

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

August 2011

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Parents' Night Out

Josh MacDonald explains how he managed a host of kids for a no-parents evening at the box.

By Josh MacDonald CrossFit Fury

August 2011



All images: Josh MacDonald

During some recent CrossFit Kids classes, we noticed that we always seem rushed to fit in everything we have planned. Either we have to shorten the WOD or rush through the game to get in all the planned activities.



Somewhere away from the din of young voices, parents are enjoying a quiet dinner and perhaps even a movie.

That got us thinking, “What could we do if we had a lot more time with the kids?” If we had several hours, we could really explore each game fully, and we could fit in some of the games that never seem to fit into a normal class. We also knew that the kids at CrossFit Kids Fury always love the games more than anything else. We can put just about any challenge into a game and they will love it.

After some brainstorming, we put together our first Parents’ Night Out. This is an evening when parents drop off their kids for a couple of hours. The kids get to take part in a ton of CrossFit games and play around in the gym, while the parents get a date night. A holiday seemed like a good time to give this a try, so we set it up for the Saturday night before Valentine’s Day.

The plan was to open the gym from 5 to 10 p.m. Kids ages three and older were invited for an evening of CrossFit-style fun. We offered a Paleo meal and snacks during the evening. The cost was set at \$20 for the first kid and \$15

for each additional sibling. We started pitching the event about three weeks prior with posts on our gym’s website, flyers at the front desk, and posts on Facebook.

We programmed the evening in one-hour blocks. The first hour included a vigorous warm-up, obstacle course and games. Mealtime began at the top of the second hour and took about 30 minutes. The rest of this hour was spent on gymnastics skills training with more controlled instruction.

We went back to a very active third hour of relays and almost 30 minutes of dodgeball. Many of the kids started to split off in favor of crafts about this time, so the time was just right for smaller group games. Hour 4 was more of the same as kids came and went from the crafts and movies. The last hour was wrap-up with quiet board-game play as parents returned for pick-up. This progression kept things fresh all evening and prevented the kids from getting bored with too much of any one thing.

The night was a huge success, and we plan to do it again, but we learned some valuable lessons we thought we would share with others who might want to try Parents' Night Out for themselves.

Lesson 1: What Went Well

My wife and I are in charge of the Kids program at CrossFit Fury. We knew this event would be more than we could do on our own, however, so we recruited the help of a teenager who works in the gym's child care. She trades labor for a membership, so it didn't cost us anything extra for the added help.

Knowing that this was a long night, we expected some kids to need a break from the marathon of activities. Having this extra help meant more crowd control early on, as well as someone experienced to watch the kids who needed that break later in the night. We had movies and crafts available to keep them busy until they were ready to return to the action. Some kids preferred to spend most

of their time in the craft and movie area. We encouraged the kids to stay active but allowed them to remain there to keep the evening running smoothly.

The cost seemed just right for our group; we had no comments or complaints on the cost. A family with two kids got up to five hours of babysitting with a healthy meal and CrossFit programming for \$35—a pretty good deal these days.

Having a total of five hours allowed us to spend up to 30 minutes on some activities. This let the kids really have fun with each game.



Dodgeball, every child's favorite game, made an appearance for a whole half hour at Parents' Night Out.



Every parent needs a bit of time to him- or herself, just like every kid needs a chance to blow off some energy in a great gym.

Our programming also went very well. We started with some animal-walk warm-up drills and moved on to a giant obstacle course that included rings, rope swings, a box-jump snake, agility ladders, cone drills, the balance beam, dot hops, and a tunnel crawl. From there, we moved on to a series of standard Crossfit Kids games: dodgeball, medicine-ball bowling, the Venn diagram game (i.e., CrossFit Darts) and more. We also broke into two teams for relay races. We used variations of running, medicine-ball carries and more animal walks.

As a pediatric occupational therapist, I have access to some unique equipment. That means we were able to do races on Krazy Kars, scooter boards and various agility items. I also brought some gymnastic mats to work on teaching skills. Having a total of five hours allowed us to spend up to 30 minutes on some activities. This let the kids really have fun with each game.

As mentioned above, we also had some crafts and movies on hand as an option for those kids needing a break from the action. We brought some board games too. This

allowed us to wind down the more active portion by 9 p.m. and engage in more quiet activities as parents started returning. We had planned more activities and games than we needed, but we didn't want to run out of things to do. We were very happy with both the flow of the evening as well as the responses from the kids.

Lesson 2: Maybe Not So Paleo

We spent a lot of prep time and a bit too much money on food in an attempt to keep it Paleo. We served chicken that we marinated and barbecued before the event. We also provided hard-boiled eggs, apple slices, raisins, a raw-veggie tray, almonds and water. Most of the parents were very surprised that their kids were willing to eat this meal, but we had very few complaints. Given the amount of time spent preparing the food and the cost, we might just cop out and go with something simple like pizza. It may be sacrilege to serve pizza in a CrossFit gym, but some things may not be worth the extra work to feed masses of kids.

Lesson 3: Marketing

Marketing the event three weeks prior to the date was not nearly early enough time for parents to fit it into their busy schedules. Several families said that with more notice they could have rescheduled or planned around our event. We had only seven kids signed up by 6 p.m. the night before. Thanks to some heavy recruiting by members, the final total was 20 kids. Twenty was manageable with the three adults, and we feel that a cap of 30 kids is feasible.

Marketing the event three weeks prior to the date was not nearly early enough time for parents to fit it into their busy schedules.

Lesson 4: Up Too Late

We set the time at five hours, 5-10 p.m., to allow parents time for dinner and a movie. We found that most parents returned by nine, and the few stragglers only came later so their kids could play more. Many of the parents said they got bored waiting to pick up their kids. Next time we will end the event at 9 p.m. That will simplify planning and keep the kids wanting more when they leave.

Lesson 5: Check-In

We had a lot of families who are not regular members bring kids. This made the first 15 minutes pretty crazy. We had to check in and get payments from 20 kids, 12 of whom needed new paperwork filled out. I took the sign-ins and payments, and my wife ran some warm-up jump-rope drills for kids as they arrived. It helped to have something for them to do right away as they trickled in, but we will run this differently next time. We will take payments from members before the evening. Any cancellations can be refunded, but not having to take payments from them that night will facilitate things.



Once the kids are tired of dodgeball, break out the Lego and let them recharge their batteries.

It is important to get off to a strong start, and we struggled with this as I wasn't able to help with the kids until I finished with the adults. We also made sure to get active cell-phone numbers from all the parents (even current members) just in case anything happened. Check-in was also a good time to ask everyone about food allergies or medical issues (i.e., asthma).

Happy Kids, Happy Parents!

The event was a big success, and we received good feedback from the parents and kids. It was enjoyable for us to watch the kids have so much fun all night long and want to stay even after five hours. As the parents picked up their kids, we had a couple of them ask if we would consider doing this once a month. That is more often than my wife and I are willing to commit to at this time, but we do plan to put on another Parents' Night Out.

We will start to pitch the event six weeks ahead of time to generate more interest and accommodate parents' schedules. The Paleo meal will likely be revamped, and there will be some other small changes, but overall we are happy with the framework and thrilled that our maiden voyage was such a success.

If you are adventurous enough and have enough kids at your gym, give this event a try. It was a great way to show kids yet another way to have fun with fitness.



About the Author

Josh MacDonald received his master's degree in occupational therapy in 2001 and has 10 years' experience working with children with special needs in both outpatient and inpatient neuro-rehabilitation. He is the pediatric therapy manager at Arizona Orthopedic Physical Therapy—Kids Place in Goodyear, Ariz. Josh works out at Crossfit Fury, where he also runs the CrossFit Kids program. Josh has Level 1, Crossfit Kids and Olympic Lifting certificates.

THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

CHEWY CHIPS

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

overview

These apple chips are an excellent healthy snack to have in your home at all times—a delicious chewy, sweet, tart-and-tangy snack you and your kiddies will love. Potato chips ain't got nothing on these babies!

blocks

2 carbohydrate blocks per apple (about 10-12 chips)

ingredients

1 apple
1 lemon
Cinnamon

notes

Serve with 2 hard-boiled eggs and 6 almonds for a balanced 2-block Zone meal.

directions

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees.
2. Cut a thin slice off the top and bottom of each apple to create a flat surface. If you have an apple corer, use it to core the apples. If not, carefully use a knife to cut the core out of the middle. Don't worry if it's a perfect circle; often-times it will wind up more square-like.
3. Thinly slice the apples horizontally to create rings. Spread the apple rings out on a baking sheet covered in foil. Be sure not to overlap.
4. Squeeze the lemon over the apple slices and generously sprinkle with cinnamon.
5. Bake for 2-3 hours, depending upon the thickness of the slices. Turn the slices once or twice during baking. The apple chips will still be soft when you take them out of the oven but will crisp up upon cooling.

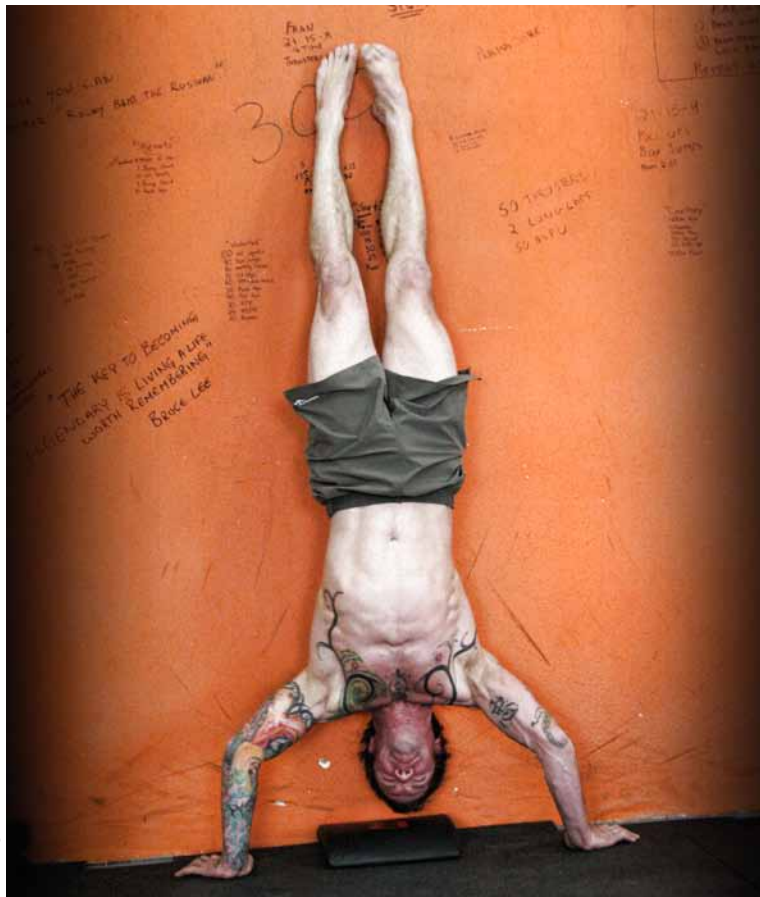
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Adrift—Then Came CrossFit

Long-time alcoholic Christian Wood came close to death in one of three car accidents in a year and decided it was time to change. CrossFit was his answer. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

August 2011



All images: Kate Berschauer

Had his co-workers just stopped to look, they might have noticed Christian Wood drinking beer and vodka from the ice chest in the back of his truck.

Had his friends just stopped to think, they might have noticed their friend's three car accidents in one year were no coincidence.

"I managed to hide it for 10 years," Wood said.

Alcoholism. The career construction worker concealed his addiction from his co-workers, from his friends. His wife, he said, always knew but didn't want to face the reality of her husband being like her father.

Then it happened—the accident that almost killed him.

"(It) was head-on with a semi on a windy path, and how we did not kill each other or how I did not kill both of us, I do not know," Wood said. "That's what started opening my eyes. (I said to myself), 'Dude, you need to change your life.'"

That was August 2009.

**"I quit drinking, but I
always found myself in
stressful situations and I
wanted a drink. Then I
found CrossFit."**

—Christian Wood

Today, the 39-year-old is a CrossFitter of more than one year who completed the Level 1 course in January.

"I quit drinking, but I always found myself in stressful situations and I wanted a drink. Then I found CrossFit," said Wood, who works out at CrossFit Cashmere in Washington state. "All want, will and desire for alcohol was gone. I don't know how to explain it, and I don't know why. I don't know if it's because it was something new and that's all I could think about."

The timing was right, said his wife, Dawn.

"I don't think he would have been as successful quitting drinking had he not had CrossFit available for him," she said.

Two Histories

Christian and Dawn got married when they were teenagers.

"He just turned 19 when our son was born," she said. "It hasn't been easy. He worked his butt off while I quit working and went back to school. He supported a family of four on next to nothing."

**"There was always a beer on
the nightstand; there were
always empties on the floor."**

—Christian Wood

The couple has been together for 23 years. Their oldest son is 20, their daughter is 18, and their youngest son is 11.

"He's definitely had a rough road," Dawn said of her husband. "On his mother's side of the family, he's got a cousin that's been in prison for dealing drugs. He's got uncles and cousins that have committed suicide that have been drug related. He's definitely had some of that stuff in his past."

She added: "He just happened to marry a girl who had some history as well."

Nearly seven years ago, she threatened to leave her husband.



***Working out regularly has helped Wood make major
changes in his life.***



Wood says he replaced drinking with CrossFit.

"The arguments were frequent when I was drinking. She didn't want to deal with it, so it was easier for her to let it go. She became an enabler," Wood said.

"I would do really good for a month or two, and then it would slowly show itself again," he explained. "There was always a beer on the nightstand; there were always empties on the floor. She knew about it and she did not approve at all."

Wood told his wife he quit. What he meant was he quit drinking in the house. In his workshop out back, he fed his addiction, strategically placing cans and bottles where she wouldn't easily spot them on a surprise visit.

After he stopped drinking, "we haven't been in an argument since," he proudly said in early April.

Don't Quit—Replace.

Wood will be quick to tell you he didn't quit drinking. He simply replaced it with CrossFit.

"The replacement is really, really important. Not quitting but replacing," he said. "If all you can think about is ice cream, then replace it with a long walk. Eat some apples and almonds."

Wood added: "On a second note, don't quit ice cream. Ice cream can be good."

The avid runner has started his own construction company and makes a point of teaching his employees how to lift heavy materials on the job.

Being a business owner has allowed him time—"time with my kids, time with my wife and time with my gym," Wood said. That gym, by the way, is about an hour away from his house.

"I drive through three towns to get to CrossFit Cashmere," he said.

So much time spent on WODs has been difficult for Dawn.

"His free time is spent doing CrossFit, so it's not really free time. He's putting so much into CrossFit," she said, adding, "But what would I rather have? I'd rather him be around longer and healthy and (enjoying) life than killing himself."

"Just the way the CrossFit program works was exactly what he needed."

—Jenny Colella

Jenny Colella, who co-owns CrossFit Cashmere with her husband, Marco, met Wood through mutual friends.

"I met him, gosh, it had to have been ... right when he quit drinking," she said.

At a holiday party, Colella said she started talking to Wood about "the CrossFit program, the whole program, community, the whole community, keeping yourself accountable."

"Just the way the CrossFit program works was exactly what he needed," she said. "Then he started coming down to the gym. He started hitting the workouts hard. I started nailing him on flexibility and form. He started learning stuff and getting better at stuff."

But white-water kayaking and about 20 years of 50-plus-hour work weeks in construction had taken a toll on Wood's body. Over the summer, he discovered a loss of strength and motor skills in his left hand.

"I saw a doctor who wanted to prescribe pills and told me that I would probably have the problem for the rest of my life," Wood said.

Instead, he went to a chiropractor and an acupuncturist.

"Within a month, I began to see progress," he said. "It took about (four) months of seeing them both on a weekly basis before I had full strength back in my hand. I was also CrossFitting through this whole time—that's how I could tell that I was making progress on my recovery. Pull-ups were my test."

Now a Games Contender

Today, Wood is known at his box for his skills off the ground.

"Any body-weight aerial, Christian's the guy," Colella said.

"He's amazing. He's got it. He's got it all. I encouraged him to go to the (CrossFit Games) Open this year. ... That guy can run, that's for sure."

Wood follows main-site programming "to a T," he said. Three days on, one off is his regimen.

"From the time I was in about eighth grade until recently, I was 160 lb.," said the 5-foot-10 Wood. "I weighed myself today. I weighed 170 and my pant size is going down."



At CrossFit Cashmere, Wood is now the recognized king of body-weight movements.

He's gone from 10 consecutive pull-ups when he started to 41 today, from one muscle-up in January to 19 today.

And he's now taking what he's learned and applying it elsewhere.

His town of Malaga this year started a roller-derby team he's coaching.

"Some of the stories that I hear from the women he's working with (are) amazing," Colella said. "(He's) helping them to get on the right life track—just like he did."

**"CrossFit has given me
the knowledge to correct.
(It's) given me the knowledge
to change."**

—Christian Wood

Colella continued: "He loves CrossFit so much that he's teaching it to these women. The whole thing is all about spreading the love He's a huge advocate of it. That's what I see in him the most is his excitement level. He's so positive ... it lifts me up. It keeps me excited about CrossFit because he's so excited about CrossFit."

Aside from continuing running and coaching, Wood said he doesn't see himself getting involved in other sports.

"I CrossFit to CrossFit. CrossFit is my sport. CrossFit is my thing," he said. "Now with my certification, that just gives me the ability to tell people what I think. CrossFit has given me the knowledge to correct. (It's) given me the knowledge to change."

For her husband to be at a point in his life where he's happy and feeling successful "is really something," Dawn said.

Wood said CrossFit has given him confidence.

"It's helped me stand up straight, and it's helped me deal with life," he said. "It's just made me a better person. I don't know how to explain it. I don't know how to put it in words. It's taught me a lot of humility."

He concluded: "It doesn't matter who you are—it's heart. You get out of it what you put into it. That's true for life, your marriage, your children. ... That's what CrossFit has given to me. And a beautiful body."



Courtesy of Andr a Maria Cecil

About the Author

*Andr a Maria Cecil, 32, is managing editor at the **Central Penn Business Journal** in Harrisburg, Pa. Andr a is a native of New Orleans who lives in York County, Pa. There, she's been doing CrossFit since 2008 at [CrossFit York](#). She dedicates three days a week to training in Olympic weightlifting at [McKenna's Gym](#).*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Ashtanga Yoga vs. CrossFit

Kristen Gilbert, a 13-year practitioner of Ashtanga yoga, tries CrossFit for six months and says the two practices complement each other in testing body and mind.

By Kristen Gilbert

August 2011



Gordon Ross

On the surface, Ashtanga yoga and CrossFit look like opposites.

Yoga involves incense, OM's, peace and vegetarianism whereas CrossFit cultivates explosive power and aggression in utilitarian-style affiliate gyms. But when delving below the surface, these practices are not only startlingly similar but also complement each other.

Recent *CrossFit Journal* posts have introduced the concept that yoga, breath control and psychological techniques can enhance overall performance. Being that Ashtanga yoga is viewed in the yoga community as the most vigorous branch of yoga, it is an ideal fit for CrossFitters who embrace intensity and physical aggression.

Superhero Training

Both Ashtanga yoga and CrossFit are subcultures of larger factions of physical training—yoga and fitness training, respectively—occupied by the hardest-core Type A personalities. Essentially, people who like extremes and pushing the limits of their comfort zones will be drawn to either of

these practices. The most intense yogis will almost always be Ashtanga practitioners; the Type A personality is drawn to the high-focus demands, near-continuous movement, ever-expanding difficulty and emphasis on upper-body strengthening and core conditioning. CrossFit's focus on short bursts of high-intensity activity, submitting to the coach's will by performing the prescribed WOD to the best of your ability, and continually tracking your progress with detailed logs also appeals to the Type A personality.

I consider both practices to be forms of superhero training because the practitioner is encouraged to continually reach new heights of physical and mental ability that extend beyond the cultural norm.

Ashtanga uses a comprehensive set form that addresses the entire body in one session—unlike CrossFit's constant variety—and links postures together with a flowing, core-centric movement called a vinyasa. Vinyasas are similar to the pass-through done on gymnastic parallel bars in CrossFit but are performed on the floor in Ashtanga. The result is a powerful, flowing and vigorous practice connected by breath and movement, with ample sweat and staggering physical challenges. This style of yoga eventually demands extreme back bends, getting your leg behind your head, and all manner of arm balances, including handstand presses.

Because Ashtanga yoga is the root practice of power and vinyasa styles of yoga, no particular poses are exclusive to this practice. The fixed sets of postures, the vinyasas linking each posture together and the way in which they are practiced characterize Ashtanga.



Josie Boulding

Ashtanga yoga is an intense practice filled with very challenging poses.

I consider both practices to be forms of superhero training because the practitioner is encouraged to continually reach new heights of physical and mental ability that extend beyond the cultural norm.

Gordon Ross



Hip mobility: not an issue.

Ashtanga has four fixed series of postures. The first is called “primary series” or yoga chikitsa (yoga therapy). Its main focus lies with addressing hamstring tightness through many symmetrical and asymmetrical forward bends, addressing hip tightness as well as pelvic imbalances. For most CrossFitters, the hamstrings can easily become the tightest part of their bodies. This is another realm in which Ashtanga and CrossFit complement each other.

Instead of a classroom format where the teacher is leading all students through their chosen set of postures, Ashtanga ultimately leads the practitioner to memorize the series of poses and perform them in a quiet room at his or her own pace, surrounded by other practitioners doing their practice. The teacher moves around the room and gives individual adjustments and advice to each student, similar to the way a CrossFit WOD is structured. Because of this style of delivery, students progress at their own pace, modulate their own speed according to their breath and move through the series as their bodies attune to it. You must be able to perform each posture successfully before moving on to the next—and usually more difficult—posture.

Urdhva dhanurasana (wheel pose) is a foundational back bend in Ashtanga, with both hands and both feet on the ground and your midsection in the air. Once shoulders and hip flexors are open enough to create a smooth arch with the entire body, the practitioner is asked to begin learning to stand from this back bend. When the practitioner can do this independently, he or she moves into the deepening series of back bends in the intermediate series, culminating with kapotasana, an intense back bend done with the knees and elbows on the floor and the hips raised to the ceiling.

CrossFit meets Ashtanga in the realm of gymnastic flexibility, agility and conditioning but layers on constantly changing demands, high reps of functional movements with heavy weights, rope climbing, waist-high box jumps and any other manner of craziness the coach wishes to inflict on his athletes. To be competent at either practice requires near-superhero-like physical ability, but it doesn’t stop there.

Stress Processing

Being that both Ashtanga yoga and CrossFit are highly demanding, the effects of these practices on your mental and emotional state are far-reaching and beneficial.

When you set goals and are able to achieve feats you previously thought were not possible, you begin to perceive yourself as increasingly capable. One of my yoga teachers always said, "Yoga is when the impossible becomes possible." By this token, CrossFit is yoga. The ability to continually expand one's boundaries—be they physical or mental—is highly addictive and beneficial to self-esteem and perceived capability.

Both systems train to deal with the unknown.

Ashtanga helps train the mind to stay centered during times of trial by physical challenges while maintaining attention and breathing. The real-life application of this is training is to maintain your center and refrain from a knee-jerk reaction. CrossFit trains the mind by taking you to your absolute limit and presenting physical challenges that at first seem impossible. By doing this repeatedly, you begin to realize you aren't actually going to die and you're much more capable than you give yourself credit for.

Both Ashtanga and CrossFit cultivate full absorption in what you're doing, which happens naturally when you're pushing your limits. This quality of focused attention is the main requirement for any transformative practice.



Gordon Ross

This movement will probably not show up at the CrossFit Games, but you never know.

When a potentially adverse situation in life arises, CrossFit training cultivates the ability to react quickly and appropriately—not emotionally—with a steady mind. This style of training does so by putting people in a stress-simulation situation every day and firing all systems on full throttle. In a slightly different way from yoga, this allows you to “practice” being stressed and hone your skills in dealing with that stress. This translates to daily life, and CrossFit junkies are some of the most down-to-earth people I’ve met. Most CrossFit athletes exemplify a fascinating combination of intense focus coupled with social openness. Both Ashtanga and CrossFit cultivate full absorption in what you’re doing, which happens naturally when you’re pushing your limits. This quality of focused attention is the main requirement for any transformative practice.

Community

Both systems encourage a like-minded community surrounding their practice, mainly because both are practiced in a classroom format, and to be successful at either system you have to attend regularly. Humans crave community to feel happy and fulfilled. Ironically, I’ve found people at CrossFit more open and welcoming than Ashtanga yogis.

“There are two qualities that will bind a community: laughter and suffering. Both happen here,” said David Marshall of Crossfit Muskoka in the Huntsville, Ont., area.

Concurrent with communities that form, various group challenges tend to arise to further bind the community. Yoga studios tout vegetarianism, hold tandem cleanses and 30-day challenges; CrossFit boxes tend to host Paleo

challenges and 30-day skills challenges. In addition, both communities give back to the larger population through fundraising: yogis have been known to bust out 24-hour yoga-thons to raise money for UNICEF or such organizations, and CrossFitters for a Cure was a recent effort to raise money for the Alzheimer Society. And of course CrossFit has a long history of supporting wounded warriors, women with breast cancer and other worthy causes. Both yogis and CrossFitters are concerned not only with physical and mental self-improvement, but also with improving their communities at large.

Yoga counterbalances the tightening effects of CrossFit, and CrossFit has vastly increased my strength and explosive power.

Personal Benefits

Practicing yoga develops an intimate relationship with the breath, one that serves me well during a WOD. When the intensity dial is cranked up to 11 and I can remember to connect my breath to movement, the WOD is always easier and my time improves. Also, the steadiness of mind cultivated during yoga practice has been of immeasurable benefit transcending hardship, especially during CrossFit, when it feels like I’m going to die.

