

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

February 2012

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Hear and Now

Born deaf, Jordan Levin runs a CrossFit affiliate and is a motivational speaker. Lon Wagner tells the story.

By Lon Wagner

February 2012



All images: Kurt Stepnitz-Michigan State University

I am talking, on the phone, to Jordan Levin.

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Levin decided early in life that a disability wouldn't stop him from doing anything.

Normal.

Mundane, even.

When I emailed Jordan, I wasn't sure how this would go, how we would do the interview. Maybe it'd have to be done through email. Or a chat window.

"It would be best for me to call you," Jordan had emailed back and explained how it would work.

"Let me know what number and what time I can call you on Thursday."

Great, but I wonder how this is going to go, I thought.

Here's the thing. Jordan Levin was born deaf.

"Profoundly deaf," the doctors pronounced him 35 years ago.

And he still is.

"Right now," Jordan says, his voice sounding pretty normal after having traveled 700 miles from Michigan to my cell phone, "I am talking to you on my iPhone, and everything you say is showing up on the screen."

It works like closed captioning on TV.

"There's a little bit of a delay, so I want to make sure I know what you are saying."

I explain that, well, the delay is probably from me. Writers, you know, try to be so precise with every word that ... to be honest, lots of times ... I tend to pause a lot. My speech is probably ... giving your software fits.

"It's not a problem," he says kindly. "You're using just enough pauses. I can keep up better that way."

This is just all so "normal," I think. Though this is one of those times that normal is completely unexpected.

This is not about faking normal with an iPhone. It's not being made normal through the technological advancement of hearing aids. It's not about making do with sign language.

**It took Jordan every minute,
hour and day for many years,
but eventually he broke
down abnormal. He pinned
disabled to the mat.**

Jordan became normal through the to-the-core stubbornness of his parents, through his own striving and persistence and insistence—and, a little bit, obliviousness.

It took Jordan every minute, hour and day for many years, but eventually he broke down abnormal. He pinned disabled to the mat.

Jordan Levin earned normal.

Denying Defeat

On this day, Jordan has taken a break from his business to conduct the interview. He and his wife, Hillary, own CrossFit Bloomfield.

To fully understand how abnormal it is for Jordan to be normal, it's best to start at the beginning. His mother, Mollene, can explain that.

Early in Mollene's pregnancy, doctors told her she would likely miscarry between her third and fourth month. She made it well past that.

She was home alone one night. Her husband, Marty, was at work and had to rush home.



In the box, Levin relies on lip reading to communicate with his athletes.



When you've overcome deafness, a weighted pull-up seems a bit easier.

"I had absolutely no labor," she said. "To be honest, we thought he was a miscarriage, but then he started crying."

No doctor, nurse, midwife was with her at the house. Jordan had come three months early. He weighed 1 pound 15 ounces. At the hospital, he dropped to 1 pound 11 ounces. Doctors told the Levins that, often, "those babies" never get out of the hospital.

Jordan was on a respirator for two months, in the hospital for four months total. Hearing impairment wasn't a concern—surviving was.

Jordan was around two years old before they figured out he was hearing impaired. He had fooled them. He would feel the vibration of a person walking up the steps and greet him or her standing at his crib railing—as though he had heard them coming. Instinctively, he came to know that when a person's lips were moving, he was being addressed.

"He was a natural lip reader," Marty said. "That's what fooled us."

But how deaf was he?

"To give you an idea," Mollene said, "if you are profoundly deaf and a fire engine goes by, without hearing aids you won't hear it."

**The Levins had a goal:
Jordan would never fall
behind, never miss practice
or a competition because
he was deaf.**

By the time the Levins discovered this, Jordan was not only deaf, but he had also missed two-plus years of therapy that they could have done if they had known.

Professionals suggested the usual route: a school for the hearing impaired and sign language. It was a crossroads for the Levins. This is where the source of Jordan's drive, persistence, insistence becomes obvious: his parents. Probably more his dad. His mom brings the calm, the balance.

"Both of us have personalities," Marty said, "that we don't always do what people tell us to do."

Going the sign-language route seemed like it would wall Jordan off permanently.

"We realized it limits you to being able to communicate with other people who know sign language," Marty said.

Instead, they chose a technique called "Learning to Listen." With the best hearing aids money could buy, Jordan would be able to have about 20 percent hearing. They had to teach him the other 80 percent. They had to teach Jordan every phonetic sound, every natural sound, every technological sound. They had to teach him how to use the hearing he had.

"When the phone would ring," Mollene said, "he wouldn't know what he was hearing."



In groups, Levin has the members face him so he can see their faces and read their lips.

When Jordan became old enough for elementary school, they wanted to send him to the one their house was zoned for. "Where you live," they were told, "has a terrific hearing-impaired program. Why don't you go there?"

"We're not, because we don't want to," the Levins said.

Jordan was seven years old the first time he came upon something hinting that he had been born differently than most people. Closed-captioning technology emerged, and Jordan saw it on a TV program.

What's that?

Well, that's for people who are hearing impaired, so they can watch television.

"Does that mean I am hearing impaired?" he asked.

Most of the time, raising Jordan was nearly a 24-hour job. Schoolwork took two or three times longer than with most kids. He did homework in the car on the way to hockey or baseball practice, on the way home, in the morning before school.

The Levins had a goal: Jordan would never fall behind, never miss practice or a competition because he was deaf.

When the sounds of music playing and weights clanging fill the gym, Levin leans on lip reading. His eyes do his hearing.

It was around the time that Jordan was 12, his parents said, that they realized their plan and their effort had worked. Jordan could talk to anyone.

He fit in.

Overcoming All Obstacles

Jordan went to college and got a business degree from Michigan State. He started his own marketing company. He lived in Miami with his brother for a while, but he couldn't find his calling in the working world.

About six years ago, he began doing personal training and, a few years after that, began learning more about CrossFit. He opened his first gym in his parents' garage and last year moved into his own 6,000-square-foot facility.

Even in running his gym, Jordan boosts his communication with members by turning what seems like his disadvantage into an advantage. When the sounds of music playing and weights clanging fill the gym, he leans on lip reading. His eyes do his hearing.

When he is laying out the CrossFit workout of the day, he says he simply commands attention. He makes everyone gather around him. He gets members to face him when they are asking questions. He makes eye contact with everyone.

Outside of the gym, Jordan does motivational speaking.

Well, it seems so ... I mean, someone like you ... I'm not sure how to put this, but ... motivational speaking and someone who was born ... hearing impaired ...

"Spit it out!" Jordan commands. "It's OK."

"Isn't that kind of the obvious thing?" I ask.

Too obvious, apparently.

"I was just trying to be normal, but people found out about how I became normal, and I got invited to speak more and more often," he says.

He has only once spoken to a group of the hearing impaired. He's even been publicly chastised by proponents of sign language for being deaf and not signing. He has a foundation, but not for the hearing impaired. He founded the Jordan Levin Childhood Obesity Foundation.



Passionate about helping others, Levin does motivational speaking and has started a foundation to fight childhood obesity.



Every coach needs to be a great listener.

He had noticed many government agencies talking about childhood obesity, but not much action in his part of Michigan. No one was encouraging young children to exercise and offering them a place to do it. So he does.

And now he's married. I wonder what that was like for his wife, when they started dating, how she viewed him, if she approached him differently.

"Why don't you ask her?" Jordan says. "She's right here."

Hillary's been listening in, in case he needed her to fill in a few words.

They connected through a Jewish dating website, then spoke on the phone. When he was dating, Jordan would direct a woman to his personal website, which told his back story. It was a way he didn't have to lay out everything, a shortcut. She was supposed to look at his site and think, "Wow, what a story. What a guy."

Hillary didn't bite.

"If I'm talking to him, why would I check out his website? I just thought it was a crock of shit."

Jordan, in the background on the phone now, laughs out loud. "Are you serious?"

She made him explain it the regular way. She made him be normal.

Hillary continues. She figured his deafness was no problem "as long as he could drive and take a girl out on a proper date."

She says his hearing training makes him notice everything, be alert for every sound, like "he's got eyes everywhere."

Jordan says it's because he was taught how to hear. He was taught what to listen for when he sees a fire truck go by or sees a bird chirping.

A loud, pounding sounds comes through the phone.

"If I am knocking on a table," Jordan says, "I was taught to listen for that sound."

Hillary says the only dating glitch she could even remember was that when they went to a movie, they would have to drive farther sometimes to find a theater that offered captioning.

Or that if they went out to dinner with a group of friends, a round table is better. At a rectangular table, people are side by side, and it makes it tougher for Jordan to read lips.

"She's the one who thought of that," Jordan said.

He had never noticed.



Courtesy of Lon Wagner

About the Author

Lon Wagner is director of communications for a medical-science company and a freelance writer who lives in Norfolk, Va. He spent more than two decades as a reporter and feature writer for newspapers in the Mid-Atlantic, and his stories won national awards in several top feature-writing competitions. His series about a Navy pilot downed during the first Gulf War was nominated by his newspaper for the Pulitzer Prize. He and his wife have three daughters.

THE CrossFit LIFE

CrossFit at 60

Craig Nelson shares his views on CrossFit after discovering the program at age 60.

By Craig Nelson

February 2012



All images: Hannah Catherine Wydeven

Birthday milestones never meant much to me—30, 40, 50 years old—bah, who cares? But 60? That's a serious number. One can no longer claim to be middle-aged, and Social Security, Medicare and other indices of old age are looming realities. Thus, as my 60th birthday approached, I found myself contemplating how I could whip my body into shape and get an additional decade or two of use out of it.



Craig Nelson not quite succeeding in snatching 105 lb.

I wasn't exactly a couch potato ... more like a treadmill potato. I had for years, almost daily, dutifully descended to my basement, climbed onto my treadmill and cranked out as many miles as I could endure. It used to be 5 to 6 miles a day. And it used to be at a rate of 7 to 7.5 miles per hour. Now it was 3 miles at less than 6 mph. My waistline was expanding, my endurance diminishing and my strength eroding.

I found TwinTown CrossFit primarily because it was located two blocks from my home. I talked to Teddy Kim, the owner, who told me his own before-and-after story. Before: 5 foot 7, 245 lb., pre-diabetic, micro-fractures in his feet from carrying all that weight. After: the chiseled hunk of granite I saw before me. I did the baseline workout, and, of course it was brutal. Sign me up.

That was six months ago. Since then I've celebrated my 60th birthday, and except for a 3-to-4-week injury timeout, I've been a conscientious CrossFitter, getting in at least four WODs per week. It's not even worth commenting on whether this has produced results. What else could

possibly happen when an out-of-shape person subjects himself to, say, 90 WODs in six months' time? It would take a very deliberate effort to not achieve significant changes. No, it's not the same as being 30 again, but I can say this—at 60 years of age, I am stronger than I've ever been in my life.

Joining CrossFit has represented two shocks to my system, one physical and one cultural. The physical shock is obvious enough—burpee pull-ups, handstand push-ups, Fight Gone Bad—what sort of sinister mind comes up with this stuff?

And then there's the cultural shock. I haven't exactly lived in a cave these last 40 years, but I am old enough to have gotten drafted during the Vietnam War. For me, the music died with Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Janis Joplin. It's been fascinating spending all this time in this social setting—a very intimate social setting—in the company of my fellow CrossFitters, most of whom are young enough be my children.



Learning the snatch at age 60 from coach Teddy Kim.

Both shocks have ultimately been very rewarding. There's been only one downside (as noted by my wife) that I've noticed: my already vestigial fashion sense has decayed even further. The example set by my fellow male CrossFitters has reinforced my own belief that a ratty T-shirt, shorts and sneakers constitutes an actual wardrobe.

And so, let me share with you a few things ...

Observations, Lessons and Questions After Six Months of CrossFit

1. If you've not done any sit-ups, push-ups or pull-ups in a quarter-century, they will have become very, very difficult.
2. I have never uttered the phrase "That was a lot easier than I expected" with respect to a WOD.
3. Women have gotten a lot stronger since I last observed the gym scene.
4. My own mode of exertion is an open-mouthed, slack-jawed gasp that looks like a bottom-feeding carp.
5. I'll never take my shirt off in the gym.
6. I'm really good at one thing: holding a plank. What's that about?
7. It doesn't look like Ella Fitzgerald will make the gym's playlist anytime soon.
8. The interest in talking about CrossFit by people who don't do CrossFit is quite limited.

9. There is a unique satisfaction to be had from performing a kipping pull-up.
10. An F-bomb will add 2 to 3 percent to any 1RM.
11. Do I need a tattoo?
12. The intersection of people-who-do-CrossFit and people-who-are-not-sore is an empty set.
13. RX is for sissies. (No, wait, I dreamt that.)
14. CrossFit wardrobe expenses are extremely low: ratty T-shirt, sneakers, shorts (laundry whenever prudent).
15. Double-unders require a specific lobe of the brain which I appear to be lacking.
16. I am still employable as a ditch-digger, stevedore or loading-dock worker should such become necessary.

And the most important thing I've learned after six months of CrossFit: There are very few problems that cannot be solved by simply making sure that you get your ass back far enough in a squat.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Play 60 Influences Next Generation

To tackle childhood obesity, the NFL is focusing on educating children about exercise and nutrition. Julie Buehler reports.

By Julie Buehler

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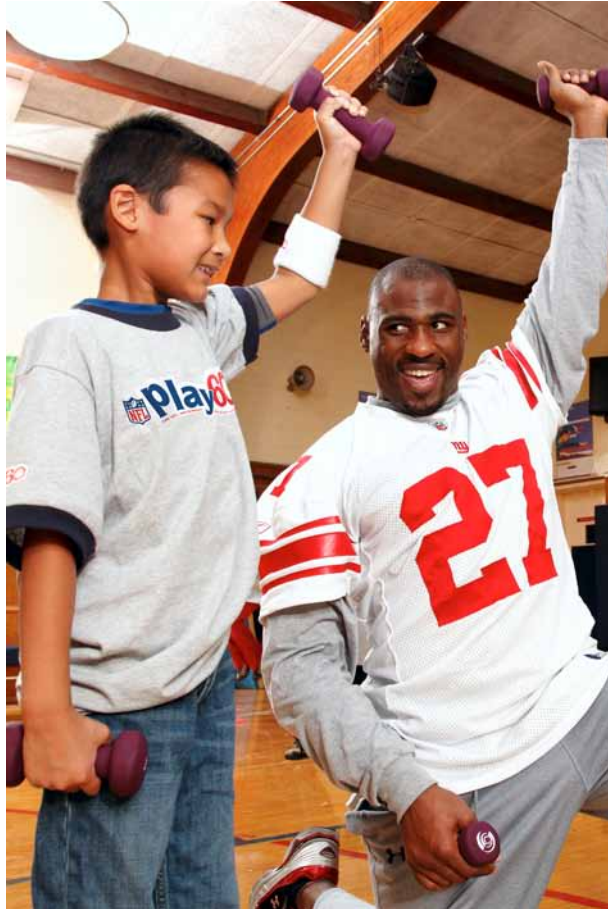


All images: Courtesy of the NFL

Ever watched in awe as someone obliterates a workout?

Ever seen a human juggernaut explode through barriers?

It's not only inspirational but it also has the ability to compel you to action unlike any written article, spoken word or AC/DC song. It's the power of example.



Players like Brandon Jacobs of the New York Giants are working to get more kids involved in fitness and sports.

With childhood obesity rates becoming super-sized and the problem creating widespread social and economic concerns, the country's most popular, profitable and influential sport is aiming to educate children about exercise and nutrition.

The NFL's Play 60 message is simple: implore children to play 60 minutes a day, every day. It's as long as National Football League athletes play on Sundays, and the program is a national initiative funded by the league, which has committed more than \$250 million to the cause.

The Beginning

The journey began with "What Moves You," a school program developed some years ago by NFL Charities and the American Heart Association. The concept was to implement an in-school program to get children moving, even in the classroom.

"We recognized that there was a problem (with childhood obesity). Our partners were telling us that (physical-education classes were) being cut across the country. We knew that the trends of obesity among the youth were just at unbelievable rates, and we were looking for some way to help," said Anna Isaacson, NFL director of community programs.

"We knew that the trends of obesity among the youth were just at unbelievable rates, and we were looking for some way to help."

—Anna Isaacson

The program gained traction and corporate sponsors lined up. Meanwhile, the NFL saw the success of "What Moves You" and the effect professional athletes had on children exercising. Thus, it expanded its in-school program to become a national campaign in 2007.

It's been a labor-intensive project, Isaacson said.

"When you have a bunch of voices speaking as one on a topic that really resonates, you have more success," she said. "(We have the) community-relations department, marketing department, public-relations department, all these groups coming together and saying, 'This is such an important issue,' and working together on it. (We know) that we're stronger as one unit, and we were really able to take a stand and say, 'This is what we want the league to stand for.'"

Play 60 now boasts programs in more than 77,000 schools nationwide, Isaacson said, and has hosted more than 1,500 Play 60 events since 2007.

"This campaign is really about reversing the trend of childhood obesity. Our tagline is to make the next generation of youth more active and healthy," she said. "So when we started this campaign, we didn't really see it ending. We know we are not the experts on the science, and we rely on our partners to tell us how it's going. And if this is still an issue in five years, then we'll be there fighting it."



Fitness can be fun for kids, especially in a class led by star quarterback Drew Brees.

Grassroots Approach

Although NFL teams fill stadiums with tens of thousands of people each week of the season and generate billions of dollars yearly, Play 60 is a grassroots movement that each of the 32 franchises implements on the local level.

“When you have a bunch of voices speaking as one on a topic that really resonates, you have more success.”

—Anna Isaacson

Former Commissioner Paul Tagliabue started the movement, and current Commissioner Roger Goodell stuck with it.

“Commissioner Tagliabue always used to say, and this is something commissioner Goodell lives by as well, ‘There are really two pillars to the NFL: one is football and the other is community,’” Isaacson said.

The key is educating one child at a time; for the Indianapolis Colts, that requires three departments collaborating on the NFL’s mission, said Stephanie Mathes, Colts community-relations director.

“(It’s a) very grassroots approach,” she said. “We’re able to interact with kids on a one-on-one basis ... and (are) able to take our community-relations department, our youth-football department, and we’ve also engaged our mascot, Blue, knowing that that character really resonates, especially with the younger kids.”

Mathes added: “Even if we put on some big event and we can just influence one child to stop and think about what (they’re) eating or make them go outside and play, then that’s what it’s about.”

Like the NFL, the Colts see their responsibility to the community reaching far beyond a scoreboard, she said.

“Being a part of this community and being more than a sports league or a sports team has always been important.”

—Stephanie Mathes

“Being a part of this community and being more than a sports league or a sports team has always been important,” Mathes said. “But I think we’ve always been searching for

that niche and how we can really home in on something and focus and see some impact and see results. And when the NFL started looking at it, there was such a natural tie to health and fitness, especially with kids.”

Helping Indianapolis youth is not new to the Colts, but the NFL’s lead has made it so the message is delivered more effectively, Mathes said.

