

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

October 2011

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Bar None

Kids see infinite games in a set of pull-up bars, and Jeff Martin describes three versions that just might work with “big kids” too.

By Jeff Martin CrossFit Kids

October 2011



Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

Every CrossFit gym has pull-up bars. For grown-ups, this is where we get our work done; for kids, even teens, the bars are not just a place to do pull-ups. Walk into any box with a thriving Kids program, and before class you will see kids hanging, swinging and generally playing on the bars.

We want kids to have a strong grip and shoulders as a precursor to pull-ups. At CrossFit Kids HQ, we harness this play and make it useful, turning strength acquisition into games and contests.

Three we often use are monkey hangs, monkey swings and Don't Touch the Ground. Monkey hangs are simple: the kids simply grab the bar with any grip and hang. Generally, we have the kids challenge themselves.

“How long did you hang last time? Let's see if you can beat it. 3-2-1 ... go!”

Monkey hangs work well for all our kids, from Preschool through Teen class.

To do a monkey swing, the child starts by hanging, then releasing one hand to tap his leg. He then reaches back up and grabs the bar, then changes hands and taps his other leg. Each leg tap is a point. Kids compete for how many points they can get, and the game is appropriate for the Kids and Teen classes.

At our box, we have a very nice Rogue Infinity Rack, and the kids play Don't Touch the Ground. The object is to jump up on the bars and traverse to the other end without falling off. The younger kids just negotiate down one side. The older kids have to change direction whenever they reach a new section. This results in them zig-zagging down the structure to the far end. We add this into our warm-ups or cool-downs.

Next time you walk in the gym, look at your bars through the eyes of a kid. I'm pretty sure you will see the endless possibilities for fun and engagement..



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Level Up?

Mikki Lee Martin outlines some considerations for advancing kids to the next level.

By Mikki Lee Martin

October 2011

All images: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids



In the CrossFit Kids Course, we discuss three class levels: Preschool (3-5), Kids (6-11) and Teen (12-17). Many official CrossFit Kids programs begin with one age group and grow into a second or third age division. We have experimented successfully with further divisions in age. However, additional divisions are appropriate for more mature programs that are staffed well enough to adequately support them.

A common challenge is knowing when to promote a child to the next class. Below are some ideas we have found beneficial to consider when making such a decision.

Physical Capacity

This seems obvious: can the child consistently perform at a predetermined level?

Create a list of basic performance metrics all children should be able to master as a prerequisite to advancement.

Preschool to Kids:

- The ability to hold and maintain the bottom of the squat position.
- Fully active shoulders in pressing movements ("push up the sky").
- Proprioception for overhead position ("hold up the sky; it is heavy").
- Basic understanding of the range-of-motion concept: where we start, where we go to, where we finish.
- Can "stand like a superhero" to demonstrate open-hip position.



In every group, some athletes will be more developed than others, and that development is often not dependent on age alone.

Kids to Teens:

- Consistency in demonstration of points of performance in each of the primary movements presented for this age group: squat, front squat, press, push press, thruster, deadlift, sumo deadlift high pull and power clean (the thruster is added, but the overhead squat and push jerk are usually reserved for Advanced Kids and Teen classes).
- Understanding and application of intensity.
- Maintenance of midline stabilization (a quick max-plank hold should answer this).

Keep in mind that recent growth spurts will interfere with consistency.

Because serious loading begins in the Teen group, midline stability is essential. Keep in mind that recent growth spurts will interfere with consistency.

Emotional and Social Maturity

Preschool to Kids

Developmentally, there are some big social changes during the ages 3-5. Kids begin with a reliance and focus on their parent or caretaker: mom, dad, grandma, nanny, etc. As they mature, the Preschool trainer becomes part of this small "circle of trust." Moving to a larger, older, more peer-directed group is a big change from a one-on-one mentor/caretaker relationship. A child must have developed the maturity to engage with peers as much as or more than with the primary caretaker to be emotionally ready for the step from Preschool to Kids classes.

