

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

April 2012

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THE CrossFit *kitchen*



All images: E.M. Burton

PALEO POTLUCK

By E.M. Burton

overview

If you're like me, you get invited to great Paleo potluck parties. This spring, we're celebrating another successful season of the Reebok CrossFit Games Open and hosting our own potluck that brings the best of the market to the table.

Share the joy of this special dish with your Paleo brethren. Watch with pride as they reach into the colorful gelatin, grab hold, tear off a fish head with their teeth and party like their ancestors. What the heck—try all your favorite flavors! Gelatin is made from pig skin, cattle bones and other grisly bits. Yum!

makes 40 1-cup servings

blocks per serving

4 carbohydrate blocks

1 protein block per ounce of sardine

1 fat block per ½ tsp. of whipping cream

notes

You can adjust the block ratio by serving extra sardines on the side and varying the amount of whipping cream.



ingredients

20 boxes of lime gelatin dessert

3 large sardines (Sardinops sagax are best if you can find them)

Water for mixing

Heavy whipping cream

Maraschino cherries

supplies

Fridge

Large punch bowl

directions

1. Keep the fish in the fridge while you prepare the gelatin mold.
2. Using your refrigerator, make sure you partially set the gelatin first. This may take several hours. Place the fish in attractive "eat me" positions when you can first see the "jiggle" in the bowl and the mixture no longer seems liquid. This will ensure the fish are properly set into place. Otherwise they just float and look dead already. You want to create the desire to grab a leaping flash of silver with the paws like a grizzly.
3. Return the bowl to the fridge for a few more hours.
4. Remove from fridge and serve with whipping cream and maraschino cherries.

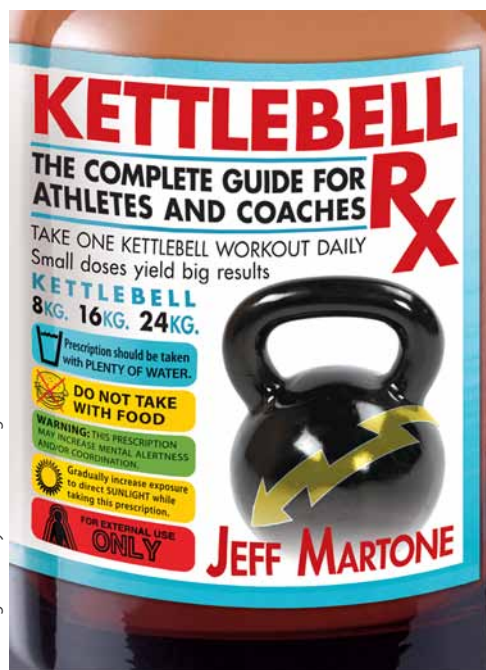
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

All About the 'Bell

T.J. Murphy reviews Jeff Martone's new kettlebell manual.

By T.J. Murphy

April 2012



Kettlebell RX: The Complete Guide for Athletes and Coaches, by Jeff Martone. 320 pp. Victory Belt Publishing. \$34.95.

As reported by Jeff Martone in his new book *Kettlebell RX: The Complete Guide for Athletes and Coaches*, the kettlebell—or *gyra* in Russian—got its start as a functional piece of equipment not created for exercise but as a tool for measuring grain. The standard weight of grain was 16 kilograms, a “pood,” and the kettlebells—sometimes built by welding handles onto cannonballs—were easy to incorporate into strength contests that were held at Russian folk festivals. By 1897, “Girevoy” had been established as the national weightlifting sport of Russia, with a national championship.

The kettlebell typically holds a special place in the heart of the CrossFitter, as the introduction to the essential technique of the kettlebell swing is also an introduction to a key foundation of CrossFit: the preference for compound, core-to-extremity movements versus isolated movements. The concepts articulated thoroughly in early *CrossFit Journal* articles become viscerally clear upon the completion of a first met-con involving nothing more than an athlete's body weight and a kettlebell: a simple, one-piece, cast-iron weight, properly used, is a more effective tool than, for example, a gleaming triceps-training machine costing thousands of dollars.

Martone is the CrossFit kettlebell subject-matter expert and creator of the CrossFit Kettlebell Trainer's Course. He knows kettlebells. He's used kettlebells to train federal law-enforcement officers, coached the American Kettlebell Club, and created a system of kettlebell juggling (Hand-2-Hand Kettlebell Drills—something that might earn you burpees without the expressed written consent of your coach). Martone is an elite athlete when it comes to kettlebell competition.

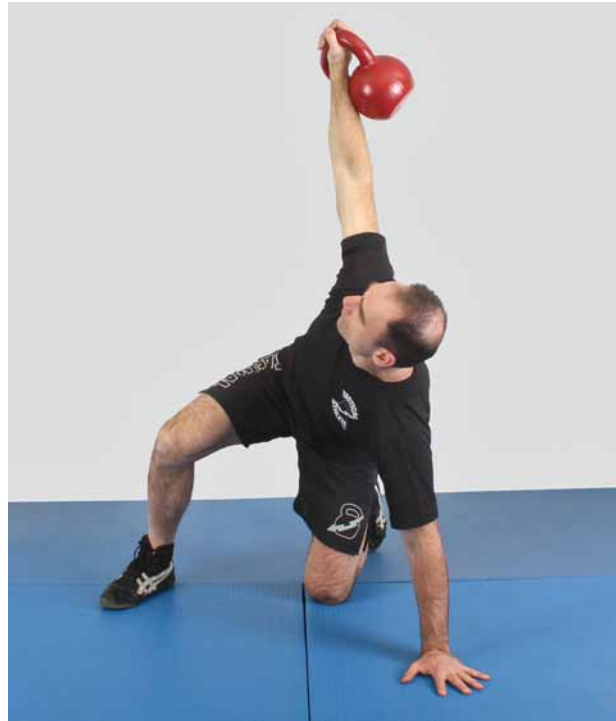
Martone's book is divided into three parts, the first dedicated to CrossFit athletes and coaches. In this regard, *Kettlebell RX* can be defined as a supporting manual to his CrossFit Trainer's Course: it's an extensive and detailed resource for the nuances of adopting into one's programming an assortment of new movement patterns using a kettlebell.

One type of reader who is likely not ready for *Kettlebell RX* is the athlete, like me, in his or her first year of CrossFit. While I found the step-by-step instructions generally clear and easy to follow and almost painfully thorough, certain types of advanced concepts of position and movement left me wanting more.

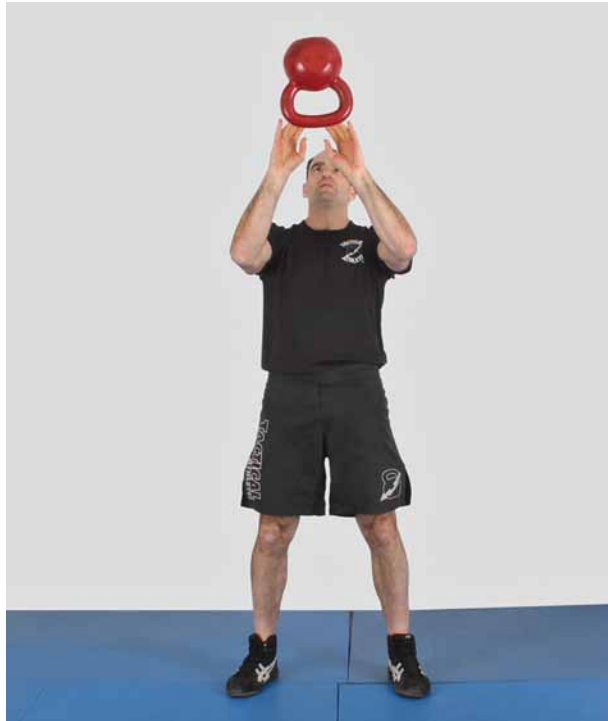
For example, simple cues—"Keep your chest open"—along with more complex foundational concepts such as midline stability made me recall my experience of first trying to do most of my CrossFit workouts alone at an L.A. Fitness versus later being coached at an affiliate. For me, the latter was an exponentially more effective and efficient process. Reading about how to do a deadlift, for example, as opposed to being shown how to do a deadlift and corrected in the process can yield two completely different techniques.

A beginner just starting to gain kinesthetic awareness of core concepts and how important they are—like midline stabilization, for example—may try and follow Martone's instructions but unintentionally go off track. Bad habits can be built despite the best intentions of the author and the athlete.

Again referencing myself, coaches at CrossFit Elysium first had to undo some of the poor mechanics I had inadvertently developed when I was more or less self-coached and referring only to books and videos. That said, if you're a beginner working out in a garage gym with no access to an affiliate or coaching, specialty books like *Kettlebell RX* might be the best option to nail down the nuances of a movement.



The Turkish get-up requires amazing shoulder stability and core strength, especially when the load is human.



No medicine ball? Martone has devised a wall-ball substitute using a kettlebell.

With the above in mind, I think *Kettlebell RX* will mostly appeal to CrossFit trainers in need of a reference source for refining proper mechanics with a kettlebell and more advanced CrossFit athletes who have a solid kinesthetic understanding of fundamentals. It will also offer coaches options on kettlebell exercises to keep their programming “constantly varied.”

Consider, for example, the “wall-ball substitute,” a motor-recruitment-pattern simulation of wall-balls that uses a kettlebell. Martone starts off with a brief description of the exercise, followed by two sequences of 12 photos that introduce the move, the first shot from in front of the demonstrator and the second from the side. Martone takes you through the points of performance from the starting position to the breathing pattern to the end position. And now you’re just getting started in the lesson. Again, this may be a fountain of possibilities for the professional coach but just informational overload for the CrossFit beginner.

Another example is how Martone breaks the wall-ball substitute down into two parts, as drills, recommending that you master them before weaving them into the complete sequence. The first drill is “swing release, half-flip catch, push press,” and the second is a “front squat.” Martone goes through the two drills in explicit detail, focusing on common errors he sees when the drills are attempted (each highlighted by photos and text explanations). Then he covers the corrective actions for the mistakes and rounds out the entry with sample Tabata workouts using the wall-ball substitute.

One of the more valuable sections for CrossFitters working out of a garage gym, either with partners or alone, is the section on the Turkish get-up. Martone starts out with a personal story, relaying how for 15 years his right shoulder was prone to chronic dislocations, in his sleep no less, and he was bracing himself for a third surgery. It was then that he was told that about the critical nature of the Turkish get-up in the history of weight training and set a goal of being able to perform the lift at 105 with either hand. Martone explains that he built two 105-lb. kettlebells at home and in a year’s time had achieved the goal.

“Now ten years later and by God’s grace, I’m even stronger and still surgery free!” he writes.

As to how much Martone can credit the get-up for this recovery is arguable, but the value of the exercise as a tool for developing proper shoulder rotation, stability in the shoulder and range of motion is solid. A subsequent 30 pages are devoted to a microscopic explanation of proper form and movements between the stages of the Turkish get-up.

The get-up is a challenge to strength and mobility for sure, but it also places heavy demands on the three stages of learning that Martone describes early in the book: the cognitive stage, the associative stage and the autonomous stage. For first-timers, the get-up is somewhat like learning a new swim stroke. For those wishing to get a hold on the movement and work toward mastery, or the “autonomous” stage, the breakdown of the get-up in Martone’s book could be an invaluable aid.



Move beyond the kettlebell swing with Hand-2-Hand kettlebell drills.

Crossfitters interested in applying their training to a sport may find various nuggets offered in Part 2: Rotational Power Development and Part 3: Introduction to Kettlebell Sport. In the former, Martone details how, in addition to developing strength in the posterior chain, an athlete can use Hand-2-Hand kettlebell drills to develop skills like hand-to-eye coordination, hand speed, and athletic capacities like rotational power and cardiovascular conditioning.

Martone reserves the final chapter as an introduction and invitation to CrossFitters to try their hand at the sport of kettlebell. Martone explains kettlebell sport is different compared to the “six-second” nature of Olympic weightlifting in that kettlebell lifting—the heart of which apparently requires highly oxidative 10-minute efforts—might be similar to the feeling of certain met-cons.



About the Author

*T.J. Murphy is the editorial director of **Competitor Magazine**, **Triathlete Magazine** and **Inside Triathlon**.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

The Pink-Ball Game

Cathy Lewis introduces “wall-ball” of a different sort.

By Cathy Lewis

April 2012



Courtesy of Cathy Lewis

Equipment

A pink Spalding Hi-Bounce ball (a “Spaldeen”), or any super-bouncy ball

Players

1 thrower

2 or more catchers

Playing Field

You’ll need a wall. Establish a line for the group to stand behind while facing the wall. The line should be about 50 feet from the wall. You can move it back as the kids get better at the game.

Rules of Play

One player (we usually go with the person who finished the WOD first) throws the ball at the wall. He or she can throw from any distance, but the athlete wants to get a good bounce from the beginning. We always establish a “re-throw” distance: if the first bounce is within 3 feet of the wall, a “scratch” is called and the thrower re-throws the ball. The scratch zone also doubles as a “no-fly zone”: no diving toward the wall to try to catch a ball before the bounce. This eliminates any chance for head injuries caused by kids running into the wall at speed.

The goal is for someone to catch the ball as quickly as possible. The referee will be counting bounces as the group tries to catch the ball. Once the ball is caught, the group has to do burpees, squats, push-ups—your choice—equal to the number of bounces. The catcher and the thrower do not have to do the movement. The catcher becomes the thrower, and the game begins again.

If the ball is caught before it bounces, the thrower must perform a penalty—something like 10 burpees, for example. The catcher still becomes the next thrower.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fix the Feet

Bob Takano reviews foot placement when receiving the power snatch or power clean.

By Bob Takano

April 2012



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

One very common problem that occurs in so many weight rooms is the excessively wide placement of the feet in the receiving position for the power snatch or power clean. This is clearly improper for a number of reasons, and yet it is a common mistake many coaches apparently don't know how to prevent.

This article is an attempt to explore the causes of this tendency and the ways to prevent it. Hopefully, this will lead to a lot less of this ugly practice.

1 of 4



In this footwork drill, the athlete starts with the feet in the pulling position and then quickly skips them to the correct landing position: her squatting stance. She can check the position by going down into a full squat.

Defining Ugly Lifting

As in so many athletic endeavors, the placement of the hips is absolutely critical in determining the success of a particular maneuver. In order to successfully perform a power snatch or power clean, the hips must be lowered as the weight comes to rest on the shoulders or at arms' length overhead. The problem of how to lower the hips can be solved in one of two ways. The preferred manner is to bend the knees, while the less preferable is to move the feet far to the sides. Both will lower the hips, but the first has a much greater range available.

**The best way to make sure
that the new lifter is not
getting into ugly habits is to
teach movement properly
from the start.**

My personal observation of the situation through more than 40 years of coaching is that role modeling has a great deal to do with which pathway is selected. Most of the athletes learning the power clean for the first time will lower the hips by bending the knees if that is how they've

observed people around them as they grew up. They have a history of squatting down to lower the hips and see that as a perfectly good solution to effect a satisfactory power clean.

Those growing up without squatting role models will attempt forward flexion of the hips and spine and/or a wide stance—or all three. Very ugly.

The best way to make sure that the new lifter is not getting into ugly habits is to teach movement properly from the start. I'll deal with correcting bad habits later.

By the way, some people might suggest not moving the feet at all. It's not a bad idea, but let's be clear about one thing: the feet have to move in order to facilitate the speed of the drop under the bar. The feet should start by being positioned directly below the hips and then skim sideways rapidly to a squatting stance.

Footwork Drill

This is the footwork drill that I teach to beginners: stand with hands on hips, knees unlocked and the feet placed at hip width. On cue, the feet skim rapidly sideways to an optimal squatting width while the athlete simultaneously descends into a quarter-squat position. To make sure the squatting width is proper, have the athlete then descend into a full squat. If the squat is properly performed, the feet are at the proper width.

Snatch on Toes

To incorporate this movement into the receiving motion, I recommend the snatch on toes performed only with an empty bar. The athlete starts with the bar hanging at arms' length, the body erect, and the heels elevated off the floor so the athlete is supported only on the balls of the feet and the toes. From this position, the athlete can only shrug and arm pull and drop rapidly into the catch position while skimming the feet to the proper width and receiving the bar at arms' length overhead. This variant can also be performed for the power clean.

Power Snatch and Overhead Squat

Once the previous movement is assimilated as a motor pattern, the athlete can then go on to performing a power snatch and dropping into an overhead squat without pause. If the feet were moved to the proper width, this transition should be smooth. Power cleans and front squats can also be coupled in this manner.

At this point I feel it necessary to restate my approach to teaching weightlifting motor skills. If I ask an athlete to perform 5 sets of 3 repetitions of, say, power cleans, I will keep track of how many are performed appropriately and then stop the athlete from doing any more.

**I'd probably opt to
use pulling blocks and
place them so that the feet
could not move any further
apart than a width that is
appropriate for squatting.**

For instance, I might tell the athlete in question that he did 9 good power cleans out of 15, and then end the session. I will not ask him to do X more reps because the nervous system is not as fresh and the chance that further reps will be performed any better is considerably less. After all, this is a sports movement, and sports require that perfection takes place on demand. No do-overs.

I expect that at the next session the athlete will attempt to perform more than 9 good power cleans out of 15.



To drill landing position, athletes can perform power snatches immediately followed by overhead squats.

Fixing the Broken Ones

Believe me, I've thought about this problem for years and have yet to come up with a foolproof solution. I even remember discussing it with my coach, Bob Hise, back in the 1960s, and the best we could come up with was "hobbles" to limit the distance the feet could travel, but we quickly dismissed the idea because of the obvious peril.