Play 60 allowed league teams to unite “behind one specific message, one specific brand and put all of our health and fitness programs under that brand to make it more identifiable and make it resonate more,” she said.

The Colts build playgrounds; renovate fitness rooms; and take players, coaches, cheerleaders and their mascot into middle schools, elementary schools and community youth centers to share the Play 60 message. Because of this focus on the issue, Mathes said, other local businesses are beginning to recognize the value of teaming up to tackle childhood obesity.



The NFL is using its influence to fight childhood obesity and encourage children be more active and healthy.

"We were able to create a platform," she said. "More people want to get involved with this issue as they see it's tied with the Colts, and they see that as a very trustworthy brand that resonates with that younger generation."

Leading by Example

The irony is that when some think of the NFL, one of two images comes to mind:

The first is an oversized fan holding a beer in one hand and wearing a foam finger on the other while sporting as much body paint as Michelangelo used on the Sistine Chapel, cheering and shouting as his girth undulates in perfect unison with his monosyllabic expressions.

The second is a prototypical player with chiseled muscles and sharp features. His jersey looks woefully inadequate to contain his biceps, let alone his thick chest or powerful shoulders.

The two images are diametrically opposed yet work perfectly in conjunction. Without the unwavering passion of the fans, the NFL and its players would not have the platform from which to educate children on exercise and nutrition. And nothing demonstrates the NFL's commitment to that platform like the grand prize handed out at the NFL Play 60 Super Kid.

Before the contest closed, any child could visit NFLRush.com/Superkid to tell of his or her fitness activities and how he or she implemented the Play 60 message. The winning child, James G., won an all-expenses-paid trip to Super Bowl XLVI in Indianapolis and will run the game ball onto the field on Feb. 5 before the most watched single-day sporting event on the planet.

It's the strength of example and the inspiration of action that the NFL employs to help shape the next generation to be healthier and more educated than the previous one.



Courtesy of Julie Buehler

About the Author

Julie Buehler is a freelance writer and sports broadcaster. She's covered the NFL, NBA, MLB and college football in Southern California and Arizona for more than a decade. She's as well known for her prolific flexing as she is for her grasp on the English language. Julie has competed in Fight Gone Bad and The Marine Corp Challenge with Desert CrossFit in Palm Desert, Calif.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Lessons Learned

Flowmaster and self-described “slow learner” Pat Sherwood shares wisdom acquired over six years of CrossFit training.

By Pat Sherwood

February 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

August marked the end of my sixth year of CrossFit, and let me tell you, it has been one hell of a ride. Since 2005, I've gone from watching Greg Amundson's WOD demos on CrossFit.com while working a real-estate job that I did not enjoy to working for CrossFit Headquarters, teaching Level 1 Seminars and meeting CrossFitters from around the world.

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Sherwood, in his element, explaining proper form to a group of seminar attendees.

I truly enjoy the many aspects of my current position at CrossFit Headquarters; however, my favorite by far is explaining CrossFit methodologies to an audience. That audience may be a random person I strike up a conversation with on an airplane, 50 to 100 people at a Level 1 Seminar, or tens of thousands of people tuned into the media coverage of the 2011 CrossFit Games.

After six years, I have lots of experiences to share that will hopefully help newer athletes and coaches get on the right path a whole lot sooner than I did. Anything that you can do wrong in CrossFit, I've probably done. I'm a slow learner. I usually try to break the wall that is in my way before I decide to go over or around it. So, I've decided to share some of my lessons learned in the hope of making other CrossFitters' learning curves better than mine.

Lesson No. 1

What is the proper course of action to learn CrossFit and its movements most efficiently and effectively? Start with mechanics, gain consistency, and then—and only then—add intensity. (This lesson will repeat over and over again.)

What course of action did my knucklehead friends and I employ? As far as we were concerned, there was only one step, not three: add intensity. To hell with learning how to do movements with a PVC pipe or light load! We intended to do all the WODs as prescribed immediately. We did this for about 18 months.

It's almost as if that Greg Glassman fellow knew what he was talking about.

What happened? We got pretty damn fit, and then we reached a plateau. Why? Because I did not need to yank on the bar harder to increase my squat clean. I needed to put my ego to the side, take weight off the bar, scale workouts and learn proper mechanics. It's almost as if that Greg Glassman fellow knew what he was talking about.



Sherwood learned that the only way to improve at CrossFit is to relentlessly hammer away at your weaknesses.

In other words, the productive application of force is technique dependent. Who knew, right? But that sounds kind of familiar. Where have I heard it before? Refer to Lesson No. 1.

Variance and Targeting Weaknesses

Where do we see the greatest gains in athletic capacity almost regardless of how talented the athlete might be? This is largely done via two avenues. The first avenue is classic GPP, or “general physical preparedness.” The second avenue is working on weaknesses. Identify the activities, domains, loadings, repetition ranges and so on that you don’t want to see come out of the hopper, and then embrace them.

Classic GPP is pure, beautiful, elegant CrossFit. At its core are couplets, triplets, going heavy at least once a week and, every now and then, going long. There is no real need to build overly complicated workouts that look super sexy on paper. But what do most of us do when we are new to programming? We try to become mad scientists. We construct these monstrous workouts under the old mindset that “more is better.” After several months of overtraining ourselves and unnecessarily beating up our bodies, we wonder why our times and lifts are not improving. So we return to where we started with classic GPP, and suddenly our fitness returns. See Lesson No. 1.

Weaknesses? Who the heck wants to spend time doing things they are not good at? I personally blew off handstand push-ups for my first two to three years of CrossFit because I sucked at them. Guess what? I’ve never recovered. I’m much better at them than I used to be, but I’m still years behind where I should be. Nothing exists in isolation in the human body. Now, years later, my greatest weakness remains anything overhead. This is no one’s fault but my own. Refer to Lesson No. 1.

“I’ll Take Variance Without Bias, Please”

Every weekend we tell CrossFitters at Level 1 Seminars that the key to GPP is variance—also known as not biasing your programming. The CrossFit.com WODs are so useful for the simple reason that they are not tinged by your personal biases.

Yet programming is a blast. Creating your own workouts gives you an understanding of what works and what doesn’t like almost nothing else will. I think every CrossFit trainer should try it.

I followed CrossFit.com programming for about two years, and then I programmed for myself for just more than three years. I was actually quite proud of the fact that I routinely went overhead in my workouts. You have to work those weaknesses, right? I would even snatch and clean and jerk once a week to stay up on the neurologically challenging Olympic lifts.

Then one day I had a rude awakening. Chris Spealler had programmed a workout that he passed along to Miranda Oldroyd, who in turn passed it along to me. It was just a simple couplet. It looked innocent, even fun. It was three rounds for time of 10 squat cleans at 135/95 lb. paired with 20 box jumps of 24/20 inches. With my squat clean a few pounds away from 300, I planned on destroying this little workout.



Going heavy is important, but nothing will destroy you like a light-to-moderate load in a well-designed, high-intensity couplet.

The opposite happened. That elegant couplet absolutely murdered me—and I never saw it coming. I knew I was in trouble on my seventh squat clean in the very first round. Then, on the eleventh box jump in the first round, I found myself resting on the top of the box, hands on my hips, sucking wind. My time was twice as slow as everyone else's. What the hell happened?

Classic, elegant, wonderfully effective CrossFit GPP programming lives in couplets and triplets.

I had biased my programming without even realizing it. While I was being diligent about hitting the Olympic lifts every week, I was only hitting them on heavy days. I was unconsciously not putting them in WODs because I knew I would hit them on a strength or practice day. So my O lifts were getting better—until you asked me to do them

in a WOD at a high heart rate with a light to moderate load. Once that happened, all my precious “strength” disappeared. Damn it. Back to Lesson No. 1.

My lessons learned about the O lifts lead nicely into something that I forgot for a while: light to moderate weight hurts way more than heavy weight does. This goes back to an earlier point. Classic, elegant, wonderfully effective CrossFit GPP programming lives in couplets and triplets. Take a look at some of most notorious WODs that leave you lying on the ground wondering how something so “simple” turned out to be so nasty. Chances are they contained a light-to-moderate loading of two or three movements paired intelligently to keep the athlete moving and the power output high.

Don't get me wrong ... you need to go heavy. It's a critical part of the programming. CrossFit is not a conditioning program. It is a strength and conditioning program. Yet the fact remains that most people I know, myself included, would agree that Heavy Fran hurts, but nowhere near as much as regular Fran. Why? Because once the loading gets to a certain point, most of us have to slow down or put the barbell down and rest. The clock keeps ticking while the power output (intensity) is going down.



Hate running? Do it more, and your workouts will improve.

If you have not touched a light load in a while, go try to PR on Jackie, or try this old one from CrossFit.com: Five rounds for time of 15 thrusters (75 lb.) and 15 sumo deadlift high pulls (75 lb.). There are literally hundreds of these. Enjoy.

Saying—Then Programming—the “R” Word

The next lesson learned makes me unhappy just saying the word out loud. That word is “running.” If there was one thing I was good at doing for many years, it was blowing off the “run 5K” days on CrossFit.com. What was my rationale? I would tell myself that I ran day in and day out for seven years in the military. I did not think I needed to work on my running, so I would go do another workout (one without handstand push-ups, of course).

These running days—which I had grown so fond of blowing off—are classic metabolic conditioning, or “cardio” as people outside our community would call them. They are a very nice test of stamina, cardiorespiratory endurance, and your ability to push through pain when your legs and lungs burn and all you want to do is slow down the pace.

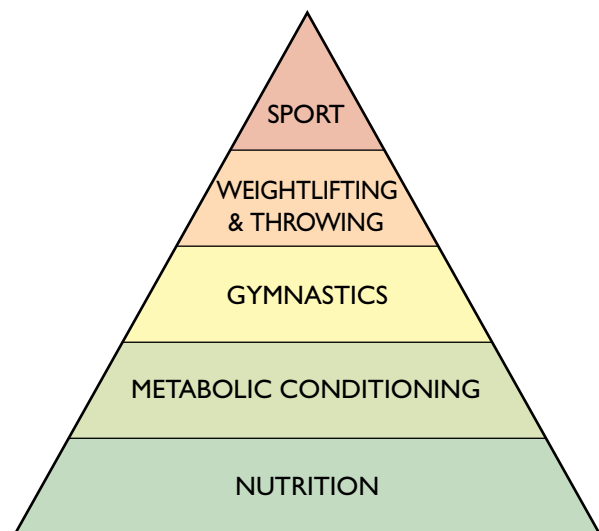
A couple of years ago, my friends and fellow Level 1 Seminar flowmaster Joe Alexander came up to me with a simply ludicrous idea: “I think we should run more,” Joe said. Anything at all would be running “more” because, at that time, we were not running at all. So we started running.

It hurt. It hurt badly. Soon we were over the initial pain and made it a point to run once a week. So, if we ran four times a month, I would say that one time was just a moderate pace for 30 to 40 minutes. The other three days we would sprint. Suddenly, we were doing mile repeats, 800 meters, 400 meters and 200 meters. Little by little, our splits got faster and faster. Those days always hurt like hell, but we learned to push through the agony, endure the suffering and maintain our pace. With this addition to my training, all my workouts got better.

Running, as it turned out, was a huge weakness of mine. It is not a weakness anymore. To this day, I sprint or run once a week. Who knew that working on your weaknesses would be one of the most beneficial things an athlete could do for his or her fitness?

Someone knew. See Lesson No. 1.

Also, isn’t metabolic monostructural conditioning near the base of the pyramid on the Theoretical Hierarchy of the Development of an Athlete (see below)? Hmm, I wonder if it was placed there by accident or for a specific and beneficial reason? (Again, see Lesson No. 1.)



Theoretical Hierarchy of the Development of an Athlete

Nutrition

Nutrition occupies the very base of the pyramid on the Theoretical Hierarchy of the Development of an Athlete. The base, the foundation is what everything else builds upon. I have a feeling that metabolic conditioning, gymnastics, weightlifting and throwing, and sport were all given a subordinate position to nutrition for good reason. I had seen that pyramid for about two years before I decided to try the dietary prescriptions recommended by CrossFit. I figured that meats and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch, and no sugar, along with the Zone, were for people who did not eat "healthy" like I did. My breakfast was a bowl of Special K, skim milk, a whole-grain bagel with fat-free cream cheese and a big glass of OJ with the pulp. I was a nutrition ninja, right?

**Eating the right foods is
like taking legal steroids as
far as I'm concerned.**

Then one day I decided to try these "crazy diets." I told myself that if things got worse, I could always just stop and go back to my old super-healthy ways that had been treating me well for years. Holy crap! Why did I wait so long to fix my nutrition? Eating the right foods is like taking legal steroids as far as I'm concerned. I was stronger, fitter, and faster than ever before. My body composition was the best it had ever been, and it was easy to maintain. That all started about four years ago, and I still eat that way to this day. I would describe my diet today as clean, high-quality, real food (most of the time) that is weighed and measured as often as I can get near the scale in my kitchen. I have found the perfect blend of quality and quantity with my food, and life has never been better.

The Theoretical Hierarchy of the Development of an Athlete was one of the first things I read about in CrossFit. I should have heeded the obvious importance placed upon nutrition a whole lot sooner, but like I said, I'm a slow learner. Don't get me wrong: I love experimenting with

diet and programming. If we don't try new things and question accepted theories, methods and practices, then we will not progress. However, these days I routinely bring myself back to Lesson No. 1 and find that things in my life and fitness improve.

Learn!

I could go on and on about the things I've done wrong in CrossFit, but I hope to write an article, not a novel. Getting "good" at CrossFit is a lifelong journey. I'm finally ready to drop my ego and start addressing things that should have been fixed a long time ago. I have learned, and continue to learn, so much from Coach Glassman, the entire CrossFit HQ staff that I have the pleasure of working with, as well as all the affiliates and thousands of CrossFit athletes I have met around the world, with whom I've shared stories, experiences, and lessons learned.

Never stop learning.

And thanks, everybody.



About the Author

Pat Sherwood is the CrossFit Training Department Project Manager as well as a flowmaster. He's done approximately 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.

THE **CrossFit** *kitchen*

K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



CATERPILLAR FUN

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

overview

This hungry caterpillar is just waiting to be eaten! Prep all the body parts beforehand and create this insect with your kid. Make his legs out of anything you have handy. We chose colorful carrots and red peppers.

makes 8 caterpillars

ingredients

body

- 1 package all-natural, uncured, all-beef hot dogs (Trader Joes)
- 1 small-head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- Salt and garlic powder to taste

appendages

- 16 organic baby carrots
- 1 red pepper, used for head and legs
- 16 sunflower seeds (eyes)

notes

Caterpillars can also be served on top of a bed of greens like fresh or wilted spinach, arugula or kale.

directions

1. Chop cauliflower into uniform pieces and steam in a pot on medium heat until fork tender, approximately 10 minutes.
2. Chop red pepper lengthwise into 4 pieces; remove seeds and stem, then cut horizontally to make thin legs. Save the base and top to make 8 round heads.
3. In a pan filled half full of water, boil hot dogs until slightly plump.
4. When cauliflower is cooked, purée with an immersion blender or mash with fork until consistency is smooth. Add in olive oil, salt and garlic powder.
5. Place hot dogs on plate and slice lengthwise, making a crater for cauliflower. Be careful not to cut through the dog.
6. Place small mounds of cauliflower in hot dog until full.
7. Use carrots and peppers to make legs.
8. Carefully slice two small divots in red pepper head and use sunflower seeds as eyes.
9. Serve to your kids and watch them eat the caterpillar!

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Work, Power and the Science of CrossFit

Dr. Ken Gall examines the thermodynamics of CrossFit and asks 10 questions worth considering.

By Dr. Ken Gall

February 2012



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

While I was an undergraduate research assistant, one of the graduate students in my lab wanted to show me a “thing on the computer” that you could use to “look up information.” I took a look at it, reluctantly, because this guy was always wasting my time with annoying things such as balloon animals and ballroom dancing. These were things I had little use for as a student (well, I guess they are of no use to me now, either).

When he showed me his little discovery, I laughed and told him it looked “useless” and I had no interest in wasting time on it. The year was 1994, I was at the University of Illinois, and the software he had shown me was called Mosaic. For those of you unfamiliar with Mosaic, you may better recognize its second-generation name: Netscape. As it turns out, Web browsing and this “terrible annoyance” called the Internet have some use.

I missed the boat. CrossFit’s approach is the Mosaic/ Netscape of fitness, and I’m not missing something big this time.

My Ah-Ha Moment

I was first drawn to CrossFit after reading the “What Is Fitness?” article given by Dan MacDougald of CrossFit Atlanta to my wife, Amanda, who had just started CrossFitting and who never lets me forget she started first.

Greg Glassman and the early adopters of CrossFit have paved the way for us to think about fitness in an entirely new light.

I was already thinking about mechanical work in my workouts. I used to select my weights in my chest and biceps training program to optimize work (not power). By this I mean rather than do 5 sets of 2 reps of 315-lb. bench press, I would do 5 sets of 10 reps at 225 lb. If you do the math, the second grouping is about three times the total mechanical work as the first. I had no clue if this was doing anything for me, but it was how I was planning my workouts, and if I sucked in my stomach you could see my massive chest.

When I first read the CrossFit website I quickly realized that I was missing two other key elements. First, you could select exercises that naturally led to larger ranges of motion, higher reps and heavier loads—like the Olympic lifts and other powerlifting and gymnastic movements.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

To a scientist, the thruster is just a way to move a large load a long distance quickly.

This would lead to more work. Second, if you thought of power (work per unit time), rather than just work, there might be another fitness benefit.

Ah-ha ...

It Works!

I thought the concept of using power to design and measure capacity in workouts was revolutionary, and I believed it would work to make me more physically fit. So I tried it. Turns out ... they were right. Within months I felt better. I was leaner, stronger and faster—approaching and surpassing levels of fitness I last felt during my college years as a wrestler. I know this is a common story, but I thought I would at least tell you my version so you would know how massively biased I already am before reading the rest of my article.

Greg Glassman and the early adopters of CrossFit have paved the way for us to think about fitness in an entirely new light. It's a beacon of light in a sea of mediocre fitness businesses, and it can be used to quantify workouts and provide not only great results, but it can also be used to better understand the scientific link between human performance/fitness and training methodologies. Fitness can now be quantified for large groups of athletes over various time domains and movements beyond max load in a single lift or time in single or serial racing events.

But It's Complicated

Putting on my academic hat, I would argue that the human body is just a mechanical system that converts chemical (or metabolic) energy to mechanical work. If we think of ourselves as a mechanical system, it is ideal if we can move heavy loads over long distances quickly. Who doesn't like fast cars and big trucks? And what if there was a truck that could haul 10 tons and was faster than the Audi R8? It would be pretty useful—well, at least to me. I believe that CrossFit works because we are training ourselves to do things we were built to do: perform work.

Even though I am 100 percent convinced CrossFit works, it is still important to understand some of the more subtle details so we can set up a framework as to why it works and continually strive to train optimally. The human body is a complex system, and work and power are slightly more complex for us than a car. Let me provide two examples.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

In a barbell lift, the athlete's mass is an important part of the system even though we usually only consider the mass of the barbell.