They should be leaving the stage of "defiance" (2), and excessive crying or tantrums should be a thing of the past (3). There should be the beginnings of understanding of personal space and touching (interfering with others) (6), and they should be able to exhibit some self-control over impulsivity.

Kids to Teens

Participation in the Teen class requires the ability to begin to “dial in” distracting and impulsive behaviors—at least long enough to listen to the coach’s instruction. If not minimized, such behaviors can easily overwhelm a class. Allowing a squirrely population of young teens to inhabit your class will foster a culture of disrespect and be a detriment to learning.

Sarcasm, metaphor, satire and irony are common forms of teen communication (1) and are not always well understood by younger or emotionally immature children. Comfort with engaging in this type of banter should be considered.

Kids who run off to mommy in the Preschool and Kids classes are doing so within accepted social norms and boundaries; this is not so in the Teen class, where social growth and acceptance require independence. The tension between autonomy and parental control is greatest during early adolescence (7), the exact time we are considering promotion from the Kids to Teen class. This is no coincidence.

Attention and focus

Preschool to Kids

The child should be able to maintain attention and focus for each segment of a 30-minute class within the recommended structure:

Whiteboard: 3-5 minutes

Warm-Up: 3-5 minutes

Focus/Skill: 5-8 minutes

WOD: 5-10 minutes

Game: 5-10 minutes

The child must understand and respond to movement cues. During these years, the capacity for visualization should be developing, such that the response to the cue “angry gorilla back” changes from “What? I am not a gorilla, silly!” to “I can try to look like a gorilla even if I am not a gorilla” (8).



To move to the Teen class, kids must be able to show focus on a specific task.

Kids to Teen

We introduce significant loading (over 15 lb. and well into adult RX'd weights) in the Teen class. This creates the need for the ability of the young athlete to pay attention to and even predict the movements of others. The traditional “shiny object” distraction cannot happen when 95-lb. barbells are being dropped and kettlebells are swinging.

**The traditional “shiny object”
distraction cannot happen
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Occasionally, discussions of movement, nutrition, strategy and competition can be incorporated into skill work, or added post-WOD, requiring both focus and attention.

Size and Safety

Sometimes the mere size of a growing child is a determinant of placement. Growth spurts can make promotion suddenly necessary. WODs and games with kids who vary in weight from 35 to 150 lb. can be a challenge, especially when focus, attention and prediction of others' movement are not fully developed.

When kids outgrow a class solely because they are too large, trainers have a couple of options: work semi-privately with the child (with parent in line of sight) until they are developmentally ready to move to the next class or simply graduate them based on size, watching carefully for areas that may require trainer intervention.

Inconsistent Attendance Due to Sports Participation

Often parents and coaches believe it is necessary for young athletes to spend all their time in sport-specific training with limited focus on general physical preparedness (GPP). As CrossFit trainers, it is our job to educate them on the positive aspects of a better-rounded program through discussion and referral to sources such as the *CrossFit Journal* and others (e.g., 5), as well as the negative aspects of too much sports-specific training (e.g., 4,9).

Attendance may well affect advancement from one class to the next by virtue of lack of consistency and consequent retrograde performance. We encourage offering a maintenance option for your young athletes (attend once a week while "in season" at a reduced rate).



Careful coaching will create cohesive groups with strong bonds between athletes.

You Make the Call

One last issue to consider is pressure from parents to promote an unprepared child. Remember that, in your CrossFit Kids program, you are the authority and you are best qualified to determine a child's readiness to advance. Be direct and firm with parents who pressure you. The above guidelines are provided to assist you in presenting your position and making the right decision for the child and your program.