If I had to come up with a solution, I'd probably opt to use pulling blocks and place them so that the feet could not move any further apart than a width that is appropriate for squatting. I'd set the height of the blocks to support the bar slightly higher than the power position, so the weights employed would not be very heavy. I would then prescribe 5 or 6 sets of triples of either power snatches or power cleans—whichever is the problem lift. Perhaps some bruising of the lateral malleolus (the prominence on the outer side of the ankle) will bring about an avoidance reaction.

Whenever fixing a problem is a part of the training, that remediation should take place on a daily basis until it is fixed. It should be performed at the beginning of a session when the nervous system is fresh, and the weights employed should be light enough that the lift can be performed appropriately.

Technique Coaching in General

If you are coaching the technique of the Olympic lifts, you must become a technique coach.

First off, you must know what all the relevant body parts are doing at each point in the movement. You must know how to explain them to different types of motor learners, and you must know which exercises will remediate which technique difficulties. You need to understand the concept of neural fatigue. Once you understand what you need to know, you will have to start coaching and learn from your mistakes. Watch an experienced coach and borrow whatever tactics you are comfortable employing.

I'll conclude with a story some of you might find helpful. One of the CrossFit athletes in my gym is a former dancer, and she remarked to me that she was having some difficulty mastering the Olympic lifts because some of the cues didn't quite make sense to her. I told her, "I know you're a dancer and you're used to learning complex dance routines by watching and imitating. You don't need to listen to cues. Just watch a good weightlifter and imitate what you see."

That made sense to her.

Not all athletes learn the same way or at the same rate.

Help cleanse the world of ugly lifting!



Bob Takano

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Tribes in Texas

Mike Warkentin reports on the CrossFit Tour stop in Fort Worth, Texas.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

April 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

A roasted pig is on a folding table outside CrossFit Fort Worth.

As athletes complete Reebok CrossFit Games Open Event 12.5 and recover, they stagger over to the table for roasted pig and chicken and a host of different salads. Everyone eyes the decidedly non-Paleo cupcakes and wonders who will be the first to break.

A dog works its way through the crowd, sucking down bits of dropped food like a canine vacuum. It pays no attention to the noise of barbells slamming down inside the gym, where the music is pumping and the crowd is cheering. CrossFit dogs don't startle easily.

Original Firebreather Greg Amundson, fresh from judging a few workouts, looks around and smiles.

"Ten years ago, CrossFit was doing the same thing in Coach's backyard."

Meet the Community

Ten years ago, CrossFit wasn't a global sport, and over 3,500 affiliates weren't scattered around the world. The CrossFit Games didn't exist, and no one had heard of Annie Thorisdottir or Rich Froning Jr.

But Cindy and Fran were still around, and at Coach Greg Glassman's original box in Santa Cruz, Calif., the sport of fitness was being created. But perhaps even more important than that, the CrossFit community was born. Even back in the early days it was clear CrossFit wasn't just about fitness but good people coming together and enjoying each other. The 2012 CrossFit Tour is a reminder of that fact.

**"CrossFit stands for making
people's lives better.
All things good come
from the CrossFit gym."**

—Coach Greg Glassman

With two stops complete and three more planned for 2012, the CrossFit Tour is a chance for the CrossFit community to come together for a few days and reconnect. That happens at competitions and events like the CrossFit Games, but the atmosphere isn't the same when the clock is on and affiliate owners are preparing teams of athletes. The Tour is a lot more laid back. There's an agenda, sure. But it's loose. There's time to mix and mingle, to reconnect with old friends, to meet members of CrossFit Headquarters, and to hear Coach Glassman himself address the community.



Coach Greg Glassman highlighted four new and inspiring projects at the Texas Tour stop.

For many, the Q&A with Coach Glassman is a highlight, but Coach's speeches are rarely lengthy. In Fort Worth on March 24, he took the stage and highlighted four CrossFit community initiatives: building [schools in Kenya](#), raising funds for [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#) in Memphis with a new and brutal workout called Hope, preventing drowning by partnering with [Infant Swimming Resource](#), and working on an SAT-prep program to help students get into the right schools and embark on successful careers.

But Coach's speech was brief. He told the community what he's doing, asked them for their support and then spent the rest of the time answering their questions. In Fort Worth, he took more than an hour to respond to questions on everything from the relationship with Reebok to his favorite workout (Fran) and his least favorite workout (also Fran).

In the end, his overarching message was clear: "CrossFit stands for making people's lives better. All things good come from the CrossFit gym."

And really, they do. That's obvious when you mill about at a Tour event and meet the CrossFit nation.

There's something special about Disposable Heroes Project founder Brad McKee shaking Amundson's hand and telling the Original Firebreather that his ultramarathon was the inspiration for McKee's own run in support of wounded warriors. McKee traveled from Louisiana and said he was "just coming to see the family." He was taking home some warm-up ideas borrowed during a visit to CrossFit Dallas Central.



CrossFit Aledo hosted Open Event 12.5, which featured a guest appearance by Games champ Rich Froning Jr. and 2011 Open winner Dan Bailey.

There's something special about seeing gymnastics expert Jeff Tucker wearing his normal attire—a cowboy hat and boots—in a state where doing so is actually 100 percent appropriate at all times.

“That’s what CrossFit is all about: building community. I think CrossFit is so much more than a workout.”

—Dallin Frampton

There's something special about knowing the story behind some of CrossFit's most famous workouts. Lynne Pitts told how she and Kelly Moore met on the Internet when

both were following CrossFit.com back in its early days. Both now work for HQ, Pitts as operations manager and Moore as specialty course support. Both are diminutive in stature but were competitive powerlifters who served in the military. Both have workouts named after them—but Lynne's features movements she loves, while Kelly's is full of things she hates. Lesson learned at the Tour: don't tell Coach which movements you don't want to do. Even so, Lynne will tell you, “I hate me after Round 3.”

There's also something special about talking to people like Dallin Frampton, the Utah CrossFitter who told Coach he wanted to build another school in Africa and needed help. Frampton built his first school near Mombasa, Kenya, in 2010, and he came back hoping to do more. Coach Glassman wanted to help, so he funded the building of a CrossFit school in Africa in December 2011. Coach is now leading the charge to build more schools in Africa.

"That's what CrossFit is all about: building community. I think CrossFit is so much more than a workout," Frampton said at Billy Bob's Texas honky tonk.

Strength in Numbers

You also get to meet some very special people who have the most amazing stories at Tour stops. Like Rob Davis of CrossFit 817.

The day before the Tour officially kicked off, Davis hosted Event 12.5 in his brand new 12,000-square-foot box in Keller, Texas. Davis has over 250 members and more equipment than most gyms can dream of.

Davis knows most of the affiliate owners in the area—there are a lot—but rarely sees them, including Kelly King-Kelley, who left 817 to start CrossFit Aledo, where Rich Froning Jr. and Dan Bailey did Event 12.5 at 11 a.m. on March 24. At the Tour events, Davis was looking forward to talking to other people, reconnecting and then maybe doing some sharing.

"I love this open-source fitness where you can glean anything from anybody, and I hope we're giving some back," he said.

He laughed: "When everyone starts drinking, we'll talk about best practices."

"I don't think we've even begun to tap into the influence we can have here in the world."

—Rob Davis

Davis indeed has something to give back: an inspiring story most people don't know.

Davis is head of a family of eight, and in 2010 he had been laid off for 16 months from a corporate job before spending the family's last \$250 to put the deposit down on a CrossFit Level 1 Trainer Course. He had no idea how he'd pay the balance.

"There was something about it," he said of CrossFit. "I was hooked."

At Christmas 2010, with the financial situation worsening, the Davis family got a knock on the door and received a check "from Santa." The card simply said "Merry Christmas," and to this day Davis doesn't know who sent it. But it was enough to pay off the balance of the Level 1 and buy some equipment for Davis to start training people out of his garage.

In April 2010, the money ran out, and the Davis family lost their house—and their garage. Rob told his clients that CrossFit 817 had outgrown the garage space, but it wasn't the truth. Davis took his wife and six kids and moved in with a friend for more than four months. When they found a great deal on a 1,500-square-foot place, CrossFit 817 survived.



Do the WOD, recover, then make new friends.

About two years later, CrossFit 817 is in a giant space, and it's thriving. At dinner at Billy Bob's, Davis was surrounded by his family, athletes, trainers and clients, and it was an inspiring sight. He was also surrounded by the larger CrossFit community of affiliates, some of them located not far from CrossFit 817.

But Davis, a man who lost his house and whose livelihood hinges on the success of his gym, doesn't feel threatened by the growing CrossFit community. Not one bit. In fact, he welcomes more affiliates in the area "because I don't think we've even begun to tap into the influence we can have here in the world."

Davis sees it differently than some: it's CrossFit against the rest, not every affiliate for itself. He sees the growth of CrossFit as nothing more than an opportunity to spread the word—and the WOD—and suck more people off their couches and out of Globo Gyms.

"I'm a competitive guy," Davis said. "I want to succeed—but never at the cost of another box ... Let's just grow this thing. It's a better opportunity for all of us."

You know what? He's right.

Earlier that night, Darin Deaton of CrossFit Fort Worth was hanging out with fellow affiliate owners, and he was making things happen. Deaton's box holds a sports-injury clinic, while nearby CrossFit Brandt runs yoga classes. They were talking about trading services and offering more to members of both boxes.

"There's no sense of competitiveness because you're just at a party. You're at a pig roast," Deaton said over a drink after Coach Glassman's Q&A.

"The Tour has given us a venue for box owners to meet each other ... and share ideas," he explained. "This type of activity gives us a chance to talk about creative opportunities."



There's nothing quite like a friendly Texas welcome.

That couldn't please Tour organizer Paula Gravatt more.

"They're coming in to hang out and meet with other CrossFitters and be part of the community," she said. "It feels like old-school CrossFit. The Games are the Games, but we still need to have this."

WODs—and More

In Fort Worth, top athletes Bailey and Froning were on hand to compete in Event 12.5. Froning posted the third-best score in the world at CrossFit Aledo, and Bailey was only a few reps behind him. The two of them actually warmed up in between signing autographs and posing for endless pictures. Their performance in front of a pack of Texas CrossFitters was impressive, as was their friendly interaction with the community.

"They're coming in to hang out and meet with other CrossFitters and be part of the community. It feels like old-school CrossFit."

—Paula Gravatt

After watching live bull riding in the dirt ring at Billy Bob's, Bailey sat on a railing and chatted with CrossFitters. He's a celebrity for sure, and he said being one of CrossFit's elite athletes "is kind of like one of those childhood dreams come true."

But more than that, he's happy to be part of the community.

"It's good to meet on a common basis," he said. "You're not going to see that in any other fitness realm. It's one of those things that makes CrossFit unique."

Sure enough, Bailey and Froning and Amundson rolled up at 9 a.m. Sunday morning for the Hangover WOD down by the river. It was Griff, and Amundson crushed it, taking time to yell and encourage others while running backwards along the course beside the Trinity River. Froning and Bailey were jogging with the people, doing a bit of active recovery after finishing first and fourth overall in the Open. HQ staff members were in there too.

CrossFit Tour: Copenhagen

The CrossFit Tour heads across the pond to Europe for a weekend in Copenhagen, Denmark, from May 25 to 27.

The Tour stop will coincide with the Europe Regional, where Annie Thorisdottir will compete to get back to the CrossFit Games to defend her title as the world's fittest woman.

For more details, visit Tour.CrossFit.com.

Everyone was sweating together in the hot Texas sun, and everyone was having a good time. They were working out, and some of them were working it off after enjoying a Josh Turner concert at Billy Bob's. All were looking forward to the farewell brunch that was to follow, and not just because bacon was on the menu.

They were looking forward to hanging with new friends, talking and laughing before heading home to their boxes.

CrossFit, you see, is more than a workout, and the CrossFit Tour is the proof.



Dave Re

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit LIFE

Politics and Pull-Ups

Mike Brown is using his CrossFit work ethic and business philosophy in a campaign to win a seat in the Iowa Statehouse. Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

April 2012



All images: Courtesy of Mike Brown

Mike Brown starts every weekday before the sun is up, heading over to CrossFit Des Moines to coach the 5:30 a.m. class. After teaching classes for a few hours, Brown throws on a sportcoat and a tie and spends the rest of the day shaking hands, meeting with advisors or—his least favorite task—fundraising.

Brown is running for state representative of Iowa, his first try at a political office. This former Air Force pararescue jumper owns and runs two CrossFit affiliates (CrossFit Des Moines and CrossFit Waukee), and he might seem an unlikely politician. However, he says it's exactly his experiences as a CrossFit athlete and affiliate owner that inspired him to run for office and serve as the foundation of his political message.

Brown graduated from the University of Iowa in 2002 and immediately enlisted in the Air Force. Always one to seek out a challenge, Brown joined the ranks of the pararescuemen, the most highly trained and versatile personnel recovery specialists in the world, serving alongside other U.S. and Allied special-operations forces.

Brown discovered CrossFit while stationed in Afghanistan in 2005, and he continued to do CrossFit workouts in his garage when he finished his service in 2008 and worked as an EMT. A friend encouraged him to start his own CrossFit affiliate, but Brown didn't have enough money to get the business off the ground.

The idea took hold in his mind, though, and Brown started gathering second-hand equipment from garage sales. Soon he was training friends in his garage, using milk jugs and sandbags and learning technique from videos he found online. In January 2010, Brown made the leap and opened his first CrossFit affiliate: CrossFit Des Moines. He poured his heart and soul into the business.

"I worked really hard, was passionate, and the word spread. About two years later I opened a second location," Brown said.

Brown opened his second affiliate in December 2011. Running two CrossFit affiliates would be enough for most people, but Brown says he's happiest when he's busy. Running for office was something he had been contemplating, and in February 2012 he decided to take the plunge. There was an open seat for state representative of Iowa because the incumbent resigned, so Brown decided it was time.

"I felt that I would be a good leader for the community," Brown said.

Although Brown was busy running his affiliates, he felt that it was exactly his experience as a small-business owner—particularly a CrossFit affiliate owner—that would make him a good candidate for public office.



The Mike Brown WOD: secure votes for time.



Suit off, game on!

Brown and his wife are actually expecting their first child in July—just when his campaign will be heating up. Other than keeping peace at home, Brown said the other challenge has been asking people for money.

"In the world of CrossFit, you strive for excellence and trust that the money will follow," Brown said. "It's different in politics. You have to ask people for money."

Brown not only draws inspiration from CrossFit for his platform of small business and American exceptionalism, but he also draws strength from his own CrossFit workouts.

"My CrossFit WODs keep me sane," Brown said. "I couldn't do this if I didn't work out."

"I built a business from my garage," Brown said. "I created seven part-time jobs, and I believe that if you work hard, you will be successful. Greg Glassman says that the best will rise to the top. He doesn't tell us how to run our affiliates. The market will decide. The customer will decide."

Running for office is something completely new for Brown.

"Each day, I'm outside of my comfort zone," he said. "But given my pararescue and CrossFit training, I'm ready for anything that comes my way. Whether I have to call and ask people for money or stand up in front of a group of lobbyists, I do well, because even though it's out of my comfort zone, I can still do it."

When asked about the hardest part of running for office, Brown said, "The biggest challenge is finding time to spend with my wife!"

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Strength of Character

Seventeen-year-old Darby Nelson has a huge deadlift—and a heart to match.

By Josh Bunch Practice CrossFit

April 2012



All images: Chris Worden

Recall for a second your adolescent years spent navigating high school. Most of us were self-conscious, overly critical and paranoid to say the least. For many of us, self-doubt was typically a rite of passage on the way to adulthood.

Darby Nelson, on the other hand, lives by a very different code.



More than a rower, Nelson boasts an impressive deadlift well over 300 lb.

Nelson is a 17-year-old CrossFitter training at Hammer Down CrossFit in Fairfax, Va. She's been doing CrossFit since August 2010 and trains three or four times a week in season and about six times a week when not competing. Regularly, Nelson is found training early in the morning while her classmates are still sleeping.

More Than Rowing

Nelson's passion for rowing began when she was a freshman, and it was a passion that eventually led her to CrossFit.

"My sister was getting her car detailed, and I saw this CrossFit sign across the street. I had heard about it, so I figured why not?" Nelson says.

Nelson was initially confused by all the open space and sweaty humans, but she was quickly comforted when she saw her saving grace resting in the corner: a rowing machine.

"Immediately, I was more at ease, and after a few minutes talking to the community, I felt right at home—especially since I could teach everybody a thing or two when it came to rowing technique," Nelson says.

Nelson's crew career had improved over the season well before CrossFit, but her 2K time was stagnant. It turned out CrossFit was the injection Nelson was looking for to give her that extra push into the elite category.

In four short months of CrossFit, Nelson shaved nine seconds off her 2K time, bringing it to 7:24.

While CrossFitters always ask about Fran times, rowers are interested in your 2K time, Nelson explained. In four short months of CrossFit, Nelson shaved nine seconds off her 2K time, bringing it to 7:24. Apparently, in the crew community, this is virtually unheard of.

"This one effort moved me to a completely different tier. I am now considered elite. The only thing that doesn't match up is my height," Nelson says, explaining that her 5-foot-6-inch frame doesn't quite get the length in the water rowing coaches look for. "If I was taller, there is no telling where I would be."

Perhaps explaining the impressive improvement on the rower, CrossFit Kids has enabled Nelson to pursue and strengthen other areas that, prior to CrossFit, might have been foreign to her. While she loves the rower, she seems to love a challenge even more.