Example 1: Load up a barbell with 225 lb. In Test 1, see if you can do 10 back squats in 30 seconds. This is a relatively high mechanical power output for your center of mass and the barbell. In Test 2, let's extend the time frame to 10 minutes and make it one back squat, but you have to make the entire rep take five minutes on the way down and five minutes on the way up. Most people who can successfully do Test 1 will fail Test 2, even though the latter is much lower mechanical power output for you and the bar compared to Test 1.

In squat cleans, relative work is often compared by the bar movement only, even though in a real energy calculation we would need to consider you as part of the system.

Example 2: This comes from Louie Simmons' book: deadlift a set weight as many times as you can as fast as you can in one minute (high power output). Then, based on this number of reps, try to do slower, controlled deadlifts at half the rep speed (lower power output). You will be unable to do as many reps in the second instance, and in fact you will notice that there is a certain time frame over which you start to lose capacity to do the reps regardless of how many you have performed before.

In Example 2, there is a contribution of total work due to hitting the bar off the ground more violently (elastic energy from outside the system of you and the barbell), but you can eliminate this by starting the weight from a dead stop at the ground, and you will usually perform more reps while maintaining reasonably fast rep speed.

Work and Power

In thinking about work and power, it is best to use the field of thermodynamics. Thermodynamics is about as boring as it sounds, but essentially it is a field of study that uses energy balances to shed light onto the behavior of energy conversion. The first thing to determine is what is in the thermodynamic "system" you are analyzing. Is it just you? You and the barbell or weight? The floor? The pull-up bar? The floor and pull-up bars can store and release elastic energy, so they can be important in some situations.

We typically consider the system to be us (with our own mass) plus the barbell (or other external mass). We can also define a system that is only our body mass and consider the barbell an external mass to our system. In this case, our system transfers work to this second system (the barbell).

The importance of the choice of your thermodynamic system changes for different workouts. In a pure pull-up workout, the only thing that is really important is our body as the system. In a power-clean workout we primarily perform work on the bar, and we often “calculate” power for the bar only.¹ In squat cleans, relative work is often compared by the bar movement only, even though in a real energy calculation we would need to consider you as part of the system because of the squat of your body weight in each rep. Online CrossFit power calculators are available to do these type of calculations that account for athlete mass and height along with movement type.

Let’s step back a bit and go back to the beginning—this will help us explain the two examples I brought up above.

If we consider your body and whatever barbell or weight you are holding a system, we can define the Gibbs Free Energy, G , as:

$$G = U + pV - TS$$

U is the internal energy, p is pressure, V is volume, T is temperature, and S is entropy. We can effectively ignore the pV term because we are not going to perform work by changing pressure or volume of the system (much more relevant for a gas, like performing work by compressing propane into one of those little vessels), and we will likely not change the temperature or entropy of the system (unless you want to throw your weights all over the room at the start of the workout, which will increase the randomness, or entropy, of your system before starting). This leaves us with internal energy, U , and we can broadly write internal energy in a form useful for our system as:

$$U = U_{\text{mech}} + U_{\text{chem}}$$



With movements like kettlebell swings, the eccentric part of the movement has important effects on the amount of work performed.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Two athletes with the exact same weight often move it very differently.

In this equation, “U_{mech}” and “U_{chem}” are mechanical and chemical energy. The first law of thermodynamics states that the change in internal energy (δU) is equal to the amount of heat provided to the system (δQ) minus the amount of work performed by the system on its surroundings (δW). Ignoring the temperature rise, this basically means that the work done within our system is equal to the changes in mechanical and chemical energy.

Work done = $\delta W = \delta U_{\text{mech}} + \delta U_{\text{chem}}$

CrossFitters already know the δU_{mech} part of this equation as “mechanical work,” and assuming you stop or reverse the weights at the top and bottom of your reps², it is best calculated through force, F , times the distance an object is moved, δx :

$$\delta U_{\text{mech}} = F \delta x$$

The most common force, F , in CrossFit is a weight, and the displacement is typically a vertical move (gravitational potential energy). Exceptions exist, such as work done against a frictional resistance: rowing, running, prowler pushes, etc. The chemical-energy term, δU_{chem} , is very hard to quantify, but it is there and is also known as “metabolic energy.” Our body is constantly converting chemical energy to mechanical work, and the transfer between chemical and mechanical energy happens regularly during a workout.

I know many of us have experienced the situation where by going slower we somehow feel worse during a workout than when you just get the reps over with.

However, chemical energy is the energy term your active muscles are burning even while you hold the deadlift weight in the top position (essentially an isometric), or the term that is still burning at a certain rate when your rep speed is very slow. If we exclude the barbell from our system calculation, we can inefficiently perform work on it by burning extra chemical energy in our body by, for example, moving the reps very slowly.

In this situation, we do little work on the barbell but still exhaust chemical energy in our body.

So if we now think of power we have the following:

$$\text{Power} = F \delta x / \delta t + P_{\text{chem}}$$

It is the chemical-energy term of total work and power that explains why isometrics (think bottom-to-bottom Tabata squats) and slow rep speeds can sometimes catch up with you and make an otherwise-low-power-output workout “harder” than just going faster within certain limits. This term can contribute to power output even when you are not performing measurable mechanical work on an external mass or your own center of mass.

I know many of us have experienced the situation where by going slower we somehow feel worse during a workout than when we just get the reps over with by effectively using our chemical-energy reserves to do the mechanical work. So in essence, if you want to perform optimally at CrossFit, you need to maximize the mechanical term of the power equation above, but you need to be aware of the chemical-energy term because it can contribute to your total power generation as a human system.

Unfortunately, the chemical-energy term does not “count” in CrossFit, where we often measure work performed on a barbell or your own center of mass as the only component of work. Exceptions to this exist, such as competitions when isometric holds are used. For example, holding a deadlift weight for max time constitutes minimal mechanical work and is just a measure of your chemical-energy reserves to keep several muscle groups contracted under load. For similar reasons a farmers carry (on flat ground) also tests our chemical-energy reserve without performing much “gravitational” mechanical work.

So What?

In the end, an athlete needs to effectively convert chemical energy to mechanical work. There is a balance that exists—an optimal combination of rep speed, technique, and cadence for specific time domains and movements that minimizes workout time. If you transfer chemical energy ineffectively, you may fizzle out faster and ultimately end up with a slower time. Your body may have actually performed more work, but it will not “count” in your assessment.

In terms of conserving chemical energy, many of the elite athletes know the “tricks” already. We have already discussed rep speed, and if you move the reps too slowly you sometimes end up worse than if you just moved quickly through the reps. Poor technique can also lead to ineffective burn of chemical energy, something that really catches up with athletes in workouts longer than a few minutes. The “negative” of reps is also a very interesting burn of your chemical energy that is converted into useless mechanical work (often slowing the bar down). Depending on the movement, the negative is advantageous from repetition-speed point of view (e.g., deadlift, kettlebell swing, pull-up), and it would be ridiculous to try and drop off at the top of each of these movements. However, in competition there are instances, particularly for the Olympic lifts, where dropping reps will, in the end, conserve chemical energy and result in a

faster time than trying to cycle every negative. A notable exception to this is something like Grace, where the time domain is so short that steadying and repositioning the weight takes more time than you have at your disposal.

Basic Science Opportunities

When I was a kid, my father only let me ask three questions a day. I guess I got pretty annoying. My two favorite questions were:

1. Which is tougher: fire or rock?
2. Why do birds fly higher than bees?

Deep. Now I always try to tell my father that asking questions is the cornerstone of science, and he always tells me that it's a good lesson to be able to only ask a limited number of them.



Mike Markentin/CrossFit Journal

How does an increase in absolute strength result in an increase in work capacity with submaximal loads?



What exercises are best for overall fitness?

Either way, questions motivate the scientific method aimed at understanding the behavior of the world around us. Along these lines, my favorite *CrossFit Journal* article is “[Fooling Around With Fran](#).” In his article, Greg Glassman writes, “We cannot, yet, derive fundamental principles more valuable than measure, think, and experiment.”

**Should people trying for
general overall fitness always
maximize power output
to become fit?**

I completely agree, and “Fooling Around With Fran” is a prime example of applying the scientific method to CrossFit. CrossFit enables experimentation in fitness across new time and movement domains and with much larger groups of people. I am not an exercise physiologist or

exercise scientist, so I am not an expert in this literature; however, I have read a fair number of articles on the topic, and although there are studies supporting high-intensity fitness and interval training (think Tabata intervals based on the study published by Dr. Izumi Tabata in 1996), there is plenty of room for studies that incorporate CrossFit methodologies. We all know the overall results are there, but we still do not understand all the details of what works better/faster and why when you open up to the range of movements and time domains in CrossFit.

For those of you unfamiliar with the “Fooling Around With Fran” article, it goes after one of the most interesting and fundamental training dilemmas regarding CrossFit: power output. The article’s focus is on comparing the power output of Greg Amundson doing Fran with three thruster weights, 75, 95 and 115 lb. As you may expect, Amundson’s average power output was highest on the lightest Fran and lowest on the heaviest Fran. The conclusion of the article (not proven but hypothesized) was that to improve Fran time at 95 lb. the athlete should do Fran at heavier weights more often than at lighter weights.

Why do I find this interesting? Because it gets to the very nature of why CrossFit works—but it also makes me think of basic questions for which we do not have answers. For starters, a few come to mind. If you have more questions than answers, you are in a scientific field ripe for the picking. It's harvest time.

1. Is the "Fooling Around With Fran" conclusion true—or can you improve at heavier workouts by doing lighter weight, higher power output workouts (assuming you are far from your 1RM weight)?
2. How does an increase in 1RM strength translate to improved work capacity over other time domains? Does it only matter if the weights are within a certain percentage of your 1RM? What is this critical percentage?
3. How does increased work capacity at one time domain translate to other domains? Can you train high power output CrossFit movements in only the five-minute domain and be proficient at 10-minute workouts, 20-minute workouts and 40-minute workouts?
4. What exercises are the best for overall fitness and translation to other movements? If the thruster has a higher power output than the clean and jerk at light weights, should we use that to train more than clean and jerk in certain weight ranges? Sure, they are different movements, but if it is total power output we want to maximize, why not primarily train with the optimal movement?
5. Should people trying for general overall fitness (not elite competition) always maximize power output to become fit? In other words, how much should they scale before their 1RM in a movement is far enough from the prescribed weight?
6. How fast should we perform reps? Always as fast as possible for all weights? Or for lighter weights should we control rep speed relative to heavier reps because the chemical energy burn is different for different weights? Where does this transition occur for different athletes?
7. For clients trying to look better (which is why many people first start in the gym), what fraction of their 1RM should they be working to optimize (read: make it happen as fast as possible) the development of lean muscle mass?
8. On the completely other side of the spectrum, what are the optimal weights to determine the fittest person on the planet? Those that maximize power output for a given time domain? Or should the workouts be strength-limiting even in longer time domains? If they should be strength-limited, what group of athletes determines this limit?³
9. How does body type (weight and height) influence maximum power output in typical CrossFit workouts? Should workouts be varied to test power output for various body types to avoid modal bias (we want to be good over broad time and modal domains)?⁴
10. How do you balance calculations and controlled experiments into your programming with an intuitive/random approach by a good coach?



Staff/CrossFit Journal

How does height influence maximum power output?

Endnotes

1. In a pure power-clean workout, no one cracks out a calculator and determines power when comparing to another athlete, as you may be kicked out of the gym. However, this calculation is “implied” when competing. If two athletes do 30 power cleans for time at the same weight, then the only variables left are distance and time. Time becomes the determining factor over who displayed more “average power” in the workout. However, the dilemma is that the taller athlete will have moved the bar farther (times 30) and thus has higher power output for equivalent time. More on this later.
2. We also have the issue of kinetic energy, which is not typically considered in CrossFit power calculations. When you stop reps at the top and bottom and completely reverse the direction of motion, kinetic energy can be dropped, and you can calculate work just using force and distance moved as changes in gravitational potential energy. In the throwing of mass for max distance (without reversal and repetition) the amount of kinetic energy you impart to the object is, obviously, important.
3. In some CrossFit competitions, weights have become heavier over the past few years—even for longer workouts. Weights above a certain threshold, for longer time frames, have relatively low power output. In the limit, using excessively heavy weights would be analogous to employing strict pull-ups vs. kipping pull-ups.
4. For example, if we use thrusters, the taller athlete may actually generate more power than the shorter athlete even though in competition this is not accounted for. When you have to throw a heavy object a set distance in the air, the taller athlete’s power advantage would now “help”, as it does in wall-balls. How do we choose unique competition movements that account for total power output better, independent of body type? Appropriate mixtures of movements do this to some degree—like thrusters and pull-ups—but this only offsets body weight differences, not height differences. Of course, I don’t have any good answers here, but if power generation is our measure and body type influences actual power output greatly, we need some innovative ways to test for this that don’t bore people to death in watching a competition.



Courtesy of Dr. Ken Gall

About the Author

Dr. Gall is a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology with joint appointments in the School of Materials Science and Engineering, the Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering, and the Bioengineering Program. He has taught engineering mechanics, materials science and bioengineering for well over a decade. He has over 140 peer-reviewed journal publications with an h-index of 38 and has given over 200 professional lectures. He has served as a consultant to over a dozen large companies and both the United States military and intelligence community.

THE CrossFit LIFE

The Little CrossFitter That Could

A year of CrossFit and an astonishing deadlift PR transforms Jessica Tyler from shy wallflower to outgoing leader. Julie Kelly reports.

By Julie Kelly

February 2012



All images: Julie Kelly

We've all heard the saying "you never get a second chance to make a first impression." All it takes is 100 milliseconds, just one-tenth of a second, to make a first impression.

The problem is that sometimes you don't put your best foot forward. You might be nervous and out of your comfort zone, and people might make incorrect assumptions. Don't let this discourage you. If people underestimate you, that gives you a chance to blow their minds when you perform beyond their expectations.



Soon after starting CrossFit, Tyler entered her first powerlifting meet.

Jessica Tyler, a 28-year-old nurse and Navy reservist, first walked into CrossFit San Diego on Jan. 3, 2011. All 5 foot 7 and 120 lb. of her stood just outside the huddle of members while they chatted about each other's kids, exchanged their latest cheat meals, stretched, and worked out the kinks with their PVC pipes, foam rollers and lacrosse balls.

Braided pigtails and thick black glasses swallowed Tyler's face. If anyone made eye contact with her, she would quickly look at the floor. If she spoke at all, her voice was low and muffled.

It took me all of one-tenth of a second to figure out that Jessica Tyler was a nerd.

The Transformation

Before I get tarred and feathered for cyber bullying, let me first say that I have a thing for nerds. I love them. I admire anyone who walks the path less traveled. While it's safe to say that I made this judgment in a tenth of a second, it's taken me nearly a year to find out that Tyler's nerdy roots run deeper than I originally thought—and I love her for that.

When Tyler was in high school, she never went to parties. Instead, she focused on things like Key Club, the Ethnic Alliance and the Future Business Leaders of America club. She doesn't have a background in gymnastics, track and field or any other sport that seems so common to CrossFit athletes.

When I asked about her athletic background, she said, "Ha! What athletic background? My background started the first moment I walked into CrossFit San Diego."

A couple of weeks into her membership, on Jan. 25, 2011, the CrossFit Total came up in programming. Her score? 280. Her back squat was 100 lb., her press 40 lb., and her deadlift 140 lb.

A few months into her membership, Tyler worked up the courage to sign up for a powerlifting meet and pulled a new deadlift PR of 180 lb. After the meet, Tyler decided to start working on strength. She tried 70's Big with much success but has since worked with our strength coach, Sal O'Campo, who programs Wendler modified for CrossFit for a small group of girls who have aspirations to compete.

Tyler attributes much of her success to O'Campo.

"He truly believes in me," she said. "I have gotten so much support from him, as have the other girls who train with me. He's there to show me things I do not see and in many ways has helped me face so many of my fears. He's helped me realize that participating is better than being perfect. Once I realized I can always improve, it lessened my fear of failure."

When asked about her goals when she first started focusing on strength, Tyler replied, "For everything great in life, you need to start with a strong foundation, and as far as my strength went, I had a long way to go."

I am still in awe of Tyler's transformation this past year.

On Jan. 13, 2012, a year after she started CrossFit, Tyler, O'Campo and I met at the gym a few hours before the scheduled classes to do the work Sal had assigned us for the day. The CrossFit Total was programmed for Jess, and she immediately started warming up.

Later, I asked O'Campo what he thought Tyler's new deadlift 1RM might be.

"My expectations were to be around 240 lb., maybe 250 lb. Maybe."

We soon realized that she was hitting multiple reps at 250 lb. Then she hit 270, 280, 290 lb. She then grabbed two 5 lb. plates to make 300 lb., looked at me and said, "Oh my God. Is this really happening?"

After all, she had already knocked some of the firebreathing girls off the whiteboard when she hit 290. If she could hit 300, she would be the only female currently a member who could pull that weight. Three hundred is roughly 2.5 times Tyler's body weight of 127 lb.

Tyler tightened her weight belt, approached the bar, set up, inhaled one giant breath and, in what seemed like an effortless attempt, pulled that weight off the floor and locked out at the top. She did it! A 127-lb. girl whose deadlift one year ago was 140 pulled up 300!

She wasn't done. Tyler stepped away from the bar and walked over to us as we nearly tackled her to the ground.

"I want to do more," she said. "Give me more."

"Good God, Sal, look at the monster you've created," I thought.

A few minutes went by, and she loaded two 2.5-lb. plates to make 305. As she gripped the bar, we screamed "Up! Up! Stand up!"

Once again, she nailed it. Tyler had just hit one of the most jaw-dropping PRs any coach had witnessed.

I am still in awe of Tyler's transformation this past year. Put aside her impressive accomplishments and continuous PRs. This is bigger than that. She has gone from a shy wallflower to a strong and confident woman who now goes out of her way to introduce herself to new members, who screams with enthusiasm when one of her teammates makes a new PR, and who always encourages the new member who gets an unassisted pull-up for the first time. That is the real transformation. That's the good stuff.

You Gotta Want It

A few days after Tyler crushed it, I went into the gym to ask O'Campo some questions about her training, specifically about the factors contributing to her success.

He replied that her success was the result of "consistency, patience and a willingness to learn."

I work out with Jess and I see that she listens and takes direction very well. In other words, she's a coach's dream.

O'Campo continued: "She wanted it, and she kept pushing through and digging deeper. She amazes me. I call her 'the little CrossFitter that could.' One of Jess' greatest strengths is that when people first meet her, they underestimate her. Make no mistake: this girl came to play."



Nerd or powerlifter? Maybe both!

Indeed.

I know I'm not the only one who feels proud to be Tyler's friend. Seeing her put her name at the top of the leaderboard was a pivotal moment in her life, not only as a future competitor but also as a woman.