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Alfia Tellez-Hernandez/CrossFit Brand X

About the Author

Mikki Lee Martin is director of youth programs for CrossFit Headquarters and, along with her husband Jeff, runs CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif. She is a Level 3 CrossFit trainer (Level 3 has since been discontinued) with CrossFit certificates in gymnastics, Olympic weightlifting, nutrition, basic barbell training and mobility. In addition, she is an ISSA-certified Youth Fitness Trainer, a first-degree kenpo karate black belt, and a KMNTC-certified krav maga instructor. With the opening of Brand X Martial Arts in 1999, Mikki began training teens and children in krav maga and kenpo karate. She has been integral in the practical development of the CrossFit Kids methodology in terms of programming, class structure, and certificate course curriculum. She and Jeff developed and maintain the CrossFitKids.com website, and she designed and published *CrossFit Kids* magazine from December 2005 to December 2010, when it was incorporated into the *CrossFit Journal*.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Coaching Fitness From Scratch

After an incredible transformation of her body and mind, Stephanie Vincent has become a Level 1 trainer and has suggestions on how to coach the unfit.

By Stephanie Vincent

October 2011



I had been obese since I was a little girl.

I wasn't good at gym class, never played a sport and was always limited in my ability to participate in physical activities.



Chris Plentus

After avoiding physical tasks for most of her life, Stephanie Vincent now embraces them.

I walked through the doors of CrossFit King of Prussia at 320-plus lb., having no confidence or experience using my body. Greg Glassman says, “We fail at the margins of our experience.” In my case, those margins were about as wide as they could be. When I started CrossFit, I was undoubtedly starting fitness from scratch.

In a relatively short amount of time, I have made progress that probably did not seem possible—especially not to me. I have lost 100 lb. and gained many skills and personal records. I am one of CrossFit’s many success stories. However, this article is not about my success but rather what contributed to it. I share in the hope that trainers can help others like me reach their highest potential. My journey is my very own case study and serves as my base of reference, along with interviews I did with CrossFit King of Prussia’s lead coaching staff: Aimee Lyons, owner/head coach and HQ Seminar Staff member, as well as Jason Lyons and Nicole Sieller.

My entire life I avoided physical tasks. When I couldn’t avoid them, I expected to struggle and would give up when given half the chance.

Coaching the Mind

Aimee told me the biggest challenge of training her least-fit clients is “touching them deep inside to give them a sense of self-worth, pride and accomplishment. The mental hurdles must sometimes be overcome first.”

That was certainly the case for me.

My entire life I avoided physical tasks. When I couldn’t avoid them, I expected to struggle and would give up when given half the chance. I had zero self-confidence in my body. I never would have experienced the physical accomplishments I have if I had not begun to build the sense of worth, pride and accomplishment that Aimee mentioned.

I can remember moments during workouts in my first couple of months when I wanted nothing more than to quit. I’ll never forget one of them during my first Filthy Fifty. As I started the burpees—probably 30 minutes into the workout—I thought, “There is no way I am going to finish.” I looked at Jason Lyons, fully expecting he would give me permission to call it a day. He didn’t. He got on the floor and talked me through each of those painstaking 50 reps. Because of his high expectations, I finished that workout and discovered I was capable of overcoming, of surviving.

My future in CrossFit would have been very different if Jason had seen me struggling and given me permission to cut the workout short. Jason said that part of his job as a coach is to “show others that the correct answer to the voice in your head is ‘Yes, I can.’ ... If I look at a firebreather, they will come off of a pull-up bar and immediately look up, ready to jump back on. Someone with less ability may need to be reminded that they are capable of doing that, and it doesn’t matter if it takes a little longer. They *can* and *will* do the work.”

Aimee has said her expectations for all clients “are the same in terms of hard work, dedication and perseverance.” I would strongly advise trainers working with unfit clients to hold the same expectations for them as they do for others with more average levels of fitness. The expectation should be to finish workouts barring illness or injury. Those starting fitness from scratch might want to quit—and the slightest bit of permission might be all they need to stop. A trainer can refuse to give them that permission and then take the time to support them in finishing the workout. This may mean verbally coaching them to chip away one rep at a time or even running the last 400 meters with them.

**“The correct answer to
the voice in your head
is ‘Yes, I can.’”**

—Jason Lyons

It is also wise to enlist the entire community in that support. At CrossFit King of Prussia, athletes cheer on other members after they finish until everyone is done. I finished many workouts with a group of people motivating me. Finishing the workout—no matter how hard or long—teaches people of what they are capable, which is usually much more than they thought was possible. Learning the rewards of perseverance and determination is an invaluable lesson, especially for someone starting fitness from scratch.