CrossFit has enhanced my pre-existing yogic fitness with the high-intensity piece. Jen Broxterman from CrossFit London in Canada points out that it’s a different story for your body when you’re strengthening at high speeds while your cardiovascular systems are maxed out (hypoxia), as opposed to yoga, where you build strength while moving slowly. Yoga also failed to address the benefits of cultivating explosive power in the body. Thanks to the well-rounded CrossFit system, on a recent trip to British Columbia, I was able to participate in a myriad of sports and outdoor activities successfully and without soreness. When only practicing yoga and riding my bike, I would have experienced debilitating delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) from doing the same activities.

“There are two qualities that will bind a community: laughter and suffering. Both happen here.”

—David Marshall

While there is much overlap between the two systems, the differences between Ashtanga yoga and CrossFit complement each other as well. Yoga counterbalances the tightening effects of CrossFit, and CrossFit has vastly increased my strength and explosive power. Through practicing yoga daily for 13 years, my back bends have expanded, my hips have opened, and my core has strengthened, allowing me to be comfortable executing increasingly complicated arm balances and enhancing subtle internal physical ways to understand and move my body. By paying wholehearted attention to these internal and external processes, my mind has become stronger and quieter. This mental focus has been highly valuable when I'm in the midst of the WOD because it allows me to observe but not honor the voice that tells me to stop. Then I can return to letting my breath propel me through reps that I previously thought I could not finish.

In addition, the mind-body integration I've cultivated through yoga, as well as responsiveness and adaptability, has served me well during CrossFit. From a physical perspective, my open hips allow me to fully explore the bottom of a squat and have in fact needed to tighten up slightly to increase the power available to me from my glutes and quads. Having open shoulders has also been to my benefit with the snatch and in learning kipping pull-ups. Ironically, pre-existing hyper-mobility has caused injuries that I am working through healing with the stabilizing and strengthening elements of CrossFit.

In my body, it feels as though the combined effects of Ashtanga yoga and CrossFit enhance the physical, mental and emotional aspects of my existence in innumerable ways. I have immense gratitude for both practices and will enjoy continuing to do my own research in both realms.



About the Author

Kristen Gilbert has been studying Ashtanga and other types of yoga for more than 13 years and teaching for 11 years. Her CrossFit obsession began less than a year ago after having a longstanding intellectual debate with a friend on CrossFit vs. Ashtanga.

The only way to resolve it was to partake in each other's systems. She is also a private health-food chef and a full-time student pursuing a master's of science degree in occupational therapy.



Kristen Gilbert

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The CrossFit-Oly Hybrid

Looking to emphasize O-Lifts in your CrossFit training?
Bob Takano explains how to do it and what you can expect.

By Bob Takano

August 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

For the last two years, I've been coaching weightlifters and conducting a strength-and-conditioning program within CrossFit boxes. I've also been instructing in Coach Mike Burgener's CrossFit Oly seminars for about the same length of time. Consequently, I've run into a number of individuals who are interested in continuing with their CrossFit training while improving their performance in weightlifting (I realize the popular term is "Olympic lifting").



Matt Chan is a top CrossFit competitor who can hold his own on an Oly platform.

The two realms have very disparate goals that often seem directed at cross purposes. The obvious question, then, is how to combine the two in order to achieve the best possible outcome?

Because the physiological demands are so different, it must be understood that combining Olympic lifts with CrossFit training will not provide the very highest levels in either. There must be a compromise. The final outcome, however, will be the result of the goals set by the individual.

Overview

CrossFit is intentionally very nebulous in its ultimate goals for the physical state of the trainee. Furthermore, the issue is subject to modification by the specific condition of the trainee upon entering the program. Each box can also provide slightly different emphases for the training. Consequently, it is almost impossible to define the parameters that will be achieved by a pure CrossFitter as ultimate goals. It is only safe to say that a long-term, seasoned CrossFitter will be an accomplished generalist in the realm of physical fitness.

Olympic lifting is both a set of sport-specific skills and a training modality co-opted by the CrossFit community. As a sport, it has very specific goals and parameters by which success is measured. Therefore, when posing the question of how to combine the training for both activities, the answer must be defined largely by the ultimate goal of the trainee in question. To this end, I am assuming that most people contemplating this combination are seeking to improve CrossFit performance while acquiring heightened proficiency in the performance of the Olympic lifts.

**In my experience,
CrossFitters who have turned
to Olympic lifting were
exceptionally fit in terms of
anaerobic endurance.**

How CrossFit Training Affects Olympic Lifters

In my experience, CrossFitters who have turned to Olympic lifting (and subsequently moved away from CrossFit) were exceptionally fit in terms of anaerobic endurance. Subsequently they were able to perform well in the initial hypertrophy phases of training while taking minimal rest between sets. They could train effectively on a six-days-per-week basis with little drop-off in muscular performance, though the same could not be said of neural performance.

Eventually, the two activities come into conflict as the athlete only has a finite amount of energy to expend each day, and the CrossFit workouts drain energy that might be employed for Olympic-lifting training. Furthermore, CrossFit keeps body weight lower than is optimal for top-level weightlifting performance. Another factor to be considered is that CrossFit workouts will in all probability keep most athletes' body weights at a point that is less than ideal for obtaining great results in the clean and jerk.

How Olympic-Lifting Training Affects CrossFitters

Again, there is an ergonomic conflict. Anyone training regularly as a weightlifter will not have the energy to perform at optimal levels in the CrossFit regime.



Josh Everett, one of the original CrossFit stars, is a great weightlifter who made the CrossFit Games podium twice.

Weightlifting training will also necessitate a significant increase in the muscle mass of the thighs and hips, thus impacting the proficiency for performing pulls-ups, muscle-ups and kipping.

Improved proficiency in the performance of the snatch and clean and jerk will also enable the athlete to become more effective in performing the lifts during the early portion of a CrossFit WOD but might result in a more rapid deterioration of the technique during the latter portions of the training. This is due to the recruitment pattern that is developed during Olympic training. It will cause the Type IIb and IIa fibers to fire and fatigue, creating a performance pattern that is not conducive to performing the movements with the same technique over a high number of repetitions.

Factors to Consider in a Hybrid Program

To gain the greatest benefit from adding a significant weightlifting component to CrossFitting, the overriding factor should be dealing with neural fatigue because there is a high degree of neural activity going on during the Olympic lifts compared to the movements in a typical WOD. Moreover, the nerves fatigue more rapidly than some of the other components of the CrossFit menu.

The second factor to consider is making significant strength gains beyond the effects of the CrossFit workout.

Finally, the planning of training intensities and volume in the weightlifting portion must be modified for optimal benefits, and the number of days of training per week must also be factored into the planning.

A Training Plan

It appears the most enthusiastic, successful CrossFitters train almost every day. Thus, the plan must be based on this practice as a constant. The weightlifting workouts should then be initially planned on a three-days-per-week basis. If we base the training on a Monday-through-Friday schedule, there should be five CrossFit trainings, with three weightlifting trainings taking place on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

For those interested in a break day midweek, the CrossFit workouts can be conducted on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The Olympic-lifting workouts could be undertaken on Monday, Thursday and Saturday.

The three weightlifting workouts should take place prior to the CrossFit workouts while the nervous system is relatively fresh. Each weightlifting workout should consist of at least one explosive movement (snatch, clean and jerk, power snatch, power clean), one squatting movement and one overhead movement. A strength-building exercise relevant to weightlifting may be added periodically.

Each weightlifting workout should consist of at least one explosive movement, one squatting movement and one overhead movement.

The three weightlifting workouts would then be followed by a CrossFit WOD. Tuesdays and Thursdays would be composed solely of CrossFit training.

The weightlifting workouts would be made up of 5 or 6 sets of 2-4 repetitions of an explosive movement as described previously. The intensities should be largely in the 75-85 percent range (power snatches and power cleans should be performed in the 60-70 percent range). These should be followed by back or front squats through 5-6 sets of 2-4 repetitions, again primarily in the same percentage range. The third exercise can be a pulling movement, or an overhead movement, performed for 4 sets of 3-5 repetitions in the 80-95 percent range.



Specialization is needed to be a top lifter, but CrossFitters can certainly become competent weightlifters.

The selection of the exercises and placement within the weekly schedule should be affected by the nature of the CrossFit training. For instance, a CrossFit WOD focusing on handstand push-ups might provide a reason to minimize or eliminate altogether any pressing movements during the following day's weightlifting training.

If the athlete is feeling well restored on the intervening Tuesdays and Thursdays, the option of including an extra session of one or two weightlifting exercises is always a possibility.

Expected Outcomes

Provided that the athlete has more or less mastered the technique of the snatch and clean and jerk, and that athletic health is sound, weightlifting progress can be expected until the limit of the individual's talent is reached under these circumstances. Of course, just to provide perspective, greater success would have been achieved if the athlete had specialized in weightlifting.

The age, physical history and athletic talent will have an overriding effect on the degree of weightlifting progress that can be achieved. At one extreme will be an individual with little weightlifting talent who is beginning this program at an advanced age after a sedentary lifestyle. At the other extreme is a young, talented and experienced athlete with an extensive training history that has established the proper biochemical pathways. The outcomes will be quite different.

Future Alterations

It would not be surprising to find that after following this type of regimen for a period of several weeks or longer, an athlete might decide to alter the approach. Some might find the Olympic lifts difficult to master, especially without adequate coaching, and not pursue snatches and cleans and jerks any further than their normal inclusion in CrossFit WODs dictates. Others may find these lifts to be as addictive as many others have discovered them to be, and they might begin to emphasize weightlifting training over CrossFitting.

Almost all the weightlifters I am currently coaching were introduced to the sport through their involvement with the lifts in a CrossFit gym. Some of them have peers who learned the lifts at the same time in the same way but continue to perform primarily CrossFit workouts.

My experience primarily as a weightlifting coach and secondarily as a strength-and-conditioning coach while working in CrossFit boxes has provided me with a unique perspective on the CrossFit-weightlifting crossover. While CrossFit is proving to be a gateway to weightlifting for many athletes, not everyone will make the jump. Others are content to simply use the snatch and clean and jerk as another tool in their training arsenals. No problem there.

Physical training is all about reaching the goals that are most important to you, the individual athlete. The best results and degrees of success will always come about as a consequence of desire and decision.



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 volleyball scholarships. His articles have been published by the NSCA and the International Olympic Committee and helped to establish standards for the coaching of the Olympic lifts. He is a former member of the editorial board of the **NSCA Journal**, and an instructor for the UCLA Extension program. He is currently the chairperson of the NSCA Weightlifting Special Interest Group. He works with Coach Mike Burgener in the CrossFit Oly Seminar program. Website: www.takanoathletics.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Kids Miniature Golf

Debbie Rakos explains how to tee up a great game for CrossFit Kids.

By Debbie Rakos CrossFit Kids

August 2011

Staff/CrossFit Journal



Area needed

30 x 40 feet is recommended. Outside is ideal.

Equipment needed

This is where imagination comes into play. A few suggested items would be the following: cones, parallettes, medicine balls, AbMats, tires, buckets, plyo boxes, 2.5-lb. plates, short PVC pipes or sticks (to be used as golf clubs), some kind of small balls (we used lacrosse balls).

When we set up our seven-hole golf course, we used just about every movable piece of equipment in the gym. We used the 2.5-lb. plates as tees and made each fairway approximately 2.5-3 feet long. The equipment was placed to make the fairway challenging to maneuver around. Each golfer got three attempts to navigate the ball down the fairway and into a hole (a bucket or box turned onto its side).

For example, at Hole 1, the kids teed off of the plate and down a fairway defined by parallettes, past two tires, and into a large bucket turned onto its side. If the golfer did not put the ball in the hole within three tries, he or she performed 10 perfect squats. Each hole was assigned a different exercise.

Some other ideas we used in creating our golf course included an AbMat as a ramp into a hole and two boxes with a mat spanning their tops to form a bridge.

With a little imagination, this game turned out to be a huge hit. The kids absolutely loved it, all while working on their coordination and performing CrossFit exercises at the end of each hole.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Take a Leap!

Dina Widlake takes a risk and learns how to grab life by the pull-up bars.

By Dina Widlake

August 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

That pull-up bar mocks me. I cannot be the only one who experiences it.

1 of 4

Messages pour like party confetti, scrappy little echoes from the distant past as I look up—only I'm not celebrating. I am being mocked.

I hear those words: "Girls aren't built to do pull-ups. They aren't designed to have that kind of upper-body strength. It's unnatural for girls to do pull-ups. *You* can't do them."

Why?

It was my first WOD on a casual "come try out CrossFit" invitation, and there I was, staring at that bar.



Devin Carr

After nervously trying CrossFit, Dina Widlake found the program was a great fit for her life.

Pull-ups were on the board. I tried one, as requested, and there it was: my first CrossFit failure. I was cheerfully assured not to worry: I could start doing pull-ups using a big, thick band with someone right there. Honestly, at that point, those messages from the past suddenly made sense. The bar seemed so far away, and pull-ups, band or no band, seemed beyond that: unattainable. So why even try? I wondered why I had come.

As, the saying goes, "Careful what you ask for ..."

For months prior to my first CrossFit workout, maybe closer to a year, I had been sharing with friends my desire to find a way to be healthier and to increase my fitness.

It was early one Saturday morning, maybe in January 2010, when I found myself walking down a long driveway to a house I did not know to meet people I did not know to do something I did not know.

With each step toward the house, random and unsettling questions ping-ponged through my mind, things like: "What am I doing? Did I hear right: this CrossFit thing involves Olympic weightlifting? What is that exactly? Is this the right house number? What if I can't do the workout? Am I late?"

I signed paperwork and was shown to the garage. I was suddenly back in my kindergarten self, peering through a classroom door where other kids had already arrived, seemed to know each other and had already found their places; they already knew things. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. A fine experience for a five-year-old. Not so for a 40-year-old.

But then again, maybe it is. For this girl, expectations (known and unknown) are awfully intimidating; they always have been.

As with most things that loom big, hairy and scary in one's mind, the reality of that thing often possesses only a fraction of its imagined bite. The biggest fear, and indeed the biggest challenge, is in actually moving forward, crossing the threshold. That Saturday morning I stepped through and met a group of welcoming, interesting and diverse people. I completed a scaled (thankfully) workout that left me sweating on a garage floor so cold that sweat had no business making an appearance. With my eyes closed and breath struggling to find its desired pace, I heard folks congratulating each other's accomplishments, praising each other's efforts and encouraging others with unmet goals.

My CrossFit flirting days were numbered, and as it goes with all meaningful relationships, I would have to choose to invest fully or not at all.

I was fascinated, curious and still unsure. Fascination and curiosity overruled uncertainty, and I periodically showed up to WODs over the next few months.

As winter gave way to spring, a grand transition paralleling the seasonal shift was underway for this community—and for me too, apparently. My CrossFit flirting days were numbered, and as it goes with all meaningful relationships, I would have to choose to invest fully or not at all.

The new box was opening. The reasons not to join came easily: single parent, limited finances, reasonably demanding job, age, other commitments and activities, etc. In the end, it just seemed out of reach, as unrealistic and unattainable as those pull-ups.

For all my rational and certainly valid reasons not to join, I struggled. The struggle was deeper than “this is something I want and I can’t make it work.” Looking back, the struggle was about being afraid.

I was afraid I was not capable to do this full force. I was afraid I did not fit in. I was afraid of breaking with those past and present societal messages about my gender, age and life circumstance. I was intimidated by the references to those who were, as I perceived, “real CrossFitters.” Who was I? I was not serving in the military or firefighting, and while I am a life-long soccer player, I am certainly no elite athlete.

“CrossFit was designed for someone else, not me,” I thought. “I am nothing more than a fortysomething single mother who really needs to focus on being a parent and working.”

Still, I took note of other descriptors like “broad, general and inclusive” and of declarations like “the needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree not kind” from CrossFit.com. It seemed I did not have to be an elite athlete. Heck, I didn’t seem to have to be an athlete

at all to CrossFit. If I wasn’t one at the start, CrossFit would make me one. But still, could I make it work in my life with all its complexities and demands?

I could never fully know at that point. I had no crystal ball. It would take a leap of faith and some risk in crossing another threshold into what I did not know. After much angst, I jumped.

The Right Choices

It is over a year later, and with the luxury of hindsight there could not have been a better fit for this girl and her family at this stage in their lives. The WODs, I’ve discovered, can be invitations to approach little thresholds: both physical and mental. I am challenged almost daily to dig deeper and explore my physical capacity, which is much greater than I ever imagined. I have also come to appreciate much more fully the value of being part of and contributing to a strong and authentic community.



Devin Carr

***Can a fortysomething mother learn Olympic weightlifting?
Absolutely!***

In a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps culture, we often operate as if what one accomplishes he or she accomplishes alone, and a requirement for individual effort is certainly present in all our endeavors. However, I believe the greatest and most long-living achievements we attain are those that involve the influence and the give-and-take of community.

**“It is not from ourselves
that we learn to be
better than we are.”**

—Wendell Berry

The writer and poet Wendell Berry said it beautifully: “It is not from ourselves that we learn to be better than we are.”

Springboarding from this experience, I am emboldened to challenge myself in other areas in my life in ways I never considered. I risk more. I live more fully and with more focus. CrossFit is constantly reminding me to live in this world as I am intended, as we are all intended: with strength and power. For me, that begins in the physical domain, which ultimately integrates into the emotional and intellectual aspects of my life.

My children, who I once feared would feel abandoned for the time I made for CrossFit at their expense, have experienced something else. It turns out it's true: nothing is more powerful than action. I could give advice to my children day in and day out about living well, being physically active, eating right, challenging themselves, risking, going to failure and doing what makes them the most alive, and it would never compare to having a living example of that advice in front of them. They have noticed. They are learning. They are benefitting. They have not been abandoned. They do not feel so either.

Back to the Bar

It was Wednesday, May 19, 2010, four months after first trying CrossFit and two months after going full force into the sport. The WOD included 40 pull-ups; that was all I really noticed. Thirty-six minutes after I heard, “3, 2, 1 ... Go!” I completed that WOD. It was far from pretty, and I

was reduced to one pull-up at a time at the end. Yet for some reason I decided it was my last WOD using a band for pull-ups. Lack of oxygen may have been a factor. It seemed like a safe decision at the time as I guessed pull-ups wouldn't be in a WOD again any time soon. Well.

It was Friday, May 21, 2010, and the WOD was Nicole (20 minutes of 400-meter runs and max pull-ups). I stumbled mentally, reconsidering my position on the whole no-band approach. I read a rule on the board, “Don't cheat yourself.” I took a deep breath and decided that at worst I would get to that bar and do no pull-ups. I would run a lot. I understood clearly by then that crossing thresholds is never easy, and they never cease to present themselves. You have to step through and welcome whatever comes.

Less than a minute after “Go!” my body unexpectedly kicked into gear and I strung together six pull-ups. Six! In pure shock and excitement, I finished the WOD with up to eight pull-ups strung together between each run. I left the box that day, hands bleeding and throbbing, feeling elated. Girls *are* made to do pull-ups and I *can* do them!

And so it goes.

I wonder what's next? A WOD that seems impossible? Job loss? A career change? My children transitioning to middle school?

I welcome it all and the fear and struggle that will come with it.



About the Author

Dina Widlake lives in Virginia with her two sons and dog and is a member of Hammer Down CrossFit in Chantilly, Va. She is an instructional designer by trade, developing end-user online training solutions for various types of software applications. At this point in her life, a fitting description would be an Episcopalian, single parent, teacher, traveler and CrossFitter who plays and coaches soccer. She recently earned her Level 1 trainer certificate and is looking forward to deepening her experience with CrossFit.



The Transformation

Jon Gilson narrates photographer Albert Dickson's look at the CrossFit body.





They'd look just as striking carved out of marble, guarding an acropolis. The human machine, at its potential, is art. Capture the light correctly, the flurry of movement, the struggle, and you capture the capacity to evoke emotion, the essential artistic quality of what we do.

This end point, the pinnacle of athleticism, the beautiful doing the impossible, is but one aspect of our sport, one aspect of our training.

For every chiseled picture, there is one that is not, sharp edges traded for rough, grace traded for strife. There is someone for whom seconds don't matter, for whom progress is measured in minutes. Someone for whom the act of standing is a personal record, never mind sprinting. There is someone getting life back, learning that the path of the athlete is the path to recovery.

In this realization, they're the same, the athlete and the novice, and the pictures don't matter. The light need not be captured, because someone said, "Go!"

The unyielding and the reborn stand side by side, pursuing the same goal. On different ends of the continuum, they use the same implement on the same canvas, intensity applied to the human body. There, the distinction between beauty and non is obliterated, rendered meaningless in the red mist of anaerobic activity.

In every end-point picture, every beautiful person smartly lit, we realize that we're witnessing what comes of this process, what happens when the novice stays the course, when intensity is applied again and again.

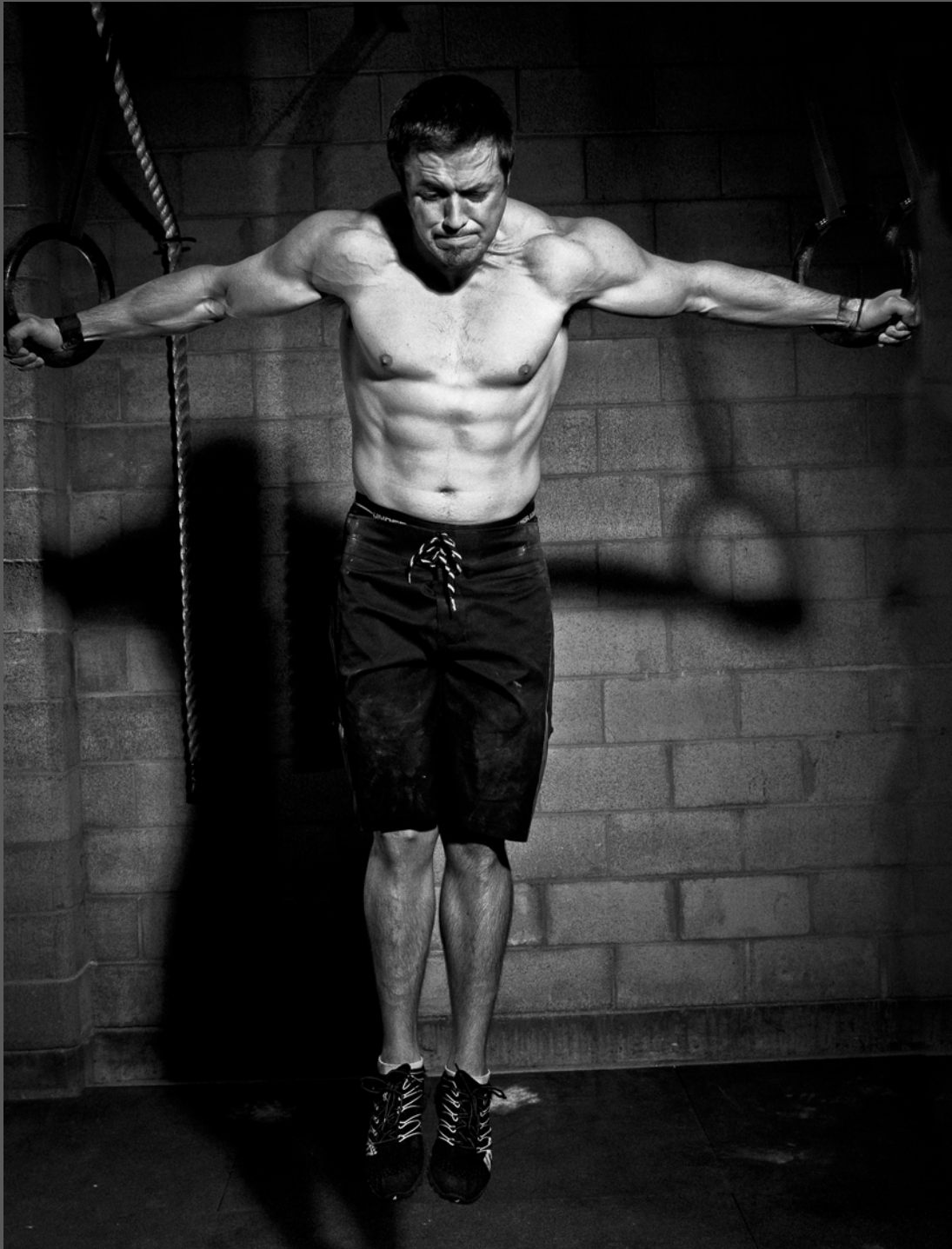
Rough edges are sharpened and polished, and weak resolve turns hard. Skirmishes are traded for easy victories, razor technique substituting for blunt force. The day-to-day becomes trivial, easy, the games we play that much more enjoyable. The novice becomes the athlete.

Continued on Page 7 ...









Continued from Page 3 ...

The light turns kinder, and the photographer's lens turns. Those who persevered find themselves at the other end, measuring progress in seconds—sprinting, recovered.

And there they are celebrated, assuming their potential.

They are art.



About the Authors

Albert Dickson is a photographer based in Boise, Idaho. He has worked in health care for the past 27 years while pursuing photography as an enthusiast and then as a part-time professional. Today, Albert is leaving his first career to fully dedicate himself to photography. Albert has traveled the west from Alaska to Baja photographing amazing landscapes. His fine-art landscape photography has been exhibited around the Northwest and can be seen at Albert-Dickson.com.

Since 2008 years he has taken a new direction with his photography: "I have fallen in love with the human form. Making photographs that explore the complexity and dynamics of individuals can be challenging and tremendously rewarding. The CrossFit community is a perfect fit for my style of photography. My relationship with CrossFit has evolved from this photo series. I have found an ever-growing subject for my camera in the local fitness industry thanks to the fine people I met at Crossfit Refinery in Boise. Thanks to everyone at CrossFit Refinery for collaborating with me on these images." Albert can be reached at Albert@Whetstonemagery.com or by visiting his blog at Whetstonemagery.com.