Early on, Nelson's CrossFit coach noticed her capacity for much more than endurance. Frequently, Nelson was found besting her older male counterparts when it came to feats of strength. In fact, when it comes to deadlifting in her age and weight class, she bested everybody. Less than one year ago, Nelson pulled a 335-lb. deadlift at a nationally sanctioned powerlifting competition, ranking her No. 1 in the nation. If the event had been sanctioned worldwide, it would have been a world record.

And what do others think of such accomplishments by an athlete who's only 17?

"Regular people (non-athletes) really don't get it. Even some of my crew team thinks my life is a little odd," Nelson says as she smiles, having clearly been asked this question before. "I don't need or want to be like everybody else. I like what I'm doing, and I do it for me."

She adds: "My friend asked me one day why I don't dress normal like the other kids ... I thought about it for a second and said, 'If I dressed normal, I would have to act normal.'"

"It seems like you get the most attention when you do what you should be doing anyway."
—Darby Nelson

Big deadlifts, fast rowing times and killer CrossFit workouts might be a big part of Nelson's story, but they don't tell the whole thing. In fact, her athletic accomplishments seem somehow pale in comparison to what she has planned: a lifetime of service to others and her country. When she graduates high school, she will enter the Naval Academy in hopes of becoming an officer, and she's supported by her family and friends

"9/11 was a huge part of my life growing up," Nelson explains. "All I can remember is those heroes helping victims, and I want to pay my respects by following in their footsteps and giving back to my country."

Darby Nelson is an example for the amazing products of CrossFit Kids, and her humble, genuine attitude is simply refreshing.

"This is just me—nothing to brag about or celebrate. It seems like you get the most attention when you do what you should be doing anyway," she says.

Snapshot From the Arnold

At the CrossFit Kids Gauntlet at the recent 2012 Arnold Classic in Columbus, Ohio, the third workout of the day was right up Nelson's alley: build to a heavy deadlift in 10 minutes.

"Good!" Nelson's judge screamed as the young athlete bested her deadlift record.

"I got 340 lb." Nelson said.

Then her judge leaned over and whispered, "Darby, that's 350 lb. You added wrong."

"Oh. Cool," she said with a smirk.



Courtesy of Josh Bunch/Practice CrossFit

About the Author

Josh Bunch is a longtime affiliate owner, the Reebok CrossFit Games Central East Regional media director, and a writer who ensures the CrossFit lifestyle has the potency of the pen and value of the word it so deserves.

THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

Simply Silly Chicken Tacos

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

overview

This dish is so simple it's silly. All you need is a slow cooker, a little time and a few basic ingredients. You don't even have to be home to cook it. Just throw the ingredients in the pot, leave, come home and enjoy.

makes 4-6 servings

ingredients

4 boneless, skinless organic chicken breasts
1 jar Trader Joe's Salsa Verde
1 onion (sliced)
1 bag of romaine leaves (or any large leaf of your choice)
Salt and pepper to taste
Crushed red pepper to taste (approximately ½ tsp.)

notes

Top with sliced avocado or guacamole for added fat and flavor.

directions

1. Place sliced onion, chicken breasts, entire jar of salsa, salt, pepper and crushed red peppers in a slow cooker and put a lid on it.
2. Turn slow cooker on low heat and cook for about 4 hours. Chicken breasts should be tender.
3. Use two forks to shred chicken, then spoon into lettuce leaves and serve.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Roasting Virtuosity

E.M. Burton explains how to properly roast a chicken for the hungry cave people in your life.

By E. M. Burton

April 2012



All images: E.M. Burton

One of the things I like best about membership in the CrossFit community is that nutritional issues are top of mind for most of us. Still, we can all use a refresher on some of the basics.

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The essentials of what can be called a “CrossFit diet” can be found in [CFJ Issue 21: Zone Meal Plans](#), elegantly explained and justified by Nicole Carroll in [Getting off the Crack](#) and [Nutrition: The Teeter-Totter](#). Start with those for the how and why.

When it comes to implementation, a few basic food-prep skills can save you time and money and perhaps reward you in unexpected ways. It might help to think of meal preparation as skill work.

Regardless of the diet you follow, and unless you’re a vegan or vegetarian, chances are pretty good that knowing how to roast chicken will be good for you. This is not so much a recipe as a method; in terms of skills, you owe it to yourself to have this one down, even if you don’t use it often.



You can always add garlic and fresh herbs, but sea salt and black pepper are really all you need to season your chicken.

Why learn how to roast a chicken? Perhaps you need to feed a family and wonder how you’re all going to make changes from the standard American diet (appropriately shortened to SAD). Maybe you cook all the time for other people and would like to shake up your routine. Perhaps you’ve never set foot in a kitchen, let alone opened a hot oven. It doesn’t matter what your training goals are; no matter who you are, you need to know how to roast a chicken. Just knowing this one kitchen skill can improve the quality of your meals and stretch both your budget and time like few others.

That’s it for the practicalities, and maybe the “why” will cease to matter once you taste it.

Like a squat, there’s a thing done badly and then there’s something that approaches the divine. The act of cooking chicken well, however, will surprise you. It can be a very sensual experience in itself, which can transport you. It always makes the romantic in me think, “This is what it must have been like to roast a chicken for a caveman,” but the realist in me always adds, “but with much better teeth.”

Teeth or no, over time those cave people managed to figure it out. Not having refrigeration for preservation, they discovered that cooked meat would last much longer than raw meat. They also must have figured out how to use high temperatures to sear in the juices, how long to cook it for best results and so on.

I have to warn you that this is going to be very hot, noisy and smelly, and you’ve got to work fast. This process will likely be very attractive to those fans of *Iron Chef*. If that’s not your thing, then supervise someone else. But if it is, put the music on loud, and it will feel like a party. It can seem very impressive, but it’s remarkably easy: once you have the ingredients, you already have everything you need to make it turn out perfectly. It’s just time and execution that will distinguish your performance.

Read through the instructions first. Like doing a WOD, wrap your head around everything that needs to be done so you’re not learning it the first time through when things are underway. Gather everything you need on the counter before you start.



Pan, salt, thermometer, baster: the essential tools for a perfect roast chicken.

Prep

Ingredients

Roasting chicken, roughly 4-5 lb.

Medium to coarse sea salt

Black pepper

Tools

Oven

Oven-safe roasting pan

Baster

Oven thermometer

A note on ingredients: The rule of thumb is to always procure the best that you can afford. As with everything, the more you spend, the better quality and taste you'll get.

In my experience, the better the bird, the less fat you'll find in the pan after roasting. Also, I think Maldon salt is the best brand I've ever found—it's a treat in our house—but any salt will do. Black pepper tastes best here when freshly and finely ground.

Directions

Start to clean and prep the chicken by removing its trusses, if it came with any (untie it). Rinse it, pat it dry, and set it in a large bowl to rest, allowing the cavity to breathe. Cover the entire thing inside and out with sea salt—liberally and all over. Grind the black pepper over the areas covered in skin; you don't need to pepper the cavity. Cover with a plastic wrap or similar cover just to keep it clean. Let the chicken sit to room temperature. For most roasters between 3 and 5 lb., that will be about one hour.

When you're ready, heat the oven to 475 F.

1. Once the oven is warmed, put the pan in and let it sit there for a few minutes to heat up. Working as quickly as you safely and carefully can, pull the pan out and drizzle it with a couple of tablespoons of non-virgin olive oil (sometimes you don't want a virgin olive oil; the flashpoint is lower). Set the chicken in the pan, breasts up. It will sizzle like crazy. Return the pan with the chicken to the oven. Set your timer for 15 minutes and ready your baster for the next step.
2. At 15 minutes, and working very quickly, take the chicken out of the oven. Notice how dry and taut the skin looks; it's holding in all the moisture. Baste it. Three or four quick squirts are all you need to cover the entire bird, and be sure to include the legs. Return it to the oven. Set the timer for 15 minutes.
3. When the timer goes off at the 30-minute mark, remove the chicken, baste it again and return it to the oven. Set the timer for 15 minutes.
4. At the next 15-minute mark—45 minutes at this point—baste again. Set the timer for 10 minutes.
5. When the timer goes off—now at 55 minutes on the overall clock—remove the bird, baste it again and return it to the oven. Set the timer for 5 minutes.
6. When the timer goes off, remove the chicken from the oven, stick the thermometer into the thickest part of the breast and wait for the reading. It should read at least 170 F. If it does, you're done.
7. Let it rest 10 minutes.

If the chicken's temperature is lower than 170 F, return it to the oven and repeat Step 5 until it reads 170 F. This likely won't be necessary; I've never had a 5-lb. chicken require more cooking time, but you need to be sure. You may live 5,000 feet above sea level, in which case your oven temperatures and its variations will differ.

I defy you to keep from devouring the roasted chicken standing up. "Heaven on Earth"—I think this is how our caveman forebears must have felt once they'd figured this out. But seek out company with this one. As the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus is known to have said on the well-lived life, "We should look for someone to eat and drink with before looking for something to eat and drink."



How to Baste

Hold baster and squeeze bulb. Insert tip into hot drippings in bottom of pan. Hold baster over bird and release bulb. Repeat three or four times.

If you don't have a baster, you can use a large metal spoon.



About the Author

*E. M. Burton is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer.*

THE CrossFit LIFE

Classical CrossFit

Craig Nelson asks us to take a break from Eminem and DMX to try a WOD with the OGs of music: Brahms, Bach and Tchaikovsky.

By Craig Nelson

April 2012



Peter Bekke

Members of TwinTown CrossFit taking the William Tell Overture 1K Rowing Challenge.

There are many things I love about CrossFit, and a few things I hate. Among the latter are, of course, burpees. But everyone hates burpees. But I have a particular loathing for something I suspect is loved, or at least liked, by most: the music.

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My problem with the music is clearly my problem. It derives inevitably from the generational disconnect between my over-60 generation and the twenty- and thirtysomethings who represent the majority of CrossFitters.

To be clear, I absolutely endorse the idea of a soundtrack to accompany the WOD. The capacity of music to propel us forward and get us moving is well understood. This effect is so powerful that iPods are now prohibited in most elite running events.

No, it's the type of music that I object to. And what type of music is that? Actually I have no clue. I suppose it's some type of rap/hip-hop/dubstep something or other. I have no idea what these terms mean. They're just words I've heard. I've purchased two CDs in the last 20 years (Amy Winehouse and Gnarls Barkley), so my ignorance of contemporary music is comprehensive. I just know that what is typically played does absolutely nothing for me.

I'm not suggesting that my generation's music be substituted for the current playlist. Yeah, a little Beach Boys might be fun sometime, but, frankly, what's evoked by most of the stuff we listened to—The Beatles, Motown, the psychedelic stuff—is something quite different than a sweaty workout session. And anyway, I don't want to make this some kind of generational feud. So is there some common musical ground that might suit all CrossFitters? How about classical music? I'm serious.

Not just any classical music will do. Indeed, most of it, no matter how beautiful, is completely unsuited to the task of getting you through your final set of kettlebell swings. Bach? Too cerebral (with one exception—see below). Bruckner? Too slow. And Mozart, well, you'll probably want to stop working out and just listen.

What we're looking for are the pieces that are high energy, fast and loud, with a thunderous crescendo at the end. Think Beethoven, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky.

To my mind, it would be the most fun to use these pieces in an AMRAP context, where the workout ends at the end of the piece. Thus, at the end of the workout when you're running out of gas, the final, furious crescendo will help carry you that last minute or two. If for some reason it's necessary to have precisely timed workouts of whole-minute durations, simply delay or advance the start of the piece as needed. In the list below, the length of the individual pieces varies from under 3 minutes to nearly 25 minutes. Thus, either singly or in combination, the songs can be used to create a soundtrack to almost any length of workout.

The workout should fit the tone of the music. Here are a few programming ideas:

At about 3:30, the frantic *William Tell Overture* would be perfect for, say, a rowing sprint. Can you break 1K before it's over?

Rimsky-Korsokov's *Marche Slav* (9:30) has a hypnotic, propulsive rhythm that would work nicely with a repetitive, heavy-lifting WOD. Another in this category is the third movement (8:25) of Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony*. But God's sake, whatever you do, don't use the fourth movement of this piece. After all, the name of the symphony is *Pathétique*, and this movement will make you put down your weights, sit in the corner and try to think of a good reason to go on living. Not the effect we're looking for.



Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kuznetsov - public domain

Tchaikovsky: noted composer and powerlifter?



Historians believe Beethoven hated burpees too.

Perfect for accompanying Fight Gone Bad is the *1812 Overture* (with chorus), which clocks in at around 17 minutes. Get a version with real cannon shots.

Although not technically a classical piece, *The Song of the Volga Boatmen* (4 minutes) is ideal for our purposes. This Russian folk tune celebrates the efforts of the workmen who would pull barges up the Volga River. Imagine climbing a rope or, better yet, pulling a rope (as did the Russian peasants) to its two refrains: *Yeshcho razik, yeshcho da raz!* ("Once more, one more time!") and *Ey, ukhnem!* (Heave ho!).

And finally, at nearly 25 minutes, there's the fourth movement of Beethoven's mighty *Ninth Symphony*, the most sublime piece of music ever written. (Is it blasphemous to use this music for the purpose of helping us throw around a bit more iron?) Save this for the most grueling WOD. It's inspiring throughout, and the final 2 minutes will make you want to run through walls.

There are many, many suitable classical pieces. On the right is a list of my favorites, sorted by duration (the timings are approximate and will vary by recording).

So how about it, affiliates? Put aside one hour per week for The Classical Hour—a deceptively serene-sounding name for the gut-busting WOD that will ensue.



Orff: <i>Carmina Burana—O Fortuna</i>	2:50
Puccini: <i>Dorma</i>	3:00
Brahms: <i>Hungarian Dance No. 5</i>	3:10
Rossini: <i>William Tell Overture</i>	3:30
Balakirev: <i>The Song of the Volga Boatmen</i>	3:55
Wagner: <i>Ride of the Valkyries</i>	5:20
Mendelssohn: <i>Violin Concerto in E Minor</i> (Third Movement)	6:00
Tchaikovsky: <i>Piano Concerto No. 1</i> (Third Movement)	7:00
Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 5</i> (First Movement)	7:15
Dvorak: <i>Symphony No. 9</i> (Third Movement)	8:10
Tchaikovsky: <i>Violin Concerto in D Major</i> (Third Movement)	8:15
Tchaikovsky: <i>Symphony No. 6</i> (Third Movement)	8:30
Bach: <i>Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor</i>	8:45
Rimsky-Korsakov: <i>Marche Slave</i>	9:25
Rachmaninoff: <i>Piano Concerto No. 3</i> (Third Movement)	9:30
Dvorak: <i>Symphony No. 8</i> (First Movement)	10:30
Gershwin: <i>An American in Paris</i>	10:40
Mendelssohn: <i>Violin Concerto in E minor</i> (First Movement)	10:50
Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 5</i> (Fourth Movement)	10:55
Dvorak: <i>Symphony No. 9</i> (Fourth Movement)	11:10
Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 9</i> (Second Movement)	11:50
Ravel: <i>Bolero</i>	13:45
Gershwin: <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i>	14:00
Tchaikovsky: <i>Violin Concerto in D Major</i> (First Movement)	15:45
Tchaikovsky: <i>1812 Overture</i>	16:45
Tchaikovsky: <i>Piano Concerto No. 1</i> (First Movement)	19:45
Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 9</i> (Fourth Movement)	24:40

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

On the Bubble

For some, it came down to one rep or a second's rest. Hilary Achauer reports on athletes who just barely made—or missed—the top 60 cut in the Reebok CrossFit Games Open.

By Hilary Achauer

April 2012



Bill Smith

On Sunday, March 25, Mark Ptasnik, a CrossFit trainer and aspiring professional wrestler, spent most of the day in front of his computer.

It was the final day of the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open, and Ptasnik had entered the week in 54th place in the North Central region. He had done workout 12.5, the combination of thrusters and chest-to-bar pull-ups that also closed last year's Open, on the preceding Friday and got 111 reps—two less than his score of 113 in 2011.

As men in his region sent in their final scores on Sunday, Ptasnik saw his name drop in the rankings. By 6 p.m. EST, Ptasnik was in 65th place. Doing some quick math, he realized he needed 118 reps to crack the top 60 and perhaps qualify for regionals.

Ptasnik called his coach, who would be his judge, and headed into the gym. He warmed up, started the clock, and pushed himself as hard as he could for 7 minutes: 116 reps.

Ptasnik sent in his score at 7 p.m. EST, an hour before the deadline for submissions. His name jumped to 56th place.

**“I went to the next page
and saw I was in 61st place.
If I had done one more
burpee ...”**

—Mark Ptasnik

“People started texting me, saying, ‘Congrats,’” Ptasnik said. “I saw some names missing, people who hadn’t yet submitted their scores, so I wondered what was going to happen.”

The deadline to submit the workouts arrived, and Ptasnik refreshed the leaderboard one more time. He scanned the first page and didn’t see his name.

“My heart dropped,” he said. “I went to the next page and saw I was in 61st place. If I had done one more burpee, one more snatch, or two more chest-to-bar pull-ups, I would have made it.”

At the end of the Open, only the top 60 athletes in each region earned a spot in the regional competition. The final placement was calculated using all five Open workouts, but the difference between 60th and 61st place often came down to the smallest detail—a missed snatch, an extra second of rest, a stumble on the box.

So what was it like to go through the five weeks of competition right on the edge?

Down to 1 Point

Vanessa Chanez’s first CrossFit competition was the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Open. She took 34th place in the SoCal region—earning a spot at regionals—but decided to compete with her Resolution CrossFit team. The box had opened its doors in early 2011, and Chanez spent most of 2011 and early 2012 getting her new gym up and running. She admits her training wasn’t optimal.