Box jumps are one of the most difficult movements for me. When I started, the smallest box—just 13 inches—was too high. One day after a workout with box jumps, I added a plate to the stack of plates I had just used to see if I could do it. I landed it. The next class had started and was being instructed, but someone noticed my success. Next thing I knew, the entire class had stopped and was cheering me on, encouraging me to add plates to the stacks one at a time until I could jump no higher. I didn’t get to RX’d height that day (although I can now), but I jumped higher than I ever had before. The sense of accomplishment I felt after that experience was amazing, and it was bigger than what I had done physically. Being acknowledged by others made it even more powerful.



Tips on Coaching Fitness From Scratch

- Hold the expectation that workouts can and will be finished.
- Acknowledge and celebrate all accomplishments.
- Identify strengths and expose them publicly.
- Encourage self-acceptance of abilities vs. comparison with others.
- Develop and use scaling for gymnastics movements that allows for full range of motion that mimics the feel of the actual movement to build muscle memory.
- Suggest tactile cues to build muscle memory for correct and efficient form.
- Promote scaling as a process toward RX'd workouts rather than just a substitute.
- Encourage the highest possible expression of fitness rather than just reaching baseline fitness.



Jason Lyons

Vincent discovered she was a natural when it came to lifting.

Jason spoke about his practice of “celebrating each and every advancement made.”

He said: “It is important to do this with every client, but even more so with someone with no athletic ability so he or she is reminded tremendous progress is being made.”

A trainer should take note of clients’ starting abilities so that, as they begin to progress, it is noticed and can be celebrated. To someone starting fitness from scratch, being acknowledged by trainers and peers for accomplishments—even those that may seem insignificant in comparison—creates a sense of accomplishment.

I am not exceptional in any physical skills, besides one: I am strong. Maybe it was from carrying around all that extra weight for so many years, maybe genetics, but either way, when it came to moving external loads, I was a natural. My community quickly acknowledged my gift. To be admired for a physical ability was a first for me, and it was a huge confidence builder.

When he works with clients with little athletic ability, Jason said he tries to identify one thing they are good at and then exploit it as much as he can to build confidence. If a trainer can find that one thing, he or she can use that as a tool to building much-needed confidence in the least-fit clients.

To be admired for a physical ability was a first for me, and it was a huge confidence builder.

Coming in last all the time and needing extensive scales for so many movements was sometimes frustrating for me. Although I was making progress every week, I was still so far behind most others. I discovered that when I felt sorry for myself, I didn’t get much out of the workout and accomplished little. But when I accepted where I was and gave my all to the movements, I had the best workouts and often accomplished things I could not previously do.

I had been adopting self-acceptance as a practice in all facets of my life when I started CrossFit. In the gym, the results of that practice are astounding. By accepting my abilities and being fully present in each rep of the movement, I get better. Feeling sorry for myself by comparing myself to others gets me nowhere. When clients who start fitness from scratch get frustrated, trainers can best support them by encouraging them not to compare themselves to others, to accept what they can do today and to give their all to that.

Coaching the Body

In the *CrossFit Journal* article [Assistance for Bodyweight Exercises](#), Coach Glassman said, “Our often-repeated claim that CrossFit is ‘designed for universal scalability, making it the perfect application for any committed individual regardless of experience’ finds its greatest challenge with bodyweight exercises—the stuff we call ‘gymnastics.’”

Coach is correct.

Scaling reps and weights is easy, but figuring out scales for body-weight movements can be challenging. I could do none of the gymnastic movements as prescribed when I started, but I have been able to experience great progress. Because of my own success, I have come to believe certain scaling strategies with the body-weight movements will help all athletes, but especially those starting fitness from scratch, to work their way to RX’d movements faster.