Jon Gilson is the founder of [Again Faster Equipment](http://AgainFasterEquipment.com) and a member of the CrossFit Seminar Staff.

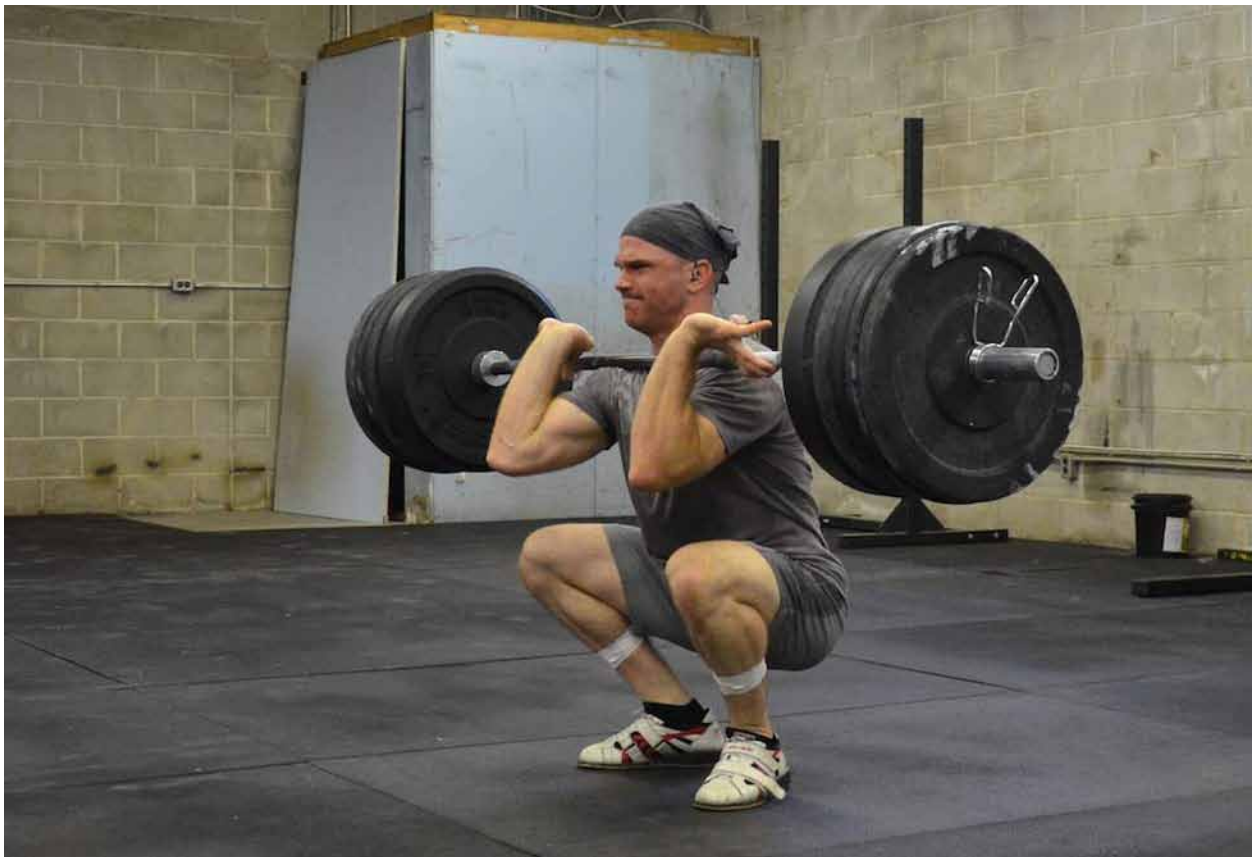
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Squat Heavy and Often

Powerlifting affiliate owner Chris Moore challenges the CrossFit community to train strength way more often.

By Chris Moore CrossFit Memphis

August 2011



Mike Warkentin

"Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative." —H.G. Wells

Some of my favorite childhood memories come from watching movies during late summer nights.

My dad always worked hard second shifts. By the time he got home, he didn't mind that I was still awake and running around the house in an ADD-fueled frenzy. I think he looked forward to those moments. It was a chance for us to spend some time together, basking in the late-night novelty.

Our ritual was always the same.

First, you had to have a big wedge of fresh-cut watermelon. You couldn't sit down to a movie without that. Second, we always seemed to watch whatever HBO had to offer. Usually it was the stereotypical 1980s action flick.

For some reason, I recently recalled a memory of watching "Kickboxer," the old Jean-Claude Van Damme fight-fest. I don't remember much about the plot, and I really don't care to. The movie's probably as terrible now as it was then. But I'll tell you what was great about it: the training montage.

I'm a sucker for a good montage.

Frequent, hard, highly novel training leads to rapid improvements in performance. ... There is perhaps no exercise better suited to this approach than the squat.

Some of the details escape me, but I can still see a young, shirtless (always shirtless) Jean-Claude moving slowly through a misty Thai jungle. He was eager to train. Sure of himself. Maybe too sure.



Mindy Bush

Doug Larson demonstrates perfect position with the cambered squat bar.

It wasn't long before his wise old master started laying into him. First, there was kicking. Lots of kicking. He kicked fast. He kicked slow. He kicked in dramatic slow-motion while underwater. You could tell this was all terribly important to the training.

I made note.

Action-movie lesson No. 1: Repetition is key.

Next, I can see a grimacing J.C. being forcibly stretched by the ankles between two palms. This guy wasn't going to be happy until full anal prolapse was achieved. It could be that this was the very first mobility WOD I ever witnessed—my first glimpse at a true supple leopard.

But the pain didn't stop there. No. There were high-altitude coconut drops to the abdomen. Repeated leg strikes to a tree trunk. It was all quite intense.

Action-movie lesson No. 2: You're not going to defeat Tong Po without laying your weakness upon the altar.

Slowly, you begin to see method to all the madness. Repetition ensured proper technique during the stress of the fight. Knuckles and shins grew hardened. Soon overconfident, shirtless J.C. was replaced by a highly trained, resolved, shirtless J.C.

The final action movie lesson: Extraordinary training leads to extraordinary, fast results.

Of course, we all recognize these montage moments are entertainment. But these scenes also allude to a damn effective training strategy: frequent, hard, highly novel training leads to rapid improvements in performance. Maybe it doesn't happen as fast as it does in the movies, but it can certainly happen sooner than we expect.

**Strength is a skill, and just like
with any other skill, practice
makes perfect. Squat more
and you will become really
strong, really fast.**

There is perhaps no exercise better suited to this approach than the squat. The heavy barbell compresses and gnarls. Repeated, heavy eccentric loading commands systemic adaptation. Every completed rep is a small taste of victory and affirmation.

You might dread the squat. You might be hopelessly stuck at the same weight. You might think you're strong enough already. Well, I think it might be time for a bit of an experiment. Maybe you just need a little time in the jungle.

Here are three squat lessons for your consideration.

Squat Lesson No. 1: You're Probably Not Squatting Enough

A few months back, one of our new lifters shared a bit of news with me. He had recently paid a visit to his former gym. From what I gathered, this was a typical commercial gym.

It turns out, he ran into the reigning meathead alpha male of the joint while there. I don't recall the name of this guy, so let's just call him "Meat."

"Did I tell you? I ran into Meat at my old gym the other day," Jordan said.

"Oh, yeah?" I replied, as I busily prepared for the day's training. I did recognize the name. We'd talked about him before. As far as I could tell, this was the typical pharmacologically enhanced local bodybuilding hero. His primary hobby appeared to be the intimidation of pubescent high-school-aged males. I suppose everybody needs an audience.

"Yeah, I told him about our training, about my progress. He didn't believe me, though."

"Didn't believe you? And why is that?" I asked.

"He said there was no way I could be squatting three days a week and still be getting stronger."

"Is that right?" I said, smiling. "Well, we better get you back on the leg press ASAP!"

I completely understand Meat's point of view. I shared that mentality for years and years. During my high-school and college-football days, I absolutely hated to squat. It hurt my back every time. My performance in the lift was not nearly as good as, say, my bench press (yes, I could easily bench more than I squatted as a Division 1 college-football player).



Mindy Bush

Jordan Carroll struggles to complete a max-effort squat under heavy chain.

That didn't change until I started competing in powerlifting. For the first time in my life, I recognized the indisputable benefits of squatting heavy. I understood my troubled history with the exercise was linked to shitty coaching, not to the exercise itself.

Rapid progress was easy. I never missed my weekly speed-squat session. Once or twice a month, I would take a heavy squat on a max-effort day. But I was careful. You had to make sure you didn't exceed three total lifts at or above 90 percent during any four-week period. If you made that fatal mistake, as sport science had told us, you would suffer the irreversible effects of the infamous overtraining syndrome, right?

No. It turns out that was bullshit.

I am a man. And as a man, I have to stand up and admit when I am wrong. So, here I am rubbing my own nose in shit. For pretty much the entirety of my powerlifting career, I was wrong. There, it's done. I feel better.

It was stupid to ignore the advice of all the Olympic weightlifters I trained with for years. It was wrong to ignore my better judgment. Strength is a skill, and just like with any other skill, practice makes perfect. Squat more and you will become really strong, really fast.

Today in our crew, I consider squatting three days per week to be the absolute minimum. Anything less is a waste of time. In my own training, I'm slowly working my way up to squatting six days per week. Consequently, I've never felt better.

Now, if I could only convince Meat to come out to the gym for open-house Saturdays.

**I have a hunch that many
CrossFitters are happy with
their strength simply because
they haven't surrounded
themselves with strong
people. They haven't really
ever seen a big squat.**

Squat Lesson No. 2: Heavy Relativity

There's a simple truth: If you want to squat more, you must squat heavy. Notice that I did not say, "You must squat what you think is heavy."

I have a hunch that many CrossFitters are happy with their strength simply because they haven't surrounded themselves with strong people. They haven't really ever seen a big squat.

No, YouTube doesn't count. We've all watched videos of huge lifts—powerlifters, weightlifters and strongmen crushing weight we can only dream of lifting. Those types of lifts are so far removed from our ability it really doesn't have much of an effect. They're really not that motivating.

Do you want to know what is motivating? How about being out-squatted by a strong, good-looking girl? One who weighs less than you, even. No matter how you slice it, dude, that shit ain't cool. It happens more than you think.

Remember, there are no hidden Soviet strength secrets. No magical combination of sets, reps and percent loading will get you the results you are after. You just need to surround yourself with lifters who will bring the best out of you—people who will challenge you.

The best example I can think of to illustrate this point just occurred in our gym.

My crew was performing box squats with the safety-squat bar, and about 200 lb. of chain added for good measure. This is a lot of chain, I can assure you. Our goal for the day was to do work up to a heavy single.

The weights all felt pretty easy, so I was confident I would hit a good lift. After 5 or 6 quick sets, I arrived at 450 lb. Now it was time to focus. I huffed and puffed, growled a bit, then grabbed the bar out of the rack. Arching hard, I popped my hips back, then sat down onto the box. Fighting to keep position, I flexed my hips as hard as possible and drove the bar slowly, but surely, to lockout.

The bar flew back into the rack.

"That's all for me!" I shouted out, satisfied.

To my surprise, one of my training partners, Dave, stepped up to the bar and slapped on another 50 lb.

The thing you need to know about Dave is that he is very game—quick to step up to any challenge. He's also about 100 lb. lighter than me. I was sure he would be buried.

That's not what happened.



Matt Baird grinds through a heavy box squat.

Mindy Bush



Shepherd Tate fights to stay upright under the yolk of the safety squat bar.

He took the massive weight out of the rack, sat down, and then started the grind. I'll never forget that rep, ever. Dave fought the bar so hard that about two-thirds of the way up, he began convulsing and pretty much blacked out. But the crazy thing? The bar kept hovering towards lockout. His unconscious body kept fighting for every inch of that rep!

Remember, there are no hidden Soviet strength secrets ... You just need to surround yourself with lifters who will bring the best out of you.

After a moment of shock and inaction, we finally took the weight from him. Unloaded, he fell back to the box.

We rushed in to make sure he was all right. All Dave did was smile.

Dave Passing Out: [.mov](#) [.wmv](#)

In an instant I was recalibrated. The feeling of satisfaction vanished in vapor. That weight I had amped up for no longer seemed worthy of such theater. These are the moments that make us stronger.

Be driven.

Squat Lesson No. 3: Get Novel

I can hear your thoughts, dear reader.

"So, I'm supposed to just squat all the time? As much as I can?"

Yes. I would say no less than three days per week.

"And I'm supposed to go heavy all the time?"

Yes. Not always to a max, but you need to have heavy weight on your back often. You just won't adapt without it, no matter how many kettlebell swings you do.

"So, how do I keep from falling apart? I mean, I'm no Bulgarian here, dude."

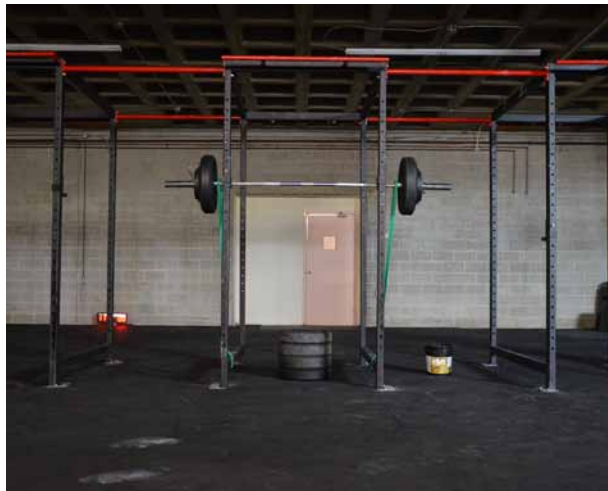
Ah, that's where a little strategy comes in, my friend. I've got just the twist you need.

By now, just about everyone has been exposed to chains and bands. To a lesser extent, many lifters have also seen specialty bars at one point or another. I could talk about force curves, or about how accommodating resistance triggers some sort of specific physiologic response in the body. We could review complicated powerlifting waves, where different types of bars are used with specific combinations of bands and/or chain. But you know what? I think that is all a bit convoluted.

I need to have fun under the bar. That's where all the variation and toys come in.

I see it differently. All these tools are simply ways to keep you squatting hard session to session. That's all.

I know I do not have the discipline of a highly trained, world-class Olympic weightlifter. I cannot come into the gym and only front- and back-squat every day. I need to have fun under the bar. That's where all the variation and toys come in.



Mike Warkentin

Bands can add some spice to your squatting.

Here's an example of how we organize our training.

On the first squat day, we might choose to squat with a standard squat bar with no additional band or chain. On the second day, we'll use a cambered squat bar with a little band tension. On the final day, we'll pick a third exercise, usually the safety squat bar with a lot of chain.

The rotation does indeed keep the training fun and fresh. But there's a very important fatigue benefit as well.

Even though you're squatting heavy three times a week, each exercise is placing a different stress on your body. For example, the cambered squat bar tends to put a large stress on the hips and lower back. When you come back into the gym a few days later to squat again, it would be tough to repeat that same workout.

But you don't.

By choosing the safety squat bar, for example, you move the stress from the lower back to the upper back. That's just the way that bar works, much like a front squat. If you add chain, the "folding" stress is even higher as you pick more and more weight off the floor. By the way, if you need to learn how to arch during heavy lifts, this is the exercise for you.

If you add together all these benefits, you will be training the squat very, very hard but will still allow room to recover between sessions, week to week.

Try something different, something that seems a little extreme. Establish the true limits of what you can adapt to.

If your box doesn't have some of these toys, no worries. All you need is a regular barbell. A very good and simple alternative would be to rotate the high-bar back squat, front squat and low-bar box squat. That'll hit every muscle you have, guaranteed.

Make all the progress you can on these exercises for three to four weeks, then just switch around the order. Use a band or chains on another exercise. Instead of a low-bar box squat, you can try the front squat off a box. You're only limited by your imagination, grasshopper.

Look, in the end you must bust your ass, but you also must have some fun while you do it. Without that, you just won't be able to keep putting in the work.

The Take Home

Every day, I see dozens of CrossFitters pushing their conditioning to the max. It never fails to impress me. It's just that I don't think they look at a heavy barbell the same way. Many don't know strength.

I say join the experiment.

Try something different, something that seems a little extreme. Establish the true limits of what you can adapt to. To paraphrase the late, great Hunter S. Thompson, the only people who have ever really seen the edge are those who have gone over.

I'll leave you with a question. What are you really capable of?



CrossFit Memphis

About the Author

Chris Moore is writer and powerlifting coach at [CrossFit Memphis](#). Prior to his lifting career, Chris played Division 1 football at the University of Memphis. During this time, he began his study of human performance, eventually obtaining a master's degree in exercise and sport science. In 2007, Chris joined Mike Bledsoe, Doug Larson and Rob Conner to found Memphis' first CrossFit gym. Today, CrossFit Memphis has grown to include powerlifters, weightlifters and mixed martial artists, all training and competing under the banner of Faction Strength & Conditioning. As a drug-free lifter, Chris' best competitive lifts include a 975-lb. squat, a 675-lb. bench press and 675-lb. deadlift. You can reach him at christophermoore57@gmail.com, or visit [FactionSC.com](#).

THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S



SCRAMBLE THIS

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

overview

It's Wednesday night, and you are unsure of what to make for dinner. Let's hope you made some pot roast the night before and didn't eat it all. If you have some left over, try this tasty mash-up of flavors. The kids won't know you took the same food from last night because it's presented a whole different way. They might even like it again, too!

Makes one serving

blocks

- 1 carbohydrate block
- 2 protein blocks
- 2 fat blocks

ingredients

- 1 ounce cooked pot roast (shredded)
- 1 egg (beaten)
- ¼ red onion (chopped)
- ½ red bell pepper (chopped)
- 3 black olives (sliced)
- ⅓ tsp. olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

notes

Serve with half an apple to make a balanced 2-block Zone meal.

directions

1. Chop onions, peppers and olives, and shred and roughly chop roast. Set aside.
2. On stovetop, heat a frying pan on medium heat, then add ⅓ tsp. olive oil and ensure the whole pan is covered.
3. Add onions, stirring occasionally, and cook until soft.
4. Next add peppers and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes, then add in roast, olives and beaten egg.
5. When the eggs begin to set, stir them around to ensure they all get cooked and evenly mixed with the meat and vegetables. The eggs will cook quickly, so do not leave them. Cook until eggs are no longer runny.
6. Serve your children the disguised pot roast, but don't tell them!

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

What Would Andy Do?

Emily Beers tells the story of the man behind the Hero WOD Nutts.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

August 2011



Nutts

Nutts was first posted May 28, 2010:

- 10 handstand push-ups
- 15 deadlifts (250 lb.)
- 25 box jumps (30 inches)
- 50 pull-ups
- 100 wall-balls (20 lb. to 10 feet)
- 200 double-unders
- Run 400 meters with a 45-lb. plate.

This is the story of the man behind the Hero WOD, Lt. Andrew Nuttall.

Andrew the Son

Richard and Jane Nuttall sit at their dining room table in their four-bedroom home in Victoria, B.C.

A year and a half has passed since their son, Andrew Nuttall, was killed in Afghanistan while serving with the Canadian military. He was 30.

Today, pictures of Andrew and military paraphernalia dominate the Nuttall home. On the mantle above the fireplace, on the walls in the living room, computer room, and dining room ... evidence of the fallen officer can be seen everywhere.

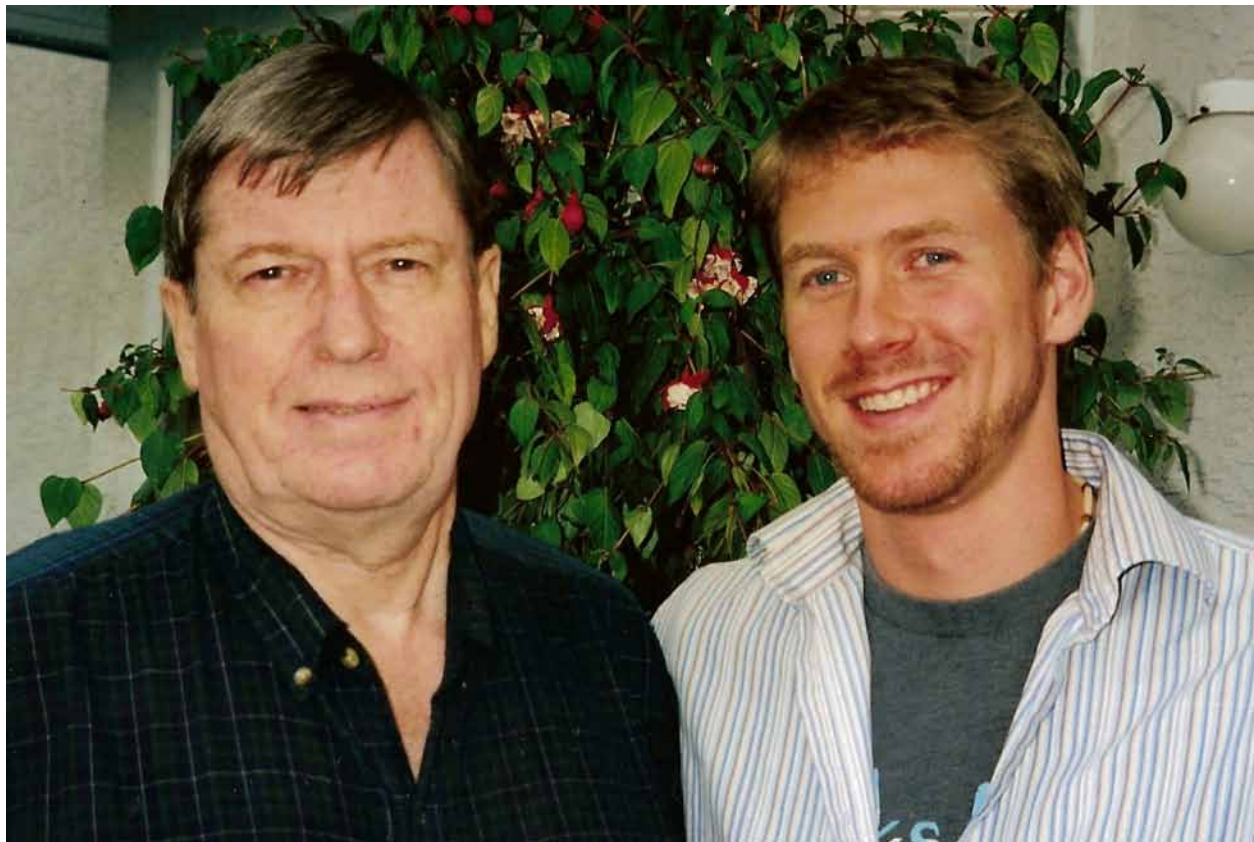
"These are some of Andrew's medals," says Richard, a semi-retired doctor, pointing to a framed box on the mantle that proudly displays two medals Andrew earned with the military. "This one here is called a 'sacrifice medal,'" he says. "It's a hard one to get."

"We wish he didn't earn that one," adds Jane, a former nurse.

The landing of their staircase is filled with a large picture of Andrew in uniform next to his Certificate of Service. Beside this is a Canadian flag draped over a surfboard, both of which are signed by the men who served in Andrew's platoon in Afghanistan.

"There is still dust from Afghanistan on here," says Jane, holding up the dirt-stained Canadian flag, brushing it off a bit with her hand.

Jane reaches over and picks up a picture from a side table. It was taken right after a CrossFit workout in Vancouver, back in 2007. In the photo are Andrew and five of his CrossFit friends, heads together, lying on their backs, covered in glossy sweat, smiling. The classic post-workout expression of relief and satisfaction can be seen on each face.



Andrew Nuttall (right) and his father, Richard.

“A lot of my favorite pictures of Andrew are CrossFit ones.”

—Jane Nuttall

“I just love this picture. A lot of my favorite pictures of Andrew are CrossFit ones,” says Jane. “I’m not even sure how we got this picture, but it’s just so Andrew—smiling, looking like he’s going to burst into one of his fits of giggles,” she continues.

Richard looks up from the dining-room table, where he is sitting with a notepad and pen. He’s trying to decide what to write on Andrew’s memorial trophy, a trophy the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry is donating for the Memorial Nutts Cup, an event CrossFit Vancouver is hosting Aug. 27.

Richard picks up the pen and writes: “Nutts Cup: In memory of Andrew Richard Nuttall, platoon commander, 12 Platoon, 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, killed in Afghanistan, Dec. 23, 2009.”



CrossFit Vancouver

Richard Nuttall drinks from the cup that bears his son’s name.

He stops and looks to his wife. “Should we say ‘in memory of’ on the cup, Jane?” he asks.

“I’m not sure,” she replies. “I don’t know what to write on these things.”

“Should we write ‘killed in Afghanistan?’” asks Jane.

“Well, that’s what happened,” says Richard. “He *was* killed in Afghanistan.”

Richard holds up the piece of paper and reads aloud what he has written. At the end of the inscription, it says, “Live life to the fullest. Make a difference.”

Richard says, “That was Andrew’s motto. He would like that to be on the trophy.”

Drew the Friend

It’s July 2009, three short months before Drew, as his university friends called him, is deployed to Afghanistan.

Drew is on a short vacation from his officer training and comes home to visit his family and friends in Victoria. One of his friends picks him up from the airport. They joke about how this is the first time Drew has ever been on time in his life. It must be the discipline the army is giving him, Drew’s friend laughs.

His best friend, Scott Cressman, is stoked to finally introduce Drew to his new girlfriend. Together, they rent a house for the weekend and head to Tofino, a surfer’s paradise, on Vancouver Island, for a couple of days of surfing, drinking and many laughs.