“I didn’t prepare my body for the Open this year,” Chanez said. “Our athletes were more important to me, and my training did suffer.”

Chanez did 106 burpees on 12.1, putting her in 138th place, but she shot up the rankings to 59th after snatching 100 lb. 18 times in 12.2. By the end of Week 4, Chanez was in 55th place. However, her mind was not on her individual ranking but on her Resolution CrossFit team. The team, competing in the SoCal region, had been hovering around 25th place for most of the competition. They had started out in 44th place and slowly climbed their way up to 23rd by Week 4.

The first time Chanez did 12.5, she was not at all happy with her score of 96.

“I felt like I was mentally giving up, which is not typical of me,” Chanez said.

She did the workout again the next day and got one more rep. It was still not good enough to secure her spot and guarantee a place for her team at regionals.

So, Chanez steeled herself to do the thrusters and pull-ups for a third day in a row. This time, she prepared correctly. She warmed up. She got her head together and finished the round of 15 plus 12 thrusters, for a score of 102. Those extra reps contributed to a total score of 436, putting her in 60th place, just one point ahead of 61st place. Resolution CrossFit finished the Open in 24th place, and Chanez will join her team in May at the Southern California Regional.

Open Surprises

For everyone who started the Open with dreams of regionals and beyond, there were those who had more modest goals. Carol Clingan, a 42-year-old athlete competing in the North West region, just wanted to do all the 2012 Open workouts RX’d and was hoping she didn’t have to scale the weight.



In 2011, Carol Clingan was unable to do the Open workouts RX'd, but she spent the last year building up her strength.

Clingan teaches middle-school math during the day and coaches at Rain City CrossFit at night, an affiliate she co-owns.

In 2011 Clingan did the Open “behind the scenes,” as she puts it. She didn’t register and couldn’t do all the workouts with the prescribed weight. A smaller athlete, she spent the year getting stronger but still wasn’t sure she would be able to make it through every workout if the weights got heavy.

Clingan did well on 12.1, with 113 burpees, but faltered on 12.2. Her 1RM snatch is 83 lb., and she wasn’t able to get the 100-lb. barbell overhead after snatching 75 lb. 30 times. After Week 2, Clingan was in 137th place.

A former endurance athlete, Clingan was hoping for something a bit longer, and her wish came true with 18-minute 12.3.

“I like the longer ones,” she said, “the warm-up is so important, especially as we get older.”

Clingan’s score of 346 put her in 106th place in her region, and she was happy she had managed to complete all the workouts. Although she was slow out of the gate, Clingan had a secret weapon that was revealed in 12.4, the wall-ball, double-under, muscle-up workout. Clingan got through 14 muscle-ups, which gave her an astonishing second-place finish and put her in 77th.

Now that the top 60 was in reach, Clingan began to change her mindset. She did the last workout on a Thursday and got a score of 108, beating her score of 100 from 2011.

“My friends told me to do it again,” Clingan said.

Knowing she was so close to the top 60, Clingan did the workout again on Saturday, making sure to warm up and prepare her body for the challenge. The clock started, Clingan hit the thrusters and pull-ups, and finished the seven minutes with a score of 115. It was just what she needed. When the leaderboard was finalized on Sunday night, Clingan had grabbed 60th place, just five points ahead of number 61, and the woman who just wanted to complete the workouts RX’d is now headed to the North West Regional.

**“I woke up, and I was still
in 60th place.”**

—Christopher Carter

Christopher Carter, competing in the Mid Atlantic region, has been doing CrossFit for just about a year—he started after buying a Groupon to CrossFit Manayunk. As opposed to the athletes who live and breathe everything CrossFit, Carter eats fast food, doesn’t follow a Paleo diet, and often misses workouts due to his frequent business trips. When Carter did 12.1 a second time, he admits he was hung over. Despite this, he improved his score by 2 reps.

“But I was surprised by how low I was,” Carter said. He did 118 burpees, which put him in 191st place.



Christopher Carter, who started CrossFit in February 2011, has already competed in four local competitions.

A score of 72 on 12.2 jumped Carter up to 65th. After moving around the leaderboard, by the end of 12.4 Carter was back in 65th place.

"I'm good at lower-body stuff, so I'm good at the thrusters," Carter said, "and my chest-to-bar pull-ups were not as bad as I thought."

Carter got a score of 130 and then left town for work. On Sunday he boarded a flight home.

"At 6:45 p.m. I was in 56th place, and my name kept dropping. I was getting nervous as people submitted their scores."

Carter considered rushing from the airport to the gym and redoing the workout but decided to let the chips fall where they would. At 8 p.m., Carter was in 59th place, and when he went to bed he was in 60th.

"I woke up, and I was still in 60th place," Carter said. He plans to compete with his CrossFit Manayunk team but is pleased to have made the individual cut and played a role in helping his team qualify.

The Zen Competitor

Tyler Belanger, an athlete in the Canada East region, qualified for the 2011 Canada East Regional, but he wasn't able to attend because he had a seminar scheduled for [Ignite!](#), a training program he founded with Chris Cooper to provide cognitive enrichment through exercise. This year, Belanger had high expectations for himself.

"As the top athlete at the gym, I set the bar high," he said. "I really wanted our team to qualify."

Belanger noticed a big difference in the level of competition between this year and last year.

"I couldn't believe how many people entered the middle-to-top range (this year). It was a big motivator for us," Belanger said.

As is appropriate for someone who works on the connection between the brain and exercise, Belanger took a relaxed, Zen-like approach to the Open. He did the first workout twice for a final score of 114 burpees, but he did the next three workouts only once.

"These are training sessions as well," Belanger said of the Open workouts. "I just gave it my all and let the score decide. If I didn't perform the way I hoped, instead of doing it again I looked at my nutrition and training. I would think, 'What do I need to change?'"

**"I knew I could kill two birds
with one stone by getting in
the top 60 and helping
my team."**

—Tyler Belanger

This philosophy served Belanger well, and at the end of workout 12.4 he was in 61st place, working his way up from 159th place after 12.1. Belanger's team, Catalyst Green Army from CrossFit Catalyst in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., was in 27th place going into the last workout.

Belanger was planning to compete on his team, but "making the top 60 was a huge motivator," he said. "I knew I could kill two birds with one stone by getting in the top 60 and helping my team."

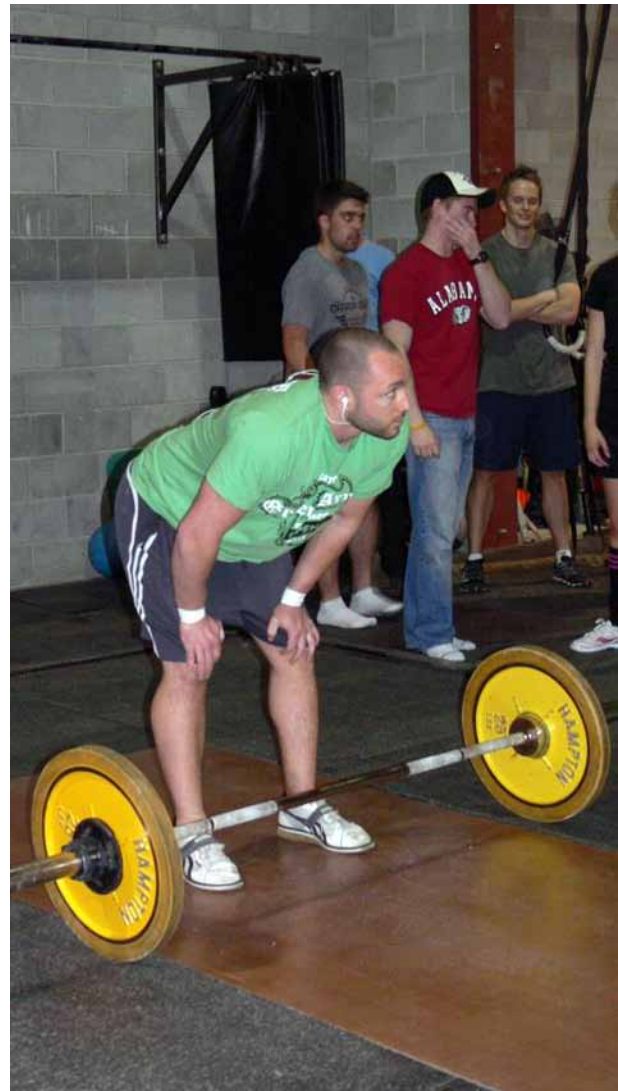
Belanger did 12.5 once and got a score of 105.

"I knew I was stronger than that," he said, and so he did the workout again a few days later and improved his score by 10 reps, for a total of 115. That was Belanger's all-out effort, and he hoped it was good enough.

On Sunday night, Belanger checked the leaderboard and saw he was in 61st place. His team was in 28th place, which was good enough for regionals, but Belanger admits he was disappointed.

I contacted Belanger for this article a few days after the Open was over, looking for people in 61st place. When he got my email, he joked later that he thought, "Maybe all of us in 61st place could form a nice support group on Facebook."

Just before I was due to call Belanger on April 2, I checked the leaderboard to review his scores. It was then I noticed something strange. His name was on the first page for the Canada East region—he had jumped to 60th place.



Stephanie Pamiak

Belanger often uses the songs on his iPod to pace himself throughout the workout.

Belanger had recently found this out himself. He thought it was a mistake at first, because he didn't get an invitation to regionals. Then, by chance, he checked his spam folder.

"The invitation to regionals went into my junk email box," he said with a laugh.

Belanger has no idea why or how he got bumped up to 60th place. He's going to compete with his team anyway, but he's happy his relaxed, methodical approach earned him a place in the top 60 in his region.

Metro Pro Wrestling



Ptasnik's villainous pro wrestling character often yells, "I'm an elite athlete!" at the crowd.

Moving On

Ptasnik, the pro wrestler in 61st place in North Central, loves CrossFit so much his professional-wrestling character incorporates CrossFit into his act. He plays a villain, "the Fittest Pro Wrestler on Earth," who enters the ring holding a kettlebell and challenges people to push-up contests. Behind the scenes, Ptasnik has inspired many of his fellow pro wrestlers to do CrossFit.

On Sunday night, the same night he found out he had just missed a spot at the North Central Regional, Ptasnik went to the gym. He did some heavy overhead squats and hit a PR. Then he did some skill work and a few weighted pull-ups, and he finished with 30 muscle-ups for time.

Many people would have drowned their sorrows in food or alcohol or would have taken a much-needed break from working out. When the leaderboard didn't shake out the way he wanted, Ptasnik's response was to get back in the gym and work harder.

"I love CrossFit," Ptasnik said. "It's such a positive thing in my life."



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 the **CrossFit Journal** and writes websites, brochures, blogs and newsletters. A Level 1 Trainer, 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.*



Gary Allard

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Serving the Soldiers

Brian Wilson explains how CrossFit Walter Reed works to help injured veterans improve their fitness.

By **Brian Wilson** Potomac CrossFit

April 2012



Nicole Bedard Photography

CrossFit Walter Reed began as an experiment with two athletes. Just by chance, I had two injured veterans referred to me in order to take part in my Working Wounded Program at Potomac CrossFit. This class meets twice per week and is designed to keep athletes training during injury.

1 of 6

Nicole Bedard Photography



Chip (left) and Pat (right) work through a warm-up chipper in Wilson's Working Wounded class.

Part 1: Working Wounded—Chip and Pat

I had been coaching a Working Wounded class for about a year using Coach Greg Glassman's [Working Wounded](#) article as my guide. Per his instructions, I had focused not on rehabbing injury but on trying to make the athletes stronger in areas where they could get stronger while letting the injured body part heal.

I thought this would be a great opportunity for me as a coach to expand my knowledge of treating injured athletes.

Capt. Chip Gabriel, fire support/field artillery officer, U.S. Army, survived multiple IED and indirect and direct fire incidents with his unit in 2009 in Afghanistan. After what he calls "some bumps and bruises" in January 2010, he was incapacitated by a vertebral-artery clot that led to a stroke.

The stroke resulted in nerve damage to his right arm and leg, significantly restricting his strength, coordination and mobility.

Cpl. Pat Murray, machine gunner, U.S. Marine Corps, was wounded during an IED blast Sept. 4, 2006, in Fallujah, Iraq. Pat is missing his right leg above the knee and sustained third-degree burns to his hands and face, two broken ulnas, three broken metacarpals, three broken ribs, blown eardrums and a collapsed lung. He has shrapnel embedded in his right side from head to hip.

Both men were referred to me separately but at the same time. I thought this would be a great opportunity for me as a coach to expand my knowledge of treating injured athletes, and I hoped I could do some good for Chip and Pat's health.

We began our first class with an explanation of what my plan was. I explained that if they wanted to do this, these classes were mandatory. If they didn't show up Tuesday/Thursday at 6 p.m. and commit to this process, then we would shut it down. After experimenting with many systems of price, payment and attendance with members prior to Chip and Pat joining, this is the system in which I saw the most benefit for both coach and athlete.

Chip and Pat agreed, and we started off with a basic assessment of their mobility using the nine foundational CrossFit movements and other common CrossFit exercises. What was especially challenging for me as a coach was the fact that their injuries were so different, but I wanted them to complete the same warm-ups, skill work, strength work and met-cons in order to foster a sense of esprit de corps and a healthy competition.

After taking them through a lengthy series of movements, we came up with the following list of what I call “green” movements in my Working Wounded Program. Green movements can be done pain-free with some amount of relative intensity and/or load.

Green Movements

Deadlift
Air squat
Push-up
Ring dip
Lunge
Pull-up
Front squat
Press
Slam-ball
Rowing
Kettlebell swing
Box step-up
Dumbbell push press (single arm for Chip as he couldn't raise his right arm overhead)
Barbell push press (for Pat only)

These movements were not all done with full range of motion, and many needed to be assisted, but we started with this group as a baseline and used these movements principally in our classes.

The classes would be structured with a warm-up chipper at low intensity in order to continually familiarize the athletes with the movements. We would follow this with a strength or skill portion where we would take one or two of the movements and progressively add loading or volume based on basic volume-training practices (see [Volume Training for Goats](#)) or basic barbell strength progressions. Lastly, we would do a met-con with some of these movements as well.

When we started out, a typical class looked like this:

Warm-Up

2 rounds, 8 reps at “warm-up speed” of:

Deadlifts, 15 lb.

Pull-ups (sub ring row)

Air squat (use squat rack for balance)

Deadlifts, 15 lb.

Ring dips (use feet to assist)

Lunges (use squat rack for balance)

Front squats (use PVC and try for greatest depth)

Presses, PVC or 15 lb.

Strength/Skill

Every minute on the minute for 8 minutes:

2 pull-ups or 10 seconds of flexed-arm hang

Met-Con

21-, 15-, and 9-rep rounds of:

Deadlifts, 85 lb.

Dumbbell push presses (30 lb. single arm for Chip, 20 lb. each arm for Pat)

Slam-balls, 10 lb.

As Chip and Pat improved, we added more dynamic movements, such as sumo deadlift high pulls, power cleans and wall-balls. We also continued to add load to our baseline green movements.

You can watch a video of Pat performing a scaled version of Elizabeth [here](#).

You can see a sample of warm-ups, skill work and met-cons [here](#).

I wanted to focus especially on the deadlift for its demands on the central nervous system as well as my belief that doing so would give the athletes a significant degree of confidence moving forward. The back squat, front squat and overhead squat would be significant challenges due to mobility issues, and overhead strength would be an issue for both as well because of Chip's ROM issues with his right arm and the fact that Pat cannot re-bend his artificial knee in movements like the push jerk. We decided that the deadlift would be our primary strength focus.

After positive feedback from Pat and Chip on their progress in the WOD classes, they no longer attend my Working Wounded classes.

After several months of work, both athletes now pull a 300-lb. deadlift and continue to see progress.

For a video of Chip's successful one-rep-max deadlift in October 2011, click [here](#).

After six months of two-on-one training in a closed class, Pat and Chip started attending our normal workout-of-the-day classes. At that point, we had gone over substituting movements and how to scale, and I felt confident they were ready to proceed. We still did our Working Wounded classes twice per week for another month, but after positive feedback from Pat and Chip on their progress in the WOD classes, they no longer attend my Working Wounded classes. After a little over a year of training hard, they perform the WODs with minimal substitutions and scaling.

For more info on Chip and Pat, click [here](#).

Part 2: CrossFit Walter Reed

Dillon Behr has been an athlete at Potomac CrossFit since August 2010. I knew a little about Dillon's background, but as I got to know him I found out more from him, his girlfriend, and a *CrossFit Journal* article by Russell Berger titled *Athletes—Always*.

Dillon was a sergeant first class, 3rd Group, U.S. Army Special Forces. He suffered several gunshot wounds during a six-hour firefight in the Shok Valley, Afghanistan, on April 6, 2008. He was awarded the [Silver Star](#) for his actions. He was transported to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., and underwent hip-replacement surgery and several other procedures.

In February 2011, after seeing me working with Chip and Pat, Dillon approached me about shadowing my Working Wounded classes. Dillon wanted to take some of the techniques and programming I was using to Walter Reed and teach CrossFit there. After shadowing several sessions, Dillon began a regular CrossFit class at Walter Reed, and I began assisting him after the first few weeks.

With the congressionally mandated Base Realignment and Closure Act, Walter Reed Army Hospital has shut down, and the wounded receiving treatment have moved to Bethesda Navy Medical Center, which was renamed Walter Reed Military Medical Center.



