlete should have no problem combining the movements learned in the power jerk and the jerk balance to perform a creditable split jerk.

Two Other Considerations in Coaching the Jerk

The first consideration is to learn to recover properly. It should be a two-step affair. The lead foot should come back to the midpoint, and then the rear foot should move forward to line up with the lead foot. This will ensure that the bar is only moving vertically and not horizontally.

The second consideration is how to reposition the hands or re-grip the bar upon arising from the clean. Once the weight is past the sticking point of the clean recovery from the deep position, the athlete can drive up rapidly, giving the bar a temporary unsupported phase during which the hands can be repositioned either in grip width or finger alignment.

Thomas Campitelli/CrossFit



D.J. Wickham used a solid jerk to get 325 lb. overhead and win Event 2b of the CrossFit Games.

Train the Jerk to Win

Once an athlete has learned how to perform the jerk, the jerk and its assistance movements should be incorporated into the training program. Each day's training should have one or more exercises to develop jerking prowess. The load of training dedicated to jerking will depend on the jerking ability of the athlete.

Separating the clean from the jerk may take place more consistently during the preparation phase for a competition. As the competition gets closer, the clean and jerk must be performed more frequently.

Employ the information and prescriptions in this article to improve your athletes' jerking skills and give them some priority as competition approaches.

Remember: weightlifting meets are won by proficient jerkers.



About the Author

Bob Takano has developed and coached some of the best weightlifters in the U.S. for the past 39 years. A 2007 inductee into the U.S.A. Weightlifting Hall of Fame, he has coached four national champions, seven national record holders and 28 top 10 nationally ranked lifters. Fifteen of the volleyball players he's coached have earned Division 1 volleyball scholarships. His articles have been published by the NSCA and the International Olympic Committee and helped to establish standards for the coaching of the Olympic lifts. He is a former member of the editorial board of the **NSCA Journal**, and an instructor for the UCLA Extension program. He is currently the chairperson of the NSCA Weightlifting Special Interest Group. For the past year he has been coaching in the CrossFit Oly Cert program. Website: www.takanoathletics.com.



Courtesy of Marta Takano