Throughout the weekend, the group of friends have one or two serious conversations about Drew heading to Afghanistan in October, but nobody is overly concerned. It’s certainly not the focus of the weekend.

On the way back, they stop at Cameron Lake to enjoy the water and the sun and, of course, take the time to appreciate each other’s company. It’s not every day this tight-knit group gets to hang out. They’re sad the perfect weekend has come to an end, a weekend that reminds them all of the countless road trips they experienced together when they were students at the University of Victoria.

Drew hops into a car with two friends, and they head back to Victoria. Cressman says his goodbyes and watches the car drive away.

With Drew heading off and the war on his mind, Cressman takes an extra good look at his best friend driving away. He's unable to stop an ominous thought from entering his mind: "This could be the last time I see him," he thinks.

His chest tightens, and he brushes off the disturbing thought as quickly as it enters his mind.

Nutts the CrossFitter

Andrew, who was known to CrossFitters as "Andy Nutts," or just "Nutts," walked into CrossFit Vancouver in 2006.

He immediately took to the sport.

"He was making \$10 an hour working as a painter at the time. He didn't have a car. He was sleeping on someone's couch. He was broke as fuck. He would ride his bike everywhere, all winter, even in the pouring rain," remembers Craig Patterson, owner of CrossFit Vancouver. "But somehow he still paid me \$65 an hour for his training without complaining."

Originally, Andy moved to Vancouver from Victoria to attend the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), but finding CrossFit soon sidetracked him from his studies.

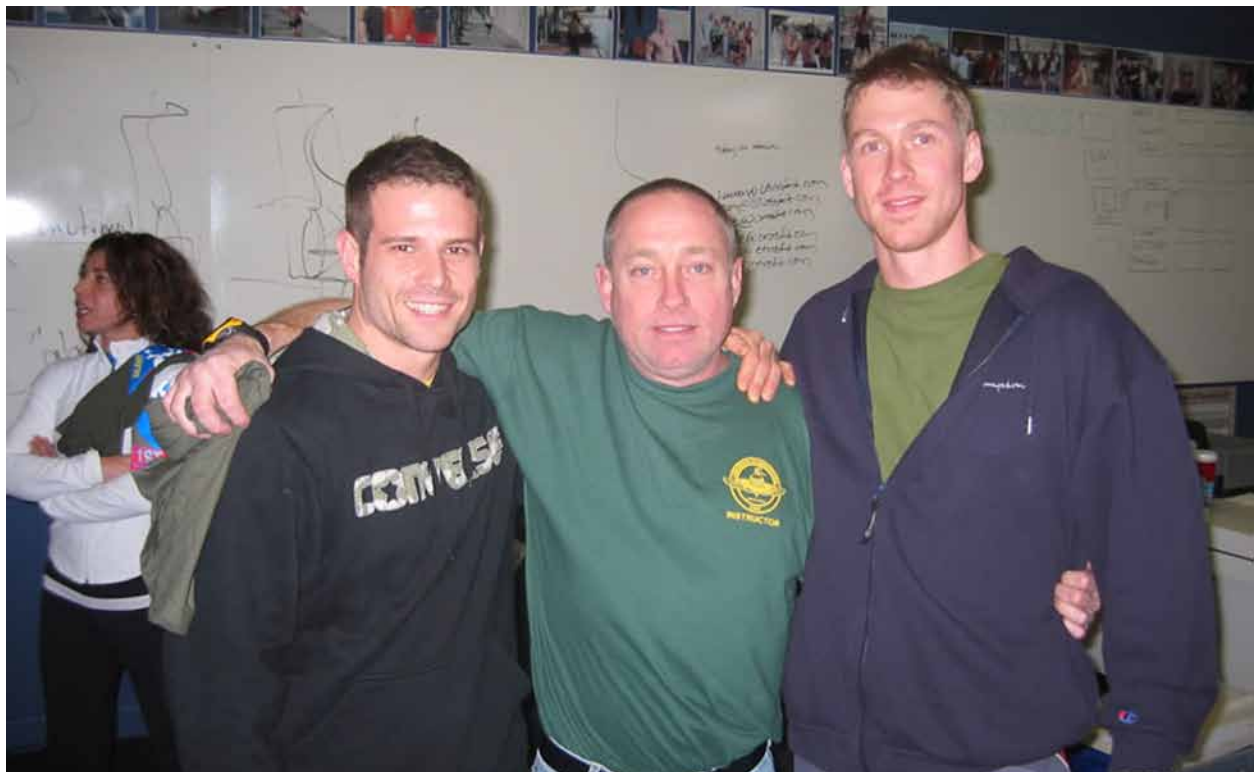
A few months after moving to Vancouver, he started coaching at CrossFit Vancouver.

"We spent a lot of time together, Andy and I. Once a week, we'd head out to New West to train military guys at the Royal New Westminster Regiment," Patterson says. "I was grooming him to be a coach in those days."

Richard and Jane clearly remember how their son took to CrossFit, and to Patterson.

"I remember him saying, 'Patty thinks I could start my own gym one day,' he would tell us excitedly. He just loved CrossFit. It focused him. He had all the tools, but he needed focus. CrossFit was a big answer for him," Richard says.

He continues: "It brought people together with a healthy attitude. Everything about it—the diet, the physical side, the camaraderie, the parties even."



Nutts

Nutts meets Coach.

Jane agrees: "It was the social side that really grabbed him."

Patterson says it was Andy's social side that made him so magnetic. "He was funny and charming and was always positive, but he wasn't afraid to call a spade a spade," he says.

Sitting with Patterson over drinks, he shares some of his favorite Andy anecdotes: "Two of his earliest CrossFit clients were this gay guy—a super-soft feminine dude—who brought this woman along with him. This woman was nothing short of a crackpot.

"She used to pay Andy in hot stone massages because she couldn't afford the training ... I'd get one massage for every three massages Andy got.

"I remember one time Andy was in there for over three hours, and he came out just cursing, 'Jesus Christ, I'm too young for this. I don't need another hot-stone massage,' he said."

Patterson takes a sip from his drink and grins.



Nutts is a sorely missed member of the CrossFit Vancouver crew.

"One of my favorite Andy memories was when about five of us decided to take a month off drinking"

—Craig "Patty" Patterson

"One of my favorite Andy memories was when about five of us decided to take a month off drinking. It was February 2007. We were about two weeks into the no-drinking commitment. We were trying to do all these sober activities to keep busy. We went sober bowling and sober bike riding Then one night, we went over to T-Bear's (Trevor Lindwall's) place, and when we got there Bear was sitting there drinking a scotch.

"Andy looks at T-Bear drinking a scotch and says, 'Patty, this was the worst idea you've ever had. I'm getting on my bike and going to get a drink.' Then he storms out of the house.

"Two minutes later, he comes back. 'My bike was stolen,' he says I don't even think it was his bike."

Patterson laughs.

The Decision

It's 2007.

Drew heads to his Kitsilano, Vancouver, to Cressman's house. They sit around having a few drinks, and he breaks the news that he's joining the military.

His friends are blindsided. None of them expected this.

"His parents won't go for this, especially his mom," Cressman thinks.

He tells his university friends his plan. He tells the CrossFit crew his plan. Patterson can't understand why Nutts would want to leave the fun life as a CrossFit coach to put himself in so much danger.

"CrossFit is just too easy. It's just too easy," Andy keeps saying.

And, of course, Andrew tells his parents.

Richard is more than a little bit surprised, and nervous.

"The army will pay for me to finish my degree, and it will give me a great career," insists Andrew.

After many conversations and much explanation, Andy's friends and family eventually started to see Andy's point of view.

"He told me he needed to do more, to make a difference. He told me he wanted to lead men in battle ... that he wanted a bigger challenge than coaching CrossFit," Patterson remembers.

Cressman adds: "We never staged an intervention or anything, but everyone who sat down and talked to him, they tried to warn him of the dangers ... And selfishly, a lot of us didn't want him to go anywhere."

He continues: "But after a couple conversations with him, I got his reasons, and I respected them. He finally found his passion."

Even Jane and Richard started to embrace their son's wishes.

"It wasn't what we had in mind, but we were supportive," Richard says.

"Could have I convinced him not to join the military? I think I could have. But would have I wanted to? Probably not," Jane admits.

"He wholeheartedly believed in what he was doing," adds Richard.

The Night Before

It's October 2009, the evening before Andrew leaves for Afghanistan.

Jane is in the kitchen doing dishes. Andrew is sitting at the table talking, but the sound of the running water is muffling his voice.

"Mom, are you listening to me?" asks Andrew, frustrated.

"Ya, ya, ya I'm listening," says Jane.

**"I might not come home,
but every single one of my
men will come home."**

—Andrew Nuttall

"No mom. I want you to really listen to this."

She recognizes the urgency in her son's tone. She stops.

"OK," she says. "What is it?"

"I hope you realize that I might not come home," Andrew says. "I might not come home, but every single one of my men will come home."

"Oh, Andrew," Jane gasps. "You wouldn't do anything crazy there, would you?"

"No, no, no. Of course not," Andrew says.

"I just want you to know that every single one of my men is coming home," he repeats.

A year and a half later, this conversation still replays over and over in Jane's mind.

"That conversation, it still gives me chills," Jane says. "But he was right. All his men did come home. Andrew was the only one in his platoon who was killed."

She pauses for a moment.

"All his men came home," she says, her eyes swelling with tears.

She takes a breath.

"I know it might sound crazy, but in my own way, I like to believe that Andrew was with them after he was killed. It gives me a little bit of comfort," she says.

Born to Lead

Neither Jane nor Richard nor Cressman nor Patterson was able to watch Andrew lead men in battle, but they've all spent time with and listened to stories from men who were with Lt. Nuttall, men who worked closely with him and even men who served in his platoon.

"He was in charge of almost 50 men in Afghanistan, and he thrived in that environment," Richard says. "His job as a platoon commander, it's the job everyone wants. All of the hormone-driven young men strive to be an officer."

"He was really good at it," Cressman says. "All his military men, they all said the same thing. They said he was highly respected, but he didn't do it through fear and intimidation. He was unique. He acted like they were all a team. So they all loved and respected him, which isn't really common in the military, I don't think."

"These men, when they told me what Drew was like as an officer, you could hear in their voices that they were genuine. They weren't bullshitters," he continues.

One thing Cressman will always remember about Drew was how unselfish he was.

"He would miss his final exam to drive you to the ferry," said Cressman. "That's just the type of guy he was. He was so selfless ... and sometimes it was to his detriment."

Ironically, this is ultimately the reason he was killed.

Patterson points out that Andy was a selfless leader, even in death.

"He could have sent one of his men out there, but Andy led from the front. He put himself in harm's way. Whatever the most dangerous position was, Andy would take it on. And in the end, he was the one killed by the explosion," said Patterson.

Dec. 23, 2009

It was 7 a.m.

Jane was upstairs when the two military men knocked on the family's home to bring them the news of their son's death. John, Andrew's brother, was visiting from Calgary for Christmas.

"I remember hearing the knock, and because it was Christmas, I thought it was just a delivery. I remember thinking, 'They're starting deliveries early today,'" Jane says.

Richard, who was downstairs, opened the front door.

"It goes through my mind all the time ... that day, that moment," says Richard, who immediately called for his wife to join him.

Jane could hear something was wrong in her husband's voice.

"Richard told me, 'Jane, you better come down.'"

This is the moment Jane remembers the most clearly.

"I told her, 'Andrew has been killed,'" Richard says.

"I actually couldn't breathe. I sat down because I could feel I was going to pass out," she recalls. "My heart was pounding."

"The men were talking, and I remember all I could think was, 'I need to get John.' I didn't want the men to say anything else until John was there," says Jane, who hurried upstairs to break the news to John.

"In that moment, I don't necessarily remember everything. I don't remember seeing the guys. I mostly just remember the voices," Jane says.

Finding a Way to Remember

Last year, CrossFit Vancouver hosted the first Memorial Nutts Cup.

Keeping the spirit of Andy alive, it was mostly a recreational CrossFit event, a chance for current members to bring newbies into the CrossFit fold.

Close to 150 people, all dressed in red and white to support the Canadian troops, completed the morning workout. Then, in the afternoon, veteran CrossFitters tackled the Nutts Hero WOD. 2010 Games competitor Garth Prouse took it down, winning the Nutts Cup, a metal cup with two silver balls hanging off it.

This year, Aug. 27 is the date of the second annual Nutts Cup. It's a team competition, where teams will be made up of two men and one woman. There is \$3,000 up for grabs for the winning team, with cash prizes for second and third as well. And Fitness Town and Reebok have both committed to donate prizes for the event.



CrossFit Vancouver

The Nutts Cup features a pair of silver balls in honor of its namesake.

The Andy Nutts Award goes to the person who can handle not only the physical workouts but also possesses the staying power to party until all hours of the night.

Patterson is also organizing an Andy Nutts Award, which will be awarded to the person who can handle not only the physical workouts but also possesses the staying power to party until all hours of the night at the after-party.

"I remember at his funeral. We all stayed up and drank until all hours of the morning to honor Nutts. We kept saying, 'What would Andy do?' Would Nutts stay up until 7 a.m. drinking? Yes, he would. Would Nutts pick up that fat chick over there? Yes, he would," said Patterson.

"What would Andy do?" has become a motto among Andy's CrossFit friends ever since.

For Richard, the Nutts Cup is special because it captures who his son really was.

"It's not some artificial memorial event. It's him. It's CrossFit. There's the party after. It's Andrew. It's who he was," Richard says.

"You don't get over this. People say time will heal, but no, you won't heal. You don't heal from this Andrew said to me once, 'If anything should happen, it's going to be a lot rougher on you than on me. And ... and it's rough,'" he said.

"But events like this, they help. They allow us to meet other people who knew him. It gives us strength."

Finding a Way to Cope

It's June 2011.

Richard holds up a picture and stares at it. In the picture are Andrew and his major, Wayne Niven. Andrew towers over Niven by a good half a foot. Both men look like they're genuinely having fun, all the while maintaining a certain degree of focus.



Nutts

Lt. Nuttall shortly before he died in Afghanistan.

"This one is my favorite. It was taken in Afghanistan. You can see that Andrew has a full moustache here. This means he has been there for a while already. So this must have been about a week before he dies," says Richard.

"I have titled this picture, 'A man in full.' You can see that in this picture, can't you? Andrew felt so good about what he was doing there. I'm so glad he made it to that place in life, a place where he was a man in his full power."

He pauses.

"A lot of people never get that opportunity," he says.

He picks up a small black leather notebook from his desk. He flips it open.

"These are Andrew's notes from Afghanistan."

He reads from the book:

"Dec. 23. 16:12 o'clock—discovered shells"

"This was the day. At 16 o'clock, Andrew discovers some shells. Then, two hours later, an IED. Bang," says Richard, clapping his hands together to make a loud noise. "He is killed."



Nutts

"I might not come home, but every single one of my men will come home."—Lt. Andrew Nuttall

He puts the book down. The room is quiet

I wonder how many hours Richard and Jane have spent staring at their son's pictures, memorizing the tiny details—the expressions on his face, the length of his moustache. I wonder how much time they've spent reading, committing to memory the notes Andrew wrote in his little black book, how much time they've spent staring at the Canadian flag and running their hands across the surfboard from Andrew's friends, how much time they've spent replaying their last conversation with their son.

"The last time he phoned was about a week before he died. I couldn't get him off the phone. We had a really long chat. We talked for an hour," Richard says. "That last conversation with him, I remember we talked about his return home. And he asked me about the sign at our ranch."

For as long as Richard can remember, Andrew had been bugging him to put a sign up at the family ranch, a property in what looks like the middle of nowhere, just outside of William's Lake, in the interior of British Columbia.

"He wanted to put a sign near the little dirt path that leads to the ranch. 'Cayoosh Ranch' is what we named it. 'Cayoosh' means 'wild horse,'" explains Richard.

"Dad, I'll pay for it," he would say. He was always wanting to pay for things, to take you out, but then he'd have no money once you got there," says Richard, laughing faintly.

So when Andrew's platoon came back from Afghanistan last summer, the 30-plus platoon members made the trek to the Nuttall family ranch to meet the Nuttalls and hang the sign that had finally been made.

While they were at the ranch, the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) arrived with their cameras to gather footage of the event for a documentary that aired last Nov. 11 called "We Will Remember Them."

"I want to show you the documentary," says Richard, sitting down at the computer to pull up the online documentary.

The Documentary

The setting is the Nuttalls' ranch.

Birds are chirping, and the wind is softly blowing in the perfectly blue sky. The Nuttalls and countless men in military uniform are there, all surrounded by an ocean of tall green trees and the lush B.C. mountains. There's not a sign of civilization. It's a place of pure solitude and untouched wilderness.

They hold a formal service for Andrew at the ranch.

One of Andrew's platoon men gives a speech. Fighting back tears, he says, "Andrew always had a smile on his face ... no matter how miserable we became, his smile helped give us that extra push to get us through."

He resumes his place among his peers.

Then Richard speaks: "In his last call from Afghanistan, he asked about the sign ... so we're going to do it," he says before Andrew's men raise the giant carved wooden sign that says "Cayoosh Ranch" in deep yellow letters.

Music plays softly in the background.

Jane expresses what the weekend means to her: "We are with people who were with him when we couldn't be ... it's been very special," she says.

"It's a huge chunk of your life that is gone. It won't ever be the same, so you have to figure out a new life. And that hasn't begun to happen yet for me."

The camera fades.

The CBC footage from that documentary was taken one year ago.

Today, in the family's home in Victoria, Jane looks up from the computer screen. She turns to me. Tears stream from her face. Unmistakable hurt radiates from her eyes.

"That hasn't happened yet," she says quietly.

She wipes her eyes, forces a weak smile and reaches for a hug.



CrossFit Vancouver

About the Author

Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts WOD HOG (www.wodhog.ca), a not-always-PG publication featuring the CrossFit community in Canada West.

As an athlete and CrossFitter, Beers started out as a gymnast, competing to the national level. After growing too tall for gymnastics, she played NCAA Division 1 basketball for the University of Idaho, then returned home and played for the University of British Columbia. After three years of playing basketball, she started rowing, competing at the varsity level at the University of Western Ontario for two years. While trying to make the National Rowing Team in 2009, she discovered CrossFit and became utterly addicted. Soon, CrossFit was meant to be a way to cross-train for rowing but became her greatest passion. She moved back to Vancouver in September 2009 and found CrossFit Vancouver, where she now both trains and works as an apprentice coach.

In her first season competing in CrossFit she won the B.C. Sectional in 2010. Regionals were less kind to her, but that's only made her more determined to get to the Games. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional media director while recovering from Achilles surgery. She competed in the 2011 CrossFit Games with CrossFit Vancouver, finishing 19th.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

A Legend Returns

After more than seven years of inspiring generations of CrossFitters, Nasty Girl Annie Sakamoto competes as an individual in the CrossFit Games. Andréa Maria Cecil reports.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

August 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Fear is what gripped her.

For four years, it kept her from individual competition at the CrossFit Games.

1 of 5

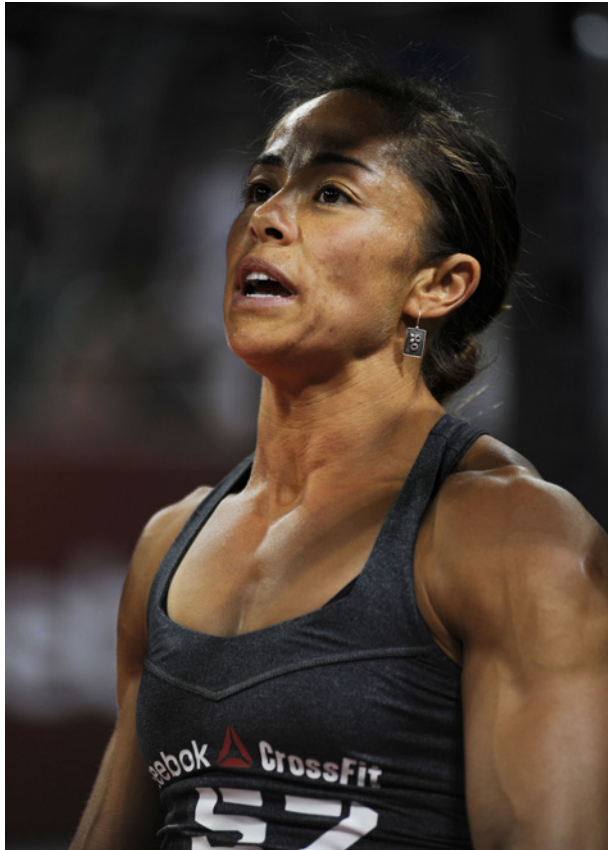
"I was scared," Annie Sakamoto admitted after the final workout of the three-day event held July 29-31 at the Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif.

Scared, that is, until this year. That's when she stepped into the spotlight with countless fans behind her.

A CrossFit icon, the always-smiling Sakamoto finished in ninth at the Games. There, the 35-year-old mother of two found herself on several occasions rep for rep, stride for stride or pull for pull with the likes of 2010 Games winner Kristan Clever, among others.

"It was, outside of childbirth, the best experience I've ever had," Sakamoto said four days after the Games ended.

But Games competition wasn't new to her. In 2009, the co-owner of CrossFit Santa Cruz Central participated in the Affiliate Cup held at The Ranch in Aromas, Calif. Days after this year's Games, Sakamoto said she realized being scared of competing as an individual "was just silly."



Always fit, Sakamoto needed only about two months of specific training to prepare her for the Games.

"I felt like I would have to measure myself up against a lot of these phenomenal athletes," she said. "Really, you're not measuring yourself up against anybody but yourself. Everyone's trying to do their own best and wants each other do their own best."

Seven Weeks of Training

Sakamoto had no intention of going to the Games. That's mostly because she had no intention of going to regionals. And that's mostly because she wavered on whether she'd participate in the Open.

**"It was, outside of childbirth,
the best experience I've
ever had."**

**—Annie Sakamoto on the
2011 Reebok CrossFit Games**

Once she qualified through the Open, "she wasn't even really set on going to regionals," said Gary Hirthler, Sakamoto's coach for the NorCal Regional and the Games. "With a little bit of convincing, she went to regionals."

Hirthler, a Level 1 CrossFit trainer with a bachelor of science in exercise and movement science from San Francisco State University, had Sakamoto doing two workouts a day before the NorCal Regional, held June 3-5 at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds. With her third-place finish there—she finished behind Elyse Umeda and Jenny LaBaw after a tiebreaker with Chyna Cho—Sakamoto asked him to be her Games coach.

That meant all Sakamoto's Games preparation would come in seven weeks. Less, if you ask Hirthler.

"It was more like five weeks of training and a two-week taper before," he said.

Although she trains CrossFit all year, Sakamoto said she wasn't training the same volume or intensity characteristic of the Games.

"I wasn't really working out really hard," she said.



Throughout the contest, other athletes watched and cheered for the Original Nasty Girl.

In the end, Sakamoto said she was pleased with her performance at the Games.

"I have a grade-A coach," she said after the final workout of the competition. "He obviously did well with the time he was given."

Hirthler, meanwhile, said he felt lucky to be able to train Sakamoto.

"There isn't a better person to train, physically. It's really not rocket science with her. ... The way she responds (to training). She moves so well," said the 26-year-old, who started CrossFitting in 2005. "It's 100 percent enjoyment, really. It's a total dream job."

"I Want to Be You When I Grow Up"

For Games veteran and 2009 bronze medalist Carey Kepler, Sakamoto represents the reason she started CrossFitting in 2005.

"My first introduction to CrossFit was the Nasty Girls video," said the co-owner of CrossFit Central in Austin, Texas. "And the only reason I said 'this could be a good thing' was because of that video."

**"To be just able to compete
with her this year ... that was
like the best thing ever."**

**—Carey Kepler
on Annie Sakamoto**

"To be just able to compete with her this year ... that was like the best thing ever," continued the 36-year-old mom who finished in 28th place at the 2011 Games. "That was awesome."

Third-place finisher Becca Voigt echoed Kepler's sentiments.

"It was an honor to be competing next to her," she said. "I thought it was really cool to see someone who pioneered this sport competing and saying, 'Look, we were the originals, we still have it in us.' I don't know how to put it into words. It was very, very impressive."

It was Voigt's first time meeting Sakamoto, whom she first heard of shortly after starting CrossFit in 2007. Within five minutes, Voigt said all her expectations were met.

"She was the most welcoming, the most non-judgmental person that I've ever met. I'm very skeptical about people when it comes to first meeting them," said the coach at Valley CrossFit in Van Nuys, Calif. "It's truly genuine."

Likewise, it was no surprise Sakamoto was named the 2011 Spirit of the Games Award winner.

"If you've ever been around Annie, she just puts a smile on your face and is always fun to be around," Hirthler said. "I feel like anyone who knows Annie or has hung out with her understands what she's about—everything is about having fun."

Multiple times during the weekend, Sakamoto was heard describing grueling workouts as "epic," "awesome" and "fun." In the first event, a tough workout that involved an ocean swim then two soft-sand runs on either side of a combination of 350 push-ups, pull-ups and squats, Sakamoto finished third, crossing the finish line with a grin on her face.

Kepler—herself known for frequent smiles, exuberant reactions and comical retorts—described Sakamoto as being all about laughter, a positive attitude, heart and desire.

"It's contagious," said Kepler, who met Sakamoto several years ago at a CrossFit seminar. "There's nothing better than that disease going around."

The amount of fans cheering for Sakamoto floored Hirthler.

"Just walking around, the number of people who came up to her, who said she inspired them to do CrossFit. 'I want to be you when I grow up.' I heard that so many times," he said.

Although a mere 5 feet tall and 116 lb., Sakamoto has a presence that is difficult to ignore.



Always, always smiling.

"She's always smiling," Hirthler said. "It's hard not to root for her."

Kepler described Sakamoto as "phenomenal."