Nicole Bedard Photography

After six months in the Working Wounded class, Pat and Chip joined the regular classes with very little substitutions and scaling.

Courtesy of Brian Wilson/Potomac CrossFit



CrossFit Walter Reed is a military non-profit affiliate focused on training wounded athletes.

We moved with the wounded athletes and have continued to train in the fitness facilities offered on base. We have also started a military non-profit affiliate, CrossFit Walter Reed, and have been joined by other local affiliates in staffing the classes. Some of those involved include John Main and Christy Phillips of CrossFit MPH and Judd Borakave of CrossFit Bethesda.

**We have significant evidence
that a measured dose of
constantly varied functional
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injured athletes.**

Establishing CrossFit Walter Reed has been challenging for several reasons. First, as anyone who has ever been in the military knows, the bureaucracy can be hard to navigate. Second, we have no dedicated space in which to train, so we use whatever space and equipment are available. CrossFit Headquarters has been very gracious in offering to provide gear for our venture; however, we are still negotiating with the Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation personnel as to where that gear will be stored.

Third, we are targeting an athlete demographic that is transient. Many wounded service personnel undergo multiple surgeries and extensive physical therapy, all the while on powerful painkillers and other drugs. Once they are through their main treatment phase and likely ready to take on a CrossFit workout regiment, they are worried about re-injuring themselves, re-entering treatment and hence postponing their future plans, and they're also focused on moving on with their lives by either leaving the service or getting back to their unit.

We have significant evidence that a measured dose of constantly varied functional movement will improve overall health and mental well-being of severely injured athletes. We also have a small but dedicated number of wounded athletes who train with us every week. However, we still have not been able to communicate effectively to the large number of wounded service personnel that CrossFit is a viable and beneficial method of improving their fitness.

Part 3: The Working Wounded Games

With these challenges in mind, we have decided to pull the rope instead of trying to push it. In conjunction with the United States Veteran's Administration Office of National Sports Programs and Special Events, we are planning on holding the first annual Working Wounded Games at Patriot CrossFit in Arlington, Va., in the fall of 2012.

Due to the fact that many wounded veterans leave the national-capital region after their treatment, we're going to hold both a live and online competition similar to the Reebok CrossFit Games Open.

We'll continue to post recommended WODs on our [CrossFit Walter Reed](#) website and publicize the event. We hope this approach will encourage wounded veterans to try CrossFit and compete. We also hope this article and the content on our blog and Facebook page will serve as an open-source fitness model for training wounded veterans. We look forward to collaborating with other trainers and affiliates on best practices.



Courtesy of Brian Wilson/Potomac CrossFit

About the Author

Brian Wilson is the co-owner of [Potomac CrossFit](#) and [Patriot CrossFit](#), both located in Arlington, Va. He is a major in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. He holds a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from the U.S. Naval Academy and has been "between semesters" as a student at the Graduate Institute, St. John's College in Annapolis, Md., since Potomac CrossFit opened in August 2008. He is projected to graduate from St. John's as soon as this owning/operating affiliates thing demands less of his time. For more information about the Wounded Warrior Games, please email brian@crossfitwalterreed.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Pinky and the Bumper

The same thing we do every class: help fit kids have fun taking over the fitness world.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

April 2012

Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids



Equipment

- 8-16 pylons
- Pinky Balls and small cones (1 each per team)
- Assorted bumper plates (10-15 lb.)

Set-Up

Create 2 lines of 4 to 8 pylons 25 feet apart. Line up 10- and 15-lb. bumper plates 3 to 5 feet apart, placing a Pinky Ball in the center hole of each. Align each bumper with a flat-style cone to designate placement and keep things organized as the WOD/game progresses. Be aware of space usage and adjust accordingly: age and level of coordination will determine the proper spacing between bumpers.

Rules of Play

Kids choose partners and alternate tasks. On go, Partner A will throw the Pinky Ball into the ground to get one big bounce (the ball must go overhead and be caught), then run to the opposite pylons 25 feet away. Once there, he

or she will bounce and catch the ball again and return to the start point. While Partner A is bouncing the ball and running, Partner B is holding the bumper in the overhead position, with the shoulders active as in an overhead squat. When Partner A returns, they switch tasks. A round is counted after both have completed each task.

Notes

More advanced kids can perform an overhead squat rather than an overhead hold.

If you run Pinky and the Bumper as a WOD, use the AMRAP-in-a-given-time format (we use 8 minutes) and be sure to have the class spend time practicing short 2-foot bounces during skill work. If you run it as a CrossFit Kids game, then each round where both partners complete each task once can be set up as a race.

Design a warm-up that incorporates bouncing and catching the Pinky Balls with accuracy. Discuss a strategy of bouncing the ball with just the right amount of power.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

A Fight to Remember

Molly Godby commits to a lifelong fight against the disease that took her mother.

By Molly Godby

April 2012



Beth Welch

When people ask me why I do CrossFit, I can give the standard answers: "It's addictive. I love the way it makes me look and feel. There is an awesome community built into CrossFit." And all of that is true.

Another reason, perhaps the main reason, I CrossFit is to fight the disease that is stealing my mother away from me bit by bit, moment by moment, the disease that has changed my mother from a smart, interesting woman into a confused, often scared "adult child."

1 of 6

Dealing With Disease

My mother suffers from Alzheimer's disease. When she was in her early 60s, before the disease was diagnosed but problems were becoming apparent, she knew things were changing before my older sister and I knew. She always found ways to compensate or explain these problems away. When she followed my family to Colorado to live, she said it was a new town that caused her to get lost—even after she had driven the same routes many times.

She worked as a counselor and had to fill out forms as part of her job. When she finally had to ask me to help with the forms, things started to click with me that something wasn't right, although deep down I had known that she was struggling. The forms were basic, and I could fill them out even with no knowledge in her field. Then she started to avoid driving unless it was absolutely necessary.

In 2007, my family moved to Indiana and my mom came along. That same year, at 66 years old, she was formally diagnosed with dementia with probable onset of Alzheimer's. She lived in an apartment home close to my family in the Indianapolis area. Luckily, this place was within walking distance of a gift store, grocery store, hardware store and other shops. I told her I did not want her driving to places outside of our small suburban town, so she would walk to these places to do her shopping.

**I had lost the mother I had
known and, in essence,
gained a child.**

The fact that she was fairly new in town was a social nightmare for her. She had always been somewhat introverted. She loved a good book better than a crowded room, but without almost anyone her age to interact with, she had to rely on me as her main social outlet. I did my best to take her places when I went, but because she didn't have friends and really didn't have a way to get to places other than with me, slowly, one by one, her skills fell away.

During these early years, my mom understood what was happening to her. Most of the time, she was cooperative when dealing with her disease. But we also called her the "Master of Disguise." She had become so

accustomed to hiding problems and finding other ways to accommodate them that sometimes I had to ask her, "What is going on? What do I need to know? What are you having trouble with?" She would tell me, though sometimes reluctantly, and we would make adjustments accordingly. Bit by bit, I became her driver, her shopper, her adviser, her bookkeeper, her nurse. In almost every important way, I became her parent. I had lost the mother I had known and, in essence, gained a child.

In 2009, my sister and I had to move her into an assisted-living facility. She was actually excited about this move. She understood that it was necessary and hoped she would make some friends and have a social life again. In actuality it has had its ups and down. She was 69 and most of the other residents were in their 80s, which made it more difficult to make friends, but she managed to meet some people, enjoy activities, and most importantly remain safe and get the help she needed on a daily basis.



Molly Godby

The author's mother had a flair for fashion and loved art, theater and gardening.

Beth Welch



CrossFit helps Godby combat feelings of anger and helplessness and keep her body and mind healthy in the fight against memory loss.

Before Alzheimer's, I remember my mother as a beautiful woman who was reserved and liked to read quietly on her own yet always had a flair for fashion. She kept a small garden and usually had fresh herbs available for meals. She loved art, took my sister and me to the theater, and encouraged us to be creative. Mom's life's work was as a teacher and a counselor. She was smart. She worked for a major university's pain-management center, where she counseled patients who suffered from chronic pain. She helped them with relaxation techniques and biofeedback. She volunteered her time to breast-cancer support groups and to groups that empowered women to find careers and to follow their passions.

This strong woman, this smart woman, is gone.

A Parent Lost

It is often hard to remember that the mom I knew growing up is the same woman I see now. The mother of my memories has been replaced with a woman who can no longer read. She cannot use the TV remote. She is afraid to get in the shower because the water is "dirty."

She is not allowed to walk outside without someone with her. She has no idea how to find the dining hall or how to order food. She once loved seeing and emulating the latest fashions but now has no idea what "pants" are and is confused trying to put on clothes. She sometimes looks in the mirror and thinks that her own image is someone else—someone who is a caretaker, visitor or friend but not herself. The mother who took care of me is now a person who cannot take care of herself and doesn't even recognize herself.

There is more. Unable to understand the world around her as it is, her mind creates an alternate world. For instance, she is sure that she has met Andrea Bocelli and other people she sees on TV, and she creates stories around these hallucinations. Some hallucinations are even stranger and much less benign. She tells the story of how she was involved in executing two young boys. Executing two boys? Yes, she says that she had to go to a jail to counsel two teenage boys. While there, the jail staff made her watch as the first boy was executed. She describes how he sat in a chair and someone put something in his mouth and he died. Then she says she was asked to kill the second boy, but she refused.

**There are so many times that
I leave her ... and all I want
to do is go for a long run or
throw heavy weight around.**

How should I react to stories like this that have become her reality, her truth? I go along. I humor her. I tell her how horrible it is that this happened to her, that I am so sorry that she had to do that. Her response is, "Why would I make that up? That is too horrible to make up." In some small part of mom that is still mom, it is as if she knows her stories are bizarre, and she wonders if she is insane. She tries to justify the stories to me to prove that she is not crazy. She is not insane, of course, just losing her mind—literally. I must watch and listen and try to respond calmly and reassuringly while she spins out stories and desperately tries to explain, in some fashion, a world that she does not, and cannot, understand.

My mom is almost 72 now, and although she is still lucid at times, she more and more exists in this alternate reality. She is losing sight of me as her daughter, although she sees me on a regular basis. It won't be long until she completely doesn't recognize me or my sister or her four grandchildren. And, to be honest, all of this just plain sucks. Many a day I leave after spending time with her and barely make it to my car before I start to bawl. There are so many times that I leave her not just mad but full of fury and sorrow, and all I want to do is go for a long run or throw heavy weight around.

Beneath my anger is pain, immense pain. How can I describe it, the pain of witnessing my mother's personality disintegrate, of seeing the beautiful, gentle, empathetic woman who raised me become someone else, a someone who is often frightened, confused, suspicious, and angry? She knows even at times, you see, that "she," the person she was, is dying a sort of death apart from the rest of her physical being. Imagine knowing such a thing. Imagine knowing that nothing can be done to keep yourself from disappearing day by day by day.

Fighting for the Future

My pain is deep and constant. It springs from my anger that this awful thing has happened to my mother, my helplessness in knowing that I can do nothing to help her and the immense sadness I feel in losing my mother. It is a pain that eats away at me. If I let it, it could overwhelm me and drag me down. Sometimes it is like being in a pool of water and constantly trying to get across only to be pulled down, fighting, gasping for air.

Now take another step with me. Imagine, as I do, that what is happening to my mother may one day happen to me, that someday when I forget a name or lose my keys, it may not be because I am stressed or busy but because I am suffering the first symptoms of the onset of Alzheimer's. I am scared to death that someday the reason for forgetfulness might be because I have my mother's disease.

These fears are not unfounded or irrational. Here are the facts:

- There is an identifiable gene that indicates the likelihood that a person may develop Alzheimer's.
- A person with a parent who has Alzheimer's is somewhat more likely to have the gene.
- If the mother is the parent with the disease, the chances are greater than if the parent is the father.



Beth Welch

There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but a good diet and exercise can significantly lower the risk of dementia and memory loss.

My sister and I may have the gene. I don't know if I have it, and I don't plan to find out. But the constant "what if?" is always there. Added to the sadness, anger, helplessness and pain I feel for my mother is the real fear I have for myself. I fear that someday my children will have to watch me disappear, just as I have watched my mother.

**My plan is straightforward:
I will do everything I can
to combat the chances of
becoming a victim
of Alzheimer's.**

These fears are based on reality, and I cannot avoid the reality that someday I may have my mother's disease. How do I reconcile that reality with my determination to live a meaningful life with my family, not a life based on fear? During the past few years I have developed a plan, and that plan gives me hope.

My plan is straightforward: I will do everything I can to combat the chances of becoming a victim of Alzheimer's. As yet, there is no cure for Alzheimer's, and the few drugs used in treating Alzheimer's symptoms don't work for everyone. They did not work for my mother. Someday there may be a cure, but right now I have no control over research or drugs or cures. I can control only what I do and how I live.

CrossFit has become part of my plan to stave off Alzheimer's. CrossFit is my hope, my determination.

Extensive medical research indicates that exercise and diet are even better than mental exercise in combating memory loss. Research also shows that diabetes, high cholesterol, high sugar intake and lack of exercise all contribute to memory loss, dementia and Alzheimer's. The research shows that one should adopt a cleaner diet and exercise the body and mind regularly to help stave off memory loss. Doing these things can lower your risks by 40 percent. I will take whatever I can get.



Beth Welch

Every time she considers skipping a WOD, Godby thinks of her mom and starts the clock.

My husband introduced me to CrossFit in 2007, just at the time of my mother's diagnosis. Both the diagnosis and CrossFit have changed my life, albeit on two totally different levels, and both co-exist in my life: one as darkness, one as light. CrossFit and its principles—including exercise, diet and mental acuity—fall right in line with my personal war against Alzheimer's. CrossFit has become part of my plan to stave off Alzheimer's. CrossFit is my hope, my determination.

Equally important, CrossFit is part of my commitment to my present physical health. I usually do CrossFit five to six days a week, and although I started out at an affiliate, I now mostly work out alone. For me, this is a lifetime commitment not just for myself, but also for my family. Each time that voice creeps up in me that says, "Take the day off" or "Forget it. No one is here watching you. You don't have to do that WOD," I think of my mom. Then the sad yet completely pissed-off warrior of a woman inside me takes over and says, "Hell, no. We are doing this."

And I do. Alone in my gym, I fight, fight through the workout while fighting against Alzheimer's. In some respects, I am a lot like every other CrossFitter out there. I felt like a complete beast when I PR'd my overhead squat last week and wanted to tell everyone. I still get that nervous feeling before every WOD because I want to annihilate it. Pressing the button for the clock to start the countdown is sometimes like jumping into a cold pool. I know it's going to hurt, but I've just got to do it. I long to improve my times and I am completely outraged and embarrassed when I don't. I put a lot of pressure on myself to be "the best," whatever that means at the time. I am super competitive. I want to win. I want to beat everyone. And I certainly want to beat Alzheimer's. I must win that battle.

CrossFit has also taught me a great deal about food. We once were the typical American family in thinking we were pretty healthy. Pizza, drive-throughs and our "treat drawer" were not everyday or even every-week routines, but they still didn't help us be a healthy family. Now, thanks to the information on CrossFit.com about Zone and Paleo eating, our family eats very clean meals. We love to experiment and try new foods, although please don't ask my 8-year-old son about kale. It may bring him to tears.

Lifelong CrossFitter

I will continue to be a dedicated lifelong CrossFitter, with all that entails—the WODs, the diet, the continual learning. CrossFit is not just a program; it is a core value in my life. I am now physically and mentally stronger than I have ever been, which I can truly attribute to my dedication to CrossFit. I will never be the person who says, “Remember when I did CrossFit?”

I own this body, and every day I do my very best to keep it as healthy and as strong as it can be. So go ahead and make fun of me if I won't eat that cookie or if I insist on fitting in a workout before we go out Friday night. Because of these life choices, I will continue to be the mom who does flips off the diving board. I will high-five my kids as we run past each other while doing a WOD. I will race them up the stairs to their rooms to read with them before bed. And I will certainly be the mom who remembers who I am and what I stand for ... or I will die trying.

This journey that I am on with my mom continues to be a rough road. On a given day, after what would be considered a “good” visit, I may break down and sob uncontrollably. On other days, I adopt the mantra “it is what it is.” CrossFit has prepared me, and continues to prepare me, both physically and mentally for the unknown and unknowable, which is every minute I am with my mom. I never know who she is going to be. What I do know is that I love her unconditionally and will continue to help take care of her. I will love her for who she is every minute, every second that I still have her, Alzheimer's and all.

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Courtesy of Molly Godby

About the Author

Molly Godby lives with her family of four in Zionsville, Ind. She holds a CrossFit Level 1 certificate and has attended the Movement and Mobility Trainer seminar. In her former life, she played high-school and college basketball. She received a B.A. in psychology from Randolph-Macon Woman's College. She was also a fourth-grade teacher and coached two competitive basketball teams while living in Colorado. She now enjoys taking care of her two children and is the household CEO, who stays fit doing CrossFit on her own.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Fashionista Finds CrossFit

Her work colleagues want fitness tips, and her CrossFit friends ask for fashion advice. Nicole Biscuiti on balancing a fashion career with CrossFit dreams.

By Nicole Biscuiti

April 2012



All images: Matthew O'Connell

It was moments before a big chipper, the third event of my very first CrossFit competition. I looked over at my friends and family yelling for me. I saw friends from my home box, CrossFit Delray Beach. I saw my mom, who on several occasions had come into the gym while I was training and freaked out.

"You are going to hurt yourself," she told me. "You are crazy! Be careful!"

Next to my mom were my friends from outside the CrossFit world, who all think I'm a brick shithouse. I love them, but they don't care or even know if I "dead-clean" 100 lb. or 340 lb. They just think I do the craziest shit they have ever seen.