"Honestly, I didn't think my name would have found a home there, and maybe that's what made it so special," Tyler said. "I am proof that it doesn't matter where you come from, if you have an athletic background or how old you are. All you have to do is want it. The biggest thing I've learned from all of this is that you have to chase your own capacity before chasing the person next to you. It never gets any easier; it just sucks less."

Amen! I'll drink to that.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

You Were Saying ... With J.T. Scott

J.T. Scott on staying present, qualifying for the CrossFit Games and clothing the homeless.

By E.M. Burton

February 2012



Journal Menu by Evan Saint Clair

The *CrossFit Journal* is pleased to present the third in a series of profiles designed to help you get to know some of the best people in our community.

1 of 4

J.T. Scott

I first heard about CrossFit from ... an old fraternity brother who blogged his WODs every day on Facebook, Leon Chang. He convinced me to get started and helped me find a trainer. Now he owns his own affiliate too: [CrossFit Elysium](#) in San Diego.

My first CrossFit workout was ... heavily scaled. I was a totally deconditioned individual, overweight by 100 lb. We did skill work on my (abominable) squat, followed by 15-12-9 KB swings (25 lb.), box jumps (18 inches) and burpees. I literally could not get out of bed without assistance for the two days that followed.

My favorite workout is ... Christine is a benchmark I revisit more often than some others. I don't really get emotionally attached to WODs, though; I just want to get better, and there's plenty of room for improvement.

The person I would most like to WOD with is ... no one in particular. I like (working out) with people who are nice, supportive, focused on their own work and accepting of everyone's scaling. That describes most CrossFitters I've met, thankfully.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be ... a wise old man. I've got a long way to go.

When I grow up, I want to be ... strong and fast enough to beat my athletes and qualify for my own CrossFit Games team. It's an honor to work with such incredible athletes, and they continue to push my own training forward, too.



Bradford Lowery

One way to be a firebreather ...

The most rewarding thing about training people is ... changing lives, building confidence and strength, and showing people that the impossible is achievable. If people can come to realize that they have the strength and capability to shape the world according to their will through their choices, I feel like I've done my job.

My favorite movie character is ... Robert Redford as Martin Bishop in *Sneakers*. It's a classic movie—prescient and ahead of its time.

The greatest challenge in coaching is ... finding the right way to communicate with every athlete.

The movement I find hardest to teach is ... muscle-ups. I still haven't found a magic pill to help people get there.

The thing I find funniest about CrossFit is ... it has to be the fashion. The CrossFitter fetishes for either compression sleeves and board shorts or knee socks and booty shorts are hilarious to me. I get it, and I share in my athletes' joy when they are thrilled to WOD shirtless and show off their new cut bodies, but I also find it endlessly funny.

My secret identity is ... I'm in the circus—I'm a fire-eating, stilt-walking acrobat and object manipulator. It's not so secret when you're in a movie, though: [Life on Fire](#) is being released soon. Not many people know I'm also a 1,000-hour licensed massage therapist.

The thing I value most is ... a gentle sense of humor and the ability to be present in each moment. When I find those in people, I treasure them.

My motto is ... consistency, integrity and transparency. These are the three principles that we operate on as a business, and we evaluate every decision as to how it relates to those principles. Personally, my highest choice and guiding principle is simply, "Love."

The most outrageous thing I've seen someone do during a WOD is ... probably unfit for print—even in the *CrossFit Journal*! It involved superhuman levels of determination, victory in a competition environment and copious amounts of bodily fluids. I am forever in awe of that athlete, though.

The place I'd most like to visit is ... I've been all over the world, but my home is Black Rock City. I like going back to work and play at Burning Man each year because it's a reminder that we can and do create our world together, every day—and an inspiration for what we can create when we do so consciously. Of course, last year tickets sold out ... so I'm changing my answer: Burning Man sucks. Don't go.

The CrossFit trainer/coach I most admire is ... my business partner Eric (Siegel) is my rock. We have developed an incredible working relationship at CrossFit Fenway, and I admire his ability to coach four classes a day, train, and manage both the endless volume of email communications and the day-to-day interactions of personalities in the box. When you've got a staff of trainers, a Games competition team and 250 members, it takes a gifted character to keep everyone's head above water and still train hard enough to be a Games-caliber athlete.

The non-CF person I most admire is ... my partner Chandra is the kindest, most inspirational person I could ever hope to share my life with. Every day I am awed and inspired by the ways she loves and lives in the world.

The thing I have the most patience for is ... fear. Every person enters the box carrying their own fear, and it is part of my job to help them set that fear aside and live in the present moment of this hour of training. If they can set it down so completely that they don't pick it up again when they leave, that's even better.

The thing I have the least patience for is ... oh boy. That's hard. I strive to have patience for everything. Incompetence in a supposed professional chaps my ass, though, as does terrible customer service. I have little tolerance for it.

When I have a challenging athlete on my hands, I ... take another breath and try another way to reach them. It's not their fault that I haven't found the right way to communicate with them yet.

A favorite book is ... *Cryptonomicon* by Neal Stephenson. (It's) maybe the best book I've ever read.



Bradford Lowery

When he's not running his CrossFit affiliate, Scott is in the circus. No, really.

The soundtrack in my box ... is very trainer-dependent. Stacey loves country, Erika can't get enough Adele and Kelly Clarkson, Eric plays the Clash, and Joe brings that classic CrossFit blend of rappers (Young Money, DJ Khaled, Wiz) and the genre most accurately labeled as "angry white-boy music." I, of course, play only quality tunes—namely bootie-shaking mash-ups of pop hits.



Scott, trying to pick his favorite cheesy dance movies.

My most guilty pleasure is ... I'm too old to feel guilty about them. But man, I've got some silly ones—like cheesy dance movies. Fortunately I've got a lot of years of practice at looking silly, so it feels pretty natural.

A dream location for a CrossFit box would be ... we're one block away from Fenway Park—I already have my dream location! Though next on my list would definitely include boxes on the premises of every major baseball and football stadium, in partnership with their teams: CrossFit Wrigley, CrossFit Patriot Place, CrossFit Comiskey, CrossFit Lambeau, CrossFit Coliseum, CrossFit Candlestick ... even CrossFit Veterans. (Eagles fans are brutally abrasive, but I bet they'd make great CrossFitters.) Oh yeah, and I am gonna make CrossFit Aruba happen one day ...

I'm really looking forward to ... tomorrow.

My favorite coaching cue is ... "Shut the car door first." Imagine you've got an armful of groceries and you need to shut the door. Bump your ass back without tipping your chest forward. For squats, especially front and overhead, it's a way to fix a few common faults by getting the weight started back in the heels while preventing excessive forward inclination of the chest—and people remember it!

The most inspiring person/athlete I've ever worked with is ... I can't possibly answer that. They're all amazing in their own ways, and I'm glad to have the honor of continuing to get to know them more each and every day.

If I could have only one CrossFit T-shirt, it would be ... a freaking miracle. I swear those things are breeding in my closet. They're more prolific than rabbits. No person needs that many shirts. There are lots of homeless in Boston wearing tough-guy T-shirts thanks to this phenomenon and my tendency to donate clothing frequently.

J.T. Scott is an affiliate owner who trains out of his box, [CrossFit Fenway](#), as well as [CrossFit Somerville](#). We are all lucky to meet some real firebreathers hanging out with CrossFitters, but Scott is an actual fire-eater.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Hitch is Hooked

St. Louis Blues coach Ken Hitchcock embraces the CrossFit Life. Mike Warkentin reports.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

February 2012



All images: Getty Images

Ken Hitchcock is a hockey guy.

He's coached over 1,000 games behind the benches of four NHL teams, and he's won over 500 of them. He's been a head coach at three NHL All-Star Games, and he's been a part of two Canadian teams that won gold medals at the Olympics.

Hitchcock has also hoisted hockey's Holy Grail, the Stanley Cup, while coaching the Dallas Stars in 1998-99.

"Hitch" is a hockey guy through and through.

Now he's also a CrossFit guy.

The Turnaround

Coaching a pro sports team is a high-stress job that includes travel, long hours, incredible pressure to perform, constant media attention and interactions with temperamental elite athletes.

Hitchcock has been described by former player and current Blues assistant Scott Mellanby as a "hardass," and former superstar Brett Hull famously clashed with Hitchcock's rigid system in the late '90s. That didn't stop Hull and Hitch from winning a Stanley Cup together, and it didn't stop Hull from respecting his coach.



Hitchcock's 500 wins and 1,000 games put him in very elite company in the all-time NHL coaching stats.

"There is no nonsense with Ken. You're going to play, you're going to play hard, and you're going to play within his system. If you do, you're going to have a lot of success. And if you don't, you're probably going to try to have a lot of success on another team," Hull said in a 2011 interview on StLToday.com ("Hockey guy Brett Hull talks up Ken Hitchcock," Nov. 8, 2011).

**"My experience with CrossFit
was that I feared every day
going in . . . I don't look
forward to going, but when
I'm there I love it."**

—Ken Hitchcock

Still, Hitchcock struggled with his weight for years, and at his heaviest he was well over 400 lb. That made him a target for angry players, and a recent TSN video profile featured players such as Jamie Langenbrunner and Brenden Morrow talking about some of the abuse Hitchcock endured ([Hitch's Switch](#)).

In the same interview, Hitchcock explained his problem with food.

"Food became the element of frustration," he said.

He added: "I was in a don't-give-a-damn-gonna-live-forever mode."

February 2010 was full of bad and good for Hitchcock. He was fired as head coach of the Columbus Blue Jackets but was an assistant for the Canadian men's team that won Olympic gold on home soil at the end of the month. Following the victory, Hitchcock headed south and spent some time in California. While there, he was coaxed into trying CrossFit by his partner, Corina Kelepouris, and her sister Tina.

"She (Corina) dragged me along," Hitchcock recalls, "and I would say after a week I felt like I needed this type of program from a conditioning standpoint."

Hitchcock was no stranger to exercise. He just never got results with machines.

"We feel the same pain as a firebreather does. They're a lot fitter than we are and always will be, but we still feel the same pain at the end of the day."

—Ken Hitchcock

"You could spend an hour, an hour and a half in the gym, and I was going in five or six times a week, and it wasn't making any difference," he says. "And I was eating a low-fat diet—the whole thing. It wasn't making much difference."

After getting into CrossFit, the coach lost 30 lb. immediately and was instantly convinced that there was something to the high-intensity program.

"I think the thing that convinced me about this form of exercise, to be honest with you, is I never changed my eating habits at all when I lost all the weight. I never changed anything for the first two months. Not one bit. And then to go and lose that much weight right away when you've been exercising all the time is pretty dramatic," Hitchcock says.

After adding in Paleo eating habits, Hitchcock reports that he lost another 30 lb.

Now head coach of the St. Louis Blues, Hitchcock has Paleo food catered to him and maintains a primal diet. The Blues also brought in some CrossFit gear for him, and he's even sucked a few assistant coaches into joining him for early morning CrossFit WODs. Hitchcock does CrossFit about four times a week and often follows the programming of CrossFit DV in Drayton Valley, Alta., or CrossFit Glenmore in Kelowna, B.C.

And, of course, he makes a mess of hotel gyms when he's on the road, using whatever equipment is available to do some form of the CrossFit program.

A New Lifestyle

Echoing the sentiments of CrossFitters everywhere, Hitchcock both loves and hates the program.

"My experience with CrossFit was that I feared every day going in ...," he says. "I don't look forward to going, but when I'm there I love it. There are certain programs I don't love or even like, but the energy with the people there makes you want to do it and not let them down, so I get enthused by it."

A career coach, Hitchcock has been around athletic teams for his entire life, and it's the positive group atmosphere he finds most appealing about CrossFit.

"I always call it 'the quiet suffering.' We go in there, and we all suffer at different levels, but we all suffer the same thing," he says of the WODs. "Some people are able to do it without props. Some people can do it straight up, some people need props, but at the end of the day, we all suffer about the same. And I find that dynamic for me is what makes it work. I love the camaraderie."

"If you're positive and you feel good and you've got energy, that's the way you're going to coach."

—Ken Hitchcock

He continues: "There's a certain level of people who are the firebreathers. We all know who they are. They stand out like sore thumbs. ... The rest of us go there because we want to feel a part of something, and I think the more fun you can make it, the more supportive you are, the more enthusiastic you are, the better we feel about it. We don't do the same as they do, but we suffer the same. We feel the same pain as a firebreather does. They're a lot fitter than we are and always will be, but we still feel the same pain at the end of the day, and I think doing it together really builds the camaraderie and a bond."

That camaraderie has added a new aspect to Hitchcock's life. He used to hang out only with hockey people, but the coach now finds himself bumping into CrossFitters all over North America. He counts 2010 CrossFit Games champ Graham Holmberg as a friend, and he'll see familiar CrossFit faces all over Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. He also socializes with other CrossFit friends, which is a big step for a man who's spent most of his time talking shop with hockey people.

Hitchcock has learned that those who do Fran together usually stick together, and while NHL players often employ personal trainers and do their own form of conditioning, Hitchcock thinks the unifying nature of a CrossFit WOD is something players could benefit from.

"I think those competitions, those team workouts, I think those things are fascinating for the players," he says. "I know a lot of teams that do that type of stuff and don't even know it's CrossFit, whether it's a team workout of push-ups, sit-ups, burpees, wall-balls, squats—whatever. That's CrossFit. We do it and we don't even know that there's a name for it."

As of press time, the St. Louis Blues were sitting in third in the Central Division and fifth in the Western Conference. The team's winning percentage has increased dramatically since Hitchcock took over in November 2011. Hitchcock's main concern is leading the Blues into the playoffs and beyond, so he hasn't found a local CrossFit gym in St. Louis yet. But he will.

For now, he continues to pull WODs from different sites and brings them into the weight room for coaches' workouts. And he maintains a Paleo diet.

"I want to do this," he says. "I want be on this lifestyle, and I feel like if I'm going to be in a stressful business, I'd better have the energy to handle the stress—and this has given me great energy. So that's the sales job for me: I'm not tired, I'm not exhausted, I'm not tired after I eat, and I feel good."

"I think that resonates throughout the way I coach, too. And if you're positive and you feel good and you've got energy, that's the way you're going to coach. If you look tired and drawn and stressed out, I don't think you would be as good a coach as you can be. So I think this has made me a better coach."

He adds: "I've found a lifestyle that works for me, and I can't say enough positive things. I feel strongly about this. From a physical and mental standpoint, when you feel like I do, it's a good thing because I'm 60 years of age."



About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the Managing Editor of the **CrossFit Journal** and the founder of [CrossFit 204](#).*

THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S

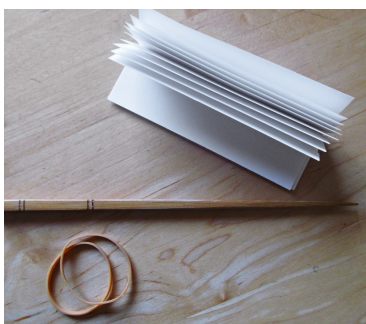
HARD-BOILED HEARTS

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet

[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

We have gingerbread houses for Christmas, barbecued fare on the Fourth of July, turkey for Thanksgiving, chocolate bunnies for Easter and cake on your birthday—but what about Valentine's Day? Start a new tradition and serve heart-shaped food! Your kids (and spouse) will get a kick out of these cute eggs.



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



ingredients

3 eggs

supplies

24 index cards

3 round chopsticks

6 rubber bands

notes

Serve your kids 1-2 eggs alongside chopped strawberries and walnuts for a festive flash of red color!

directions

1. Cover the eggs with water in a pot. Place on the burner and boil for 12 minutes.
2. As the eggs are cooking, divide the index cards into 3 piles of 8 cards. Fold the cards in half the long way.
3. Once the eggs are done, remove from the burner, dump boiling water and fill the pot up with cold water to cool down the eggs.
4. Working while the eggs are still hot, shell them.
5. Place one egg in the center of a pile of index cards. Press a chopstick lengthwise into the egg. Tightly wrap a rubber band around either side of the chopstick, attaching it tightly to the index cards. Repeat this step with each of the eggs.
6. Place the eggs in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
7. After 30 minutes, remove the rubber bands and index cards.
8. Cut the eggs in half and enjoy your hard-boiled hearts!

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

I Am a CrossFitter

Elite weightlifter Erin Okonek explains how she's fitter and happier now that she's doing CrossFit.

By Erin Okonek

February 2012



Courtesy of Erin Okonek

What is CrossFit and why is it better than other workout programs?

By definition, CrossFit workouts are constantly varied functional movements performed at a high intensity. More simply stated, "They are hard as fuck!"

1 of 4



When you feel like giving up, don't.

Yet these attributes do not sufficiently capture the true meaning of CrossFit and inadequately define CrossFit vs. the copious other workout programs people are bombarded with on a daily basis.

Overall, CrossFit is not a workout program; it is a lifestyle. I would personally go even further to state that it is my religion and therapy. Granted, for some of us CrossFit addicts, it's about "chasing the rabbit," competing and becoming a Firebreather. But most importantly, CrossFit, unlike other workout programs, makes us better overall people by creating strong, confident and dedicated individuals.

By suffering through the physical and mental pain of a CrossFit workout of the day and overcoming the deep-seated desire to quit and avoid the pain, each CrossFitter discovers within an individual ready to embrace life's biggest challenges. Every CrossFitter experiences the moment when quitting a workout seems like the best option, when lying down sounds more appealing than fighting the fatigue in the legs, the tightening of the chest and the torn calluses on the hands.

However, it is at that moment that the support of the CrossFit community captivates your heart and helps you find that hidden inner strength to keep moving forward. Other individuals are suffering through the same unbearable workout you are enduring, and they're drenched in even more sweat than you. They're fighting the same desire to quit. By drawing on that community, relief feels reachable as the clock ticks past the halfway point, and each athlete begins to feel the gratification of success.

And just when you feel like lying in a pool of your own bodily fluids is more appealing than getting up and driving your tired ass home, you stand up to high-five and congratulate the room of moms and dads, business professionals, retirees, and fellow athletes who all experienced and overcame the same physical and mental challenges you did. Sometimes those are challenges people did not realize they were capable of overcoming.

While enduring some of life's challenges, I have learned that I want to live every day with a "3, 2, 1 ... Go!" mentality.

I truly believe that all CrossFitters who have drank the CrossFit Kool-Aid have had an ah-ha moment when they realized they were better than they thought they could be. Each individual has left the CrossFit box experiencing the awakening of an inner strength applicable to everyday life, a strength that is not achieved through biceps curls and workout DVDs. Furthermore, sharing this experience with the CrossFit community enhances the experience and is one of the greatest benefits of CrossFit.