"It's who she is and who she always will be," she said. "I learned probably more from her over the weekend than I did from any athlete there. It's all about attitude."

"If you've ever been around Annie, she just puts a smile on your face and is always fun to be around."

—Gary Hirthler



Muscle-ups, of course, aren't a problem for Sakamoto.

How It Started

Unlike many competitive CrossFitters today, Sakamoto has a lackluster pre-CrossFit athletic background, she said.

"I played a ton of sports in high school, but I was just completely mediocre at all of them—soccer, water polo, one year of swimming, one year of diving. Barely mediocre," she said.

Then, in the spring of 2004, when Sakamoto was teaching a cardio-kickboxing class, longtime friend Eva Twardokens suggested she do a CrossFit workout with CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman at the original CrossFit HQ box in Santa Cruz, Calif.

"She was training with Greg and she said, 'Why don't you come in and do a little workout?' and I did," Sakamoto recounted.

After a couple of workouts, she kept going back. Eventually, she would become part of one of the most well-known videos from the CrossFit main site: Nasty Girls.

Nasty Girls: [.mov](#) [.wmv](#)

The video shows Sakamoto, Twardokens and Nicole Carroll doing the Nasty Girls workout: 3 rounds for time of 50 squats, 7 muscle-ups and 10 hang power cleans at 95 lb.

In the now-famous video, Sakamoto finished the workout first with a time of about 9:48. Carroll, who dissolved into tears at the end of the video after difficulty with the final round of muscle-ups and cleans, is now CrossFit co-director of training. She bestowed the Spirit of the Games Award on Sakamoto on the final day of the competition, telling the crowd the recognition was going to someone who has inspired generations of CrossFitters.

For Sakamoto, being regarded in such a fashion is "pretty humbling."

"A lot of it, I think, was I was at the right place at the right time," she said. "I feel really fortunate and really lucky and really humbled."



Courtesy of Andreea Maria Cecil

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Fountain of Youth

Is there CrossFit after 60? Hilary Achauer investigates at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

By Hilary Achauer

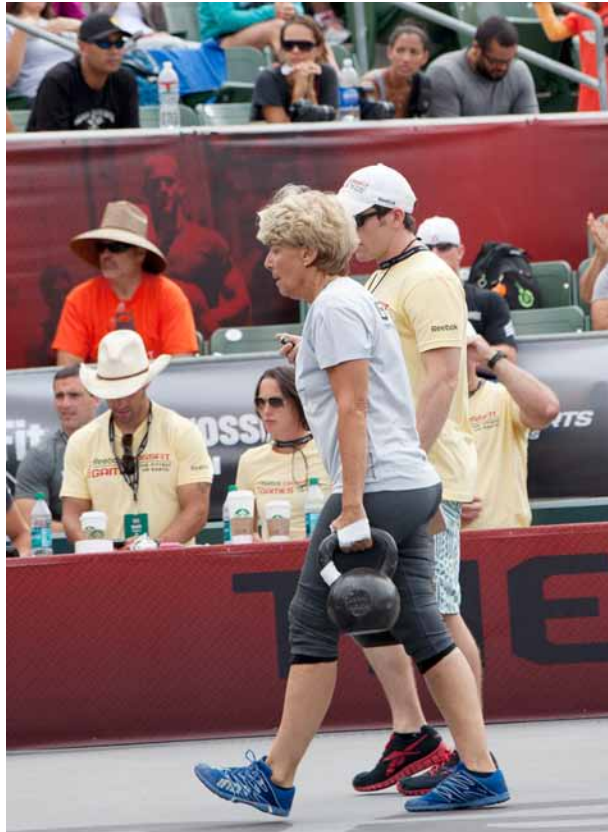
August 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Some couples celebrate their anniversary by going on a cruise to Alaska. Some throw a party.

High-school sweethearts Greg (62) and Becky Walker (60) commemorated their 41 years of marriage by competing together in the 60-Plus Masters Division at the CrossFit Games.



Sixty-year-old Becky Walker finished eighth in her division at the Games.

A Reluctant Competitor

"It was a 'pinch-me' weekend," said Greg. "I am so proud of Becky. She has never, ever competed before, and look at what she did. Her self-esteem and confidence are through the roof."

Here's the thing about Greg: He won his division, coming in first in four of the five events, but all he wanted to talk about was his wife. A cool-looking dude with long, white hair and a laid-back attitude, Greg told me that the change in his wife's self-esteem and confidence was remarkable.

"She's soaring," he said.

Becky never planned to compete in the CrossFit Games. She started doing CrossFit three years ago when their daughter, Jennifer Lawrence, began working as a CrossFit coach. Then Greg and Becky became co-owners of their daughter's affiliate, CrossFit Northwest Tucson, which opened in October 2008.

Becky was a cheerleader in high school and college and had always stayed active with racquetball, tennis and golf, but "Women's sports weren't big in the 1960s," she said.

When the Open came around, Becky said she didn't want to compete. On the day before the deadline to submit the first Open score, Becky was in the gym doing her normal Saturday workout. Halfway through, Greg said, "Becky, stop. You can do this. Try the Open workout."

Becky stopped, rested for a few minutes and did the workout. After it was over, she turned to Greg and said, "I guess I can do that."

In that first workout Becky tweaked her knee, and it kept bothering her, so three weeks before the Open she had an MRI. She was diagnosed with a torn meniscus, and the doctor said that her options were to stop working out or have a full knee replacement. Completely committed to competing in the Games, Becky decided to cut back on her training but postpone any operation until after the Games.

Once Becky got to the Home Depot Center, however, the doubts started to set in.

"I thought, 'I shouldn't be here,'" she said. "I was so unsure of myself. I couldn't train like the other women leading up to the Games. I thought I wasn't a real competitor, and I was blaming Greg for getting me into this."

After each workout, Becky's grandchildren would ask, "Grandma, did you win?"

Everyone told Becky just to do her best, to just do what she could. Wearing two braces on her knee, she stepped out into Lot 17, the competition area for the masters athletes, and that's when everything changed.

"Walking out there, in front of all those people, I was so excited," she said. "My knee didn't hurt. And it was fun. I thought, 'This is fun!'"

After each workout, Becky's grandchildren would ask, "Grandma, did you win?" Each time, she replied, "In my heart I did."

Becky was doing well in her heart *and* on the scoreboard. She placed in the top 10 in the first four workouts. The top eight athletes by the end of the day on Saturday would go on to the last workout on Sunday. Becky didn't think she would make the cut and remembers being relieved.

"I thought, 'Oh good, it's done. I can relax.'"

She was playing with her granddaughters by the playground when her phone rang. It was her daughter, Jennifer.

"Oh my gosh. You made it, mom!" Jennifer yelled.

Becky's first reaction was, "No, I'm tired. I can't." She was completely shocked.

But once again, Becky rose to the challenge. After talking to eventual individual champion Annie Thorisdottir in the athlete area under the stands, Becky walked out into the stadium to the cheers of a packed crowd.

"I thought I was nervous in the first workout, but this was worse," she said. "My adrenaline was running so high I felt nauseous."

Becky went too hard on the rower and felt exhausted for the rest of the workout, but she finished, taking eighth place overall.

Sticking to the Plan

Unlike Becky, Greg has spent much of his life competing. He swam and played football at Wayne State College in Nebraska. After college, Greg played semi-pro football for a few years and continued playing in flag-football leagues into his 50s.



Surprised to make it to the final event on Sunday, Becky gave it her all in the 60-Plus Masters Division final in the main stadium.



The fittest man over 60: Greg Walker.

"Before CrossFit, I ran sprints and lifted a little weight," he said, "but nothing like I'm doing now."

Greg designed and sold swimming pools for most of his career and most recently has been helping his daughter with CrossFit Northwest Tucson, running the CrossFit Seniors program.

He competed in his regional in 2010 but didn't make it because of difficulty with double-unders. He stepped up his double-under game and in 2011 earned second overall in the Open in the 60-Plus Masters Division.

Greg approached the Games much like a football game.

"Being a football player, I train for the fourth quarter," he said. Greg worked out a plan with his coach, Jim Sullivan, and followed it exactly.

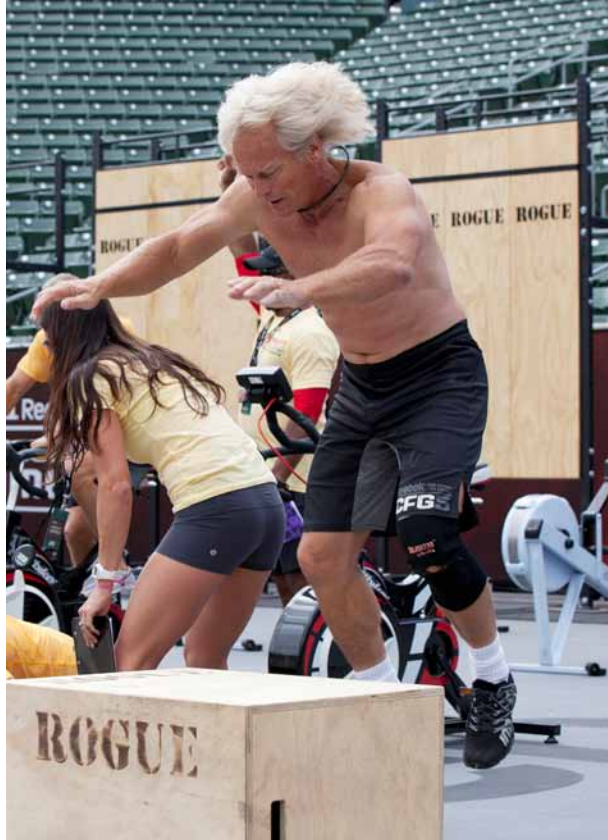
Mark Laakso, who won first place in the Open, shot out to an early lead in the first event, but Greg followed the script.

"I didn't care where anybody was," said Greg. "Mark was 50 meters ahead of me after the first-round shuttle run, but I didn't panic. I stuck to the game plan."

Greg felt fresh for the second round and could sense that Mark was tiring. In the third and final round, Greg did all his overhead squats unbroken, finished his push-ups and took the lead. He finished first in the event and proceeded to win every other event through the end of the day Saturday.

"All I had to do was show up to win," he said about the last event on Sunday.

Greg's coach, Jim, said to him, "Just enjoy it."



Could this be you at 62?

And indeed Greg did. He looked up into the stands, soaking up the experience. He came in second in the event, which was more than good enough to win him the top spot on the podium.

The first- and eighth-place finishes are impressive, but what Greg and Becky remember most about the experience is hearing their granddaughters yell, “Go, Grandma!” and “Come on, Grandpa,” and watching the girls do cartwheels of joy in the stands.

“It was incredible to watch both of my parents compete in the Games,” said Jennifer, Becky and Greg’s daughter.

“What a roller coaster of emotions,” Jennifer said of watching her parents compete. “One moment I was screaming my head off for them; the next minute I was getting goosebumps watching them do WODs many people my age would struggle through.”

“They are my role models, my inspiration. When I grow up, I want to be just like them.”

**—Jennifer Lawrence
on her parents**

“To have my girls there with me, watching their young-hearted grandparents breathe their own kind of fire, it can’t help but light a spark of inspiration in so many ways. I’m their biggest fan. They are my role models, my inspiration. When I grow up, I want to be just like them.”



Courtesy of Hilary Achauer

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Rookie Rally

Does experience count for anything at the CrossFit Games? Hilary Achauer explores how rookies Jenny LaBaw and Brick CrossFit came out of nowhere and stormed their way into the top 10.

By Hilary Achauer

August 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

This year's CrossFit Games included some superhuman performances and unexpected workouts—from ocean swimming to a softball throw for distance—but the first-place finishers were not surprising. In many eyes, Rich Froning Jr., Annie Thorisdottir and CrossFit New England were the favorites to win from the beginning.

1 of 7



Jenny LaBaw used her athletic ability to quickly learn the CrossFit movements and finish sixth overall at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

That doesn't mean the weekend wasn't without its surprises.

The sixth-place female finisher, Jenny LaBaw, started training for CrossFit in January 2011, and she had a lot to learn in a short time. She learned Olympic lifting during the Reebok CrossFit Games Open, and she did 70 percent of her Games training by herself, with no coach or training partner.

Nine-month-old Brick CrossFit finished fifth overall with a team they put together during the Open. Only two of the teammates had ever competed in CrossFit before, and they were one of the smallest teams—in weight and stature—in the competition.

Talent, Strategy, and Heart

Jenny LaBaw has been an athlete all her life. She played soccer in college, and after graduating she ran endurance races ranging from 5Ks to marathons. She took a CrossFit

Level 1 Seminar in January 2010. A trainer at NorCal Strength & Conditioning, LaBaw was coaxed into a strength challenge in October 2010, and she only started focusing on CrossFit in January 2011. She entered the Open on a whim, placing third in her region. She then surprised herself and the community at the Northern California Regional by placing second, in front of third-place finisher and CrossFit vet Annie Sakamoto.

The NorCal Regional did highlight one weakness.

"The Amanda workout was a disaster. I was only able to get four muscle-ups in the entire workout and didn't finish," LaBaw said. "It was as much a mental problem as a physical one. I was freaked out."

LaBaw's goal going into the Games was to make the top 10: "Why do it if you aren't going to shoot for the top?"

Two weeks after regionals, LaBaw made an appointment with Carl Paoli, the well-known elite gymnast based out of San Francisco CrossFit. LaBaw saw Paoli twice and used his advice to improve her muscle-ups in the weeks leading up to the Games.

LaBaw's mission going into the Games was to make the top 10, which she says was "a super-lofty goal." But, "why do it if you aren't going to shoot for the top?" she asked.



After the Killer Cage, LaBaw was in third overall and poised to medal.

In the first event, which started with an ocean swim and soft-sand run, LaBaw, a former competitive runner, was right next to Annie Thorisdottir at the end of the first run. She finished that workout in 10th place—in front of eventual medalists Kristan Clever and Rebecca Voigt of Valley CrossFit. By the end of Day 1, LaBaw had placed in the top 10 in each of the three workouts.

It was Event 4, the first workout on Saturday, that would truly test LaBaw. The Triplet Sprint included the dreaded muscle-ups that had caused her so much trouble at regionals.

"I felt confident (going into the workout)," she said. "It was my boyfriend who was making me nervous. He kept saying, 'Don't be nervous,' and finally I said, 'Marcus, you are freaking me out!'"

LaBaw started off strong and didn't miss one muscle-up, breaking the 5-muscle-up sets into blocks of 2 and 3 and finishing in 11:04, 19th overall.

LaBaw continued her strong showing in the Skills 2 workout, where she managed a 50-lb. chest-to-bar pull-up—the same weight as Clever and Voigt. Her one-rep-max snatch was 125 lb. (keep in mind she has only been Olympic lifting since March), and she carried the weighted jug further than Clever and Voigt. LaBaw's seventh-place finish in the final workout on Saturday, the Killer Cage, put her in third place overall.

As her boyfriend, Marcus Brown, put it, "Her mental state changed. All of a sudden she had a shot at the podium. That drives an athlete."

After the first workout on Sunday, called "Dog-Sled," LaBaw was tied for fifth place. "I knew then that I had a chance at the top three," she said.

Looking back, LaBaw thinks she pushed too hard on The End 1 and The End 2 and had nothing left for the last workout.

"The hardest for me was the wall-ball," she said. "I had a lot of missed reps because I was used to hitting a wall, and here we had to hit the middle of the target."

Accuracy problems aside, LaBaw performed very well.

"I got second in my heat in Event 2, and I have no regrets," she continued. "But when I found out I ended up in sixth place, I started crying."

Just making it to the Games, much less finishing in sixth place, is an astonishing accomplishment for an athlete so new to the sport. Most of the individual athletes who made it to the last day spent the last year living CrossFit, and many athletes had competed in previous CrossFit Games. Many had multiple coaches helping them refine their skills, and many of them worked out with fellow Games-bound athletes.

After taking a break to go mountain biking and hiking, LaBaw says she's going to find a coach and start training for next year.

As Brown says, "She's ready to start going. Look out."

L.A. Story: Every Rep Counts

Early Saturday evening, just after the last heat of the final team workout of the day, the Killer Kage, there was a commotion by the scoreboards near Lot 17. The Brick CrossFit crew was gathered around the scoreboard tower, waiting to see where they stood as the updates came in.

In a twist from previous years, the teams' cumulative scores from the first two days would be wiped clean on Sunday, meaning that whichever team came in first in the last event would win the Affiliate Cup.

As the scores from the final Day 2 team event came in, the stakes were high. Only the top six would go on to compete in the final workout on Sunday, and each team would have a shot at the cup.

When the scoreboard flipped over to show the top six teams, the Brick crew erupted in screams and shouts of joy.



Solid work in the first two days of competition earned the Bricks a spot in the final team event, a winner-take-all one-workout showdown.

Brick had competed in the second-to-last heat in the Killer Kage, a workout involving shoulders-to-overheads, box jumps, a monkey-bar traverse, double-unders and a ride on a Wattbike. The Bricks knew they had a shot at the final going into the event, but it was not a lock. They had placed fifth in the Sandbags and the Triplet Sprint events but 22nd in the Rope and 12th in the Clean events.

Whatever happened, it was going to be close.

When the scoreboard flipped over to show the top six teams, the Brick crew erupted in screams and shouts of joy. Brick had made the top six over Diablo CrossFit by one point, which they later found out came down to a mere 4 reps. One team member was so overwhelmed she put her face in her hands and started sobbing.

Brick CrossFit will be the first to tell you they are very L.A. Jarett Perelmutter, the team's captain and owner of the affiliate, said their biggest obstacle was "planning around Sylvia's schedule, since she's the only one with a job. Everyone else on our team is an aspiring actor who pays the bills working as a personal trainer."

"Sylvia" is Sylvia Galindo, who was joined at the Games by Perelmutter, David Page, Blake Hood, Israel Wright, Maddy Curley, Andrea Ager and Holly Holton.

Brick CrossFit earned second place in the Southern California Regional, but they knew the Games would be a whole new level of competition. Only two of their team members had ever competed in CrossFit before, and the gym had only been open for nine months. Added to that, the Brick team was smaller than most of their competitors. Two of the women weigh less than 120 lb., and Perelmutter only weighs 150 lb.

"We knew what we were up against," Perelmutter said. "We just didn't want to be last."

Brick did have a few tricks up its sleeve. Perelmutter has been involved in martial arts for 25 years, and his kickboxing experience includes over 140 undefeated fights. He currently holds six U.S. and international titles.

The Brick team used their home-court advantage to the fullest. Once they heard about the first workout—which involved moving 15 sandbags 200 yards with a log obstacle and a 4-foot wall in the way—they went back to the gym to strategize. They guessed how much the sandbags would each weigh, practiced with different loads and figured out the maximum each one of them could carry.

Diablo's Story

For every triumph there is a defeat. At the same time that Brick CrossFit was celebrating the sixth-place finish that earned the crew a spot in the final day's showdown, the Diablo CrossFit team was in tears.

Diablo CrossFit, located in Northern California, placed third in the Northern California Regional competition, and they came into the Games with a solid strategy that took advantage of their well-rounded team. Led by their coach, Jeremy Jones, Diablo got second place in the Sandbags and Triplet Sprint events at the Games.

Going into the final workout Saturday, the Diablo team used a strategy that had earned them a first-place finish in the last regional event. Rather than loading all their fastest athletes at the beginning of the event, they decided to put the two women in the middle, giving their "engine"—the fastest male athlete—time to rest.

Distracted by a full day of events and the excitement and noise of the Games, Jones and his team didn't realize that they only needed to place 36th or better in the final event to make it to the final. They went in it to win.

Diablo also didn't take time to monitor the team's nutrition throughout the day. Shannon Murphy, an experienced athlete who qualified for the Southwest Regional in 2010, got so caught up in the watching her team in the morning that she forgot about her nutrition, eating only a small amount of protein in the a.m.

Murphy was second in line in the Killer Kage event, which started off with 20 shoulders-to-overheads—135 lb. for the men and 95 lb. for the women. That's normally an easy weight for Murphy, but when she stepped up to the barbell she couldn't get the weight overhead. Lacking the proper nutrition, her body faltered, and she struggled, failing over and over.

Diablo continued...

The Brick team used the home-court advantage to the fullest. Once they heard about the first workout, they went back to the gym to strategize.



Diablo CrossFit missed the final by only one point despite finishing no lower than 12th in four of five preliminary events.

Diablo continued...

By the time Murphy got through the 20 reps, the team had fallen behind. The rest of the team tried their best to catch up, but Diablo finished in 37th place, missing the top six by 1 point.

The team was devastated. "That first hour, everyone quit CrossFit," said Craig Howard, one of the owners of Diablo CrossFit. "There was anger and resentment."

"As a team, we failed," said Howard. "We should have considered where we were ranked going into this event, and we should have made sure everyone on the team had the proper nutrition."

The Diablo tent was next to Front Range CrossFit's area, and Howard said his team had initially scoffed at Front Range's elaborate set-up.

"They had multiple pop-up tents and four ice baths of their own," said Howard. "The athletes didn't have to share an ice bath, and they had room to rest in between events."

Looking back, Howard says Diablo learned some important lessons about how to approach the Games.

"Now that it is so competitive, we need to approach the Games like a Tour de France team," said Howard. "We need to have a nutrition coach who makes sure the athletes have all the food they need, both leading up to the Games and during the weekend of competition. We also need a logistics coach in charge of scheduling and scoring."

By the time the Diablo CrossFit team got back in the van to drive home, everyone had recommitted to CrossFit. They were in good spirits and ready to get back to the gym and start training. They plan to put together a team as soon as possible and start training for the 2012 Games. And they'll most likely invest in some tents and ice baths.

—Hilary Achauer

The teams didn't know in advance how the logs would be stacked, but Curley had an idea.

"What if they were in a pyramid?" she guessed. So the team set up boxes in a pyramid shape and practiced getting over them with different weights. Curley's guess turned out to be correct, and this preparation and strategizing helped Brick take fifth in the first workout.

Perelmutter also coached his team members to stay in the moment. He told them they couldn't let one negative performance ruin their focus. They had to shake it off and move forward. He also wanted them to appreciate the experience.

"I told them to take in everything that was going on, all the people supporting them. Don't take it for granted," he said.

The Brick crew certainly had a lot of supporters. Every day over 200 members showed up at the Home Depot Center to cheer on the local team.

Consistent performances and three top-six finishes earned Brick CrossFit a spot in Sunday's showdown. But only barely. Diablo CrossFit finished second in two workouts and looked poised to secure a spot in the final. When the devils from Pleasant Hill, Calif., took 37th on the Killer Kage, Brick CrossFit's sixth-place finish gave the crew a one-point lead and chance at the Affiliate Cup.

When the team learned about the workout, a brutal mash-up of Elizabeth, Fran, Isabel, Grace, Diane and Karen, they thought they had a 50-50 shot at getting to the podium.

"CrossFit New England has so many strong individuals," said Perelmutter. "It's really about who could do it the fastest."

Curley, a former competitive gymnast who appeared in the Disney movie *Stick It*, started off with Elizabeth: 21, 15 and 9 reps of a 95-lb. clean and ring dips. She finished second, right after CrossFit New England. That put Galindo against Mel Ockerby, an athlete who narrowly missed qualifying as an individual at the Games. Ockerby's Fran was unbelievably fast, and CFNE pulled ahead, where they would stay for the rest of the event.

Behind the East Coast box, the rest of the Brick team moved steadily through the workouts, finishing about two-and-a-half minutes after defending champion CrossFit Fort Vancouver to secure fifth place. That's a huge accomplishment for a gym that opened less than a year ago.

"We have no regrets," said Perelmutter. "We just opened the gym in November, and we are fifth in the world."

He paused: "I'm living the dream, man."



Courtesy of Hilary Achauer

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Tribal Ritual

Jeff Martin describes team-building tribe jumps.

By Jeff Martin CrossFit Kids

August 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

We have used this warm-up effectively in the Teen class. In fact, the teens ask for it.

Gather athletes in a circle and have each one place both arms on his or her neighbors' shoulders. Begin to jump together, starting low to get the group rhythm. The goal is to jump at the same time as high as possible.

We find sometimes the kids will chant "go, go, go!" or "jump, jump, jump!" but mostly they just giggle.

We implemented tribe jumps because one of our athletes had a habit of landing flat-footed during double-unders. In this case, use of the tribe jump encouraged keeping up with the group and bouncing in such a way that landing on the ball of the foot with a light heel touch eventually became second nature and transferred to double-unders.

Tribe jumps have the additional benefit of being an excellent impact-loading exercise that supports bone health.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

What to Expect When Coaching Teens

Mentally and physically, teenagers are changing daily. Be ready. Bob Guere explains.

By **Bob Guere** CrossFit California City

August 2011



All images: Bob Guere

There are two essential elements in programming for pre-schoolers, adolescents and teenagers. One is to ensure fun is pre-eminent. The other is to define, recognize and program based on expectations.

Expectations should be glaringly different in each age group and certainly in your adult classes.

Many CrossFit affiliates wrongly lump the teen population with adults out of assumed necessity, convenience or ignorance. Yet there is opportunity to make a huge impact in a teenager's life if your expectations are in check and your programming follows.

Necessary Separation

The expectation that a teenager will thrive and succeed when included in an adult CrossFit program is misguided. Affiliates who tackle this without either hiring a CrossFit Kids trainer or sending a trainer to a CrossFit Kids course are taking their chances with the safety and success of the athlete.

Think of training teens as a long-term process in which you're preparing them for inclusion in the adult program.

Similar to training the elderly or special-needs adults, training teens requires the ability to scale, adjust and customize workouts based on a variety of situations. The age span of 12-17 years comes with an abundance of physical, mental and emotional changes. A trainer should expect a teen to be multiple athletes depending on the day. Rushing or forcing a workout goes well beyond the realm of just "suck it up, buttercup." It can lead to lasting injury and, more frequently, bad habits and self-doubt.