I started with jumping pull-ups. After a while, I became frustrated with still having to do them, but even the thickest band did not offer enough assistance for me to get my chin over the bar. Then I had the idea to try two bands, and with the two thickest bands I finally did my first full-range-of-motion assisted pull-up. That was in late November/early December 2009. I set a goal to be able to do one pull-up with a single band by the end of 2010. By Jan. 1, I had already met that goal. Jumping pull-ups were a great starting scale for me.

However, it was being able to perform the movement with full range of motion that jump-started my progress toward RX'd pull-ups. (I have a few unassisted kipping pull-ups in my repertoire now.) My experience with the pull-up started shaping my beliefs on scaling.

I believe scaling should always preserve the stimulus. I have found the best scaling for quick and efficient progress does not just preserve the stimulus of the movement but also builds muscle memory. Muscle memory is created for the prescribed movement when a scale allows for either full range of motion and/or mimics the feel of the actual movement.

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Every experienced CrossFitter knows the importance of building muscle memory. It is essential in mastering movements, especially complicated ones like the muscle-up and the snatch. Nicole Sieller talked about how building good muscle memory helps athletes progress toward RX'd movements. When their bodies learn how a movement should feel, it helps them "call on the right muscle groups at the right time to accomplish the movement," she said.

Muscle-Memory-Building Scales

Push-Up	Banded push-up: The band is strung on the pull-up bar and placed around the waist. The push-up is done on the ground. Inclined push-up: Boxes, walls or benches are used to do a full-range-of-motion push-up in plank position. Width of hands should mimic width in a push-up on the ground. Knee-to-plank push-up: Push-up is done on the knees but full plank position is engaged once arms are fully extended for the negative.
Pull-Up	Banded pull-up: Band(s) are strung on the pull-up bar for full-range-of-motions pull-ups. To build muscle memory for kipping, the foot rather than the knee is placed in the band.
Knees-to-Elbows	Banded knees-to-elbows: A band is strung on the pull-up bar. Both feet are placed in the band with the knees on the outside of the band.
Box Jump	Scaled-height box jump: Bumper plates stacked to appropriate height (or added to boxes) for jumping.
Squat	Wall squat: Stand in front of a wall at a distance that allows for full depth to be achieved. The wall encourages a knees-out, chest-tall squat. A box or ball can be placed under butt to cue depth.
Handstand Push-Up	Handstand hold: Maintain the upside-down position for timed intervals whatever way it can be achieved. Bands can be used with the pull-up bar to help get into the position.

Jason Lyons



By getting creative with assistance gear, you can get athletes to do movements with full range of motion.

For someone starting fitness from scratch, especially those who have never been athletic, muscle memory might be missing for the simplest of movements: pushing, pulling, jumping and squatting. It is imperative to build muscle memory. Trainers can encourage clients to choose scales that do this.

Scaling for a box jump is a good example of a choice that builds muscle memory. When someone cannot do a box jump at the prescribed height, he or she could do a step-up or jump on a shorter box or stacks of bumper plates. I believe it would be better for future progress to use even one bumper plate over step-ups on a box of the prescribed height. In this case, the muscle-memory-building scale shortens the range of motion but mimics the feel of the movement.

My experience with the push-up also has proven the idea true. At first, I could barely do one knee push-up. Even after months had passed, an RX'd push-up continued to feel impossible. That changed when I read a blog post by the great CrossFit sage [Lisbeth Darsh](#).

Trainers can be creative in finding scaling strategies that build muscle memory.

"Stick with knee push-ups, and you know what you're going to get really good at? Knee push-ups. That's it. Not real push-ups. Not ring push-ups. Not even holding plank position," she wrote.

I am willing to bet most trainers would agree that there are many athletes who stay stuck on their knees or revert back to them during high-rep schemes. In Lisbeth's blog post, she suggested doing push-ups in full plank—at an incline where full range of motion is possible—at all costs. I took her advice and started using stacks of boxes instead of my knees. A short time later I did my first RX'd push-ups.