You can dress her up, but she still has pull-up calluses and deadlift scars.

I saw my colleagues from work. One of my colleagues always asks me to write workouts for her to do at the YMCA but then comes back into my office and says things like, "What's a burpee?" So I show her—while wearing my suit and heels. She says, "Um, yeah, that looks hard. Anything else I can try?"

Last but not least, I saw my boyfriend, also a CrossFitter. I don't have to explain anything to him. He can look at me and he knows.

My friends and family were shaking Ketel martinis, popping Veuve Clicquot (my favorite) and drinking beers. The tent had tables with cheese and meat platters, pastries and sandwiches. The fresh-squeezed orange juice was for mimosas, and the only fruit was lime for the tequila. Pink pompoms and "Go, Nicole!" posters created a colorful, festive hedge.

I thought, "Just a few more minutes, guys. I'll be right there with you."

The triathlons and running races of my past were easy compared to this. I had butterflies in my stomach. I looked

over at what I kept referring to as my "fan club" and thought, "Damn I'm lucky. All these people are here for me!"

Once the "3-2-1 ... Go!" sounded, the butterflies immediately dissipated and I went into work mode, steadily chipping away at the workload in front of me and constantly thinking about how I could make up ground by perfecting and improving each movement. When I finished, I had taken third place in that event. I didn't win but certainly did not disappoint myself, either.

I am a public-relations executive in the fashion industry: I manage PR for Bloomingdale's in two of its five Florida markets. My life is similar in some aspects to that of Anne Hathaway's character in *The Devil Wears Prada*, and in other aspects I often feel like a glorified hotel concierge manager. Five to six days a week you can find me, BlackBerry in hand, wearing a black suit, highly accessorized, with a minimum of four-inch stilettos hugging my feet, working 12-hour days. I walk fast (non-CrossFitters can't keep up), and I'm always on my way to a meeting, event or walk-through.



Training secret revealed: hot coffee in the ice bath.

Event planning and PR are all-or-nothing job scenarios. Just like CrossFit. You are either in or you're out. A great event is all in the details, the minutiae, the things nobody sees. Just like a great squat snatch or a perfect golf swing. The best make it look easy. But it takes time and energy.

My fashion colleagues don't exactly know what CrossFit is, but I'm pretty sure they think I'm crazy. They love asking me, "What did you do in the gym today?" and let me describe my training to them over lunch (which for me consists of "approved foods" as I salivate over the greasy, fried goodness they have on their plates). My colleagues in the Orlando office got me a mini-fridge to house all the food I drag into the office with me each day on the condition that Dustin, our security officer, is allowed to keep his Rockstars in there. I have successfully converted one colleague into a CrossFitter, and now everyone in the office gets to hear his stories about box jumps and tire flipping.

My CrossFit friends think my work is awesome. They are always asking me, "So, what fun event do you have going on this week?" or "Hey—I want to buy something to wear for a party. What do you recommend?" I'm usually sporting new trends and bringing them little accessories to try.

I found CrossFit just by chance when I was looking for a place to work out that was convenient to my house. Up until that point I was running every day and weight training a couple of days a week, and I had just started training for my first triathlon with Team in Training.

My first experience with CrossFit was a Helen-esque workout—all stuff (now) in my wheelhouse, and I think it probably took me 40 minutes to complete. Even though I was "in shape" by L.A. Fitness standards, when I started CrossFit I was using bands for pull-ups, never did a thruster over 65 lbs., did double-unders that made me look like I was hopping around the house trying to avoid stepping on nails, and thought there was something wrong with people who ate organic beef jerky, nuts and grilled chicken before noon.

That was two years ago, and while I am nowhere near where I'd like to be, I'm also celebrating my small successes through various PRs (like my first muscle-up!) and very much living in the present, understanding that every day I accomplish something.

I can say with certainty that CrossFit is by far the best, healthiest part of my life. Currently, I spend half of my week training at CrossFit Delray Beach in my Florida hometown and the other half of my week at Kingspoint CrossFit in Orlando. Invariably, with my busy travel schedule, I am forced to crash a Globo Gym here and there. I have many very early mornings and late nights in order to get fit.

I believe that my CrossFit life has enabled me to be a better, more efficient person at work. I'm not bothered by the physical demands of my job because I know that no matter what it is, it's going to be 10 times easier than whatever I'm doing in my CrossFit box.

In the same manner, I've been able to apply the practical thinking that I've gained as a fast-paced executive to my training program, which has helped me see that even the smallest gains matter, and that this "CrossFit thing" I'm doing is not a fad—it's a long game. Having patience and enjoying the journey is all part of it. Along with Champagne tents and pink pompoms.

To follow along on my CrossFit journey, visit my website: www.NicoleBiscuiti.com.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Nine-Month WOD

Bayley Lawrence talks about her experience
CrossFitting while pregnant.

By Bayley Lawrence

April 2012



All images: Nick Freeman

Pregnancy is a workout only CrossFit could design:

Start with an empty vest. For every week that goes by, add one-quarter to one pound to the vest. Continue adding weight for eight months. Do not stop the workout but modify if necessary. This is not for time. Going faster will get you nowhere.

3-2-1... Go!

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After finding the CrossFit Mom site, Bayley Lawrence adapted her workouts to her pregnancy.

Becoming a CrossFit Mom

I am no CrossFit star. Far from it. Even before I got pregnant, I couldn't do more than two pull-ups in a row. Double-unders eluded me, as did handstand push-ups. I have never set foot in a CrossFit gym; I work out at gyms on military bases where my husband is stationed (they may not be perfect, but they're free). Though I eat a very clean diet, it's not Paleo or Zone; I eat intuitively and as healthfully as I can.

In July of 2011, I'd been doing CrossFit for just over a year. I was starting to really enjoy my noticeable new strength and speed when two lines showed up on the home pregnancy test.

I was determined not to be relegated to the couch, which seemed to be the fate of too many pregnant women

I was determined not to be relegated to the couch, which seemed to be the fate of too many pregnant women—egged on by their own or their doctors' desires. While exercise was and is a priority in my life, it did not override my other goals. During the two months when my husband and I were trying to get pregnant, I made an effort to not overdo it at the gym. I still followed CrossFit main-site programming but kept myself away from extreme exertion by slowing everything down.

Once that test came up positive, though, it was time to really dial it down, and I had done my research. A simple Internet search brought me to the [CrossFit Mom](#) website, a thrilling discovery for any new, clueless pregnant woman. It's run by Andrea Nitz, a trainer out of CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif., and it offers not only scaled versions of the main site WODs but also a community forum for pregnant and post-partum CrossFitters everywhere. It is a gold mine.

The CrossFit Mom WODs are divided into three categories: advanced, intermediate and beginner. Because I started out my pregnancy strong, healthy and accustomed to the rigors of a CrossFit workout cycle, I used the advanced version. I always felt safe and comfortable doing the exercises. Nitz recommends certain basic substitutions for exercises, so if it was a rest day and I wanted to work out, I could easily look on the CrossFit main site and scale a workout to pregnancy-style, swapping hang power cleans for cleans from the floor, knees to elbows for GHD sit-ups, or lighter one-armed kettlebell swings for heavier two-handed swings (CrossFit Mom advises against doing certain movements that put unnecessary strain on the belly).

Not wanting to risk anything in the delicate days of the first trimester, I started following the CrossFit Mom programming exclusively. The only exception was that I consistently ran more than prescribed. For example, I would often add an 800-meter run between rounds of a workout, and I tried to go for 20-to-30-minute jogs on one of the two consecutive rest days. I like running; I ran

cross-country through high school and moved on to half and full marathons after. I am not fast, and pregnancy slowed me down, but I was comfortable running straight through the nine months. Other than that, I followed the WODs to the letter.

I never lifted more than 65 lb., and the rare times I tried to go up to 70 or 75 lb. were uncomfortable. If I felt any awkward or pulling sensations in my belly, I immediately stopped, walked around the gym and came back to the workout slowly.

The whole experience was exceptional. I felt strong, even though I wasn't lifting heavy weights compared to what I lifted pre-pregnancy (which was not heavy by most standards). Despite eliminating or modifying many of the regular CrossFit exercises, I knew that working out was helping me maintain my strength, and that it was good for my baby, too. On days when the workout kicked my ass (and there were plenty of those), I told myself over and over that I would need the endurance during labor and post-partum recovery, and that the workouts would help my baby handle the rigors of labor better.

First to Third

The most surprising aspect of pregnancy for me, and the most annoying, was the first-trimester exhaustion. I was shocked at how tired I got just rowing 500 meters some days. I felt pretty drained all the way through the first trimester until I hit 13 weeks. Still, I rarely missed a workout, even if that meant taking my sweet time and sitting on the floor or stretching for long minutes in between rounds. My stubbornness paid off: the workouts gave me more energy, and I usually felt better afterward.

In pregnancy, unlike in normal life, it always pays to listen to your body's signals when it's telling you to slow the hell down.

I admit there were a few days in the first trimester when I would sit on the C2 with the handle in my hands, or stand at the squat rack with the bar resting on my shoulders, telling myself over and over to go. Sometimes nothing would happen for a while. My body was telling me to take it relatively easy, and I listened. In pregnancy, unlike in normal life, it always pays to listen to your body's signals when it's telling you to slow the hell down.



By listening to her body, Lawrence was able to keep working out throughout her pregnancy.



Moving lighter loads during pregnancy, Lawrence carefully monitored the intensity of each workout.

At 13 weeks, as if by magic, the curtain of exhaustion lifted. The second trimester was great. I could run comfortably, and I suddenly had a lot more energy (I was also eating a lot more vegetables, which didn't hurt). I didn't gain a lot of weight, and I did not experience any of the discomforts I dreaded: back pain, strange food cravings, swelling, sleeplessness, constipation ... was that too much information? Clearly, working out, in combination with a clean diet and the fortune of a low-risk pregnancy, saved me from a lot of uncomfortable months.

Going into the third trimester, I was revved up. Around the end of the seventh month, my belly started to get in the way of certain exercises. I had to deliberately navigate the barbell around it, and my rowing form changed, but I kept at it. I started to get strange looks at the gym, but it helped my ego to finally look pregnant, so that when I had to take a break after every three overhead squats, people knew I was working out for two and not just resting a lot because I was lazy.



Lawrence gained a total of 21 lb. during her pregnancy.

My doctor never asked me about my exercise program or advised me about what to do or not to do. Frankly, this was probably for the better. I know what my body can handle better than he does, and I don't see any reason for him to offer me advice that I'm not going to follow. Even in the absence of medical advice, my blood work and blood pressure were always good, and my weight gain was healthy (I gained 21 lb. in total).

I worked out up until the very end of my pregnancy, and Owen Joseph Freeman was born on March 30 after 30 hours of the hardest work I could ever imagine. I went through it free of pain medication. My last workout was March 28. The next morning, I went into labor while I was getting changed for the gym. I labored at home (still in my sports bra) for 12 hours before going to the hospital and laboring for another 18 hours there before the little guy was born with the help of a vacuum extractor due to being face-up and completely stuck.

The doctor said that it was less than a 50 percent chance that we'd be able to get the baby out with the vacuum, and that I would need to push harder than I'd ever pushed before (this after three hours of intense pushing with no progress). The alternative was a C-section. I dug deep, and I pushed with all my heart, and we got him out. I narrowly avoided a C-section, and Owen was born with a sore head but was otherwise perfect at 6 lb. 15 oz. He made a lightning-fast recovery, and the nurses were all surprised that he had handled the long and hard labor so well.

I was able to have intermittent monitoring the entire time because of his ability to keep his heart rate relatively constant despite the stress of labor. For this I credit all the workouts we did together: he was used to me working hard, and he knew how to deal with it.

Back to the Gym

Despite his challenging entrance into the world, Owen is absolutely the best thing we could imagine. I was back in my favorite jeans just three days later, which felt good, but not nearly as good as seeing my little guy so healthy and happy and peaceful. After 12 days of no exercise other than long walks, I ventured back to the gym and did Grace with a modest 55 lb.

**My gym mantra was,
"Always, always, always
finish the workout."
If I finished, I succeeded.**

I continued to work out every other day or as my body wanted to, slowly upping the weights and intensity. It felt fantastic to push myself hard and not worry about getting my heart rate up too high or being out of breath. Finally, I had my own body back, with no one to share it with, and when I came home soaked in sweat and kissed my little boy, I felt like a billion dollars.

I'm lucky I started CrossFit before I got pregnant and was therefore comfortable easing into scaled-for-pregnancy WODs. I don't know how I would have gotten through the nine months if all I did at the gym was run on the treadmill or bounce on the elliptical. Sticking with the workouts required a complete mindset change: pre-pregnancy, a WOD was an opportunity to compete with myself and or my husband, whereas in pregnancy I never pushed myself harder than was necessary. My gym mantra was, "Always, always, always finish the workout." If I finished, I succeeded. It's the same with pregnancy: there are no rewards for doing it faster, and in fact being patient is the most valuable asset.

CrossFit taught me about patience in the midst of physical pain, and pregnancy and labor reinforced this lesson in a different but surprisingly symbiotic way. The two complement each other perfectly, and the result is healthy women and healthy babies. In many ways, that was more rewarding for me than a new PR or fitting back into my clothes.

Owen agrees: he's already doing body-weight squats with a little help from dad.



About the Author

Bayley Lawrence used to live in Monterey, Calif., but moved to Hangzhou, China, in the summer of 2011 with her husband and two-month-old son to study and travel for two years. They blog at Nickandbayley.wordpress.com, and Bayley can be reached at bayleyrlawrence@gmail.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

400 Percent

Forcing children into sport-specific training can be detrimental. Jeff Martin explains.

By Jeff Martin

April 2012



A 400 percent increase—that's huge.

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If we were talking about your deadlift, that would be spectacular. Instead, according to a February 28 episode of [Today](#), we're talking about a 400 percent increase in anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries in children.

The rise is largely due to children's lack of general physical conditioning and the increasing trend toward early sport specialization (2,10), according to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) and the organization [Stop Sports Injuries](#).

What does this kind of knee injury mean long term for a child? Devastation.

A recent retrospective study involving 205 men who had ruptured their ACLs playing soccer showed that 78 percent had developed signs of osteoarthritis in the injured knee 14 years later, compared with only 4 percent in the uninjured knee. Similar statistics were found for female soccer players 12 years after the injury (4).

**Career-ending elbow and
shoulder injuries are on the
rise. Concussions as well.
Career-ending injuries
at age 12?**

It isn't just knee injuries, though. Career-ending elbow and shoulder injuries are on the rise. Concussions as well. Career-ending injuries at age 12? How could this happen? Little League rules determine how many pitches are safe for kids, right (7)? Well, they don't take into account warming up in the bullpen or a pitcher stepping into another position that requires throwing hard, do they? A sport-specialized baseball kid might be throwing year round. This sports specialization is inappropriate and detrimental to long-term sports development and general physical development of the child (2), according to the AAP.

Too Much too Soon

For the purpose of this article, the why and how of this predicament are not necessary to understand. What we need to understand is our kids are being asked to start sports training at a very young age. In the 1970s, young boys commonly started Little League at age 8 or 9. Today,

kids are starting sports training as young as 3 or 4 and being asked to specialize in a sport at age 8. In 2010, Little League changed its rules, allowing 4-year-olds to play tee ball (9). Year-round training in a single sport, two to three times a week for two hours a pop, and games and tournaments on the weekend—let's examine why this is problematic for the development of our kids.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when kids began playing organized sports at 8 or 9, elementary schools offered physical education, or P.E. Kids not only learned the rudimentary skills to play a variety of sports from a trained teacher/coach, but they were also introduced to gymnastics and calisthenics; they learned to run and climb and throw things.



Danell Marks

At age 3 or 4, many children are encouraged to specialize in a sport rather than build general physical fitness.

In those days, after-school time was spent on some field or court, playing pickup ball with friends—long afternoons learning to catch, throw, shoot and run with your friends on broken asphalt, choppy fields or rocky lots. Games outlined by adults in P.E. were played with rules that kept the game moving and accommodated or enhanced the acquisition of skills that then wrapped back into the games played at school.

Kids no longer gather in a back lot to play ball after school. Now they're too busy being shuttled off to their two-hour soccer practice.

Today, P.E. in elementary schools is largely abandoned—only 36 percent of our kids get daily P.E. Most get less than two short sessions a week of P.E. Kids no longer learn gymnastics skills, throwing or running in their P.E. classes. In fact, only 27 percent of a P.E. class is devoted to actual motor activity (8), according to [PE4Life](#). Kids no longer gather in a back lot to play ball after school. Now they're too busy being shuttled off to their two-hour soccer practice.



What are our kids giving up by specializing in one sport so early on in their lives?

The AAP says this situation is bad for our kids (2). Overuse injuries are on the rise. As noted above, catastrophic injuries have increased at an alarming rate. In our practice at CrossFit Kids HQ, we see kids who are monster athletes in their chosen sport but are simply unable to squat or lift something correctly. They might be sport savants, but we know most savants give up something for that ability. Most savants are incapable of negotiating the world on their own; think *Rain Man*. What have our sport savants given up? The ability to move well in any functional capacity outside of their chosen sport.