Let's consider this hypothetical situation: 13-year-old Billy is a slightly overweight freshman in high school who is somewhat active. He's never participated in organized sports but plays with friends more outside than inside. His family joins your affiliate. You either can place Billy in a teen class or in an adult class.



Teens are not adults and require a special approach in your affiliate.

Similar to training the elderly or special-needs adults, training teens requires the ability to scale, adjust and customize workouts based on a variety of situations.

If Billy is lumped in with the adults, he likely won't get the immediate attention he needs to address many of the common capacity deficiencies: squatting, lifting objects off the ground and overhead, and lifting his own body off the ground or, simpler, off the couch. In the adult program, Billy will constantly be trying to catch up, feeling inferior to the adult athletes despite the compassion of the trainer and classmates. The assumed expectation will be that Billy is equal to the adults and just needs to catch up. Without his peers, Billy might not give complete effort and might not have the extra incentive to push himself out of his comfort zone.

Conversely, if Billy is introduced to CrossFit in a dedicated teen program, he will, above all else, be among his peers. The chance for success among his peers is not only more valuable but expected. Friendships will develop. The social component of CrossFit cannot be understated. This is what builds our community, and it's no different among teens. In a teen class with qualified teen trainers, Billy will begin with the proper exposure to fundamental functional movements that are the basis for all athletic endeavors. Billy will not be playing catch-up. He will be among other teen athletes with similar deficiencies and capacities. From Billy's perspective, the expectation will be focused on proper movement and effort, not on an ill-placed measuring stick the adult class would impose.

Behind the Science

There are scientific reasons why your teens should be trained differently.

Teen athletes are developing rapidly, and their bodies are changing daily. An adult program does not take into account the real possibility—and high probability—that a teen will come in one day exhibiting what appears to be a massive brain dump.



Teens can be different athletes each day and require close attention.

How can they forget to squat overnight?

They haven't forgotten how to squat or press or deadlift or jump. Their equipment has changed. If a golfer trained for five years with the same set of clubs and then switched it with a set six inches longer, how do you think his swing might look? My educated guess is he would have to re-learn how to swing.

What if the equipment change was your legs? Or your arms? That's what happens when teens grow. Their bones change, their muscles and tendons lag, and boom—you've got teens who can't get the hips back or the knees out. They haven't forgotten how to squat; they need to re-learn how to squat.

Consider this scenario in an adult class, where your teen athlete is, essentially, a new student. What do you do with your new adult? Many gyms have an "indoc" or "on-ramp" class to teach the movements required to safely and efficiently perform CrossFit workouts. Are you going to send the teen back to on-ramp every time he or she grows? Of course not. But you should be prepared to take two steps back and start from scratch often.

Loads will need to be lessened or removed, and the movement will need to be re-learned. Most teen athletes who get lumped in with adults will be hesitant to mention to a trainer (again) that they are having problems with the movements or can't seem to get their body in position (again) and could use some help. This pulls the trainer away from the rest of the class (again) and is not fair to the teen or the rest of the adults. Keep your teens training together with a coach who has the passion and the patience.

Kids who train with weight are stronger and less injury-prone. Weight-bearing exercises increase bone density; joints and tendons become more robust.



As a teen, coordination and body awareness are just as important as strength.

Another scientific reason to train teens differently is that studies point to direct improvement in learning function when exercise is induced. Many CrossFit Kids programs, following the lead of CrossFit Kids HQ, have integrated “study hall” at the end of workout sessions. The enhanced brain function created by exercise makes kids ripe for learning. Exercise causes increased oxygen flow to the brain, more efficient synaptic activity, stimulated neurogenesis and increased production of various hormones responsible for growth and development of the brain. Expect smarter kids.

As important as the inclusion of exercise in a child’s learning pattern is the type of exercise. We know movements that take children to positions other than upright—horizontal, upside down—stimulate the vestibular system that accounts for a vast array of motor-function improvement. Information from your inner ear travels to and from your fingertips, muscles, joints and the soles of your feet, among other places. We see this as communication for limb position (can you say “good overhead press?”), muscle growth and development, and improved balance and coordination.

In addition to bone-density-increasing movements like box jumps and broad jumps, rolling, tumbling and handstands should be a staple in your child and teen programs. Many of these movements should come naturally to kids and might not be as welcome to your middle-aged adult class.

For more information on this topic, check out the research and writings of John Ratey, John Medina and Dr. Jon Gary, who is part of CrossFit Kids HQ.

In the discussion of science, it is important to mention one myth that continues resurfacing. It’s the one that claims weight-bearing movements are bad for growth plates and dangerous for youth. Dr. Gary covers this extensively in the CrossFit Kids course. Not only is the data to the contrary, but it’s also difficult to find legitimate data to even support the statement. Kids who train with weight are stronger and less injury-prone. Weight-bearing exercises increase bone density; joints and tendons become more robust. Growth-plate injuries are generally from impact incidents to the soft portion of the growing bones.

Programming

Programming for teens should not be complicated. Keep the rep schemes simple. AMRAPs work great in an environment ripe with personalities. They allow all the teens to work for the same amount of time, encouraging the community you are trying to develop.

Do not over-complicate movements either. Stick to the basic overhead movements—pull-ups, push-ups, jumps, rolls, running, etc.—and the foundational functional movements all humans do. Keep the high-skill movements for their own training period; introduce them only when mastered. Avoid taking teens into the met-con suck zone—30-plus minutes. A good long smoker can be helpful in team WODs with built-in rest, but long Hero-type workouts do not add much to the stimulus other than misery.

Next, expect your programming skills to be challenged.

The need for proper scaling in teen programming is paramount. Substituting movements appropriate for their developmental stage is a skill. Cultivating an environment in your teen class whereby the teens do not ostracize or otherwise demean an athlete who is substituting/scaling is also important. Learning to adapt your plan for the workout to each and every teen athlete can be a logistical challenge as well as a coaching challenge.

You are programming for many different athletes with many different abilities. Substituting and scaling is more than lowering weight and reps. Teen athletes will give coaches a unique opportunity to scale for very different reasons. As mentioned earlier, teens might show up with the apparent inability to perform a movement that was easily perfected just the day before. Your job as a teen coach is not to simply remove that movement from the workout but to sub a movement that allows the same stimulus without compromising the safety of the movement and, hopefully, addresses the new-found capacity degradation.

The need for proper scaling in teen programming is paramount. Substituting movements appropriate for their developmental stage is a skill.

For instance, a 13-year-old girl who has been CrossFitting for two years comes in after a week at grandma's house. She looks different, almost taller. Surely she is. During the warm-up, you notice her squat is atrocious—knees flying forward, chest crashing down. To keep her in the workout and to begin the re-learning process, a simple air squat can be performed with hips facing a wall or knees facing a bench. This simple sub works wonders for growing teens and will have your athletes fixing their own squats very quickly.

Another technique is having them draw outlines of their feet on the ground for proper foot position. For those days when the set-up just isn't working, a visual cue is very handy. Reiterate the proper set-up for the deadlift—feet underneath shoulders—while at the same time having the athlete look to place his or her feet in the outlines. Seems simple and almost kindergarten-like, but this isn't rocket science. Find what works for your athletes. But I caution you not to sub something out of the workout simply because an athlete "can't" do it that day. Find what part of the movement is giving fits and work that. Any other approach might prolong or enforce the decreased capacity.

On Rhabdo

Another important aspect of training teens is the increased risk of rhabdomyolysis that is present with this age group.

Not only are they easily susceptible, but they also present less symptoms than adults.

Adults can present any or all of three common symptoms: severe pain, weakness and cola-colored urine. Teens usually only present one of the three—and good luck guessing which it will be.

It is important to keep a close eye on your teens (and all kids) during every workout. Always ask about their day, how they feel, if they are sore, etc. If you haven't seen them in a few days, ask if they've been ill. Teens' rhabdo probability goes up after illness. Give them a few days of scaled workouts until they are back to full capacity. Avoid high-rep eccentric movements with teens—this can also increase their risk for rhabdomyolysis. Exercises like jumping pull-ups, negative movements and downhill running are all eccentric in nature. A vigilant coach will not have to worry about rhabdo.

Nutrition Talk

Nutritional advice and prescription should be different than it is for the adult population of your gym as well.

Many adults are concerned with leaning/weight loss. Teens should be taught about long-term health and fueling their body for exercise. Quality of food over quantity for teens is better. Teens should be taught the importance of quality protein, fat and carbohydrate sources. They should be taught how to make better choices in social environments and how to not feel guilty when they don't.

Building a foundation of movement in the teen years rather than throwing them to the wolves with Fran will set up teens for even greater success when they enter adult CrossFit.

Especially important with teenage girls, the “cheat meal” or “cheat day” should not be frowned upon as a failure but regarded as an acceptable part of an otherwise well-managed diet. Kids should be taught that what the schools teach them concerning the food pyramid is erroneous and really upside down. If you are successful in getting teens to eat solid protein sources at breakfast in a household otherwise not CrossFit-friendly, you have exceeded expectations. Teens do not control the grocery list. Parents who do not CrossFit might not understand the importance of our way of eating and certainly won’t want you telling their kids how to eat, for the most part. Expect battles with teens and parents and expect to relish in small victories where food is concerned.



By building a solid foundation as a teen, young athletes give themselves every chance for success as an adult.

The Importance of Movement Development

This is the good stuff.

Building a foundation of movement in the teen years rather than throwing them to the wolves with Fran will set up teens for even greater success when they enter adult CrossFit.

CrossFit Kids HQ has the longest test program so far with teens like Connor Martin and David Shanahan, who are 19 years old with between six and seven years of CrossFit under their belts. They learned to move their bodies, and move them well, long before load was introduced. By teaching them to move, it made them stronger. The ability to control their bodies as they began to add load to movements has made a huge difference in their training. These young men are now putting up numbers that would make most, if not all, top-tier male athletes proud. Stick with the plan. Movement before load and you can’t go wrong. Expectations for your teens should be nothing less than stellar if you have them for six years.

Once teens have been held to that high standard of movement performance, they will begin to show capacity to gain strength quickly. They will enjoy steady, frequent gains in their performance. Expect it. It will happen.

A lifting program based on form first and steady, incremental, weekly increases in 5-, 3- and 1-rep loads will seldom stall. And when they do reach stalls, they are usually timed with changes in the athlete’s body, schedule, etc. Plateaus are rarely seen throughout the teen years when this steady, patient programming is followed. There is no need to shoot for large-volume lifting or complicated programming. Basic core lifts—i.e., deadlift and back squat—can and should be worked weekly in this regimen.

A good teen lifting program works three main points: it’s fun, it’s safe, and the kids get stronger.

CrossFit Kids HQ prescribes an easy, two-day-a-week lifting program for teens, with other lifts sprinkled throughout the workouts during the week. One day for back squat, one day for deadlift, and on each of those days the kids perform movement review and unloaded demonstration. That covers the safety portion of this program. They increase load in sets of 3s until a PR is achieved. And at that point, the athlete is done lifting for the day. Wash, rinse, repeat every week. Back squatting and deadlifting will increase their total body strength unlike any other movement.

On each of those two days, accessory lifts also can be included, as well as an opposing or complementary Olympic lift. For instance, on back-squat day, push jerks for reps of 5 to PR might be included, or cleans on deadlift day.

Once teens have been held to that high standard of movement performance, they will begin to show capacity to gain strength quickly. They will enjoy steady, frequent gains in their performance. Expect it. It will happen.

The important part to pick up here is that they PR every week and the athlete is never overloaded. Remember, it's fun! Less is more with kids; they *will* get stronger. It happens almost magically, and to an aging athlete like myself, it can be sickening. As a coach, it's wonderful to watch. Kids who PR every week come into and leave every workout with a positive attitude. They know they'll PR that day, and they leave with a PR.

When a plateau is observed, the coach should then switch that athlete away from a 3-rep scheme and move to a 5-rep scheme and work 5-rep PRs for a while. If all the wheels fall off the cart, speed drills and form work in 7-rep schemes are always in the back pocket. But they can PR 7 reps, too!

If an athlete begins to lose form in a movement, coaching cues are used and another rep is allowed for correction. If a teen athlete cannot get his or her form back in 2 reps, remove the bar and lower the weight. Too many pieces can be broken if you do not. Remember, there are tons of variables with teens' growing bodies. It's best to just step back, lower the weight and work some 7-reppers for the day until they can re-master the movement.

Periodization

Teen programming might change during the year for a variety of reasons.

If your teen athletes play sports, training volume should be marginally decreased during that particular season. But be careful not to succumb to the urge of team coaches who believe CrossFit during the season is too much. Rather, attempt to develop a good rapport with the coach and explain the benefits of your program and how it will benefit your athlete if he or she continues your program, even if pared down slightly, during the season. Maybe in the process you'll gain more clients. Explain how your program requires less time and produces greater results than traditional conditioning, and how that means more time for sport-related skills and drills.

Remember, expectations are key.

Expect your athletes to be of high capacity when they hit the field. Express to their coaches that these are not ordinary kids; they possess the makings of world-class athletes, and removing CrossFit might (will) diminish their capacities.

Observed Recovery and Progress

Teens have an astonishing ability to recover quickly.

While exercising extreme caution with kids, it's also important to know when they're ready to spread their wings and demonstrate the outstanding capacities they've worked hard to develop.

While exercising extreme caution with kids, it's also important to know when they're ready to spread their wings and demonstrate the outstanding capacities they've worked hard to develop.

Case in point: the previously mentioned David Shanahan. David was training at CrossFit Brand X for the 2009 CrossFit Games at 17 years old. He approached his coach with a crazy idea: in the middle of CrossFit Games prep, he wanted to run a marathon. Coach Jeff Martin frowned upon the idea and told David if he did run the marathon, he better be ready to show up Monday and continue training. David did run the marathon, in cargo shorts, texting the whole way, and returned Monday to smoke his coach in that day's met-con.

A marathon leaves normal people wrecked for days, some longer, but not David. Why? I don't think we really know, and it might not really matter. David is an athlete with great capacity to work and recover. You'll see this in your teens as well. Just be mindful of letting them out of the barn too often. There is no need to induce any over-use injuries.

Properly trained athletes can withstand normal injury rates and enjoy increased recovery.

I train a high-school varsity-girls soccer team. The girls learn early in the season that they will not be out-run. We might be out-coached or out-skilled but will not be bested by conditioning. My team of 26 girls also suffered zero knee injuries in 2011 in a high-school sport rife with the problem. They all know how to squat and have a strong foundation of hip recruitment that prevents many common knee injuries. They're stronger and faster, and they have fewer injuries.

Your expectations should be real, and they should be high. Expect to be challenged, expect to be proud, and expect your teens to succeed.



About the Author

Bob Guere is the owner and trainer at [CrossFit Kids California City](#). Guere runs a nine-week summer camp and is a strength-and-conditioning coach for area high-school soccer teams. CrossFit Kids California City operates out of a garage affiliate and travels to the athletes wherever team practice occurs. Guere has been married to his wife, Kerry, for 18 years and has a 15-year-old daughter, Whitley, who will be participating in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games CrossFit Kids exhibition.

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Building A Strong Shoulder Girdle

Bill Starr explains how to create a strong, balanced upper body.

By Bill Starr

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All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Strong shoulders are beneficial to every athlete because they play an active role in every athletic activity. Even in sports such as soccer, where the athletes do not use their arms to handle the ball for the most part, strong shoulders are still important because they lower the risk of injury from impact with other players and the turf.

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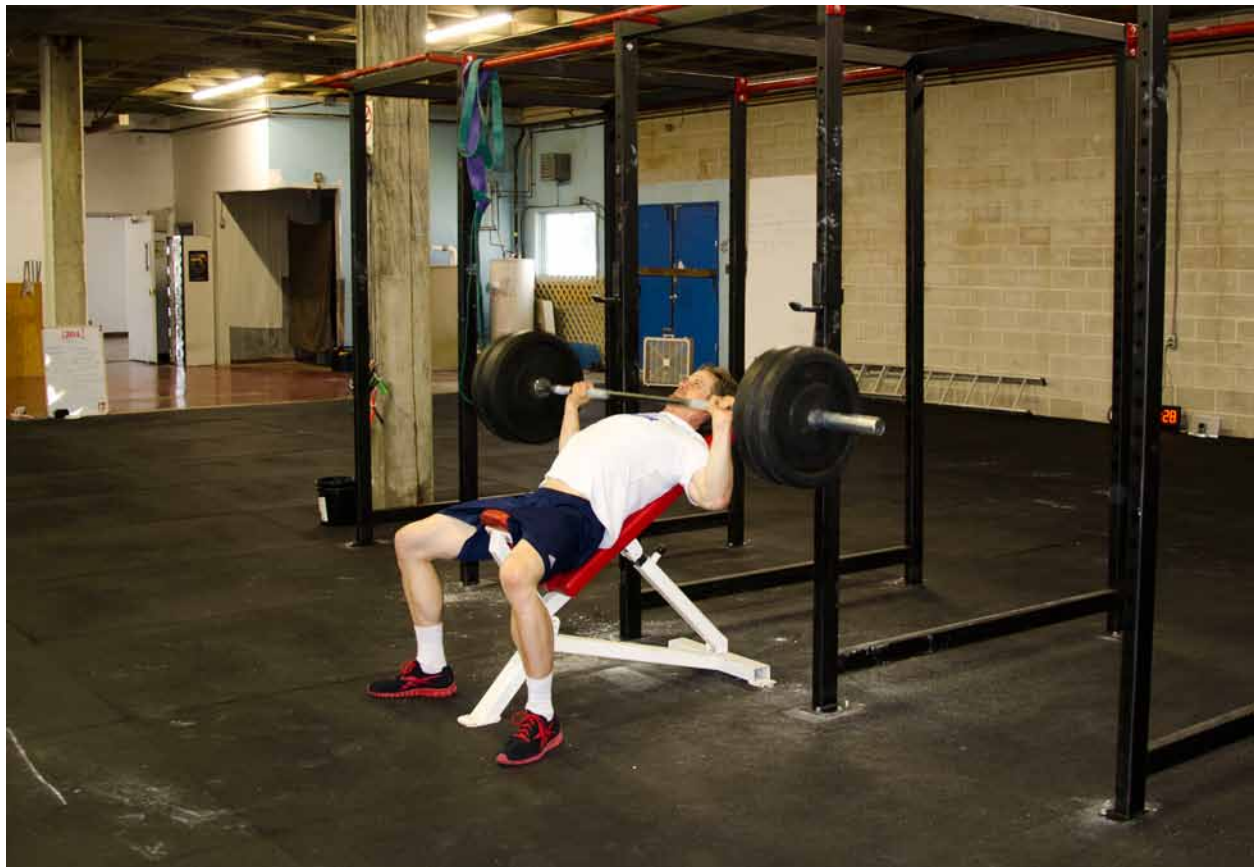
Those participating in any contact sport understand all too well the necessity of keeping their entire shoulder girdle strong. Sports which utilize the arms a great deal—baseball, football, lacrosse, basketball, volleyball, swimming, all the field events in track, and both powerlifting and Olympic lifting—rely on having strong shoulders and arms. I include the arms in the shoulder girdle, as well as the upper part of the chest and back.

A Brief History of the Press

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when everyone who lifted weights possessed wide, powerful shoulders. Bodybuilders were actually strength athletes back in the '40s, '50s and '60s, and all of them believed wide shoulders added to their physiques. And they were right. Look at the photos of John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Vern Weaver, Val Vasilef, Serge Oliva, Bill Pearl and Marvin Eder. They had shoulders like barn doors, and they were not just window

decorations. Those guys were extremely strong. Stanko was the first athlete in the world to total 1,000 lb. in the three Olympic lifts prior to becoming Mr. America. Grimek was a member of the 1936 Olympic team before he won that title twice. All the others won numerous Olympic contests while they competed for the bodybuilding titles at the same time.

When someone wanted to know how strong you were, he would ask, “What can you press?”



Often forgotten, the incline press can be found in Bill Starr's upper-body programs.

The reason why all these athletes in a wide variety of sports possessed such imposing shoulders is because they did a great deal of overhead lifting, especially pressing. In fact, the military press was the standard of strength for everyone who lifted weights for whatever reason. When someone wanted to know how strong you were, he would ask, "What can you press?" One of my first goals when I began weight training was to press body weight. Once I'd achieved that, I moved that goal to pressing 200 lb., and throughout my lifting career I continually elevated the standard for the press. As a result, my shoulder girdle got stronger and stronger.

Now, the standard for strength is the bench press, and very few athletes even include military presses in their routines any longer. So what happened? A series of events that occurred almost simultaneously in the early '70s. The International Olympic Committee dropped the press from official competition. Joe Weider took control of bodybuilding away from the A.A.U. and got rid of the athletic points, which meant contestants no longer needed to enter lifting meets, and the first exercises they dropped were the press, snatch, and clean and jerk—all overhead movements. Powerlifting gained a strong foothold, and the bench press was the test for upper-body strength. Finally, weight training for athletes emerged in force, and the primary shoulder-girdle exercise for them was also the bench press, primarily because coaches thought it was safer (which wasn't true) and it was easier to teach (which was true).

So in a very short span of time, the military press virtually disappeared from weight rooms, as did all the other forms of overhead lifting—jerks, snatches and push presses. All weight trainers and bodybuilders cared about was the flat bench, which is not nearly as useful in building a strong shoulder girdle as the overhead movements.

To add to the problem, few included any specific exercise for their upper backs. When the Olympic lifts were included in their programs, they did plenty of exercises that hit their upper backs: snatches, cleans, high pulls and shrugs. That changed to just doing deadlifts or, better yet, working on the expertly designed machines that emerged on the scene.

And this is why you rarely see anyone training in a weight room who has broad shoulders anymore. Even when they possess large arms, they aren't in proportion to their shoulders, and most have that book-bag slump simply because their upper backs are not strong enough for them

to maintain an erect posture. The shift in the way athletes and those training for fitness lift has been dramatic in the past few decades, and not for the better. Problem after problem has emerged, such as a rash of rotator-cuff injuries, as well as injuries the shoulder joints themselves.

When the military press was the primary shoulder-girdle exercise, rotator-cuff tears were unheard of.

When the military press was the primary shoulder-girdle exercise, rotator-cuff tears were unheard of. In fact, the majority of us didn't even know where the muscles were located, and they were not even mentioned in kinesiology and applied anatomy texts. Now a multitude of shoulders are being hurt due to the over-working of the flat bench without any corresponding exercises specifically for the upper back, primarily the traps. This is simply a matter of disproportionate strength, and, happily, it can be corrected simply by making some changes in your strength program.



In CrossFit, the overhead press is making a comeback in a big way.

Upper-Body Balance

While I do start all my athletes, male or female, off with the flat bench, I move them to overhead movements very quickly. Actually, I much prefer to start most athletic teams with the incline bench press because it applies more directly to their sports, especially basketball, volleyball, lacrosse and baseball. But all the coaches insist on testing their players on the bench press, so I have to include it. Not that I'm anti-flat-bench. I believe that exercise has a part to play in building a stronger shoulder girdle. It's only troublesome when it's overworked to the exclusion of the other useful shoulder-girdle exercises.

What an athlete should be trying to achieve when putting together a routine to strengthen his upper body is balance. All angles and ranges of motion that the arms move in during practices and games should be made stronger. So my programs consist of flat benches, incline benches, overhead presses and dips. Those movements will hit every group in the front of the body very nicely. Then, to make sure there is more balanced strength in the entire shoulder girdle, add in one or more exercises for the upper back. These will strengthen the all-important traps, as well as the lats to some extent, and also the hard-to-hit rear deltoids. The lifts I use are as follows: power cleans to begin with, then power snatches, snatch- and clean-grip high pulls, and dynamic shrugs.

The Press

I'll start with the military or overhead press because it will need more attention than the other exercises. Few know how to do it properly. One thing I always liked about the military press is it can be done safely without the need of any spotter or assistance. This allows an athlete to do the movement at home if he so desires. Should he not be able to complete the lift, he merely lowers it back to his shoulders, or, if he is spent, he can drop it to the floor.

I've covered form for the overhead press in previous articles for the *CrossFit Journal*, but a review is never a bad idea. While you can either power-clean the weight or take it from a rack before pressing it, I have beginners start by taking it from a rack. That way, they can concentrate completely on the press and not be concerned with cleaning the weight. The first thing to learn how to do is fix the bar across your frontal deltoids. You don't want it to be on your collarbones. One, that's painful. And two, if the lowered bar bangs against those bones over and over, they can be bruised, and this is not only painful but can also eventually be injurious.

To do find the right spot for the bar, simply shrug your traps and elevate your entire shoulder girdle an inch or two. That will provide you with a muscular ledge on which to place the bar. Don't just let the bar lie there; pull it down into your frontal deltoids. Your elbows shouldn't be high, as in parallel to the floor, or very low. They should be somewhere in between. The best grip for most can be found in this manner: extend your thumbs on an Olympic bar until they touch the smooth center. Make sure you grip the bar firmly with your thumbs wrapped around the bar. No false grips.

Because your wrists will be taking a good deal of pressure during the press, it's a smart idea to tape them. This will also help keep them straight throughout the up and down movement of the bar, and they absolutely have to be straight. Cocking or twisting them around while the bar is in motion is an invitation to injury.



Relaxed shoulders won't give you a good "shelf" for pressing.



Elevate the entire shoulder girdle to get the bar to sit on your delts.