Untapped Resources

Personally, CrossFit has "saved" me in every mental sense of the word. Through that ah-ha moment, I have discovered

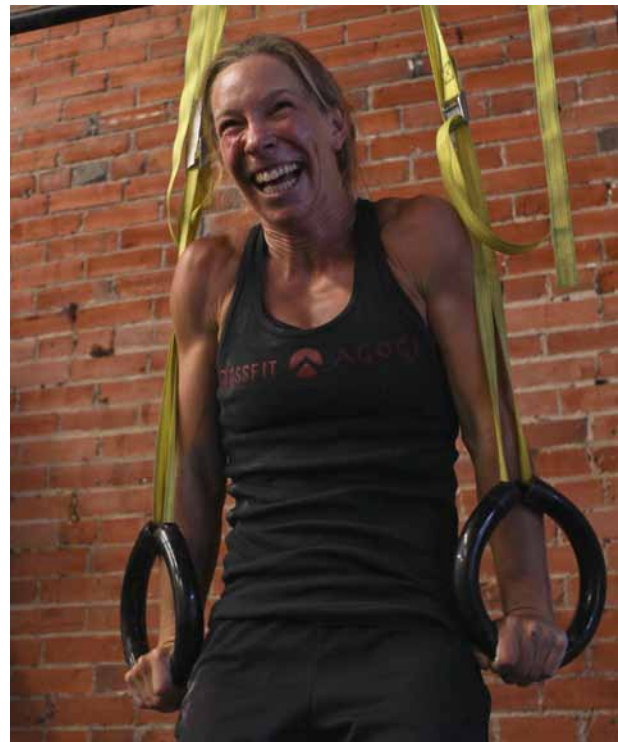
strength within myself to keep moving forward when life has had me at its lowest depths.

I remember the exact moment in a CrossFit WOD when I was sure I would not physically be able to finish a workout. I remember looking around the room and seeing others struggling just as hard, if not harder, than I was. I heard a coach holler at me to get my ass back up on that pull-up bar and felt my heart begin to surge as I took a deep breath and told myself, "Erin, you are not a quitter." That day, I found a determination within I was unaware of. I left the box with a renewed sense of vigor and my head held higher.

While enduring some of life's challenges, I have learned that I want to live every day with a "3, 2, 1 ... Go!" mentality. Each morning, I awake to a new day anxious to live it to its absolute fullest potential. True, I tend to cram 25 hours into a 24-hour period, but I figure if I approach every activity with a CrossFit mentality and put all my effort into life, I can collapse into bed at night knowing I lived the day to its fullest potential.



Once a top-10 international Oly lifter, Okonek now considers herself a CrossFitter.



When it gets hard, you might as well smile and keep going.

Yet this inner strength doesn't even begin to address the physical benefits achieved through CrossFit. For 10 years, I trained for the Olympic Games in the sport of Olympic weightlifting. I was top 10 in the world, had 10 percent body fat, and was not just "strong for a girl"; I was really strong. However, I am more fit now. I might have been capable of throwing 300 lb. overhead, but I ran out of breath walking up a flight of stairs. My diet was high in carbohydrates and low in fat. I was constantly fighting lower-back injuries and was ultimately forced to retire from Olympic weightlifting due to neck surgery.

Overall, I am more fit now than when I was considered an elite athlete.

Today, I might only lift about 85 percent of the impressive weights I once hoisted overhead, but simultaneously I am regularly running 400s, swinging from a pull-up bar and jumping on top of boxes for time. I am flipping tires, dragging sleds and swinging a kettlebell as fast as I can, all the while having a ton of fun. My diet is far from perfect (I may not eat many grains, but I continue to consume them in liquid form), but about 90 percent of the time I eat meats, veggies, fruit and nuts. Overall, I am more fit now than when I was considered an elite athlete, and the variety of the workouts has prevented the injuries that once plagued me as a weightlifter.

Furthermore, this level of fitness is not something accomplished by 20 minutes on the elliptical machine and 3 sets of 10 lifting various weights. Working out in front of a TV does not encourage people to push themselves beyond their comfort limits. Lifting weights will increase strength, yoga may make an individual bendy, and running long distances may increase cardio capacity. However, none of these "workout programs" creates the strong, flexible and metabolically conditioned athlete encountered regularly in the CrossFit world.

And why do we repeatedly come back for more CrossFit insanity? Because, simply stated, it's so stinking fun.

CrossFitters possess an enthusiasm for getting their own asses kicked and want to make sure they are a better person today than they were yesterday. In life, we encounter amazingly passionate, determined and supportive individuals; however, in the CrossFit world, you discover these people in mobs. In surrounding yourself with motivated individuals, you inherently want to be better yourself. This attitude is contagious and is what distinguishes CrossFit from every other workout program out there. CrossFit and CrossFitters are unique in every sense of the word.

So when somebody says to me, "Wow, Erin, you are in great shape. What workout program do you follow?" I respectfully and proudly state, "I don't follow a workout program. I am a CrossFitter."



About the Author

Erin Okonek grew up in Washington state and has always been athletic. She began weightlifting in 1997 with Coach Mike Burgener. Erin graduated from UCLA but put her "big-girl job" on hold to move to the Olympic Training Center to train. She stayed there for six years and competed nationally and internationally in events including the World Championships. She earned a master's in elementary education during this time, and her best lifts were a 209-lb. snatch and 262 lb. clean and jerk. Following an injury to her neck, Erin was forced to retire. She started coaching CrossFit Olympic Lifting Seminars in 2006 and officially drank the Kool-Aid in July 2010. She is one of Coach Burgener's Tier 1 trainers and has Level 1 and CrossFit Gymnastics certificates. She currently works as a scheduler for Matrix, and she loves horseback riding, skiing and snowboarding, and salmon fishing.

THE CrossFit LIFE

My Tribe

Jeremy Striffler applies the concept of tribal culture to CrossFit and examines the five stages of the CrossFit tribe.

By **Jeremy Striffler** TwinTown CrossFit

February 2012



All images: Teddy Kim

On a crisp, cold Saturday morning in early December, I showed up at **TwinTown CrossFit** in Minneapolis, Minn., to participate in the preliminary round of the Winter PR Challenge. The sight of 30-plus members of the gym preparing to do the CrossFit Total welcomed me.



A CrossFit gym is more than a gym: it's a community.

For close to three hours, our group cheered each other on as we made our individual attempts at each element. A countless number of personal records were achieved, and the atmosphere was fun and celebratory and transcended any other experience I have ever had in the past at a gym or on a sports team. I was overwhelmed by the group's commitment to each other's success, which seemed more paramount than any individual worrying about his or her own accomplishments. What I had suspected over my past six months since joining the gym was finally confirmed that day—we are a tribe.

I first read about the concept of tribal culture in David Logan's business tome *Tribal Leadership*. In his book, he states that through history, people have always naturally formed tribes of 20 to 150 people. (Is it a mere coincidence that TTCF recently capped its membership around 150 members?)

Logan says that recognizing our tendency to form tribes is a key to understanding our own history: "Tribes helped humans survive the last ice age, build farming communities, and, later, cities. Birds flock, fish school, people 'tribe.'"

Logan identifies five tribal stages we all fall within, differentiated by tribal culture and language. While in his book he applies this model to the corporate world, its application can be seen within the CrossFit world. It can also explain why we have all benefited from the Stage 5 culture TTCF has developed.

Here are the five stages:

Stage 1: Life Sucks

In the lowest of the stages, people are lost, alienated and alone. It is the stage of gangs and prisons—thankfully, we are far removed from this stage at TTCF.

Stage 2: My Life Sucks

In Stage 2 of tribal leadership, language is focused on the mantra of "my life sucks," and it is where I believe most of us joined TTCF. Left to our own devices, we would skip workouts, make poor decisions about what we eat and drink, and resign ourselves to the fact that life is great for some people, but not for us.

To some degree, we all inquired about TTCF because we were looking for a way to improve our lives. Whether we wanted to lose weight, increase strength or just feel better about our general health and wellness, we sought out a membership in TTCF for some personal gain. Many of us thought, "My life sucks, but I know it can be better." Simply by becoming a member of TTCF, we allowed ourselves the possibility that life could become better at a superficial level thanks to the help of the trainers, the routine and the workouts.

Stage 3: I'm Great

While we knew life was going to be improved by committing to at least two classes a week, our confidence was still shaky. However, the culture of TTCF quickly raised us out of a mindset of "my life sucks" into one of "I am great." Time after time while doing push-ups and sit-ups and squats, the trainers cheered us on and applauded our efforts. This was true no matter whether we were using a green band or one hand to do a pull-up.

If we work hard, we are encouraged to believe in ourselves and know that with time and sweat we are going to do great things.

This is the stage where most tribal cultures remain. People believe themselves to be great and find ways to compete with others. They say, "Did you see how many pull-ups I did?" or, "Dude, I just deadlifted 400 lb.!"

As Logan writes in his book, "People in stage three tribes try to outperform each other and put each other down." But this is not the case at TTCF.



The TTCF tribe.

Stage 4: We're Great

The greatest challenge tribes find is moving from Stage 3 to Stage 4. However, it was an easy transition at TTCF. The key is that the encouragement and support that we receive does not begin and end with the trainers. Rather, most of the cheers and hugs and high-fives come from our fellow members. At TTCF we are united by our values, one of which is having an outward focus.

According to Logan, "We have become a tribe that is aware of our own existence." Because of this mindset we can do remarkable things. We can motivate and inspire each other to reach new personal records every day. Simply attend a clinic or a fundraiser or the Winter PR Challenge to see it in action.

Further, Logan writes, "In stage four groups, when two members of the group meet, they're excited about being with another member of the tribe. People are fully themselves. Everyone seems happy, inspired and genuine. The overall vibe of the room is 'tribal pride,' which is the mood of stage four." Witness the rapport between people at open gym, or just go to a bar on a Saturday night, run into a member of your CrossFit box, and tell me that's not true.

Stage 5: Life is Great

At TTCF, we don't dwell in a language of "life sucks" or "my life sucks." Nor do we tolerate those who simply think, "I'm great"—a narcissistic mindset often employed at chain gyms full of mirrors and preening muscle-heads. Rather, TTCF has created a culture that celebrates everyone.

Logan explains, "People who have ever been part of a stage five tribe—or even seen one at work—often describe it in the same tone of reverence and gratitude they use to tell stories of their kids."

I truly believe that TTCF—and many other CrossFit gyms—is a Stage 5 culture whose values are not based simply in the language of "my" or "ours" but have a global tone. We have developed an ever-growing network of organizations and groups whose values resonate with our own. TTCF members are active participants in Mud Run MS Minnesota, Bike MS and countless other fundraisers, giving their time and money to these great causes. And we support local businesses, like placing group orders for grass-fed cattle. We constantly demonstrate that we care about universal issues.

Built upon the foundation of CrossFit, TTCF has created a Stage 5 tribal culture that focuses on developing the body, mind and soul. And because of it, life is great!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Globo Friendly

Michael Campi explains how to behave as a stranger in a strange land.

By Michael Campi CrossFit Kraken

February 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

The benefits of belonging to an affiliate are clear: quality coaching, a sense of community and working with a group of people who have a common purpose. But what if an affiliate is not available to you for whatever reason?

1 of 5



"When in Rome" does not apply.

There are a couple of routes you can follow: you can start to accumulate your own equipment and build a garage gym, you can follow the never-gym-less philosophy popularized by Ross Enamait, or you can head to the neighborhood Globo.

For the economically challenged or those who don't live near an affiliate, joining a big-box gym is usually cheap. Other perks include showers, and most of them have pools and lots of weights, and some of the people there—although misled by the mainstream fitness philosophy—are quite friendly. So if you are a self-starter with built-in motivation, then it is possible to thrive as a CrossFitter in a Globo environment.

You Are a Guest

Rules of the road: you are in someone else's playground. You should be, if anything, more respectful of the facility than the regular members. Racking weights, putting things back where they belong, wiping down equipment

you use, and generally straightening things up will go a long way toward setting an example of gym etiquette and keeping CrossFit in a positive light in the eyes of the general public. You are a guest in the big box and you should behave as a guest.

**CrossFit is, to me, about
building strength and
strength of character,
and nothing builds
character faster than
humility and respect.**



You can always be creative when planning your CrossFit workout in a Globo Gym.

Despite the idea promoted in “How to get kicked out of your gym in 10 days or less!” published in the September 2002 issue of the *CrossFit Journal*, you might want to behave a little better than that if you want to stay in the gym. CrossFit is, to me, about building strength and strength of character, and nothing builds character faster than humility and respect—although the opportunity to occasionally have some fun at someone else’s expense should not be passed up.

Other things that can interfere with your pursuit are having someone ask if he or she can work in. This rarely happens on a squat rack, but when it does I will merely inform people that I am doing a set with specific rest intervals and specific weights and that I will be done in five or 10 minutes. That will usually suffice. If it doesn’t, I tell them they are more than welcome to work in if they can put their weights on, do their set and get my weights back on in three minutes. They usually decide to come back later or find something else to do.

What You Can Do

Most places have plyo boxes these days, and most have rowers (caveat: don’t join if there is no rower, as the big boxes are notoriously unresponsive when it comes to customer requests for equipment). All of them have squat racks, a pull-up apparatus of some sort and dip stations or (you can bring rings), lots of weights, lots of bars, lots of dumbbells.

More and more CrossFitters are showing up at the Globos. I have, in the last month, seen three trainers from local boxes and several indie CrossFitters. If you are in need of a spotter for a max lift, look around for one of these folks. They are fairly easy to spot. Vibram FiveFingers are a dead giveaway, as is someone doing full range of motion on dips and squats.

What You Can't Do

I have never been to one of these gyms that has bumper plates, so you will have to forgo max-effort O-lifts and dropping weights, as fun as that is.

As a stranger in a strange land, there are concessions you will have to make and irritants you will have to put up with. For me, one of the most unpleasant aspects of these places is the apparent inability of the denizens to re-rack weights. My warm-up is, on a fairly regular basis, finding all the weights I need, putting them in order and getting ready to lift. I am fairly obsessive about having everything neat and tidy to start and leaving everything neat and tidy when I go. If you ask the Globo gremlins when their mom is coming down to clean up after them, they generally will not get the message and will sneer at you. That alone makes it worth the time to ask.

WODs

When looking for workouts that are Globo friendly, the CrossFit main site is a treasure trove. You need only go to the archives for years of WODs, then pick the ones that are easily done in a big box. I tend to stay with more confined workouts that don't take up too much space or use all the equipment. Kipping pull-ups can be done if you are short, but if you are 6'5" like I am, you are either going to do a bent-knee kip or dead-hang pull-ups (which are better for you anyway). The list below is just a start and could go on and on.

**When looking for workouts
that are Globo friendly, the
CrossFit main site is
a treasure trove.**

Other sources of info are the affiliate sites. Most of them post their WODs. Or you can just make stuff up on your own.

Here's a list of workouts to get you started, and if the weights are not indicated, select them based on the stimulus you need from the workout:

1. 3 rounds for time of:
20 burpees
500-meter row
2. 7 rounds for time of:
7 manmakers (40/20 lb.)
7 pull-ups
3. 4 rounds for time of:
5 dumbbell split cleans (challenging weight)
10 knees-to-elbows
15 pull-ups
4. AMRAP in 10 minutes of:
10 deadlifts (body weight)
10 dumbbell push presses (50 percent of
body weight divided by two dumbbells)
5. AMRAP in 10 minutes of:
3 power cleans (135/90 lb.)
6 push-ups
9 air squats
6. 4 rounds for time of:
20 squats
20 push-ups
20 box jumps (24/20 inches)
20 sit-ups
7. Reebok CrossFit Games Open Event 11.2
AMRAP in 15 minutes of:
9 deadlifts (155/100 lb.)
12 hand-release push-ups
15 box jumps (24/20 inches)
8. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 rep rounds of:
Kettlebell or dumbbell swings (53/35 lb.)
Push-ups
Box jumps (24/20 inches)
9. 1 minute to do 20 squats
1 minute row for calories
1 minute to do 15 push-ups
1 minute row for calories
1 minute to do 15 burpees
1 minute row for calories

The score is number of calories. Rest is the time from the finish of the work to the start of the row. Set the rower up on intervals with 1 minute of work and 1 minute of rest.

10. 500-meter row
20 power cleans
200 double-unders
500-meter row

Partition the power cleans and double-unders any way you like or do them straight through.

11. 21-, 15-, and 9- rep rounds of:
Squat cleans (135/95 lb.)
Bar dips

This is Elizabeth with bar dips, and you can also do it as RX'd by bringing a set of rings with you.



Courtesy of Michael Campi

Final Words

You'd do well to remember a few things:

- When training on your own at a Globo Gym, don't forget your weaknesses. No one will be on you about them, so it is up to you to attack them.
- At some point you will probably need some assistance, so seek out help when you need it. With the money you save each month at a Globo, maybe you can afford to hire a CrossFit trainer from one of the local affiliates (if there is one) to check your form and give you some pointers.
- Make friends with the affiliates in your area. Some of them may be open to the idea of letting you come in at a drop-in rate once a month or so.
- Make friends with other people at the Globo. Some of them may approach you if what you are doing looks interesting enough.
- The big thing to remember is this: don't be a putz. Wipe things down. Put things away. If you use chalk, don't get it all over everything.
- Have fun. Who knows? You might get enough people interested to start your own affiliate.



About the Author

Michael Campi is a part-time trainer at Crossfit Kraken in Pasadena, Calif. He has spent time working out at affiliates in Monrovia, Upland, Rancho Cucamonga and Claremont and is now making a go of it at a Globo.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Romancing the Apocalypse

Dan Edelman visits the CrossFit Kids Gauntlet and finds the missing link between fitness and the zombie apocalypse.

By Dan Edelman

February 2012



All images: Michael Brian

My mind zeroed out the moment I was asked to write a piece on the second CrossFit Kids Gauntlet, which went down at the Los Angeles Fitness Expo on Jan. 28 and 29.

I didn't panic, mostly because I didn't have the time or energy to spare. See, I consider my prime mission for CrossFit Kids to be communicating the substance and significance of the program to the CrossFit community (and beyond), but this weekend my main job was to help ensure that the Gauntlet ran as smoothly—and above all safely—as possible. I am lucky and honored to be working among great people, so my work was easy, if seemingly non-stop.



Amid the booths selling the latest get-fit potions, young athletes battled through two days of punishing WODs.

By all accounts, the competition was a success, and at the end of Day 2, we were adrift in that exhilarated state of exhaustion that comes after completing what we believe is essentially a good thing. And I was story-less. But not for lack of potential topics.

**Faster than it takes me to slide
into self-pity during a WOD,
I went numb to the freshly
dressed but same ole, same
ole in myriad booths.**

I mean, after all, I was at the Los Angeles Fitness Expo. Heck, Mike Tyson set up shop right next to us. Something interesting was bound to come from that. But alas, apparently no one recognized the value in obtaining his autograph, so he took his entourage and went home before something suitably Tyson-esque could occur.

Well, shoot, got to be something else fascinating going on beyond the Gauntlet, right? The industry has evolved so much, right? So I thought I would ramble around the vast hall in search of inspiration. But faster than it takes me to slide into self-pity during a WOD, I went numb to the freshly dressed but same ole, same ole in myriad booths—the brash hawking of magical elixirs, charms and rituals and the buffed-out, often oddly colored crowd strutting and roosting between them.