Let's be clear, we want all kids to participate in many different sports. But if we want our kids to be healthy and reach their full athletic capacity, they must be fit. As CrossFitters, this idea is almost primal for us. It's in our bones. In early 2001, Coach Greg Glassman wrote "World-Class Fitness in 100 Words":

"Eat meat and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch and no sugar. Keep intake to levels that will support exercise but not body fat. Practice and train major lifts: Deadlift, clean, squat, presses, clean and jerk, and snatch. Similarly, master the basics of gymnastics: pull-ups, dips, rope climb, push-ups, sit-ups, presses to handstands, pirouettes, flips, splits, and holds. Bike, run, swim, row, etc., hard and fast. Five or six days per week, mix these elements in as many combinations and patterns as creativity will allow. Routine is the enemy. Keep workouts short and intense. Regularly learn and play new sports" (5).

Being fit is being functional, capable and injury-free. Early on, Glassman understood that routine is not our friend. Being fit involves building a base of fitness and pursuing many different sports. This idea is fundamental to us as CrossFitters, and it is critical to the development and long-term health of our children.

Does biasing fitness over sport work? Let's look at an adult case first.

J is a 40-year-old Ph.D. who enjoys playing basketball and volleyball. In the past few years, he found his jump height had decreased; he was not able to dunk a basketball or hit with the same power on the volleyball court. After pursuing many avenues to increase his jump, he turned to a CrossFit trainer. The CrossFit trainer did not prescribe any specific jump training. Instead, he fed him a regular diet of couplets and triplets sprinkled with heavy squats and deadlifts. J soon found he could dunk the ball and was crushing it at the net in volleyball.

At other end of the age spectrum is 10-year-old E, who has been CrossFitting since he was 7. He is, for all intents and purposes, sport-specialized in baseball. He is a small kid and probably will remain relatively small throughout his life, which puts him at a disadvantage given that bigger athletes get a better look from higher-level coaches. To address this disadvantage (and because he demonstrated good movement and the ability to focus), he matriculated into the Teen/Advanced class just prior to turning 9. The next baseball season, with only CrossFit Kids distinguishing his preparation from that of other players and no extra sport-specific training—and still one of the smallest (and youngest) kids—he was the hardest-throwing pitcher in the league.

**There is no question that
CrossFit Kids wants children
playing sports of all kinds, but
we also want our kids to be fit.
All athletics start there.**

The Theoretical Hierarchy of Development

"A theoretical hierarchy exists for the development of an athlete. It starts with nutrition and moves to metabolic conditioning, gymnastics, weightlifting and finally sport. This hierarchy largely reflects foundational dependence, skill and, to some degree, time ordering of development. The logical flow is from molecular foundations, cardiovascular sufficiency, body control, external object control, and ultimately mastery and application. This model has greatest utility in analyzing athletes' shortcomings or difficulties. We don't deliberately order these components, but nature will. If you have a deficiency at any level of the pyramid, the components above will suffer" (5).

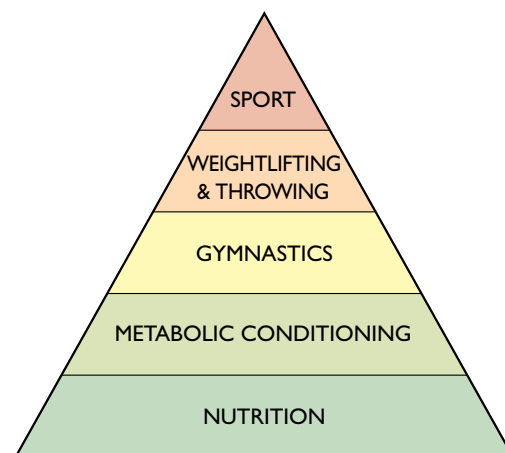
To make the pyramid easier to understand for our kids, we replace metabolic conditioning, gymnastics, and weightlifting and throwing with a single word: CrossFit. That leaves sport at the pinnacle where it belongs: the ultimate expression of our fitness. But only so long as its foundation is solid.

Well, folks, in the U.S. we've turned this hierarchy on its head to the detriment, even peril, of our children. There is no question that CrossFit Kids wants children playing sports of all kinds, but we also want our kids to be fit. All athletics start there. The problem with the current situation in U.S. youth sports is that by pursuing sport dominance at the expense of fitness, we find not only that our kids are not fit but, ironically, that they also never develop the full expression of their athletic ability.

How can they? The components for full expression are simply not there or are at best muted.

Is it true that a deficiency at one level of the hierarchy will affect the levels above? Let's look at an example.

T walked into a CrossFit affiliate in his junior year of high school having jumped 6 feet 5 inches at the state meet. At 6 foot 2 and 155 lb., T had a back squat of 135 lb. and a rickety 185-lb. deadlift. He faded fast on any and all met-cons. It was clear he was under-strong and deconditioned even though he had attained competency in his chosen sport. With his CrossFit trainer, he developed a plan to address the components in which he was weak. A year later, T was a leader in his CrossFit Kids class. Regularly in the top group in the met-cons, he returned to his track team with a 285-lb. back squat and a 365-lb. deadlift. Ten pounds heavier, T met his best jump height on his first attempt that year and went on to jump 7 feet and win the high-school state high-jump (6). T attributes the jump to the strength he developed over the year.



The four elements below sport are its foundation and the key to exceptional results.

It's clear that if we follow the theoretical hierarchy, that if we simply allow ordering of the components by nature, we set our kids up to have the best chance of success in sport. Not only that, but we also have the best chance of protecting them from the catastrophic injuries discussed at the beginning of this article. Why are knee injuries on the rise? Is it because kids don't know how to land correctly when they jump? Perhaps. But more likely, it's that even when properly taught to land, kids are not strong enough to land in the proper position. It is our belief that short-circuiting the natural hierarchy of development will not lead to better athletes but rather injury and muted athletic development overall.

B was a top-level swimmer in her high-school CIF division. When she walked through the door, B presented abnormal spine curvature seen in many swimmers, as well as strongly internally rotated shoulders. She came to us with a labrum tear in her shoulder. The tear occurred when B, a long-distance freestyle swimmer, had been asked to fill in as a backstroke. B had surgery on her shoulder and proceeded to do one-arm CrossFit with us. One year later, she was back in the water—and setting PRs. In fact, she was setting records in events she had been stagnant in for years.

When C started with CrossFit Kids, she was small and under-strong. She also had been born with hip dysplasia. The dysplasia presented itself strongly when she squatted; her leg would flop dramatically inward. Over time, she became strong enough to keep her knees where they belonged when squatting. Despite remaining small for her age, she became a star athlete in several sports. Never

training to run long distance, C won a district-wide cross-country race three years in a row. She made all the all-star teams in the sports she played.

At 11, C made the travel team in her chosen sport. The practice schedule was so demanding that she had to give up coming to CrossFit Kids. On the rare occasional break between seasons, C rejoined our classes. We noted a slow decline in her fitness, in particular her metabolic fitness and strength. Eventually, the leg flop and inability to hold her femurs in the proper position when squatting returned, becoming more pronounced as the time away from CrossFit Kids lengthened. Even though her time practicing in her given sport had increased astronomically, C was not as fit as she had been. At 14, C took a bad step and tore her ACL.

Interestingly, in our practice we have found a correlation between proper squatting and proper landing. Indeed, none of the kids who actively take part in our classes at CrossFit Kids HQ has had a knee injury even though many play sports such as soccer, in which the incidence of knee injuries is extremely high.

Both the AAP and Stop Sports Injuries recommend kids not specialize in a sport until reaching their early teens (2,10)—that they be exposed to many different sports and, most importantly, that they be involved with a well-rounded fitness program to strengthen them and prepare them for the rigors of sport specialization.

What does that sound like? It sounds like CrossFit, or, more specifically, CrossFit Kids.

Forging the Future by Changing the Present

What can we do to help kids?

First, we can recognize that kids are not missing anything if they don't start playing sports when they are 3 and 4 years old. Sport psychologists say kids are not even developed enough to understand positional play until around age 7 or 8 (3). Early immersion simply is not necessary for most sports and does not work for most of our children. Signing our kids up to learn the rudiments of a sport from a "coach" who is a volunteer parent and likely has absolutely no training in what is and is not age appropriate for the kids he or she is working with is not going to prepare children to be future stars in their sport of choice. In fact, research shows that team sport participation in the U.S. declines beginning at the age of 11 due to burnout and/or injuries (3,11).



Early immersion does not impact later performance in sports, so let kids explore a wide range of athletic interests.

We can use the time we gain here to expose our children to CrossFit Kids, a program that, by design, understands the developmental needs of children and follows the theoretical hierarchy of development. We can make our children well-rounded athletes and provide a fitness base that will protect them in the coming years.

Playing while injured is not smart. Kids do not build character this way, and they can exacerbate injuries.

When we do start our kids in sport, we can expose them to many different sports. Traditionally in the U.S., we expose our kids to only four or five sports: football, basketball, baseball, soccer and hockey. How about letting our kids

try lacrosse, rugby, golf, field hockey or fencing? There is a world of athletics out there for them to investigate and pursue.

We can campaign against year-round training in a single sport for young children. It is unproductive and against the recommendation of the AAP.

Playing while injured is not smart. Kids do not build character this way, and they can exacerbate injuries in this manner. We can support coaches who do not play kids injured and ask that those who knowingly do be reprimanded or released.

We can insist that coaches are background checked and have had at least some training in what is and is not developmentally appropriate for the children under their care.

When our children are involved with a sport, as parents we can insist the practices are short in duration and developmentally appropriate for our kids. We can make sure our kids have time to continue to pursue general fitness as an adjunct to their specific sport training.



After a season of basketball, why not have your kid try gymnastics or fencing?

Above all else, we can be good role models for our children. Live well, pursue fitness and talk to them about why it is important to be fit first before entering sports. This we must do. The current youth sports system in America is our pet creation, and we need to take ownership of its fruit, whether that be the next athlete-entertainer prodigy or a 400 percent increase in injuries to our children.

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Alfira Tellez-Hernandez/CrossFit Brand X

About the Author

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

THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



CRUNCHY CHICKEN TENDERS

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

overview

Do you want to be the coolest parent around? Then send your kids to school with crunchy chicken tenders in their brown-bag lunch! While all the other kids are eating their soggy chicken tenders from the school lunch lady, your kids will be crunching away on a healthier and tastier version that will be the envy of even the most popular kids! You just made yourself into the ... coolest ... parent ... ever.

makes 4-6 servings

ingredients

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken tenders
½ cup arrowroot
1 tbsp. chili powder
2 tsp. sea salt
2 tsp. pepper
2 eggs
2 cups crushed sweet-potato chips or plantain chips
Olive oil for frying

notes

Serve your tenders with mustard for dipping.

directions

1. Mix together arrowroot, chili powder, and salt and pepper in a bowl.
2. Whisk eggs into a second bowl.
3. Place crushed chips onto a plate.
4. Dredge the chicken tenders through the arrowroot mixture, then the egg, then the chips. Place on a separate plate.
5. Generously cover the bottom of a skillet with olive oil and heat over medium-high heat until bubbling.
6. Place the tenders in the skillet in a single layer and cook 1 to 1½ minutes on each side until golden. Add more olive oil to pan between batches and let it heat up to bubbling before adding more chicken tenders.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fit to Fight

Sara Ayaz describes how CrossFit and Krav Maga work together to produce finely tuned martial artists.

By Sara Ayaz

April 2012



All images: Courtesy of Sara Ayaz

When I first started Krav Maga, it was the single most intense and awesome thing I had ever encountered. As a lifelong martial artist, I was looking for a system that was more ardent and practical than what I had previously done. Krav Maga was that system.

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Krav Maga is similar to CrossFit in that the classes are interval-oriented and the focus is on practical, real-world scenarios.

Krav Maga is a self-defense system created by Imi Lichtenfeld, and it focuses on practical approaches to modern-day threats. It was forged in a hostile environment and is ever-evolving.

Each class starts with a 10-minute warm-up that consists of cardio, calisthenics and working our basic stance. Classes are interval-oriented. After two-to-three years of Krav, your athletic ability should be at a fairly high level. Each ranking in Krav consists of a three-to-five-hour endurance test involving punching, kicking, sparring and whatever other creative calisthenics hell the person running the test can think up.

One might say Krav Maga is the full package: self-defense, fighting and fitness.

Enter CrossFit.

Creating a Hybrid

Mid-South Krav Maga (MSKM) has always had a fitness program since it was founded in 2003. Our cardio kickboxing class was our main fitness class, supplemented by circuit training and, more recently, CrossFit. Rob Yahn, a Level 1 CrossFit coach and instructor at MSKM, introduced lead instructor Michael Hooker to CrossFit.

**The combined mindset
of Krav Maga and CrossFit
has produced a new level
of elite athleticism.**

Hooker fell in love with the CrossFit workouts but found a lot of the students were scared to venture into this high-intensity training.

"I was in great shape as far as the martial-arts world was concerned but found myself at the bottom of the barrel with CrossFit," Hooker says. "This gave me the drive to pursue CrossFit. I believe that me starting at the bottom helped me to influence more of our Krav Maga students to jump into the trenches with me.

"I took the CrossFit workouts that I felt we could scale to our abilities in the beginning, and we worked through them together. As it evolved, I found myself gearing more toward the fighter, leaving out some of the Oly lifts and heavier weight training. The atmosphere that is created by the group and the non-competitive nature has increased the enthusiasm of the group as a whole."

A personal favorite workout that we do is "Annie Plus Cindy": 20 minutes to perform Annie for time followed by as many rounds of Cindy as possible in the time remaining. (We call it "AMRAP ITLOO," or "as many rounds as possible in time left out of 20.") What I particularly enjoy about this workout is that even if people's Annie times are varied, everyone starts and finishes together.

The combined mindset of Krav Maga and CrossFit has produced a new level of elite athleticism.

Some might say it is the perfect marriage.

Ready for Anything

Krav Maga is designed for use by anyone from any walk of life. A bodybuilder, a petite female and a college athlete can be equally efficient.

The biggest equalizer in a street fight is aggression. We train to function under stress and to be very aggressive. We don't play by rules. These elements are what equalize a fight between a 100-lb. female and a 230-lb. man.

When I started Krav, I was around 128 lb. I wasn't in awful shape, but I was certainly nowhere near fit. As I began progressing through the system, it became clear that my major weaknesses were in my lack of strength and aggression.

Just over a year after I started doing our fitness program religiously, doing two-to-four WODs a week, I tested again. The difference in strength, muscle recovery and cardio was unbelievable. Four-and-a-half hours of non-stop activity and I never struggled.



Krav Maga trains fighters to use aggression and function under stress—essential skills in a street fight.

The street fight generally lasts less than a minute. In that minute, your heart rate will triple and your adrenaline will be through the roof—a feeling those of us who endure hellish WODs are well acquainted with. While Krav Maga is solely centered toward the street fight, some people train in both mixed martial arts and Krav, and some students have ventured into amateur ring fights for the experience.

The CrossFit-style programming produces massive advantages in the ring fight. The muscle recovery, cardio and strength are assets every fighter wants. A difficult part of ring fighting and mixed martial arts is the constant transitioning from ground fighting to stand-up fighting, but with the conditioning CrossFit brings, this becomes much less difficult.

For everything that is practiced and trained in Krav, CrossFit supplements it perfectly. For myself and many other students, this dynamic approach to fitness has become the final piece in our journey.

"Coaching CrossFit has given me some practical tools in my Krav Maga instruction, such as Tabata punching drills," says John Whitman, president of the Krav Maga Alliance and owner/lead instructor of Focus Self-Defense and CrossFit.

"It has given me a deeper understanding of high-intensity work," he continues. "And as a practitioner, I find that CrossFit has allowed me to become even stronger and more explosive than before. It is becoming more common for students to train in both Krav Maga and CrossFit, and they are seeing huge benefits in both areas."

John Covington, a Krav Maga instructor and co-coordinator of the fitness program, has seen similar benefits.

"At 42 I feel like I'm in the best shape of my life. Not only do I feel stronger and have more endurance than I've ever had, but I find I'm much more happy and stress-free."

"I find that CrossFit has allowed me to become even stronger and more explosive than before."

**—John Whitman,
Krav Maga Alliance**

In Krav, we learn to push our limits. We hit our wall and push past it. The ability to draw on every bit of energy, strength and determination you have is what might potentially save your life in a fight.

Combining this mindset with the drive CrossFit instills to push yourself to the max has produced incredible results, even for those people doing two WODs per week as opposed to three or more.



CrossFit training helps fighters transition from ground fighting to stand-up fighting, one of the most difficult aspects of mixed martial arts.



Try this move in your next CrossFit warm-up.

The willingness to push past what you think you can do and what might hurt and to see what you are physically capable of is often a scary concept. To be in an environment that constantly encourages you to progress and succeed, to extend those limits, has an immense impact on every aspect of life.

Diversity

Our new approach to fitness has gained an almost cult following with people including college students, law-enforcement personnel, lawyers, doctors, ex-service-people, housewives and everyone in between. This diversity is commonly found in both CrossFit and Krav Maga, though not often seen in other fitness and martial-arts programs.



Always do toes-to-bar near the speakers for maximum motivation.

As a lifelong martial artist, I can only say that the feeling of being strong and capable and knowing I can walk in peace with the skills that Krav has given me is something I want to share with everyone.



About the Author

A lifelong martial artist, Sara Ayaz has studied various styles including karate, Chinese kenpo, kung-fu and kali. She has competed in state-wide and nationwide karate tournaments. She became addicted to CrossFit after her first workout in early 2010. She is now an apprentice instructor at Krav Maga Desoto, owned by Michael Hooker. She is planning on competing in next year's CrossFit Games season.

THE CrossFit LIFE

“I’m so Glad Daddy Found CrossFit”

Angie Fontes’ husband discovered CrossFit and inspired their family of six to lose a combined total of more than 185 lb.