Once you have the bar locked on your shoulders and your arms are in the correct position, step back from the rack and set your feet. They should be shoulder width with the toes forward. Try to grip the floor with your feet. At York, we used the analogy of a bird gripping the limb of a tree. That's what you want to attempt to do. That will help you create a solid base from which to press the weight. Lock your knees and keep them that way throughout the lift. Tighten all the muscles in your body from your toes to your traps. Now, bow your midsection forward just a tad. When you feel like you're in a perfect starting position, drive the bar off your shoulders in a straight line very close to your face. The bar should nearly touch your nose. As you do that, uncoil and continue to keep a steady pressure on the moving bar. As it passes your forehead, move your head and body under the bar. Don't lean back. This will cause the bar to either run forward or backward and carry it out of the correct line of flight. You want to try and keep the bar over your power base, the hips, all the way from start to finish.

Although the overhead, or military, press is easy to learn, it is difficult to master.

Breathing: just before you drive the bar off your shoulders, take a deep breath and hold it until you've moved through the sticking point or have locked it out. Don't inhale or exhale during the execution of the press. Either action causes your diaphragm to relax and that, in turn, creates a negative intra-thoracic pressure. In simple language, if you breathe, you diminish your power. Once the bar is firmly locked out, breathe, but continue to apply upward pressure in to the bar. Think about pushing it even higher, and hold it there on your final rep for five or six seconds. That forces all the muscles responsible for supporting and controlling the weight overhead to work even harder and will strengthen nearly every group in your entire body from your traps to your feet. Those who are constantly looking for a useful core exercise will find this dynamic hold at the end of a press to be perfect for their needs. It really hits all the groups that surround the spine—as many discover the morning after a heavy press workout.

Although the overhead, or military, press is easy to learn, it is difficult to master. When the weights get heavy, and that's a relative term of course, there is a great deal of timing, coordination and balance involved. And gains do not come rapidly on the overhead press. You must be determined to stick with them even when you stall out at a certain weight.

As with most exercises, I start everyone out with 5 sets of 5 reps. However, once form is at least adequate, I have them move to this set and rep formula: 3 sets of 5 as warm-ups, then 3 sets of 3 with the same work weight. After they have done that for a month or six weeks, I have them add in another work set, and a bit later, yet another. At that point, I also have them do a back-off set of 8 or 10 to further expand their workload. Every four weeks, I have them go after a max single. Breaking a PR is very motivational and helps them push through numerical mental barriers.

Give the press priority while you're learning the form and moving the numbers up.

I should mention a couple of other things in regards to the press. It's a good idea to wear a belt for these. It doesn't have to be a thick or wide one. In fact, the basic leather belt is the best. It will give you some support but, more importantly, will give you feedback as to whether you're leaning backward too much, and it will keep your lower back warm, which is very beneficial. However, do keep in mind that the belt will not save you from an injury if you use sloppy technique.

Secondly, always take some time to warm up your shoulders before starting your press workout. This goes for every pressing movement, and dips as well. Two sets of 20 lateral and frontal raises with dumbbells will do the trick.

There are two common mistakes beginners make in the overhead press. The first is following the flight of the upward-moving bar with their eyes. Your eyes should be looking straight ahead from start to finish. If you look up to see where the bar is, it will force you to lean back, and this has two negative results: it will carry the bar out of the correct line and will put undue stress on your lower back. The other error done by so many beginners is placing one foot out ahead of the other rather than having them on the same line. This, again, is potentially troublesome to the lower back because the stress is not evenly distributed. Should you happen to lose your balance and have to move one foot or both, it's best to end that set right there and start over after a short rest.

Dips

My second favorite exercise for building strong shoulders is the dip using weight. This movement, like overhead presses, was a staple for every bodybuilder, strength athlete and competitive lifter when I first got interested in physical culture. When I came across my first set of dip racks and started doing as many as I could at the end of my workouts, my overall shoulder strength shot up, so I was a believer from the very beginning. But, like many other strength exercises, the weighted dip fell by the wayside when all the machines came on the scene. Rarely do I even see any dip bars in gyms and fitness facilities any more. They're not shiny and require hard work to get results, and this doesn't fit the mentality of gym owners and members with today's easy-is-better-than-hard attitude.

Many are reluctant to take the plunge with dips because they're not able to do very many of them. That's OK. It doesn't matter where you start out on any exercise, only where you end up. If you can only do 5 reps, use that as your starting point and try to add at least 1 rep every time you do them—which should be at every session until you get considerably stronger on the exercise. Do 4 sets of as many as you can do and, over time, you will arrive at 4 sets of 20. It isn't important how long it takes to get to that goal, just that you persist and get there.



After you can do 4 sets of 20 body-weight dips, it's time to add weight.

At that point, you need to add weight to the movement. Tuck a 10-lb. weight between your knees and go back to work. When you're able to handle that amount of resistance for 4 sets of 20, move on to a 20-lb. dumbbell. Keep climbing up the ladder until you reach 80s, 90s or the 100-pounders. I know it's possible to do dips with a 100-lb. dumbbell tucked between the legs because I was able to do that, and I'm in no way, shape or form a superman.

After that, dumbbells are extremely difficult to hold, so it's time to invest in a dip belt. Or figure out how to use two lifting belts to hold bigger dumbbells. However, the dip belt is much easier to deal with and worth the expense. Dealing with weights over 100 lb. on a set of dip racks set high off the floor can be daunting. Climbing up to the bars is difficult enough, but getting down after an exhausting set is often a risky task.

The solution: pull a bench in close to the dip racks. Not so close that the weight will hit it during the exercise, yet close enough for you to be able to step off it and assume a strong starting position on the bar. Then after you have completed your set, simply step back onto the bench.

Squeeze your legs around the weight and go up and down in a controlled manner. If you try and rush the movement, you'll start swinging.

The two most important points to know about weighted dips is that the weight has to be locked in tightly to your body and it cannot be allowed to swing during the execution of the exercise. Squeeze your legs around the weight and go up and down in a controlled manner. If you try and rush the movement, you'll start swinging. Should the weights start swinging like a pendulum, you should stop, step back on the bench and regroup. Swinging with a heavy weight strapped to you can be very traumatic to your wrists, elbows and shoulders, so do not allow that to happen.



The flat bench should be done with control: no bridging, bouncing or squirming.

One other form point: whenever you hit the sticking point, look up and lean back. That will help to keep the weight right under your shoulders, which is where it needs to be. I find it beneficial to change the sets and reps at every workout on weighted dips. Do 4 sets of 8, do 5 sets of 5, then plan a session where you do 2 warm-up sets of 5 followed by 3 or 4 sets of 3. Once a month, go after a max single, and after you have been doing these for a few months, start adding in a back-off set of as many as you can do. The back-off set should be 50 lb. less than you handled on your top-end set.

Benching

Dips and presses go hand-in-hand to build greater shoulder strength. One involves pushing a weight upward, and the other involves pushing downward. Now all you need is to add in incline and flat benches, and you have all the bases covered. If you have an incline bench where the angle can be adjusted, use the steepest angle possible. This will help

strengthen those muscles high on your chest, which are used much more so than those lower down. The higher angle also works the frontal deltoids better than at a lower angle and, of course, you'll be hitting those groups with the flat benches.

I won't go into form on either of these two styles of benching other than to say that perfect technique will yield greater results than raggedy form. Do each set precisely, which means pausing the bar for a second or more on the chest and not bridging or squirming around on the bench. One of the main reasons I prefer the incline over the flat bench is that it's nearly impossible to cheat on the incline. Try to rebound the bar and it will jump forward. Try to bridge and you will find that it's nearly impossible.

Five sets of 5 alternated with 3 sets of 5 followed by 2 or 3 sets of 3 works well for both the incline and flat benches. And, as I suggested with the dips, go after a max single about once a month.

Work the Back

While all of the aforementioned exercises do work the upper back to some degree, especially the overhead press, you will still need to do something specific for that area in order to have a balance of strength in the shoulder girdle. And all the groups have to be worked extremely hard to stabilize the shoulder joints.

I start all my athletes off with power cleans, and this helps to maintain that balance from the get-go. Next, I teach them the power snatch, which is extremely good in this regard because the bar has to be pulled higher than in any other exercise, thus making the muscles of the upper back work even harder. Plus, those long pulls bring the rear deltoids into play, and they're a difficult group to strengthen.

The long pulls of the power snatch bring the rear deltoids into play, and they're a difficult group to strengthen.

After good form has been established on the power clean and power snatch, high pulls can be inserted into the routine using those two grips. The high pulls can be done with much more weight than the power movements, and this is what you want—to overload the groups involved, which includes the traps, lats and the rear delts.

I find that a good way to bring the high pulls into a workout is to do them right behind power cleans and power snatches. This works well because the muscles that will be doing the work are thoroughly warmed up and the line of movement is already imprinted in your mind. Use straps on these so that you can give your full attention to pulling the bar just as high as you can without having to worry about your grip. I suggest doing the high pulls in sets of 3. This will allow you to concentrate fully on your technique. Your goal should be to use 50 lb. more in the high pulls than you handled on the power cleans and snatches.

The final exercise for building a stronger shoulder girdle is the shrug, using both snatch and clean grips. This is the ultimate overloading exercise for the upper back. But in order for them to be effective, you must pile on the weights and pull just as high as you can on every rep from the very beginning. Again, use straps. These can be done inside or outside a power rack. Beginners should stay inside until their form is exact.



The power snatch requires a long pull, which is perfect for strengthening the muscles of the upper back.

The initial warm-up set should be pulled high over your head—even so high that the bar hits the crossbar at the top of the rack. This will establish the pattern you want for all the rest of the sets. Fives work well, and your eventual goal should be to handle 585 lb. for 5 with the bar jumping at the top. That's six 45-lb. plates on each side.

There are few things in life that give me as much pleasure as waking up with sore traps. It tells me that my upper back is stronger.

The true test to determine whether you used enough weight on your shrugs is whether your traps are sore to the touch the next morning. If they're not, add weight. There are few things in life that give me as much pleasure as waking up with sore traps. It tells me that my upper back is stronger, and that is very important to me even though I no longer participate in competitive sports. Keeping that part of my body strong—and that includes my neck—means that I can do a great many things that involve my shoulder girdle, which, when you think about it, is involved in just about any movement you do during the day.

For aspiring athletes in any sport—football, baseball, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, volleyball, swimming, track and field, and all the rest—building and maintaining a strong shoulder girdle is even more important. Not only will it help them to perform better in their chosen sports, but it will also greatly reduce the risk of injury to their shoulders, back and neck.

Can't ask for much more than that.



Jody Foster

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Not One More Child Drowns: Infant Swimming Resource

A mother shares her story of tragedy and explains how you can prevent infant drowning.

By Marla Carnes

August 2011



Courtesy of Marla and Dwain Carnes

My son, Sterling, was born when I was 27 years old. I stayed home with him. In fact, he never spent a moment away from me during the first two years of his life. We never had a babysitter. He was with me every second of the day, except when we both slept. We had such an extraordinary bond with each other and loved each other more than words could describe.

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Sterling's second birthday.

When he turned 2, I enrolled him into a wonderful mother's-day-out program twice a week and joined a Bible study once a week. The first day he cried uncontrollably, as I had never left him before. They called me back to come pick him up within about 30 minutes. He saw me and ran into my arms crying.

Needless to say, it was very hard to take him back to the program, but I did. He cried less each time I took him, and within a couple of weeks, he loved his "school." I gave him a "special kiss" on his hand each time I dropped him off. That special kiss was from my lipstick. That made him feel safe and that a part of me was with him.

The Unexpected

On Wednesday, March 7, 2007, we went to a bridal shower immediately after Bible study for my future sister-in-law, who was also in my study group. I had never been to the house that the shower was to be held at. I wasn't sure if I should even go to the shower because I had my son with me and it would be hard to watch him and do shower stuff. I actually stressed about it for about a week prior to the shower, until another lady in our group said she would bring her 4-year-old daughter. I felt better that I wouldn't have the only child at the shower. However, I still needed something to entertain my son while we were taking care of shower business, so I bought him a new Mr. Potato Head set and the new Peter Pan DVD to keep him entertained.

When we arrived at the shower, we rang the doorbell and walked inside to the foyer of the house. Sterling was carrying his new Mr. Potato Head set. Directly in front of the front door was a wall of windows with a swimming pool in

the back yard. My first thought when we walked into the house was, "Oh no, there is a pool. I'm going to have to watch Sterling a lot more carefully. Oh wait, it's winter and we won't be outside." I felt a little relief about that.

Then I noticed the stairs in the house. I thought, "Oh no, there are stairs. I'm going to have to watch Sterling a lot more carefully." We didn't have stairs in our house, so Sterling was not good at going up and down them yet.

For some reason, Sterling stayed right by my side, which was out of his character. He was the type of child to just do what he wanted and go where he wanted. Surprisingly, he stayed right by my side as the hostess showed us around the living-room, kitchen and dining-room areas.

It was time to sit down for lunch. I was surprised there was not a seat at the table for my son, so I was thinking of letting him sit on the step behind my chair in the dining room to watch his portable DVD player and eat his lunch. The hostess noticed I was trying to figure out what to do with him and offered to let him watch the movie in her bedroom, which was also adjacent to the foyer, opposite the dining room. I said, "No, thank you." I told her that I had brought his portable DVD and that he would be fine watching that. She insisted and told me that the other little girl who was there had been to her house many times and watched movies in her bedroom. She invited me into her bedroom to have a look around. I didn't see immediate danger, so I agreed because he would be with another child and we would be just outside of the bedroom.

We dumped his new Mr. Potato Head toy set onto her bedroom floor and put the Peter Pan movie on in the DVD player in her bedroom. The only thing I was hesitant about was a step that led from her bedroom down into the master bathroom. I was worried he would fall down the step. I didn't walk into her bathroom to look around because I wasn't invited to do so. I've always felt that it's rude to walk into a part of someone's house when you have not been invited there. I was worried about the step, but I thought to myself that I was being overprotective and walked out of the room.

**I thought to myself that I
was being overprotective and
walked out of the room.**



Dwain, Marla and Sterling out and about. Sterling was not a stranger to water but wasn't prepared when he fell into a pool.

After we had sat down for lunch and a little time had past, I was beginning to feel that I needed to check on my son. About the same moment, the mom of the little girl said she was going to go check on them because they had been quiet for a little too long. I agreed that she should go because if I went, my son would have insisted I stay with him to finish watching the movie. My son was able to watch full-length Disney movies, and they kept his attention, so I wasn't overly worried about him being too quiet in the bedroom.

The other mom went to check on the kids, and about a minute or two later, we all heard her make a weird scream. We all thought that was strange, and another lady in our group said she would go check on them. A moment later, we heard the other woman yell, "Call 911!"

When I heard that, my first thought was, "Oh no, something happened to the little girl!" Then I heard the rest of the sentence: "Something happened to Sterling!"

I thought he must have fallen down the step to the bathroom. I stood up from the table, and I was paralyzed with shock. I couldn't move and didn't know what to do or

where to go. Someone must have said he had fallen into the pool. My brain was trying to process all this, as we had seen Sterling go into the hostess's bedroom but never saw him come out of there. I was thinking, "I never saw him come out of the bedroom. How could he have fallen into the pool? How did he get outside? I don't even know how to get outside!"

The ladies were pushing me where to go. There was a back door off the kitchen to the back yard. However, the door had been closed and locked. I was thinking, "How did he get out this door? We didn't even see him go by us to get to the door!"

As I was pushed outside, I saw my son lying on the side of the pool and the first lady who had gone to check on the kids was all wet as she performed CPR with another lady. Sterling was a bluish-green color. I was trying to stay calm because I thought my son was going to be OK and at any moment would sit up, open his eyes and cry. I didn't want him to be scared. As I approached him, I realized that he wasn't opening his eyes and wasn't breathing.

"No," I thought, "everything will be OK! This kind of thing doesn't happen to me!"

But Sterling was still blue, and he wasn't opening his eyes. They were still doing CPR on my baby!

I began to scream at him to wake up. I was desperate! I was screaming, "Wake up, Sterling! Open your eyes! Wake up, Sterling! Just breathe, Sterling, breathe!"

Finally, the police, ambulance team and firefighters all showed up. The paramedic quickly examined him. He listened to his heart and then cut Sterling's pants and shirt right off him. I was getting pretty panicked because Sterling had not woken up yet and still wasn't breathing. I told the paramedic to do whatever he had to do to get my son breathing again.

They put him on a stretcher as they continued CPR. I asked where they were taking him. The paramedics told me they were going to life-flight him to a hospital in Galveston where they specialized in drowning victims.

Fighting for Life

Still in shock, my husband and I somehow both arrived at the hospital at the same time. After a wait that felt like an eternity, a nurse came to get us. She asked if we wanted to see our son. I said, "Yes, of course!" She took us into the ER, where they were working on him. They were still doing CPR with the bag. But now he had his pinkish color back. He was no longer greenish blue. I felt some hope and relief when I saw that but then realized he still wasn't breathing on his own. That made me worry again.

I did the only thing I knew to do. I started to talk to him again, really loudly.

"Hi, Sterling! You are doing so good! You got to ride on a helicopter and you did so good. Mommy is so proud of you! Mommy needs you to open your eyes, Sterling. Please open them for mommy. I love you so much. You are such a good boy. Sterling, please open your eyes so we can play. If you wake up, mommy and daddy will take you to see Mickey Mouse and the real Lightning McQueen and the real Buzz Lightyear!"

It went on like this for a little while. Finally, the nurse told us we needed to step out again. They said they would come get us if anything changed. I didn't realize it at the time, but that was the hospital letting us come see our son one last time so we could say goodbye. They were going to let him go and call his time of death right after we walked out.

A few minutes after we walked out of the room, a nurse came running out of the ER and grabbed us to come back in to see Sterling again. They told us that he had a pulse! The nurse grabbed me and put her arm around me and said, "I just have to let you know this: your son must really love you because the second you walked out of that ER room, he got a pulse." She told me that kind of thing just doesn't happen. They transferred our son to the pediatric intensive-care unit. We got to walk with him, and I kept telling Sterling how proud I was of him and what a good boy he was.



After the accident, Sterling was airlifted to a hospital where medical professionals fought to save his life.

Our family and friends arrived at the hospital throughout the day and into the night. As it got late, most people needed to leave to go home and sleep. I was not going to leave my son's bedside even though I was exhausted, because if he woke up and I wasn't there, he would be scared.

Ultimately, my son had been without oxygen for an undetermined amount of time, and it had taken 90 minutes to resuscitate him.

We spent a total of nine days in the hospital with my son. We went through many ups and downs. We had hope all along the way, but then the doctors would explain to us that there really wasn't any hope. We had many meetings with the neurosurgeon and the doctors to discuss my son's day-by-day condition and best and worse outcomes.

Ultimately, my son had been without oxygen for an undetermined amount of time, and it had taken 90 minutes to resuscitate him. That caused his brain to swell, which caused more damage to it. It was determined that

the entire part of the brain that made my son Sterling who he was had been damaged too badly to work again. Basically, my son would never be able to feed himself, talk, walk, recognize me or do anything else that makes a person a person. This was the hardest reality to face. I, as a mother, could not give up on hope for our son. I could not quit fighting for him, but I realized that it would not be fair for him to have me keep him alive on life support when he would never be "alive" again.

We had a meeting with the brain doctor and all the other doctors, and they told us we needed to decide if we were going to take him off life support or continue what was going on. My son was getting worse, but at first I didn't really understand what the doctors were asking me to decide. How could I decide to let my son die? After hours of meeting with them, they helped us decide that it would be the best thing because things were not going to get better.

We decided that the next day we would take my son off life support.

Saying Goodbye

The doctors told me that after life support was removed, Sterling would either pass away immediately or very quickly, or that he could hang around for a little while, meaning a few minutes to hours to days to weeks—or that he would be stuck in a vegetative state. This was very scary to me. I didn't want my son to be a vegetable forever. That wouldn't be fair to him. I also did not want my son to suffer before he died. If I was going to let my son go, I wanted him to be able to go in peace and without suffering.

The doctors could not tell me which of the three scenarios was going to happen until we actually took him off of the machines. I was 30 years old when this happened. How do you make such a decision? A person should not have to think about taking a child off life support, especially when it's his or her own child! But that is what we were facing.

We had to let our families know what we decided to do and explain our reasoning to them. Many of them were against it, but they had not been in all the meetings with the doctors. We had to do what we felt was best for our son, even if it meant letting him go. It was the hardest thing my husband and I have ever had to decide in our lives.



Even though he was alive, Sterling had been without oxygen for too long.



Marla holds her son in the days before he was disconnected from life support.

The night before we took our son off life support, we let any family member or friend come and say goodbye to him. We didn't want a huge group of people at the hospital the day our son was going to be taken off support because we didn't know which of the three scenarios was going to happen, and we didn't want people waiting around the hospital for a long time wanting to know what was going on. We felt like it would put too much pressure on us, and we wanted our focus to be on Sterling. We wanted it to be private.

The night before the worst day of my life, after everyone was done visiting my son, I crawled in bed with him and cried and cried and cried. I hugged him and held him and just cried on him. I couldn't believe this was going to be my last time to hold him and touch him and love on him and be a mom to him. I didn't want to leave him. I wanted to stay with him all night long. I studied every detail of his face and body. I was so scared I would forget something about him. How is a mother supposed to let her baby go? My heart was shattered in a billion pieces.

All too soon, the day arrived. We had them set up a TV in his room with his favorite movie, *Toy Story*, playing. The song *You Got a Friend in Me* played and I had to fight back the tears. My husband and I told our son that we loved him before they disconnected his life support.

This was the hardest thing that we have ever had to face in our lives. It seemed surreal.

**My husband and I told
our son that we loved him
before they disconnected
his life support. This was the
hardest thing that we have
ever had to face.**



Sad parents saying goodbye to their baby.

The doctors asked if we wanted to hold him and I said yes. They picked Sterling up and placed him in my lap. I was sitting in a chair next to his bed. Then they took Sterling's breathing tube out of his throat, forcing him to breathe on his own. He started to throw up and was gasping desperately for air. I turned him on his side because he was choking on his vomit, and I was screaming at the nurses and doctors to help him. I then remembered that they couldn't. We had signed the do-not-resuscitate form.

I knew that it was best, but in the moment, I didn't want my baby suffering. The nurse came to my son immediately and suctioned the vomit from his mouth and throat. He was no longer choking, but he was still desperately gasping for air and was so weak that he could hardly fight. The doctor came to my son and gave him some morphine to help him calm down and relax.

Sterling never did open his eyes again after he had his accident. The morphine relaxed my son, and I was also able to relax. Over the next couple of hours, I held my son in my

arms as the doctors periodically gave my son morphine to keep him from suffering. I talked to him the entire

"Go, Sterling, go to the light. Mommy and daddy love you and it is OK."

I realized that he wasn't ready to leave me yet, so I started to tell him what my 2-year-old needed to hear. I said, "It's OK to go Sterling. Mommy and daddy will be there with you someday, but you need to go there first and check things out for us and see how things work. You won't have to share or take turns there. You can go on the jumpy-jump as much as you want and eat all the candy you want to eat."

We said his last prayer with him. We thanked God for every detail in Sterling's life that was important to Sterling, as well as to us. We told him what a good boy he was and we told him what a good son he was. We told him how proud and honored we were to be his parents. We explained to him that it was OK to go. We told him Jesus was waiting for him to come and play.

I don't remember exactly what I was saying at this moment, but a couple of minutes before my son passed, I felt a presence, an energy, his being, his soul, pass through me and go up. I do not know how to put into words exactly what I felt or experienced, but when it happened, I looked up at the doctors and shouted out to them that I just felt him pass through me. I didn't understand because he still was barely breathing and barely had vitals. I was looking to the medical team for an explanation, but they didn't know what I was talking about and could not explain anything to me. A couple of minutes later, my son's time of death was called.

His funeral was held six days later. We made it a celebration of his life. I didn't want anything else to be sad. We had balloons and popcorn, which we called, "poppy corn" because that was what Sterling called his favorite snack. No one dressed up because I told everyone that Sterling would not recognize them if they were dressed up. I wanted them to wear what Sterling saw us in every day. Many of our friends and relatives wore Disney shirts with Sterling's favorite characters on them. I put a Lightning McQueen and a Mater toy in each one of my son's hands when we buried him.

Not One More Child Drowns

I am telling you this detailed story of hell because I do not want anyone else to have to go through the pain of losing a child to drowning. People always think it won't happen to them. People always think they are the most watchful parents. Some people think it won't happen to them because they don't have a pool. Well, my son didn't drown in my pool. He drowned in someone else's pool at a house that we had never been to before. We were not even outside near the pool. It was not even summertime. It was winter. My son found a dog door that was in the master bathroom and was the size of an 8 x 11-inch piece of paper, and he crawled out. He was the size of a 4-year-old when he passed away. He was a day short of 2 years and 5 months old. I didn't know they had dog doors at the house we were at. I didn't even think to look for them.

I have had another child since my son has passed away. I have a daughter now. She looks just like her brother. I was very nervous about her being near water or in water because of what had happened to my son.



Sterling Carnes, beloved son.

My son took swim lessons from the YMCA, "mommy and me" classes. They didn't work. My son was already not afraid of water, and the classes did not teach him to swim at such a young age. I knew those classes didn't work, so with my daughter, I found Infant Swimming Resource (ISR). She has graduated from ISR and has already taken refresher courses. The refresher courses are mostly for my peace of mind, but they help her become even stronger in the water and give her even more confidence with her survival skills.

I think that if my son had taken the ISR lessons, he would still be here today.

I think that if my son had taken the ISR lessons, he would still be here today. The lessons not only give my daughter the skills to survive in the water in case she gets out of my sight, but they have also taught her to respect the water. In addition to adult supervision, ISR lessons are a second layer of protection for her around water. ISR lessons are the best gift I could give myself for peace of mind, and they're the best gift I could give my daughter for life-saving skills and confidence in the water.

Thank you, ISR, for all you do.