I could've contrasted the blood, sweat and tears of the Gauntlet with the strident, smile-infested exercise demonstrations going on next to us. Coulda made it chock full o' nudge-nudge, wink-wink, lookit-how-legit-we-are yucky-yucks. But that whole smug, us-versus-them quasi-religious zealotry? It just irritates me. And it's stale.

Perhaps one of the remarkable teen athletes at our competition could play my muse. Like the kid who represented one of the OG CrossFit families; he represented extremely well, too. Or how about the young man who traveled from Central America on behalf of the only CrossFit box in Guatemala? He's earned a scholarship to play soccer at Fordham University and, throughout a competition that tested him mightily, comported himself with all the poise of a man twice his age.



CrossFit or zombie-apocalypse training?

Nick was there. Some of you might remember him. He's the 13-year-old whose video-recorded 300-lb. deadlift blew up on FaceBook, revealing (yet again) the breath-taking depth of callousness and mean-spiritedness from people who enter the realm of "social" media and jettison such niceties as civility and compassion. Nick had to battle through some serious anxiety and self-doubt to get out there on the Gauntlet floor. He didn't win a medal this time, but he won his fight.

I could discuss how the Gauntlet competitions are designed to mirror our CrossFit Kids Teen/Advanced classes, beginning with the structure of the Novice, Junior Varsity and Varsity divisions and their respective programming. But I could see that treatment jaggging into a rant on the ills of American youth sports, which I'm not doing. Not yet.

You know who helped judge? Kristan Clever and Rebecca Voigt, two of the best CrossFitters on Earth. How cool is that? Pretty darn cool as far as I'm concerned. Because it wasn't about lending star power or dropping sound bites to the media guys. They volunteered out of generosity and out of appreciation for CrossFit Kids. That's right up the *CrossFit Journal's* alley. But everybody already knows how classy those two role models are.

So after the dust settled from the double-unders and sandbag carries and handstand walks, I left the Los Angeles Convention Center filled with my own anxiety and self-doubt. Were there stories there? Maybe. Probably. But I'm not the guy to tell them.

So I made my way home, thoughts tangling on the rocks of responsibility at home and CrossFit Brand X. And then, driving beneath the pastel Popsicle light of the westerling sun, a story shambled out of the muck: Zombies.

A Metaphor for Our Times

"Fluff!" the haters cry.

OK, bear with me here. Or not; haters hate and we must press on. But this idea ... I realize that, for some time, this idea has been gnawing at my brain like, well, like a zombie.

The living dead have been lurking in our consciousness for decades, but since the turn of the century, the zombie and, more to the point, the concomitant apocalypse, has supplanted the vampire as an iconic pop-culture artifact.

Why the dark fascination?

CrossFit Kids stresses the same mechanics-consistency-intensity teaching progression that underpins adult CrossFit.

Well, I wonder if 9/11 served as an apocalyptic moment for many of us, coming on the heels of the century's turn, rung in as it was with the Y2K bug end-times scenario. Technology and terrorism, politics and excess. The complexity and tempo of our world are stunning, and yet our existence seems so fragile; recall how efficiently Hurricane Katrina peeled away the veneer of civilization. I find more and more that the convolutions of hectic everyday life are haunted by Paul Virilio's conceptual relationship between speed and destruction (10). I often feel like truth is relative and there is no reality, only spin doctorism, Photoshop, status updates, publicity, damage control. And I wonder if others sense this without necessarily being aware of it beyond a sort of simmering angst-filled fatigue.

The zombie apocalypse harkens back to a (mostly delusional) simpler time. The chaos of breakdown sweeps away the technological instantaneity and perpetual and dizzying sociopolitical machinations characterizing almost all our (inter)actions. We no longer worry about absolutely, positively getting there overnight. We no longer project power. We hunker down, dig in and hide behind heavily fortified battlements. Like in days of yore. Norms, mores and rules no longer apply; social life is suspended. We enter a liminal state. Media-free reality returns. Everything is stripped down to one fundamental issue: survival. Our problems are simple, as in basic. And they are embodied in the slow, guileless, inexorable (dis)figure of the zombie.

Yeah, yeah, some of you are asking, "What about the fast-moving zomb? Huh? How does that fit your dubious little dromological metaphor?"

To you smug zombiphiles I have only this to say: in the case of the fast zombie, you better strap down, and you better have your 10 general skills well honed.

Throwdown: The Gauntlet

At the L.A. Expo, teen CrossFitters squared off in up to five WODs (the Novice division hit four of them) over two days in the 5,400-square-foot Gauntlet arena. Pull-ups, wall-ball shots, clean and jerks, squats, bag carries, handstand walks, double-unders, burpees. The programming was simple, elegant, demanding. Nothing elaborate or gimmicky. Any of the WODs could've been pulled directly from the CrossFit Kids main page. In other words, they were the kind of workouts you should see if you wandered into a CrossFit Kids Teen/Advanced class—Varsity handling the adult RX, Junior Varsity and Novice scaled to match capacities.



"Oh, don't mind me. Just spending some time upside down."



A barbell, a rope, an athlete: classic CrossFit.

So it follows that what I witnessed in the Gauntlet arena over those two days was no different than what I see at Brand X on a daily basis. We all know by now that CrossFit Kids is pure CrossFit tailored to a special population: children, ages 3 to 18. We tell parents that we're going to make their kids stronger, faster and more capable at more things than their schoolmates. We tell the parents of jocks that we're going to make their kids better at their sports. And we tell kids they're going to have a blast while getting there.

I saw strong, fast and capable kids in all divisions all weekend long. And I saw kids having a blast confronting the challenge of multiple daunting WODs. It reinforced something about Jeff and Mikki Lee Martin's CrossFit Kids program that I have noted elsewhere (4,5). CrossFit Kids' overarching goal is to pair fitness and fun. When we successfully wed the two, not only do we set kids on the path to super-wellness for life, but we also foster a reorientation of certain sociocultural values among our young clients. Such change falls under three interrelated categories: process over outcome, life lessons and accomplishment over image.

Getting There Is Half the Fun

Kids are immersed in a world of physical activity obsessed with outcome:

- How many sit-ups did you do for the physical -fitness test?
- We must win this match to be the pee-wee champions!
- Did you check the league website to see if your batting average is in the top 10?

CrossFit Kids stresses the same mechanics-consistency-intensity (MCI) teaching progression that underpins adult CrossFit. Kids learn the technique correctly and then execute that correct technique consistently over time across different rep schemes through consistent class attendance before the trainer increases pace and/or loads. When rigorously applied, MCI ingrains a love of process in children; that is, a key dimension of the fitness-fun link is encouraging young clients to find enjoyment in personal progress toward long-term goals as opposed to immediate gratification, particularly in comparison to peers.

The Gauntlet allows teens of all capacities and skill levels to participate and, thus, like a CrossFit Kids class, the WODs are scaled by division. Athletes in the Novice division enthusiastically participate, knowing that their continued progress means that eventually they will compete in the Varsity division.

CrossFit quickly disabuses us of the notion that easier is better.

No Answers in the Back of the Book

Technological advances are wondrous. Consider all the gizmos that we rely so heavily on now and how easy they have made much of our day-to-day existence.

Our children are growing up in a world where they can, for example, tell their personal phones to text their friends, further removing them not only from genuine social relations but also from an understanding of the cause-effect association between toil and reward. Our needs and desires are met with less and less thought, effort and resourcefulness. As a result, children are not being taught basic life lessons, leaving them ill-prepared to handle the parade of stressors and challenges and disappointments that await them on the road to adulthood.

Properly plied and fully embraced, CrossFit quickly disabuses us of the notion that easier is better. CrossFit Kids is no different. The linking of fitness and fun re-connects kids to certain life lessons at risk of being lost in the overwhelming technological surge to make things faster and easier, more comfortable. Within the MCI framework, young athletes reap the rewards of hard work achieved through practical problem solving, goal setting, persistence, integrity and self-discipline.

CrossFit Kids, and by extension the Gauntlet, provides a safe space in which kids confront and overcome challenges that require more self-reliance than is typically asked of children these days, perhaps preventing later adversities from knocking them back on their heels.



Look out, Katie Hogan!

Leaving home for the first time? 3-2-1... go!

Public speaking to a packed house? 3-2-1... go!

Broken heart? Just breathe ...

Scavenging a burned-out derelict Costco? Well, you get the picture.

From Novice through Varsity, I watch athletes use these tools all weekend while competing and preparing to compete. Some of them go after the WOD with a cool predatory detachment, just taking care of business; others dig in and grind out the work, refusing to give up. Ferociousness, ice, distress, fist bumps. Getting it done.

What You Do Speaks so Loudly

"Appearance rules the world." So said Friedrich Schiller (7) some two centuries ago. That morsel certainly seems to hold true today, and, again, I can't escape the sense that our perceived reality is almost entirely manipulated via mass and social media, and children are deeply affected by this influence as it drives societal standards (e.g., 1,2,3,6,8,9). So many kids measure their self-worth by what they see in the mirror measured against what society says is cool, beautiful, tough or popular.

Now let's not kid ourselves, CrossFitters care about how they look; there is definitely a CrossFit aesthetic. But an important element of that aesthetic is rooted in accomplishment. CrossFit Kids recognizes that and asks, "What can your kid do?"

MCI instills in young clients the value of working toward goals; success is understood in terms of process and progress. This occurs in an environment safe for the organic learning of life lessons. And what we find is that these kids begin to define themselves by what they can do rather than by the dictates of a media-saturated society. In that way, the program can help deflect the social pressure projected from the hordes of phony digital images swarming and yammering endlessly from magazines and the Internet.

The Gauntlet showcases what kids can do without glamour and glitz. CrossFit Kids Headquarters sinks its energies into safe and legitimate programming and the logistics to support that. Many exhibitors lure in Fitness



Games athlete Becca Voigt (far right) cheers on one of the CrossFit Kids athletes.

Expo attendees with lavishly coifed booths and free swag. The Gauntlet arena resembles a typical box: some black matting, a lot of plain gray concrete, bumpers and barbells and medicine balls, and a black Rogue rig unadorned but for phantoms of chalk on the bars. There are no bikini-clad beauties or Herculean beefcakes tempting passersby with P.T. Barnum promises of loot and miracles.

**If you can't scale that wall
then, baby, you're just a nicely
presented Happy Meal.**

Our athletes are ordinary kids who look as if they've been randomly plucked from high school hallways. Yet the arena is surrounded by spectators all weekend. Because 3-2-1 ... go! and these kids aren't ordinary at all.

Apocalypse Now

The first thing the zombie apocalypse does is skin away the trappings of civilization. Amid total system collapse, material wealth and corporate power, social status and carefully managed reputations count for nothing. Beauty is beside the point. Years spent at the fitness club may mean you look good with your clothes off, but if you can't scale that wall then, baby, you're just a nicely presented Happy Meal.

The allure of the zompocalypse is that it rids us of putting on and putting up.

Hypermodern everyday life can be tiresome and empty, with truth and reality contingent. In our apocalyptic fantasy, that alienating humdrum gives way to a simple accounting of your capacity to perform real work to solve fundamental, existential (and ravenous) problems. CrossFit Kids outfits children with the gear to do just that. And I believe the Gauntlet will continue to validate the substance of the program and the achievements of our youth.

Yes, I am suggesting that CrossFit Kids is working not only to make children fit for life but also to prepare them for circumstances requiring self-reliance, resourcefulness and grace under fire.

But there's another way to look at the CrossFit Kids program. With dusk settling, I brooded on the link between fitness and fun and teaching children the value of process over outcome, the work-reward connection, and accomplishment over pretense. And as the liminality of a weekend away from home faded and I moved headlong back to the conditional reality of my daily existence, it occurred to me that CrossFit Kids, in unrelentingly chasing after some of the troubling aspects of contemporary society, is itself like the zombie apocalypse.

And how cool is that?

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Courtesy of Dan Edelman

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Mind the Gap

Mikki Lee Martin and Keegan Lee Martin explain how CrossFit Kids Preteen Class is a bridge between Kids and Teen/Advanced classes.

By Mikki Lee Martin with Keegan Lee Martin

February 2012



All photos: CrossFit Kids/Danell Marks

There is a natural division within the gaggle of children in our CrossFit Kids classes. They generally divide by friendships, which tend to be consistent with age. Given the very broad age range we suggest for a CrossFit Kids program (5 to 12), dividing into groups makes sense as it keeps friends together.

Often for the WOD, we end up with an A group and a B group, offering two versions of a workout to engage both age groups. This is repeated with the game, where two versions are offered, one of which is designed to challenge the older and often more capable kids. However, as our CrossFit Kids class grew in size, we began to see the need to divide the group more formally by age to optimize the time with both.

The Preteen Class (ages 10 to 12) acts as a bridge between the CrossFit Kids Class and the Teen/Advanced Class. Although many preteens are beginning to feel they no longer belong with younger kids, they are usually not ready for the emotional and social context of the Teen/Advanced Class. That bears repeating: for optimum success—and CrossFit is all about optimization—putting a child younger than 12 into the Teen Class should be done with extreme caution and definitely only after discussion with both the child and the parents (1). In addition to being too socially and emotionally immature for the Teen/Advanced Class, many 10-12-year-olds are not yet physically prepared.

At CrossFit Brand X, we have Keegan Lee Martin coaching the Preteen Class. He started CrossFitting at 11 and is now 18, and he has attended over 20 CrossFit Level 1 Trainer Courses with his parents and is now a CrossFit Kids Course Trainer. His experience and mentorship provide an extra element of motivation for our youngsters. We highly recommend the use of a trainer who is a mentor and role model for this age group, a high-level CrossFit competitor or a younger coach. The following five paragraphs and sample classes are contributed by Keegan:

The CrossFit Kids Preteen Class follows a format similar to that of the CrossFit Kids Class but adds important components to help ease children into the Teen program. The class begins with a warm-up, moves to focus or skill work followed by a WOD, and then ends with a challenge.

The warm-up is usually dynamic, much like the Teen/Advanced Class; e.g., a short sprint, some hurdle jumps, a monkey-bar pass, a few slow, technique-focused squats and repeat. This is a great platform to keep preteens having fun and allows the trainer to identify kids who may have an injury or need scaling for the WOD.

As soon as the warm-up is finished, the kids will either be taught a new movement as a skill for them to work on or they will focus on a movement they already know (e.g., squat, press, deadlift). We suggest praising the preteens who learn a new skill and program a WOD with those skills to motivate the more experienced kids.



Above all, CrossFit Kids classes have to be fun for young athletes of any age.

Very rarely in the WOD will the format be task oriented. Letting preteens count their own repetitions is a mistake most trainers will make only once! Everyone wants to be done first, so form will degrade and repetitions will be cut roughly in half (sometimes more). The WOD is almost always an AMRAP until the trainer gets tired, usually about six to eight minutes. This allows the trainer to tailor the time frame according to the general state of the kids (e.g., are they showing excessive fatigue?) and eliminates the gaming that sometimes occurs when children know the work time expected of them. The WOD comprises movements that are engaging for the kids along with the movement they practiced in their focus or skill work.

The class-ending challenge is just as important to the preteens as the game is for the younger kids. The only difference here is that the challenge is simply skill work in disguise, prepping them for the Teen/Advanced Class. Sure, every few weeks we play a game, but when we do a challenge, it will consist of things the kids find and need to work on; for example, who can hold themselves in a support on the rings for the longest.

Three Preteen Class Examples

No. 1

Warm-Up

5 wall walk-ups
Balance-beam walk
100-meter run
10 side-to-side hops
Bear crawl

Skill/Focus

Squat

WOD

Tabata squats (8 rounds)
200-meter shuttle run
Half Tabata squats (4 rounds)
400-meter shuttle run

Challenge

10-lb. dumbbell hex-hold walks for distance

No. 2

Warm-Up

Box jump snake
10 squats
Crab walk

Skill/Focus

Pull-ups

WOD

AMRAP until I get tired:
5 pull-ups/monkey hangs
5 handstand push-ups/wall walk-ups

Challenge

180-degree jump on balance beam
Handstand walk for distance

No. 3

Warm-Up

20 squats
Monkey-bar pass
100-meter run

Skill/Focus

Pistol squats

WOD

AMRAP until I get tired:
2 pistol squats/20 squats
4 double-unders/40 single-unders
6 hang power cleans

Challenge

Hoover Ball

The addition of the Preteen Class has been a resounding success at CrossFit Brand X. Parents have told us that it has reinvigorated their children, especially those with younger siblings in the CrossFit Kids class. After only three months, we have an average class size of 18 preteens. Many kids have asked, "When can I get into the Preteen Class?" For most, the answer is simple: once you are 10.

For one 9-year-old with four years of exposure to CrossFit and beautiful movement, her maturity, capacity and quality of movement gained her early entrance to the class.

It is a real motivator for kids to be part of the next step up and to see and test their overall progress with their peers.



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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Ones to Watch

Dark horses make the Reebok CrossFit Games Open a great race. Hilary Achauer talks to two of many who are hoping to get to the regional level.

By Hilary Achauer

February 2012



All images: Michael Brian-www.michaelbrianphoto.com

Skeleton racing is a sport that involves hurtling headfirst down an icy track at speeds of more than 70 miles per hour with no steering or braking mechanism. It's something nobody in his or her right mind would do.

When Ryan Fischer heard about an open call for a spot on the Olympic skeleton team in 2007, he signed up to try out right away.

Fischer spent his high-school years playing lacrosse and football, running track and cross-country, and competing as a world-ranked BMX racer. After high school, he decided he wanted to fly helicopters, and he was finishing up helicopter-pilot school in Hawaii when he heard about the tryouts for the skeleton team.

After easily passing the recruiter's test, Fischer moved to Utah to start practicing the sport. He made it to the Olympic trials for both skeleton and bobsleigh in 2010. He also found time to fit in competing in the national championships for Olympic weightlifting, a sport he did in the summer.

Fischer kept getting hurt with skeleton and bobsleigh racing, tearing his hamstring and later his ACL, so in 2010 he was looking for something new when he wandered into Ute CrossFit, Tommy and Bobby Jo Hackenbruck's gym in Salt Lake City, Utah. Given Fischer's Olympic-weightlifting background, it wasn't long before he was coaching and then competing.

Fischer had big hopes for regionals in 2011 and even had thoughts of competing at the Games. He placed 38th in the Southwest region in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Open and went on to compete at regionals. However, as many new CrossFit athletes discover, doing a workout on the competition floor is a very different experience from working out at a gym.

Fischer was intimidated by the well-known, experienced CrossFit athletes competing next to him.

"The big stage didn't work in my favor," Fischer said. "I was really nervous, and my game plan went out the window."

Fischer placed 31st at the Southwest Regional and went back to the gym to build up his strength and experience.

A Natural

Like many successful CrossFit athletes, 31-year-old Tiffany Hendrickson has a background in gymnastics. She earned a full-ride gymnastics scholarship to Boise State. She was the Big West champion on the floor in 1999 and 2000 and holds records at Boise State for the balance beam and floor exercise. After college, Hendrickson moved to England for four years with her husband, where she focused on raising her three children, who are now 8, 6 and 3 years old.