By Angie Fontes

April 2012



Jennifer Sheppard

Scott Fontes (left) was 295 lb. when he started CrossFit but lost almost 100 lb. in a year.

On March 17, 2011, my husband Scott walked into CrossFit Lake Mary in Lake Mary, Fla., to collect on his two free classes and see what this “CrossFit stuff” was about. Scott is 5 foot 6, and he weighed 295 lb. Greg Sheppard, the affiliate owner, gave Scott a basic workout to perform while the other lady in the class flew around the gym during her workout as if it was the easiest thing in the world. Scott came home that day saying, “Angie, there’s something to this. I’m going back.”

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Jennifer Sheppard



Losing 100 lb. looks exactly like this.

We spoke about the expense. It was a little more than a Globo Gym membership yet cheaper than a personal trainer. Scott truly felt this was something he would commit to and wanted to keep going back. I agreed to the expense with some reservations, and Scott continued to go.

After a few weeks, Scott asked me to go to a Saturday class to watch. I was very hesitant. I was still suffering from a great deal of postpartum depression and never wanted to go anywhere. We packed up our four kids on a Saturday morning, and I watched the class. It was intimidating. I thought that neither Scott nor I really belonged in a place where so many fit people were lifting heavy things and running around with such ease. Then I watched Scott. Everything he did was scaled. Running was rowing and weights weren't as heavy as what was on the whiteboard. I didn't realize CrossFit allowed you to scale until that visit.

Before I attempted CrossFit, I emailed the gym and asked some simple questions. They gave me links to review and even sent me a follow-up email to see if I had reviewed them. It wasn't until six weeks after Scott started that I went to collect on my two free classes. I'm 5 foot 1 and weighed 222 lb. It was Scott's success that encouraged me to at least try. Still reluctant and not in the right frame of mind, I began on April 27, 2011.

Just eight days after I started CrossFit, our gym began a Paleo challenge. I cut out processed foods and pasta, dairy, beans, legumes, and other items loaded with

gluten and sugar. Scott and I are both competitive, so we studied up on this Paleo way of eating and worked hard to implement it for the 30-day challenge. We supported each other and made sure we could each make class while maintaining our home, holding two jobs, and caring for four kids and two pets. It was never easy. I struggled with many additional challenges. I suffer from polycystic ovarian syndrome and have insulin resistance, which added additional concerns as we planned our diet.

We each lost a decent amount of weight during the challenge. Scott even won second place! He lost 20 lb. and I lost 11 lb. Scott was beginning to see changes to his size. *Perhaps this is working*, I thought.

Running a Family—and Running

The New Year's Eve before all this CrossFit stuff, Scott made a resolution to do a 5K a month for the entire year. He thought it would spark his weight loss. He had lost 20 lb. prior to CrossFit but did not see significant body changes until he added in CrossFit WODs. In July, I joined him in his 5K challenge. We had done only one other 5K earlier in the year together, in February 2011, just three months after the baby was born. I thought it was going to kill me. Each race became a little easier, even though I didn't really train for them outside of CrossFit WODs.

We continued to eat Paleo through the summer as often as possible. Consistency is what worked. We performed a WOD five to six days a week and ate Paleo 90 percent of the time. We allowed a cheat day every other week just for sanity.

School started back, and the pressure of running a household increased once the kids' activities ramped up. Our children are 13, 10, 5 and 1. Each child has individual interests and activities. In the past, this has led to a few nights of KFC or McDonald's when food was not easy to prepare; however, our slow cooker became our saving grace.

Our day started with a 6 a.m. CrossFit class for me and then an 8 a.m. class for Scott. We then each worked eight or more hours. After work I shuttled kids around to this or that. Then we would come home to cook Paleo and do it all over again the next day. Scott has an hour commute each way, so much of his time driving includes listening to podcasts or videos about CrossFit to improve his knowledge and performance.

In late September, I was fortunate enough to participate in a nutrition seminar put on by Jeremy Mullins of CrossFit HQ. The seminar went over both Zone and Paleo diets. It also covered some science and basic principles about how to properly evaluate your food intake. Everyone's personal needs are different. I gained valuable knowledge about how to dial in and tune our diet in such a way that we really began to see body changes like never before. We kept up the effort regardless of stalls or hiccups along the way.

On Oct. 6, 2011, we began our second Paleo challenge. I was determined to win this time. Not for the prize but to finally get my diet under control. I spoke to Scott, and he was on board to bring the kids in 100 percent as well. This Paleo challenge would prove our most difficult yet. We would be preparing 100 percent Paleo food for six people and even constructing CrossFit Kids WODs at home. We were focused and ready to make it a success.

Before the challenge, our oldest son was about 15 lb. overweight. Our four-year-old daughter was at risk of being overweight. During the course of this Paleo challenge, our 4-year-old learned that McDonald's is not good food. Our 13-year-old dropped 12 lb. and two pants sizes. Many of his friends say he needs a new nickname—he's not "Stubby"

anymore. Our 10-year-old took his lunch every day, knowing he was eating healthy even though classmates made fun of him. He lost 7 lb., and our 4-year-old lost 2 lb. She dropped from the 95th percentile for BMI to the 75th percentile. Our baby girl has had healthy check-ups at each milestone for BMI.

The most heartwarming event from this Paleo challenge was a conversation I had with our oldest. He said, "Mommy, I'm so glad daddy found CrossFit. It really has changed all of us. Daddy isn't angry anymore and you seem happier. I'm just really glad he found it."

Our success was amazing. And as for me, I lost 17 lb. and dropped two pants sizes for a 5.4 percent body-fat reduction. I won first place! Scott lost 20 lb. and won third place.

Not only had I lost 65 lb., but the symptoms of my polycystic ovarian syndrome were disappearing. My hair loss had stopped, and hair was actually returning. My cyst issues were non-existent and my postpartum depression was gone. Even my prescription for glasses was cut in half. Scott was seeing more drops in size. He went from wearing a 3XL to an XL or a large. Scott had lost almost 90 lb. at this point.



The Fontes clan one year and about 185 lb. apart.

Jennifer Sheppard



Angie Fontes, then and now.

Just because the Paleo challenge was over didn't mean we were done. Not by a long shot! Our gym decided to do the 12 WODs of Christmas. This was 12 WODs over 12 hours; the buy-in went to charity. Those who completed all 12 WODs got a T-shirt.

Scott was amazing during the WODs. He completed every one of them and, yes, got his T-shirt. I had the kids with me that day but was still able to complete seven of the WODs, including the 120 burpees, which our oldest completed, too.

Holidays weren't without a struggle, of course. After coming off a hardcore Paleo challenge, we just wanted a rest. We still ate Paleo and worked out, but not with the same consistency as before. Our results suffered. While we did not gain weight, we did not see the results that we saw when we were consistent with our efforts.

Full Circle

Two years prior, I had lost weight and completed the Disney Princess Half Marathon at Walt Disney World in Florida. I was just thrilled to complete it. Afterward, we had baby No. 4, and I gained all the weight I had lost plus some. I had asked Scott if I could travel to complete the Tinkerbell Half Marathon in Disneyland in California.

On Jan. 28, 2012, I completed the Tinkerbell Half Marathon, and I beat my previous half-marathon time by 18 minutes. This was a wonderful accomplishment, and my box back home sent me notes and messages of encouragement.

As if that PR was not enough, four weeks later, on Feb. 26, 2012, I once again completed the Disney Princess Half Marathon and beat my previous PR, earned just four weeks prior, by 14 minutes. I know CrossFit prepared me for those PRs far better than training on my own. By completing a half marathon in the same calendar year at each Disney location, I earned the coveted Coast-to-Coast Medal.

Now 2012 is here, as well as Scott's one-year anniversary with CrossFit is approaching. At the time of writing, he is poised to lose 100 lb. since CrossFit and 120 lb. overall. His journey has inspired so many. First me, then it spread to the kids. We've inspired family members, friends and even strangers.

People I haven't spoken to in years contact me to ask what I am doing and how have I done it. My mother has even spoken to me about her own diet and exercise. This means more to me than she'll ever know. Scott's brother has begun his CrossFit journey and Paleo efforts. People we had no idea we had inspired or touched have reached out to us. We truly feel we must pay this journey forward.

Where do we go from here? Our weight-loss journey is still not over. Scott has another 20 to 30 lb. to lose, and I have about 40 to 50 lb. left to lose. We have our children to mold into healthy individuals who will make good choices even when we're not around. Both Scott and I have taken a CrossFit Level 1 seminar, and I hope to take the CrossFit Kids course as well. We have started **Primal Gourmet**, a Paleo-style food business. All this plus four kids, two jobs (now our own business too), pets and trying to complete our journey.

We are very glad daddy found CrossFit.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFitter Signs With Steelers

After missing a post-college shot at the NFL because of the 2011 lockout, Will Johnson became determined to make it to the big league. CrossFit, he says, made the difference. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

April 2012



Don Friend

In most ways, Will Johnson is a quintessential CrossFitter.

After just two weeks, he started to see results, got addicted and had to be instructed to take rest days.

But there's one difference, a big one: in late March, the 23-year-old was signed by the Pittsburgh Steelers.



Johnson was initially skeptical of CrossFit, but he saw improvement within a few weeks.

Johnson credited the CrossFit training methodology for making his career dream a reality.

"All my numbers just drastically increased," said the 6-foot-2, 242-lb. athlete. "And all that has to do with CrossFit."

The numbers on key football tests:

- 30 reps of a 225-lb. bench press vs. 26 reps before CrossFit.
- A 4.49-second 40-yard dash vs. 4.69-second before CrossFit.
- A 36.5-inch vertical jump vs. 33.5 before CrossFit.
- A 4.01 short-shuttle run vs. 4.29 before CrossFit.

Those feats were tested March 16 during West Virginia University's annual Pro Day. Dozens of National Football League scouts—and sometimes coaches and

managers—put NFL hopefuls through a series of tests that day.

"What makes my case so special is they allowed me to come back and participate," Johnson said.

The Dayton, Ohio, native graduated from WVU in 2011—the year of the NFL lockout.

Johnson participated in that year's Pro Day and caught some eyes. But once the lockout was over, the college receiver and tight end was no longer at the top of anyone's list.

"He wasn't a draftable athlete, so he was a free agent," said Andy Hendel, owner and head coach at North Carolina's

**"I made up my mind that,
'You know what? I didn't
get picked up, but I'm going
to put everything in and
give it a shot.'"**

—Will Johnson

CrossFit Charlotte, where Johnson started CrossFitting. "I went through the NFL strike back in ... '87. I was a free-agent type of guy—that hurts you."

Hendel, father of perennial CrossFit Games competitor Spencer Hendel, was a special-teams-leading tackler/short-yardage specialist and linebacker with the Miami Dolphins.

Despite the situation last year, Johnson wasn't disheartened.

"I made up my mind that, 'You know what? I didn't get picked up, but I'm going to put everything in and give it a shot,'" he said.

After College

After graduating with a degree in multi-disciplinary studies, Johnson moved to his fiancée's native state of North Carolina and took odd jobs: interior landscaping, working in a shipping warehouse, helping install lights. In early December, he quit working to focus on training.

"That's what led me to CrossFit," Johnson said. "A buddy of mine kept suggesting it."

Johnson was skeptical at first, but after an hour-long conversation with Hendel, Johnson agreed to come into the affiliate.

"I did the WODs. He kind of tweaked them here and there, and I did a lot of extra stuff afterward," he said.

In two weeks, Johnson started seeing results. He was hooked, showing up to train Monday through Saturday.

"If (Hendel) didn't tell me to take a day off, I was there," Johnson said. "I was willing to do whatever it took. When you're seeing results like that, it's kind of hard to back away."

When Hendel began working with Johnson, he focused on achieving full range of motion and proper form.

"I was willing to do whatever it took. When you're seeing results like that, it's kind of hard to back away."

—Will Johnson

"I said, 'Listen: the reason you're not playing on an NFL team ... isn't because you're not strong enough,'" Hendel recounted. "'You don't have to squat 500 lb. to play on Sunday afternoons. You want capacity in other areas.'"

Afterward, Hendel put Johnson through a "gasser" or two—sprints over and back twice the length of a football field—and a 500-meter sled push with 110 lb. Johnson could handle more weight than "us mere mortals," he said.

"He's like Rich Froning, but 6 inches bigger, 6 inches taller and 50 lb. heavier," Hendel said. "I wish I could have had him on an affiliate team."

Johnson completed the first three workouts in the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open and finished 15th in his region in Event 12.2, a 7-minute workout featuring snatches at increasing weights.

For the rest of Johnson's training, Hendel also employed exercises from legendary powerlifter Louie Simmons, as well as Tabata workouts and sprints. Other than those "extras," Johnson stuck to Hendel's CrossFit programming.

"I'm a big believer that there's really nothing sport-specific about power sports," Hendel said. "What we do at

"He's like Rich Froning, but 6 inches bigger, 6 inches taller and 50 lb. heavier."

—Andy Hendel

CrossFit ... to me, you just get so much more out of it."

CrossFit provides "a suitcase full of skills," Hendel added. "You can get specific in practice."

"I Can't Give up CrossFit"

After his Pro Day performance impressed Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin and general manager Kevin Colbert, Johnson signed with the team shortly after. Johnson and his fiancée moved to the Pittsburgh area on April 14. Two days later, he started training with the team.

In addition to doing the Steelers' workouts, Johnson will continue to do CrossFit, he said.



Johnson is hooked—he'll continue doing CrossFit in addition to training with the Steelers.

"Yeah, I can't give up CrossFit," he said with laugh. "I definitely can't go back to the normal."

And so he'll be making regular visits to CrossFit Pittsburgh.

Johnson added: "I talked to (the Steelers) strength coach and he said that would be perfectly fine to go do my own thing as well."

"It puts me in the best position to being game ready, and by that I mean game shape. It dramatically helped improve my power and strength."

**—Will Johnson
on CrossFit**



About the Author

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

CrossFit, Johnson said, has a high correlation with football because of the explosion required.

"It puts me in the best position to being game ready, and by that I mean game shape," he explained. "It dramatically helped improve my power and strength."

For his part, Hendel said he would like to see Johnson get quality rest—in addition to quality workouts—and clean up his diet.

"When he finds out that nutrition plays the role that it plays, he'll get better," he said.

Johnson said he's "excited to get started" with the Steelers, and he'll be fighting to make the team once training camp starts in summer.

"I hope that my story can motivate anyone," he said. "Hard work definitely pays off."



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Pan-Seared Steak

It takes a bit of skill to produce a fine stove-top steak.
E.M. Burton explains.

By E.M. Burton

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All images: E.M. Burton

Early this March, Dr. Walter Willett, chair of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, published a study that followed over 100,000 people for more than two decades (abstract: <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/archinternmed.2011.2287>).

As noted in the March 24 *L.A. Times* story "How rare should red meat be?" Dr. Willett found "the amount of red meat they ate was linked to a rise in premature death." He's talking about metabolic syndrome across the board. Willett notes, "We looked at total mortality. ... We did see a linear, step-wise increase in risk of dying prematurely with higher red meat consumption. ... It does appear that the data are quite strong."

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He added, however, “When you get down to maybe one serving of meat or less per week the risk gets pretty low.”

As yet, there is no data being gathered to chart CrossFit athletes’ meat consumption to test the impact of diet combined with 20-plus years of high-intensity functional movement. Until we have results of such a study, when cooking for my family I keep the red-meat consumption to the lower part of the protein list, after chicken and fish.

However, there are times when life calls for steak, and you should know how to pan-sear a steak to perfection on top of a stove.

Ingredients

Steak, about 1 inch thick (trim any fat away)

Salt and pepper

Canola oil

Supplies

Stovetop

Oven, warmed

12-inch skillet

Tin foil (if necessary)

Directions

1. Dry the steak with paper towels and sprinkle salt and pepper liberally over both cooking sides. Warm your oven to 150 F.
2. Heat the pan first to medium-high, then add oil. Getting the temperature right is critical; know it for your stove. It’s the point at which the canola oil is slightly smoking. Wait until that temperature is reached to add the steak.
3. Place the steak in the pan and don’t move it. Flip it at 3 minutes and, once again, don’t move it. Reduce the heat to medium, and cook the other side for 4 to 5 minutes.
4. Move the steak to the warmed oven to let it rest for 10 minutes. You don’t have to keep it in a warmed oven, but cover it with tin foil and let it rest before carving or serving.



Start with a grass-fed, boneless top sirloin steak for a good balance of cost and fat content.

Notes

One should balance the factors of cost and fat content when buying a steak. One of the best cuts in this category is a boneless top sirloin steak. I usually get more than I need for one meal in order to have some left over.

Lean steaks cook best at a high temperature. This is not for the faint of heart: high temperatures call for keeping your wits about you. These instructions are for medium-rare steak.

If you use a thicker cut, you’ll require more cooking time. In my experience, a steak 1¼ inches thick should be seared 4 minutes per side, and a steak 1½ inches thick for 5 minutes per side (reducing the heat to medium at the 2-minute mark on the second side). If you’re not sure, and as a rule of thumb, undercook the meat slightly, as the cooking process will continue after it’s removed from the heat source, a phenomenon known as “carry-over cooking.”

If you want to be specific about your degree of doneness—and test this method to figure out what works best for you—use a meat thermometer. Testing at exactly the moment you take the steak off the high heat, cook as follows: 115 to 120 degrees for rare, 120 to 125 F for medium rare, 130 to 135 F for medium, 140 to 145 F for medium-well, and 150 to 155 F for medium well done.

Practicing this technique and getting it right can be considered a basic life skill. Combine your meat with tossed vegetables and a good fat. You’ll be glad you did.