Founded by Harvey Barnett, Ph.D., in 1966, ISR endeavored to put an end to a preventable tragedy: childhood drowning. Barnett witnessed the aftermath of this tragedy after a neighbor's 9-month-old son reached the water alone. From that point on, Barnett vowed to do everything possible to ensure not one more child drowns, which is ISR's mission. A behavioral scientist by trade, Barnett adapted his theoretical knowledge of learning to pioneer the ISR Self-Rescue method used today to teach infants and young children to save themselves should they reach the water alone. What began as one man's mission has transformed into a worldwide organization. To date, ISR has 790 documented cases of children using ISR's survival-swimming techniques to save themselves from drowning.

CrossFit Kids supports ISR's mission that "not one more child drowns." Participate in Fight Gone Bad 6 on Sept. 17, 2011, to reach 3,000 kids. Sign up for the fundraiser at <http://www.sportsgrants.org/fgb6/isr> and make a donation by texting "FGB6" to 57682. From outside the U.S., text "FGB6" to 4246751014. The minimum donation is \$10, and standard text-message rates apply.

"All four of my children have successfully completed ISR's Self-Rescue program, and I am a believer that a moment's inattention does not have to cost a child his life," said CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman. "Through this initiative, CrossFit Kids and ISR will be teaching children to be survivors."

For more information about ISR, visit Infantswim.com.



About the Author

For the last 15 years, Marla Carnes has lived in the Houston, Texas, area with her husband, Dwain. They have a 2-year-old daughter, Peyton. Marla is a stay-at-home mom and devoted wife. Dwain is an entrepreneur in the auto industry and a loving husband and father. As a family, they enjoy spending time together swimming, biking, hiking, skiing and traveling. Both Marla and Dwain love to take Peyton to the park and to pull her along for shorter bike rides. Peyton loves to swim! Several months shy of her third birthday, she can already swim across the pool, jump off the diving board and go down the water slide on her own. She does not use any type of flotation device and does not require any assistance. She is self-sufficient in the water, although her parents still keep her in sight at all times. Peyton also loves to dress up like a princess. She wakes up wanting to wear a princess dress, shoes and earrings. She loves to dance and to do gymnastics.

THE **CrossFit** *kitchen*

K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

EGGHEADS

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

overview

Sometimes even your little rugrats have a bad day. Feed them this cute little meal! Who can stay grumpy when lunch is smiling back?

blocks

2 carbohydrate blocks
1 protein block
1 fat block

ingredients

1 hard-boiled egg
2 cups mixed greens (hair)
1 red pepper (mouth)
Sunflower seed (nose)
Black olives (eyes)
Drizzle of olive oil (1/3 teaspoon)

notes

For a larger meal, make a whole egg-head family!

directions

1. Cut hard-boiled egg in half and place cut side up on plate.
2. Cut a small circle in the side of a red pepper, and then cut the circle in half. Now you have two smiles! Place them on the egg heads. Cut the rest of the pepper and serve on the side.
3. Take one olive and cut it in two. Now you have two eyes! Place them on the egg heads also.
4. Use a sunflower seed for the nose.
5. Place the mixed greens on top of the egg head and drizzle with olive oil.



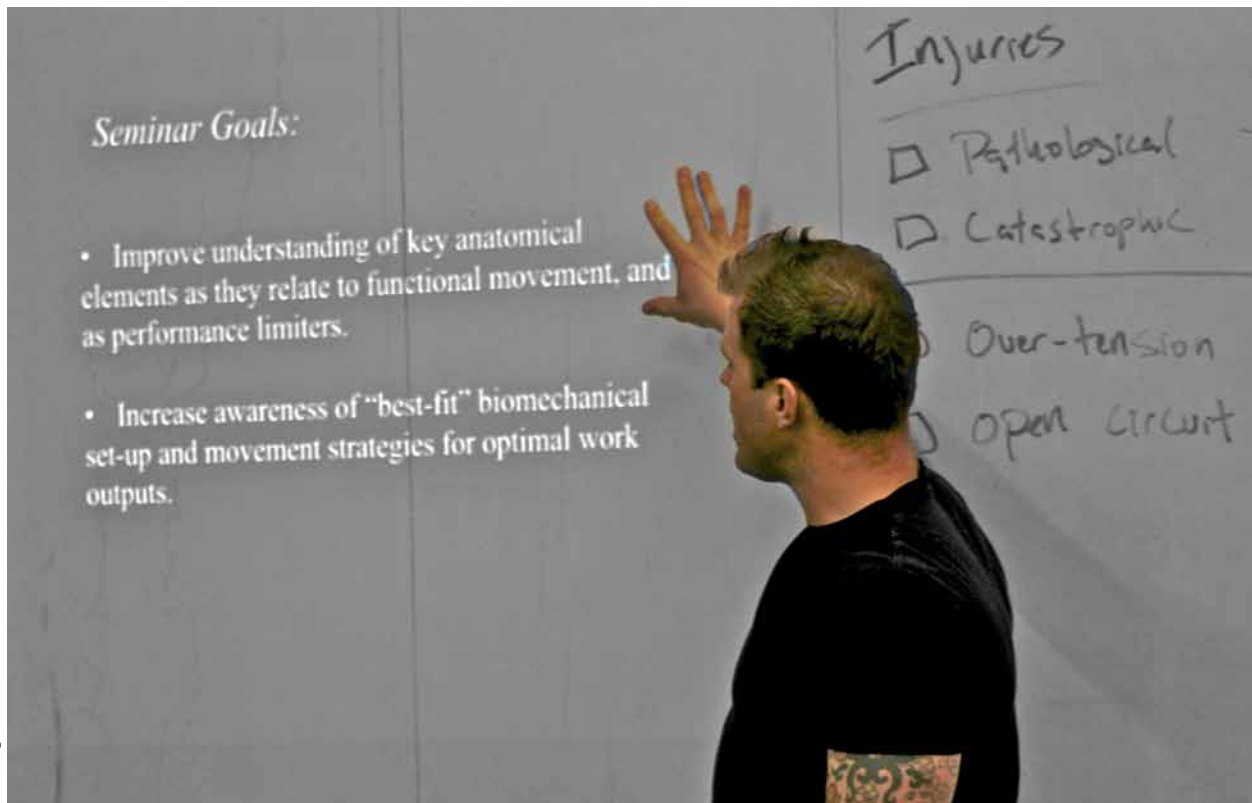
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Manage Your Own Business

Paul Southern presents a Q&A with mobility maven and original supple leopard Kelly Starrett.

By Paul Southern CrossFit Pleasanton

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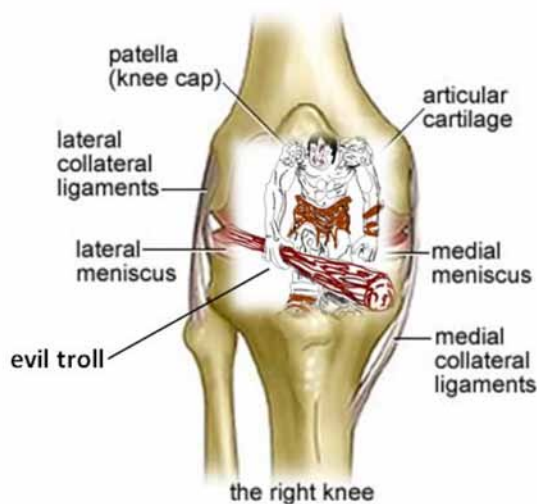
All images: Paul Southern

Kelly Starrett received his doctor of physical therapy degree in 2007. His popular Mobility Seminars sell out worldwide. His MobilityWOD.com site had more than 600,000 visitors in its first 80 days. Kelly's background as an athlete and coach includes high-school and college football, paddling whitewater slalom canoe on the U.S. Canoe and Kayak teams, and leading the men's whitewater rafting team to two national titles and competition in two world championships. He also owns and operates San Francisco CrossFit.

To say Starrett is in high demand is an understatement. In the last two weeks before our interview, he was in Scandinavia, Chicago and Los Angeles helping athletes improve. This is in addition to being a father and husband, running a burgeoning gym, and also rehabbing athletes as a doctor of physical therapy. If you have ever attended one of his seminars, checked out his MobilityWOD site or had a chance to talk with him, you will understand why Starrett is in demand: he has a really big brain.

And sure, there are a lot of big-brained people just hanging out at coffee shops near colleges, sneering at dumb people and doing nothing for mankind. But Kelly has a higher purpose. He is taking very complex ideas about human performance, rehab, kinesiology and health and breaking them down into single-serving sessions of legit-ness for anyone trying to improve his or her human condition.

If your knee bothers you after a workout, is it ebola? Should you run to a surgeon to fillet you open and remove the evil gnome under your patella, or should you learn how to manage your own business? I'll take the latter, and K-Starr is showing the way.



Uneducated guesses suggest knee trolls affect one in 10 Americans.

As a physical therapist and coach, Starrett works with athletes at the top of their game: professionals, Olympians, state champions, CrossFit Games winners, record-setting powerlifters, etc. He sees a lot of these athletes as Ferraris driving around with the handbrake on and a tree branch dragging under the rear differential. These athletes are operating at a ridiculously high level, and they still have so much more to give if they could just get into better positions.

I got Kelly on the phone for half an hour to talk to him about mobility, nutrition, mechanics and all the other aspects that help you “manage your own business.”

Kelly, I’m wondering if you can clear up some confusion. What is the difference between your mobility research and the stretching poster that came with my uncle’s Bowflex?

I use the word “mobility” and not “stretching” because stretching doesn’t work necessarily. Stretching typically refers to a muscle. Muscular stiffness and muscular position is complicated. It’s based on the joint position, neuromuscular control, midline stabilization and can just be how glued down you are from the workout the day before. So when you are just looking at muscle length, it is a short alley. What we really have to do is focus more on position. What I consistently see is that really good athletes, especially strength athletes, are potentially working at the limits of their position, and if we can’t optimize position, then we have really lost the chance to optimize mechanical advantage. We’ve lost the chance to optimize the best length-tension relationship of the joint, the musculature that affects the joint and the soft tissue that supports the joint.

“If we can’t optimize position, then we have really lost the chance to optimize mechanical advantage.”

—Kelly Starrett



A superfriend will gladly help you lock your ribs down while you hunt the supple leopard.

Can you give me an example?

Classically, I see guys that get short in the hip capsule. As soon as we improve their flexion by mobilizing the joints into the back of the socket—by using a movement bias, working on hip flexion—we are then challenging the hip-capsule tissue. Suddenly, that joint rests more mechanically efficiently in the back of the socket. The hamstrings have a better mechanical advantage, the leverages improve and I'm un-impinged, so I have more movement and set-up options. God forbid I'm flipping a tire and not just lifting a barbell. We see athletes working at the end range of their mobility anyway. When you are at the end range of your muscles, you're weak and soft there too. You just don't have a lot of length-tension overlap. ...

We make fundamental (Type 1) movement errors all the time. For example, if you are overextended in the thoracic spine (upper back), if your thoracic spine is stiff, and you tilt the whole thing (rib cage) back and you look like you are broken at the bottom of your rib cage, well it turns out that your lower traps just don't turn on very effectively. Then, if you can't stabilize your scapulae, you can't provide a very stable platform from which to press off of. The basic pieces of this are: what are the limiting factors towards getting athletes into a good position?

Is throwing a leg up on the 12-inch box at the gym for a little 10-second hamstring stretch going to get you to your next PR or work out that hammy pull from last week's co-ed softball train wreck?

Traditionally, athletes come to mobility and come to these issues only as a way of getting out of injury. And that is a fault of physical therapists and physicians and chiropractors alike that they do not impress upon the athletes that this is an issue of performance. And it is very simple. Pain—yes/no—is not a sophisticated enough mechanism to drive ... change about performance.

What is a significant thing is that if you have a capsular problem in the hip and we notice that you cannot get into a good position, and we get you to work on that, then we see an immediate change. We expect that your pain should resolve. We expect that your dysfunction should resolve. That is the easy stuff. But more importantly, if we are doing the right things, we see a change in power output, we see a change in strength output, and we see a change in work capacity. Choose your piece. That is how we know this stuff works.

So the right mobility work can help someone become a world-class athlete?

What's nice is that when we are chasing an idea of the best joint congruency, safest joint position, most integrated spine—these are also all the ways that I create the best leverages and best mechanics in the human being. Right?

(Powerlifter) Mark Bell deadlifts in a way that he loads all his tissues in order. He is able to keep his spine neutral. He loads his hips early. He tensions at the knee and hamstrings by tensioning in the right order. It speaks to his mechanical efficiency and his prowess.

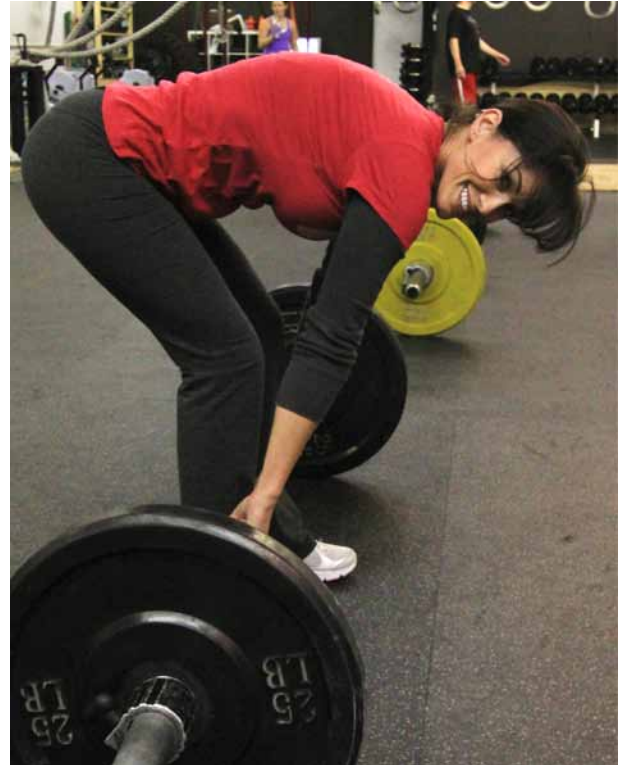
Now what we need to say is that if athletes cannot get into these good positions, then it's not an issue of working harder or pulling more effectively. The coach cannot cue an athlete into a better position, although cueing could be an issue. If we get an athlete into a better position, then we see a commensurate change in power output, in wattage, in poundage and in rep count. At the same time, I am also going to capture tissue health, tissue mobility, tissue extensibility and injury prevention. I expect that. But by focusing on performance first, I'm going to get those other beneficial things as a derivative.

“If we get an athlete into a better position, then we see a commensurate change in power output, in wattage, in poundage and in rep count.”

—Kelly Starrett

So how do we get athletes to mobilize their areas of restriction?

We know how to eat (theoretically), we know how to train, we recover, we obsess over the details, we watch weightlifting videos, and yet when we have knee pain we don't understand where to start. Or we don't understand how we are being inefficient or how we are running around with these brakes on. We used to play this game with rental cars a long time ago, uh, er, I mean, I have heard about this game In the game, you keep the gas pedal



Part of lifting is getting into a position of mechanical advantage. What does this athlete need to do to maximize that advantage?

floored all the time in the rental car. By the way, I'm not saying you should do this. But it has happened. Potentially. So you keep the gas pedal floored and then accelerate and decelerate with the brake. Right? You can run the car that way, and it is very hard on the car. It's called Gas'O Brake'O. And, potentially, one of my friends got out of the car after doing this and a bystander said, "Senior?"

My friend says, "Yes, sir, I am a professional actor and stunt man. You can tell I am the best in the world"

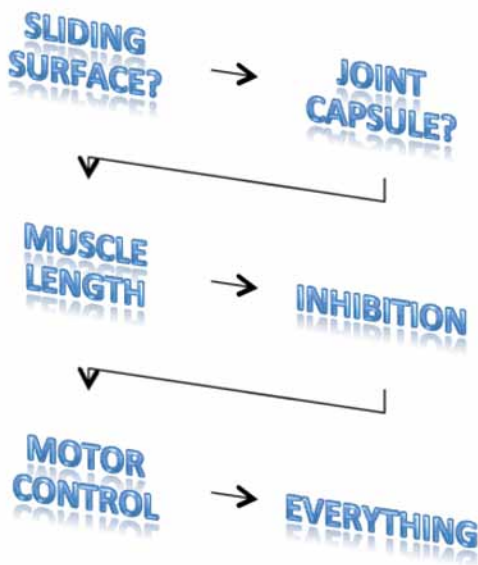
"No, no, Senior. Your wheel is on fire."

What happens is that a lot of athletes are playing Gas'O Brake'O. When we have pain or tissue failure, most of the time, 99 percent of the time, it is not a traumatic someone-rolled-into-my-knee injury. It is an issue of having a SLAP tear because I was in a bad position and there was translational loading, or I had to make a movement compromise based on my poor mechanics. So if we focus on the mechanics and we focus on positioning, then we can see changes in force production and we have tissue protection.

We play Gas'O Brake'O until we have a shoulder problem, and then we scramble around figuring out what's up. If you tweak your back or tweak your shoulder and miss a training microcycle or a training cycle and you have to lay off heavy pressing for two weeks to recover your shoulder, I'm two weeks ahead of you. If you can't stabilize your back because your hips are tight and you have a little back tweak, I get a week ahead of you training, and you can't catch up. There are only 52 weeks in a year, and if you give up a week, I've got you. Especially since the difference between first place and last place is one percent. The difference between gold medal and not-gold medal is very, very minuscule. And so why are we not paying attention to these little details?

Uh, "potentially" we had an off-road track that we took rental cars and golf carts on when I was in high school. Potentially. It's possible that it happened. I know that you have a CrossFit or conjugate way of approaching mobility. Can you talk about that?

We don't do the same training model every single day. Why should I mobilize or stretch the same way every single day? And we don't. It doesn't work. Athletes don't do it. So now we have these big strong athletes with huge work capacities playing Gas'O Brake'O, wondering why they tore their labrum, wondering why they have an impinged hip capsule. These things are so easy to spot. We are talking about issues of longevity, and we are talking about issues of performance, and they are one and the same.



Follow the path to mobility ... and performance.

How do you break down what needs to be done for an athlete?

Walk around and look at these guys. They are so tight. It's no wonder they can't get into good positions. It's no wonder they are making these movement compromises. They can't externally rotate the shoulders effectively. They can't generate a lot of torque on the set-up for the squat, the deadlift or the press. These are issues that are easily dealt with.

What I encourage my athletes to do ... especially those obsessed with lifting, obsessed with poundages, obsessed with wattage, obsessed with reps ... is systematically look at the tissues that are limiting this piece. And what do I need to get in there? And it is not just stretching. It's not just foam rolling. It's not just capsular. It has to be a system-wide approach. And why don't we take a system-wide approach? That's how we train.

So the questions are:

1. Is it a sliding surface problem? That is why we see ART guys, that's why we do rolling (foam roller), and that's why we unglue ourselves with lacrosse balls and massage.
2. Is it a joint-capsule problem? The joint capsule can be mobilized by the athlete.
3. Is this a muscle length problem? Rarely is the muscle length the issue, although it certainly can be. Usually it is a complex interaction of all these things.
4. Is it that I'm not in a good position and can't recruit the right musculature because I am "positional" inhibited?
5. Or is this a motor-control problem? Athletes are making very fundamental movement errors based on overextension or they are rounded when they pull because they are missing hip flexion.

It could be any of these things. Once you start to systematically deal with this, then suddenly mobility is about how you get into that good position, and then where does that lead? What I am a big fan of is working on mobility a little bit every day. If you try to mobilize, or stretch or treat the whole body every day, it is impossible. But if you have three movements that you are going to do one day, then you can systematically think about what tissues are restricted, what movements you are going to be doing (in your workout), and then I can just do that 10-minute piece. Suddenly I have a conversation with my body that is dynamic and sophisticated.



K-Starr on the job, making people more limber.

How do you sell mobility to guys who don't want to take the time to do it?

It's easy. We get athletes thinking about these details, and it is not overwhelming, and we change behavior because we tie that behavior into issues of performance. So if I am a strength coach and I get my athletes performing more effectively, then they are more likely to manage their business again (mobility). Most of us stopped stretching and stop mobilizing because we didn't see the benefit. And selling mobility based on what may or may not happen 20 years from now, that's just crap. No one gives a crap about that, and neither do I. Even though I see all the herniated discs, I see all the tractionees, I see all the torn labrums. Right? That's the problem. We live for today, we don't live for tomorrow. We need to get athletes to change their behavior and look at tissue health.

... We have a concept called "no days off." And if you are really trying to find out the limits of human performance, there is no such thing as a day off. There is no such thing as a non-training day. Your non-training day is recovery. It's some sled dragging. It's turning the ship around ...

It's getting ready. It's cultivating position. If you sit at a computer all day long, in a chair hunched over, why are you surprised that you are having a difficult time jerking 350? If you are sitting down all the time in a flexed position with a rounded back, why are you surprised that you round your back all the time when you squat or deadlift? So what we are saying with this no-day-off concept is that I'm always mobilizing, I'm always cultivating position, I'm always cultivating tissue health so that I am always ready to go when it is time to fire my guns.

"If you are really trying to find out the limits of human performance, there is no such thing as a day off."

—Kelly Starrett

There is a really great cyclist who said, "Whoever trains the hardest wins." And people were like, "What about over-training?" He said that if you over-train, then obviously you did not train hard enough to train that hard. ... What's preventing you from training that hard? Tissue recovery? Joint position? Injury? Nutrition? Not good enough. We can do better than that. There is no such thing as a day off anymore.

I just had a strength-and-conditioning coach from a university in Nebraska. He came to one of my seminars. In one week he said he averaged about four-to-six PRs for his team. He just had 56 PRs in one week with one swimming team of 26 athletes. It's an issue of, "Are the athletes in good position? How do we get them in good position?" Warm-up, recovery and mobility is how we get into a good position. I don't know what the percentage is on that, but he goes from four-to-six PRs to 56 PRs in a week with one team. And that is the idea. If we can make these ideas about performance, then we are going to capture the imagination and the interest of the athlete.

I tell all the people I work with, "Sell injury prevention to the coach." But it is all about performance to the athlete, and it should be for the coach too. And it is very simple to stick a lacrosse ball into your ass and open up your hip capsule and unglue your posterior chain. Lo and behold, you're pulling heavier weights. Why is that confusing to us?



Eat like a human, not an ignorant teenage human.

What part does nutrition play in tissue health and recovery?

If I'm walking around chronically inflamed and not seeing the correlation between my ability to recover from a difficult workout and the foods that I eat and the quality of the nutrition that I eat, then that is one of those very simple things that is easy to turn around quickly. And if I can't correlate my chronic dehydration and my junky torn meniscus with the fact that I am chronically inflamed and I look like a doughboy, then that is a real problem.

And what we are saying is that if you are serious about seeing where you can go and what is possible, then food is the most powerful drug on the planet. You should be eating like a human being: more of a Paleolithic model or a model that at least controls insulin. It's still huge amounts of meat, huge amounts of vegetables, high-quality fats. You've just gotta eat like a human being, not like an infantile teenage human being. If you really need to add the calories, a shot glass full of olive oil will do it for you. You don't need to eat the pizza; you need to eat a steak and a shot of olive oil. Eat three avocados and 12 eggs and tell me you're still hungry.

Kelly, this all sounds very illegal. Are you telling me that I'm allowed to mobilize my own hips without a license?

Human beings are wired for movement. We're not wired for musculature. You don't need to have a year of gross anatomy. You need to understand that squatting is flexion, abduction and external rotation. What are the pieces that I can mobilize and change? We should be able to take a crack at it. I can do CPR. If you pass out with an airway obstruction, I can trach you (cut a hole in your neck and insert a straw). If I have a cut, I can clean it up with soap and water, but if I have knee pain I have to go see a doctor? That's not good enough. We should have basic ways to solve our mechanical problems, and that is the mandate of the athlete. To the extent that we have failed to make the case for it is my fault. It's the fault of the performance-focused physical therapists. When we start looking at these issues, I can start putting athletes back on the field and into the competition who are healthier and can do it longer and can get into a better position and express more strength.

“It’s not enough to go get on a treadmill for five minutes and then go lift heavy weights. We really need to think about positioning and mechanics.”

—Kelly Starrett

Although sometimes it is nice to have a 100-kilo physical therapist that can squat 500 lb. dig into your hips. That helps. But you should know where to start to be able to maintain yourself and get into a good position. And that is a conversation that we have lost because we don’t take a holistic view. It’s not enough to go get on a treadmill for five minutes and then go lift heavy weights. We really need to think about positioning and mechanics. What is preventing me from getting into a good position? We see athletes that cannot express how strong they are all the time because their mechanics suck.

With the MobilityWOD.com, you take these complex ideas and break them down into single-serving mobility nuggets that are easily digestible for people. I like the fact that this allows someone to manage his or her soft-tissue business without needing a degree in physical therapy.

Concerning the MobilityWOD, it gives athletes a place to start. You can’t train the whole body in one single day. Let’s just take one piece at a time and work on all of the issues.

In 80 days, we have had over 600,000 visits. I’m getting e-mails from Iraq. I’m getting e-mails from the Texas Rangers, Special Forces. Guys and gals are using this and seeing a difference in their position. As a coach, it takes care of so many things that you see come up in your gym. If you are doing a good job with strength and conditioning, you should be finding all of the holes in your athletes. That is the definition.

The goal in any good strength-and-conditioning system is to exceed the previous efforts of my athletes every single day and to find out where they have holes so that they don’t fail—in life or in sport or in game or in mission. When we find those problems, what do we do about them?



About the Author

Paul Southern, CSCS, owns and operates [CrossFit Pleasanton/Reactive Gym](#). He has been a coach for the last 13 years. Before that, Paul served as a Fleet Marine Force Grunt Corpsman and led his team of corpsman to the Pacific Fleet Corpsman Cup Championship (a physical performance and skill-based challenge for the best corpsman). Paul is a lifelong learner. He has a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts (magna cum laude) and also studied pre-med at Hawaii Pacific University.