Hendrickson remained active with rock climbing and cycling, but nothing fueled her competitive fire until she saw a CrossFit gym near her home in Utah in February 2010. Hendrickson didn't know anybody who did CrossFit, but she was immediately hooked.

"I was never satisfied (with a sport) until I found CrossFit. I feel like it tapped into my strength and my muscle memory from gymnastics," Hendrickson said.

Hendrickson got a certificate and started teaching classes, balancing CrossFit with her responsibilities as a full-time mom of three. She has always been drawn to competition, so when the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Open came around, she was excited to throw her hat in the ring.



Fischer has learned how to stick to his game plan in the heat of competition, something he had trouble doing last year.

She made such a splash—finishing seventh in her region—that the CrossFit Games site filmed a profile on her, calling her an athlete to watch. Concerned that she wasn't at the level of some of the other individual athletes, Hendrickson decided to compete on the Wasatch CrossFit affiliate team. Her team started strong but came out too fast and faltered on the team Amanda workout.

Hendrickson had quarter-sized rips in her hands going into that workout, and she couldn't do the muscle-ups, hurting her team's progress. They finished in 10th place, not good enough to earn a spot at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

After regionals, Hendrickson took a short break and then dove headfirst into training, her eyes on 2012.



Who says you can't do CrossFit in a skirt?

Welcome to 2012

I met Fischer when he walked into the box where I train, CrossFit Pacific Beach in San Diego, Calif. He had just moved to California and was looking for a job as a full-time CrossFit trainer. Fischer didn't know anyone at the gym, and perhaps feeling like he had something to prove, he started throwing out talk of a close-to-two-minute Fran time. The owners of the gym raised their eyebrows and looked doubtful.

Everyone kept a close eye on Fischer over the next few weeks and came to realize that he was exactly as good as he said. It wasn't long before Fischer won everyone over with his enthusiasm for CrossFit, his goofy sense of humor, and his seemingly endless capacity for hard work.

One day, after a workout, Fischer decided to go for a run.

"I started running, and pretty soon I realized I had run 15 miles," he said. "I decided to keep going and make it a marathon, and I finished in under 3:40."

Fischer later moved to L.A. and started working there as a trainer in early 2012.

Fischer proved himself even further when he qualified for the OC Throwdown, where Games athletes including Blair Morrison, Tommy Hackenbruck, Gabe Subry, Peter Egyed, Taylor Richards-Lindsay, Kristan Clever, Rebecca Voigt, Lindsay Valenzuela and Katie Hogan were invited to compete.

Around this time, Hendrickson competed in a local competition in Utah and earned first place overall. Impressed by her performance, Tommy Hackenbruck invited her to compete in California.

At first, Hendrickson had difficulty getting used to seeing her name next to CrossFit stars like Clever, Voigt and Hogan, a feeling that intensified when she checked in and there was a problem with her registration.

"Are you sure you're elite?" asked the person checking her in, trying to find her name.

"I was really anxious," said Hendrickson. "I saw all of those big names, and I wondered if I belonged there." Eventually everything was sorted out, and Hendrickson got ready to compete.



Hendrickson puts her gymnastics background to good use on the pull-up bar.

At the end of the first day, Fischer was in third place, while Hendrickson was in eighth. Both went to bed that night knowing they had to perform exceptionally well the next day to move up in the ranks.

Next Stop: The Reebok CrossFit Games Open

Hendrickson caught my eye on Sunday, when I watched her blow through handstand push-ups, overhead squats and pull-ups while wearing a bright purple skirt. Hendrickson, at 5 foot 3 and 120 lb., is small and quick but surprisingly strong. She moves with grace and confidence.

As I watched her work, I overheard someone next to me say, "You've got to be good if you're going compete in a skirt."

And indeed she was good. She finished fourth overall, while Fischer placed second. Both Hendrickson and Fischer are focused on the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open, then regionals, and then the Games.

"I am trying to be consistent with my programming," Hendrickson said, "and trust my coach. I am increasing my strength training and overtraining on purpose. I'm going to ride the overtraining wave, and then dial back as we get closer to regionals."

Hendrickson typically works out two times a day. Sometimes she does intervals at the track, and some days are more gymnastics-based. She reserves Wednesday for active recovery—a run, bike or easy row.

Fischer trains between two and five times a day. He said he won't change his schedule leading up to regionals.

"Last year I took it easy before regionals, and I wasn't in my groove," Fischer said. "The day before the OC Throwdown I did a triple—three workouts in a day—and I felt great."

Keep an eye on Hendrickson and Fischer throughout the Open, which starts Feb. 22, 2012.



Courtesy of Hilary Achauer

About the Author

Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor with a background in marketing and communications. An amateur-boxer-turned-CrossFitter, Hilary specializes in health and wellness content, focusing on emerging fitness trends. Her writing has been featured in a leading online parenting magazine as well as a number of travel and lifestyle publications. She is an editor for Frommer's travel guides and writes websites, brochures, blogs and newsletters for universities, start-ups, entrepreneurs, accounting and financial service organizations, and management consultants. She lives in San Diego with her husband and two small children and spends most of her free time at CrossFit PB. To contact her, visit HilaryAchauer.com.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Crossroads of Ourselves

Ryan Carbone looks at the origins of the words “cross” and “fit” and finds an unexpected deeper meaning.

By Ryan Carbone

February 2012



All images: James Carbone

Words are powerful. They can be employed in an incalculable number of ways to achieve any number of ends. They can motivate, inspire, make you laugh, make you cry, or cultivate your dreams or crush them.



At a crossroads, choose wisely and then hit the rails at full speed.

The power of words, however, rests on our capacity to understand them. If we understand the meaning of a word, then we can respond appropriately to its use. If we don't fully comprehend the meaning of the word, then we are simply left to languish in its mystery.

The more I thought about this, the more I realized that I have absolutely no idea what a lot of words actually mean. The only way to truly define these words is to look at where they come from. Delve into the origins of words, and you will unlock their vast potential.

Let's take the word "humility."

This is one of those words I've heard in varying contexts, but one that is difficult to define. Humility: the act of being humble? Try this on for size. The origin of "humility" is the Latin word *humus*, meaning "soil"—specifically rich, dark, organic soil. When a seed is planted in this fertile soil, it transforms into something greater. The acorn becomes the oak tree, and the pumpkin seed becomes the pumpkin. This fertile soil, or humus, has profound transformative and nurturing capacities, but only to the extent that the seed is willing to accept them. Humility is the capacity and willingness to acknowledge that we are always capable of learning and developing.

So let's take a look at the word "CrossFit." Greg Glassman defines CrossFit as "constantly varied high-intensity functional movement." This definition is adequate in defining what CrossFit is, but an etymological investigation reveals more.

The word "cross" is derived from the Latin *crux*, which—and this is no joke—loosely translates to "torture, trouble and misery." If you've ever done Fran, this definition seems spot on. Digging deeper, I discovered *crux* is derived from the Latin *crux interpretum*, which was used by scholars to mark a point in a text that was seemingly impossible to interpret. The literal translation is actually a "crossroad of interpreters."

The word "fit" is derived from the Old English *fitt*, meaning "an adversary of equal power." We all have an adversary of equal power we combat every day: ourselves.

CrossFit, by definition, is then the "crossroads of ourselves."

In the gym, we are confronted with the "crossroads of ourselves" when we decide if we are going to push through and finish the WOD or whether we are going to quit. CrossFit gives us the opportunity to cultivate that part of our being that doesn't give up and forges on.

This definition, "crossroads of ourselves," captures the essence that is CrossFit. To many, it is just the term that defines the fitness regimen we follow, but to me it is a term that captures a universal reality of our lives. We are perpetually standing at the crossroads of ourselves, and CrossFit, maybe in just some small way, can serve to remind us of that and cultivate our capacities to choose wisely.

Words are hauntingly powerful and have transformative capacities that few of us recognize. I challenge you in your WOD today, tomorrow or next week to perceive CrossFit not by its technical definition but by its deeper meaning. You won't be disappointed in your performance, and I'm predicting a PR.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Role of the Bench Press in Strength Training

Bill Starr on what bench pressing can do for athletes
in any sport—even Olympic weightlifting.

By Bill Starr

February 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

The bench press has always been a part of the routine for bodybuilders and strength athletes. It's an easy exercise to learn and do and takes a minimum of equipment.

When I first embarked on my quest for greater size and strength, I wanted to include bench presses in my routine, but I had a problem. There were benches available at the first two weight rooms that I trained in once I finished basic training. They were no more than flat benches used for sitting in locker rooms. The trouble was there was no one else using the weight rooms to assist me in getting the bar from the floor, then lying down on the bench, doing my set, then getting it back to the floor.

But I was determined to do benches, so I would power-clean the weight, straddle the bench, sit down, lie back, and proceed to do my reps. When I finished, I would either stand back up with the bar or lower it over the end of the bench to the floor.

This worked—to some degree. I was only able to use light weights. A couple of times, I tried to use more than usual and had difficulty standing back up with the weight after I had done a set. And when I lowered it back over the end of the bench to the floor, I could feel undue stress all through my arms and shoulders. I decided to give up on the idea of doing bench presses until I was in a better situation, which finally occurred at my third duty station in Keflavik, Iceland. Actually, it was on a radar site about 20 minutes from Keflavik.

There, I had both a bench and several training mates. They would hand me the weight, I'd do my set, and then they would relieve me of the bar and plates. It worked out well.

By this time, I had become interested in the three Olympic lifts: press, snatch, and clean and jerk. I believed the benches would help me improve my overhead lifts, and they did almost right away.

While I put much more emphasis on the press and jerk than I did on the bench, the exercise continued to be a part of my routine all through my Olympic-lifting career. I was in a minority in terms of benching; most Olympic lifters in the '60s shunned benches. They didn't want any additional body weight to be laid down on their chests because the pectoral muscles do very little in overhead lifting. They preferred to spend their time doing more overhead work and weighted dips, as well as doing isotonic-isometric contractions in the power rack when isometrics were the craze in the early part of that decade.

There was also the general opinion that the bench press tended to tighten up the shoulders, making them less flexible, and flexibility is crucial to success in the Olympic lifts. The standard of strength from the time I first got interested in physical culture up until the early '70s was the overhead press.

"How much can you press?" was the question you were asked when someone wanted to know how strong you were.

How Much Ya Bench?

Then several things happened that changed things dramatically. First, there was the emergence of the sport of powerlifting. Competitive weightlifters who were having difficulty mastering the quick lifts found that they could utilize their strength much more readily by doing less dynamic lifts: bench press, deadlift and back squat. Nearly every pioneer in powerlifting was a former Olympic lifter. Except for a few rare exceptions, these athletes stopped doing overhead presses completely and spent more time improving their benches.

The next event that influenced strength training's shift away from the overhead press to the flat bench came in 1972, when the International Olympic Committee dropped the press from official competition.

Finally, this is when strength training for athletes really began to grow. High schools and colleges across the country soon had strength programs, usually run by an assistant football coach. Because the overhead press had gotten some bad press when it was eliminated from Olympic competition (it was supposedly a high-risk exercise for the lower back) coaches opted to go with the much safer flat bench.

**For the record, it was never
proven that overhead presses
were, in fact, risky to the
lower back.**

For the record, it was never proven that overhead presses were, in fact, risky to the lower back. The real reason the Olympic Committee dropped the lift was because the judging had gotten completely out of control. The press became a political tool, and instead of cleaning up the officiating, they took the easy way out.

In a few short years, the standard of strength shifted from the overhead press to the bench press.



The bottom position should be near the end of the breastbone, and the bar will sweep back slightly as you press it up.

"How much can you bench?" is the question now asked to find out how strong a person might be. Personally, I believe knowing a person's incline, front-squat or deadlift numbers are more important when I want to know a person's level of strength.

Here is a truism in strength training: if you constantly utilize bad form, sooner or later you're going to pay the price.

There's no doubt that the bench press is king. It's the lift used to test athletes in nearly every sport. In football, when a player is being recruited, how much he can bench is listed right next to his 40-yard-dash time. That makes the bench very important. Getting a free ride to a D1 school is worth a small fortune.

Because the bench press carries such significance to college recruiters, there is a great deal of pressure on high school athletes to record a high number on that lift. And sadly, that means anything goes: just get it to arms' length and lock it out. Form is not a factor. Excessive bridging, rebounding the bar off the chest, squirming, twisting ... all

are game. Many coaches and parents actually encourage this sloppy technique, even to the point where an athlete is almost standing on his head to move the weight through the sticking point.

However, here is a truism in strength training: if you constantly utilize bad form, sooner or later you're going to pay the price. Whenever improper technique is practiced regularly, the athlete is placing his wrists, elbows, shoulders and rotator cuffs in jeopardy. If the lifter bangs the bar off his chest in order to get a jump-start on the exercise, eventually he will do damage to his pecs and most likely also irritate his elbows and shoulders in the process.

Also, the rash of rotator-cuff injuries can be traced to the emergence of popularity of the bench press in the '70s. Before that time, rotator-cuff injuries were unheard of. That's because heavy overhead pressing strengthens those delicate groups. One of the most popular kinesiology and applied anatomy texts of the '60s, written by Philip Rasch and Roger Burke, does not even mention the rotator cuffs. The muscle group only gained prominence after the bench press became the upper-body lift of choice.

Yet, the bench press is not the true villain. When done precisely it is an excellent exercise to strengthen the arms, shoulders and pecs. It's only when form is thrown out the window and when it's severely overworked that problems arise. It needs to be understood that the wrists, elbows and shoulder joints are rather delicate, and whenever they are repeatedly abused with improper technique, often with heavy weights, those areas will become traumatized.

Should the athlete continue to ignore the warning signs and keep pounding away using ugly form, he may injure himself so severely that he will be forced to stop benching altogether. And in some cases, he will have to cease doing any strength training. It's hard to do much in the weight room with a torn pec or a serious elbow injury.

Bridging and Bouncing Are Banned

One reason so many athletes utilize poor technique on the bench is that the lift is thought to be so easy to perform. You lie down on a bench, take the bar from the uprights, lower it to your chest, then press it to lockout. Nothing complicated about that. So coaches let the players figure out what to do on the bench by themselves, while they spend their times teaching the power clean and back squat, because those lifts are much more complicated.

But proper technique on the bench press is equally important as it is for the other exercises in the program. In truth, every exercise should be done perfectly, even those seemingly tame ones like curls and straight-arm pullovers. If any movement is done incorrectly, eventually trouble will arise.



The false grip (top) is dangerous and puts the wrists in a bad position. Wrap the thumb and keep the wrists straight.

Another reason why every athlete needs to know how to bench correctly is because it's the most dangerous exercise in all of strength training. During the execution of the bench press, the bar is suspended directly over the athlete's face and chest, which means a major mistake can be disastrous. Every year, a number of young men seriously hurt themselves doing bench presses, usually by allowing the bar to slip out of their hands or by getting stuck with a weight on their chest when no one is around to assist them.

While a wide grip may indeed result in a higher bench, it also has a higher risk factor.

It's important for a young athlete to learn the proper technique on the bench press from the get-go. Then no bad habits need changing. I've found that once a person has been benching in a certain style for a long time, he will never change it very much.

I'll go over the form points for the bench press. Follow them and you will not only end up benching more weight, but you'll also greatly reduce any risk of injury.

I'll start with the grip. First and foremost, always use a secure grip with your thumbs around the bar. In other words, no "false grip," where the thumbs are not around the bar. The false grip is far too dangerous. Those athletes who had the bar slip from their grasp were all using a false grip. I know the argument exists that the false grip helps the lifter get more upward thrust, but the risk factor is much too great to even consider that type of grip. Besides, with a secure grip, the lifter is able to guide a bar back slightly to keep it in the correct groove much better than with the false grip. It's better to be safe than sorry.

Where to grip the bar depends to some degree on your shoulder width, but the best guideline that I have found is this: grip the bar so that your wrists are directly above your elbows. This means that your forearms will always be vertical. The reasoning behind this is basic. If your grip is too close or too wide, you're giving away some power because you're pressing the weight laterally rather than vertically.

I'm aware that many coaches teach their lifters to use a very wide grip so that they work their outer pecs more. However, I much prefer to use a closer grip so that the deltoids and triceps handle the bulk of the effort. Pecs come into play in very few athletic endeavors; triceps and deltoids are utilized in every sport. And while a wide grip may indeed result in a higher bench, it also has a higher risk factor. The only athlete who ever got injured on the bench in my 11 years at Hopkins was one who used a wide grip. And he had torn his pecs twice, once with a max single attempt and the other time with high reps.

The grip that I have every lifter try at first, regardless of his size is this: grip an Olympic bar and extend your thumbs until they barely touch the smooth center in the middle of the bar. If you then find that your forearms aren't vertical, make the necessary adjustments.

Another form point that is often overlooked: your wrists must remain absolutely straight throughout the exercise. Many get in the habit of twisting or cocking their wrists during the execution of the lift, but this is incorrect on two counts. First, all the twisting and cocking of the wrists diminishes the power generated by the chest, shoulders and arms. Second, the unnecessary movement of the wrists can easily ding the small joints, and an injured wrist can take forever to heal because it's so small and is utilized in so many ways.

Should you find you're cocking your wrists or they are moving around when you bench, start taping them. Trainer's tape works well. Make the tape tight enough to hold your wrists firmly but not so tight that you cut off circulation. A bit of trial and error will allow you to figure out just how to tape your own wrists. The tape will help keep your wrists from moving about and protect them from being hurt.

Speaking of safety, always use a spotter when benching. However, I realize that there will be times when a spotter isn't available. I've benched frequently without any spotters, and I've also gotten stuck, so one of the things I teach everyone learning how to bench is what to do if you do get trapped under the bar.

Rule No. 1: do not hesitate. Once you know your goose is cooked, react. If you wait, even just a few seconds, you'll deplete your energy. Immediately tip one side of the bar so that the plates fall off. That will cause the bar to flip and unload the other end of the bar. It's noisy and not particularly pleasant, but it's a far cry from the alternative.



It's not pretty, but learning how to dump the weight will save you from getting trapped if you're benching without a spotter.

The first time I got pinned under a weight, I lay there wondering what I should do. Finally, thinking of nothing better, I rolled the bar down off my chest and over my abs until I was able to sit up and place the bar on the floor. My chest and abs were black and blue for a week. But that's how I learned most of my lessons in the weight room: hard experience.

Whenever I hear someone shouting, "It's all you! All you!" in a gym, I know for certain that the lifter is getting help.

Back to the spotter. His job is to assist the lifter in taking the bar off the uprights, assist him in putting it back safely when the set is finished, and help the lifter in case he gets stuck. His job does not include aiding the lifter in moving the weight through the sticking point. This is what I call the "All-You Syndrome." Whenever I hear someone shouting, "It's all you! All you!" in a gym, I know for certain that the lifter is getting help. To me, it's like helping a runner make it to the finish line in a footrace. My rule in a weight room is this: if the spotter touches the bar, no matter how slightly, before it's completely locked out, that rep does not count. It's as simple as that. Strength training is not a team sport.

Set Up Right

Next, your feet. Benching starts with the feet. Many are not aware of this and let their legs dangle or merely let their feet land wherever they choose. When the weights get demanding, their feet move around, sometimes even leaving the floor.

Your feet provide the foundation for the bench press. When the bar hits the sticking point, which it will sooner or later, power can be brought up from that solid base into the chest, arms and shoulders. However, without a strong foundation, no source of additional power is available.

What typically happens is the lifter begins to squirm and bridge to set the bar in motion again, but these are major form breaks and very much against the rules should they be done in competition.

In this same vein, instead of just lying back down on the bench, squirm down into the bench until you become part of it. Lock your shoulder blades and glutes into the fabric, and squeeze your feet tightly to the floor. And keep them that way throughout the exercise.

Once you have a firm grip, your body is locked into the bench, and your feet are planted on the floor, have the spotter help you take the bar off the uprights. I've found that it goes more smoothly to have a prearranged signal, such as, "Give me the weight on three. One, two, three. Got it." And when you finish, make absolutely sure the spotter has full control of the bar before you let go. I advise that you keep pressure on the bar until you see it placed in the uprights.

Lower, Pause, Explode

With your wrists locked, lower the bar in a controlled manner until it touches a point right at the end of your breastbone. When the bar touches your chest, pause for a 1-second count. If you learn to do this from the very beginning, you'll be way, way ahead when you start handling demanding poundages or decide to enter a powerlifting contest.



Bridging is not acceptable. Keep your feet flat and your butt locked to the bench.

After the brief pause, drive the bar upward forcefully. While learning how to guide the bar upward in the proper line, this thrust needs to be controlled. But once you are confident with the line, punch the bar like a boxing jab. What most do is drive hard into the bar, then they sort of hesitate, maybe to see if they pressed it high enough to finish before applying more power. What you want to do is blend the middle right into the start. As soon as you drive the bar off your chest, lean back down into the bench and stretch the bar higher. When you coordinate the start with the middle in a dynamic fashion, it will climb right to the finish. Never let up the pressure on the bar until it's completely locked out, then signal to your spotter to take it.

The bar should blast off your chest in a straight line. Then it will glide backward at the conclusion of the movement so that it ends up above your chin or neck. However, the bar should not travel any further back than that. It will move upward in an arc, but only a slight one.

You need to hold your breath during the execution of the bench press. Inhaling or exhaling while the bar is in motion forces your rib cage to relax, thereby preventing you from maintaining a rock-solid foundation. Here's the correct breathing procedure: take the bar from the rack, lock your arms, set yourself and take a deep breath. Lower the bar to your chest, pause, drive the bar to lockout and exhale. If you exhale too soon, that rep is going to be much harder to complete. Do the same thing for all the reps.



Holding your breath during the entire bench press will help you maintain a solid foundation, essential when pressing big weight.

It only takes a few seconds to bench-press a weight, so holding your breath is no big deal. This may not seem to be important, but it is. Holding your breath throughout the lift ensures that your diaphragm stays locked, creating positive intrathoracic pressure.

From the beginning, learn how to lower the bar in a controlled manner, more slow than fast. This control keeps the bar from crashing onto your chest and also helps you position it in the exact same spot every time. It also helps you keep your body extremely tight.

When I first started doing bench presses, I noticed an instant improvement in my overhead lifts.

Doug Young, the great powerlifting world champion of the '70s, was a master at lowering the bar for the bench press. It would move in slow motion until it sat solidly on his chest. Then he'd get the signal to press and the weight shot up faster than the eye could follow.

Sets and Reps

Now I want to move on to programming the bench press. Because this lift is of more value to football than it is to any other sport—except powerlifting, of course—I have football players bench twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays. Mondays are heavy days, so they alternate 5 sets of 5 with a back-off set of 10 with 3 sets of 5, followed by 2 sets of 3 plus another back-off set of 10. On Fridays, I use this formula: 4 sets of 8, then 2 sets of 2. This helps them increase their overall workload while touching bases with more intensity.

This idea works well for throwers in track and field, wrestlers, rugby players and others who benefit from stronger pecs. But what about Olympic lifters? Should they avoid the bench press or does it have merit in that sport?

When I first started doing bench presses, I noticed an instant improvement in my overhead lifts: press and jerk. It makes sense. The bench press works the deltoids and triceps, and those muscle groups are certainly utilized in pressing and jerking. And the different angle hits all the muscles involved in a slightly different manner.

Bob Bednarski had not done any bench presses for a very long time. When there was a long break from contests in the fall, I would do benches once a week for six weeks, then only do them about once every month during season. One warm-up set of 5, then all singles to limit. Bednarski decided to do them with me. At that time he was still recovering from a dislocated elbow he had sustained at the Pan-Am Games in Winnipeg, Canada. We both added 5 lb. to our final lift each week, so he increased his benching strength by 30 lb. Doesn't seem like much, does it? But that little extra strength was enough to help him press a world record of 451.5 in Washington, D.C., in May of 1968. The next month he cleaned and jerked 486.5 for a world record at the Senior Nationals.

Two other York lifters used the bench press to help them set world records in the press. Russ Knipp broke the world mark several times in the middleweight division, and Ernie Pickett smashed the world record in the heavyweight class at the '68 YMCA Nationals in Chicago with a 445 effort in February.

Keep two things in mind about the bench press in regards to Olympic lifters and other strength athletes who are concerned about their shoulder flexibility and not adding any additional weight to their chests. First, keep the reps low. Singles and doubles will strengthen the muscles involved without making them any bigger. Doing higher reps will tend to increase the size of the pecs, so if you don't want that, stay with low reps. Second, spend time stretching out your shoulders. Stretch them after every set, and do more after the session is over and even more later on that night.

What it boils down to is the bench press is really no different from any other exercise in strength training. When it's done with perfect technique and utilized in your program to meet your overall goals, it's definitely a valuable asset.

Overwork it or use sloppy form and it will become a detriment. It's simply a matter of how you deal with the lift.



Jody Forster

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

You Were Saying ... With Tammy Shea

Tammy Shea talks about *Terminator* movies and religion-based squat cues.

By E.M. Burton

February 2012



All images: Sue Williams/Deja Sue Photography

The *CrossFit Journal* is pleased to present the next in a series of profiles designed to help you get to know some of the best people in our community.

1 of 3

Tammy Shea

I first heard about CrossFit from ... Alan Cook ... I walked into the local gym after a long run to stretch and there was a new guy in there doing things that I had not ever seen before ... so being the shy person I am ... I walked over and asked what the eff he was doing? He explained that he was a Level 1 trainer and he was doing CrossFit ... I was his first client at what is now Hypoxia CrossFit.

My first CrossFit workout was ... I remember a sledgehammer and a tire and a kettlebell ... The rest is just a blur.

If I could force one person to do Heavy Fran, it would be ... a bodybuilder/gym owner friend of mine that thinks ladder work is hard.

My favorite workout is ... Murph. With a weight vest.



Tammy Shea: trainer and princess warrior.

The person I would most like to WOD with is ... Kristan Clever.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be ... a princess warrior.

When I grow up, I want to be ... a healthy and happy princess warrior.

The most rewarding thing about training people is ... watching an athlete's confidence grow as they are able to do their first pull-up or double-under, ... seeing the sense of accomplishment on their face.

My favorite movie character is ... Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*.

The greatest challenge in coaching is ... getting tired and cranky people to believe that what you eat affects your performance and mood.

The movement I find hardest to teach is ... air squat. (It's) unbelievable how hard it can be to help someone find their heels; seems like most of the population is quad dominant.

The thing that makes a successful coach is ... a solid foundation of the basics and being able to teach them well.

My secret identity is ... my athletes call me "Taminator."

The thing I value most is ... my family.

My motto is ... you can't ... yet!"

The most outrageous thing I've seen someone do during a WOD is ... tip over sideways during a push-up: one arm pushed up and the other had total failure. I still giggle when I think about it.

The place I'd most like to visit is ... Mike's Gym.

The CrossFit trainer/coach I most admire is ... Greg Glassman, of course.

The non-CrossFit person I most admire is ... my grandmother.



A "lifting platform" of another kind.

The thing I have the most patience for is ... newbies getting through the first few weeks.

The thing I have the least patience for is ... someone screwing around when they have a weight overhead.

When I have a challenging athlete on my hands, I ... like to make them work on their weaknesses. It seems to knock them down a few pegs.

A favorite book is ... *The Sweet Potato Queens' Book of Love* by Jill Conner Browne.

More than anything, I fear ... heights. Rope climbs are very challenging for me.

My most guilty pleasure is ... dark chocolate.

A dream location for a CrossFit box would be ... Costa Rica.

I'm really looking forward to ... competing as a master. I am 43 now and am tired of getting my butt kicked by the twenty- and thirtysomethings.

My favorite coaching cue is ... knees out, Catholic girl!

The most inspiring person/athlete I've ever worked with is ... a 70-year-old woman named Judy. I hope to still be in her kind of shape when I am that age.

If I could have only one CrossFit T-shirt, it would say ... Focus: Don't blow your WOD!

Tammy Shea spent three years training at Hypoxia CrossFit in Ouray, Colo., and now calls Mandeville, La., home. She's now training out of her garage. Contact her on [Facebook](#).



THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



BUTTER BALLS

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

overview

The kids will surely be talking about the colorful combinations of this dish—and hopefully they'll be eating it too! Butternut squash shows us its beautiful color while the meatballs add some valuable protein and savory flavor.

makes 6-8 servings

ingredients

- 1 small butternut squash
- 1-2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 package organic ground turkey
- 3 spicy Italian sausages, casing removed
- ½ cup almond meal
- 1 organic egg
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tsp. dried fennel seeds
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 can organic diced tomatoes, no salt added

notes

Serve warm. Add a leafy green vegetable to balance the meal and add even more color!

directions

squash

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. Peel, seed and cut butternut squash into 1.5-inch cubes.
3. In a bowl, toss squash with a small amount of olive oil until coated, then spread onto baking sheet and bake for approximately 20 minutes or until squash is fork tender. Set aside.

(The above steps may be done ahead of time.)

meatballs

1. Turn oven on broil.
2. In a large bowl, combine ground turkey, sausages, almond meal, eggs and seasonings. Mix well with hands.
3. Using a spoon to scoop the mixture, roll with hands into 1-inch balls and place on baking dish.
4. Brown meatballs under broiler for approximately 2 minutes, then turn heat to 350 and move meatballs to middle oven rack. Cover with foil and bake for 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Remove meatballs from oven, then pour tomatoes over top. Place uncovered back in oven for 5 minutes.
6. Serve meatballs atop butternut squash and enjoy!

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Never Enough CrossFit

After being among the youngest individual competitors at the regional level of the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games, 19-year-old Trevor James wants to make CrossFit his life and career. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

February 2012



Staff/CrossFit Journal

On his 19th birthday, Trevor James didn't celebrate in the traditional way. He drove nearly five hours from Shrewsbury, N.J., to Canton, Mass., for the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Northeast Regional.

The teenager was one of the youngest athletes to compete at the regional level as an individual.

But he almost didn't make it that far.

After discovering CrossFit in high school, James made his way to CrossFit Shrewsbury in the summer of 2010. There, he offered to "do anything you need" because he couldn't afford a membership. As the Open neared, he bemoaned the fact that he wouldn't be participating.

"I asked, 'What's stopping you?'" recalled Stefanie Hicks, co-owner of the affiliate in the New Jersey borough roughly 50 miles south of New York City and about a mile from the Atlantic Ocean.

"When he started comparing himself, doing these workouts, he finally realized he could do it," she said. "I don't think that in his first year he thought he was going to be in the top 60, and he was No. 60."

Infatuated With CrossFit

The summer before James' junior year at Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School, a friend introduced him to CrossFit. His buddy had a set of Rogue gymnastics rings, and the two went to a local park, where there was a pull-up bar and a 1-mile track.

"I don't think that in his first year he thought he was going to be in the top 60, and he was No. 60."

—Stefanie Hicks

His first workout: a shortened Cindy combined with a half Murph.

"It just wrecked me like no other," James said. "I couldn't get enough."

His excitement led him to dig up a jump rope in his house for double-under practice, and to program himself a 21-15-9 WOD of pull-ups, ring dips and push-ups.

"I couldn't move my arms for, like, three days," he said.

He added: "I just became infatuated with it."



Champlain Valley CrossFit

James became an intern coach at CrossFit Shrewsbury, working to earn his membership and practicing whenever he could.

In the months before he went away to college, James visited CrossFit Shrewsbury for the first time. He did a few workouts and then signed up for a membership at a local Globo Gym.

"I told Stef I didn't have money, but 'I love CrossFit. I'll do whatever I need to do. I'll run errands, whatever,'" he said.

And so James became the box's intern coach.

"He was there, like, every day, practicing," Hicks said. "We would practice stuff together, and he really became the foundation of the gym."

Not only did James train at a "real" CrossFit gym, but he also trained with an Olympic-weightlifting legend: Karyn Marshall. Marshall, who competed in the master's division at this year's Games, is the first woman to clean and jerk more than 300 lb. and was inducted into the USAW Hall of Fame at last year's Arnold Sports Festival in Columbus, Ohio.

Marshall described James as "a great athlete."



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Overall, James finished 14 places behind regional winner Austin Malleolo, the world record holder for the deadlift/box-jump workout.

"He's just got the heart. He's just got that passion. He's got the skill. And he's got the work ethic. You have all those basic building blocks—you can't teach someone that ... that comes from the inside," she said.

**"He's just got the heart.
He's just got that passion.
He's got the skill. And he's got
the work ethic."**

—Karyn Marshall

A Birthday Present

The night before the Northeast Regional, James got his shirt with "Competitor" printed on the back.

"He sat down on the bed and really got emotional," Hicks said.

James said, "I put it on. I wanted to sit there and wear it forever."

The next day, when he stepped onto Reebok's world-headquarters campus for the regional competition, James was in awe.

**"Being in the same athlete
area as them and being in the
same list of names as them
was, like, the most unreal
experience I've ever had."**

—Trevor James

"I was almost living ... a dream," he said. "The athletes are all nice to each other. It's not like a high-school sports game where people are so mean to you."

There he was, rubbing elbows with elite CrossFitters he respected: Dave Lipson, Austin Malleolo, Rob Orlando.

"Being in the same athlete area as them and being in the same list of names as them was, like, the most unreal experience I've ever had," James said.

He ended the competition only 14 places behind Malleolo, the man who set the world record for the deadlift/box-jump regional workout, James noted.

"My goal was to not be last," he said about his pre-regional strategy. "I just stuck to my plan. I was going to give everything I had on every step I took on every movement I made. And wherever the chips fell, (so be it)."

Still, James was "furious" he didn't move on to the final day of competition.

He finished 15th out of 42 men.

"It gives me something to shoot for," James said in early November 2011.

Looking back, he said, the regional was his birthday present.



Champlain Valley CrossFit

James clean-and-jerked 300 lb. at the Beast of the East competition for a 15-lb. PR.

Life Is CrossFit and CrossFit Is Life

At the University of Vermont in Burlington, James has immersed himself in all things CrossFit.

After his first semester, he changed his major from environmental science to exercise and movement science.

"I just realized I was too into what CrossFit was to do something so outside of CrossFit and so outside of fitness," he explained. "All the anatomical positions came really easily to me."

He added: "It just gets me through the day easier."

What also helps is his job: coaching at Champlain Valley CrossFit.

The affiliate opened two weeks after James started college in Vermont. He took the Level 1 Seminar in October and now teaches three classes a week at that box.

"I get to be part of the gym and be part of the community," he said.

"It's pretty cool that I have the same job up here as I do at home. I just kind of realize every day when people say, 'Oh my God, that's awesome,' I'm like, 'Yeah, that's pretty awesome.'"

He added: "A lot of things that fell into place are really awesome."

In early October, James competed at the Beast of the East event at the Durham, Conn., fairgrounds where he cleaned-and-jerked 300 lb.—a 15-lb. PR after running a 5K that morning.

A couple of weeks later, he participated in the 2011 Northeast Event Series of the Garage Games series—known as the New England Team Throwdown—as part of Champlain Valley CrossFit's team at CrossFit Milford. After the last event, his box was tied with CrossFit New England's team that included Mel Ockerby and James Hobart, both on CFNE's team that won this year's Games Affiliate Cup. For a tiebreaker, each team chose one person to perform a final workout: Fran. In the end, James went head-to-head with "a guy I really look up to." Hobart **beat James by 28 seconds**.

"The second best day of my life thus far," James said.

**"I just realized I was
too into what CrossFit
was to do something so
outside of CrossFit and so
outside of fitness."**

—Trevor James

In mid-November, James finished second at the Garage Games men's final at CrossFit Southie.

So while some of his friends might be out on the town, James spends many a weekend at CrossFit competitions, training for CrossFit competitions and making choices that will only enhance his CrossFit performance, Hicks said.

"He gets so much crap from some of his friends ... about, 'Oh, your life's CrossFit. He gets so much peer pressure. He gets a hard time,'" she said.

"You would never in a million years ... think he was 19 years old. He's very confident. He's very motivating. ... I've even learned from him."

No Future Without CrossFit

In the long-term, James said he would like to be part of CrossFit HQ's Seminar Staff, not only to spread the CrossFit word but also to introduce people to "something that I love," he said.



James finished second at the Garage Games men's final in November 2011.

Journal Menu

"If I could make it my job, I wouldn't want anything more than that."

In the short-term, James is focused on the 2012 Games.

Despite his youth, Hicks said James won't be distracted.

"I don't think Trevor would consider anything other than CrossFit until he reached his goals in CrossFit. He loves challenges. And this is his goal right now," she said. "He's pure about it. He doesn't do anything to show off. Trevor's the kind of guy that can go into an empty gym and still give it his all. He doesn't need somebody to be watching him, to show off, to say, 'Look at what I can do.'"

Just like Lipson, Malleolo, Orlando and Chris Spealler, CrossFitters will one day know James' name, too, Hicks continued.

**"I see him, without a doubt,
being a top competitor."**

—Stefanie Hicks

"I see him, without a doubt, being a top competitor," she said. "I know he will continue forging forward until he gets to the level of competing that he wants."

And his finish at the Northeast Regional was not what he wanted, James said.

"If I was happy with 15th place, then I wouldn't try hard again. My goal is to go to the CrossFit Games. That's my goal. That's what I want to do," he said. "That's always in my head: What is going to get me there?"



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

About the Author

*Andréa Maria Cecil, 33, is a career journalist who is managing editor of the **Central Penn Business Journal** in Harrisburg, Pa. Andréa is a native of New Orleans who lives in York County, Pa. There, she's been doing CrossFit since 2008 at [CrossFit York](#). Additionally, she dedicates three days a week to training in Olympic weightlifting at [McKenna's Gym](#).*