Knee push-ups might be the appropriate scaling at the start, but at some point continuing to do them might delay progress toward being able to do push-ups as prescribed. There is better scaling that allows for full range of motion in plank position and simultaneously creates the vital muscle memory as strength is acquired. These include knee push-ups that come to full plank position at the top, push-ups done in full plank position at an incline at a height that allows for full depth, or push-ups with a band. If I had to choose the best muscle-memory-building scaling, push-ups with the band would be the winner. They replicate the push-up exactly, simply removing weight so full range of motion can be performed.

Trainers can be creative in finding scaling strategies that build muscle memory. Nicole said she learned scaling is an art, not a science.

"It's something coaches should be constantly tinkering with and coming up with new ideas for," she said.

One scaling option I created is banded knees-to-elbows. During workouts with KTE, I became frustrated with my limited range of motion. By the end of the workout, I felt like I was doing nothing but hanging on the bar. Banded KTE allowed me to do the full range of motion of the movement; as a result, I get a much better workout and believe they will get me to the RX'd movement sooner.

Another way to build muscle memory is to use tactile cues in scaling.

For me, scaling with tactile cues with the squat has been transformational. I am not a natural squatter, to say the least. Part of the problem came from my limited kinesthetic awareness—the ability to sense my own body in space. I had knee surgery to repair my meniscus in April 2010. I was banned from deep squatting for four months. When I returned to it, I realized it was imperative I improve my form if I was going to get better at many other CrossFit movements.

Despite verbal cues, I continued on with a premature squat with lots of forward inclination until I was introduced to the wall squat. When doing squats facing the wall, the wall itself provides tactile cues for a tall chest, knees over toes and weight in the heels. My body finally got it. My squat has improved greatly and, in turn, so have my lifts.



Jason Lyons

Squatting facing a wall can provide a host of cues to the new athlete.

Scaling has become more than simply a substitute for movements I can't do but rather a tool for me to one day do them.

I am experimenting with a new tactile cue for double-unders. I have been tying a band around my arms when I do them to teach my body how to keep my elbows in, especially after seeing pictures of myself doing CrossFit Open WOD 11.1 and looking like I was getting prepared to take off. I plan to use this scaling during double-under workouts, and I am fully expecting it will quickly improve my form.

Someone starting fitness from scratch might be elated to perform a movement at all and think he or she is done with scaling. However, to continue to progress, tactile cues in scaling might be needed to provide external feedback, especially for those with little kinesthetic awareness. A trainer can suggest an athlete temporarily use scaling, such as a medicine ball under the butt for full depth. In my experience, it's amazing how quickly tactile cue scales build muscle memory for correct form and in turn make movements more efficient.

Coaching the Unfit for Life

Scaling has become more than simply a substitute for movements I can't do but rather a tool for me to one day do them. It doesn't matter to me if I finish the workout last because of my scaling strategies. When I scale, I scale so the movements are as difficult for me as they are for those doing them as prescribed. To their least-fit clients, trainers can reinforce that scaling is their friend and not their foe—an essential part of their success. Clients can be encouraged to accept that scaling is a process. If a scale gets too easy, it's time to find the next scale in the process toward RX'd movements.

Another important factor in my success is that I don't CrossFit to just get fitter. I CrossFit to discover the full potential of my fitness. Clients starting fitness from scratch might be just thinking it terms of losing weight and gaining some health. Trainers can encourage another idea: CrossFit can be much bigger than merely getting to a baseline of fitness. Trainers should want and expect that any client might become a firebreather. To unfit clients, the idea sounds like fantasy, but it is an ideal that will allow them to blossom into their possibilities in the gym and beyond. Coach Glassman once said, "Addressing (your weakness) will make a difference in you in ways you will never be able to predict prior to the experiment." We can never know what is possible until we test our limits and test them often.



Ilranda Alice

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About the Author

Stephanie Vincent began CrossFitting in September 2009. She became a Level 1 trainer in March and is interning as an assistant coach at CrossFit King of Prussia. Stephanie is pursuing training to be a professional life coach and is the author of the blog www.radicalhateloss.com. You can learn more about Stephanie's story on her blog or by listening to her interview on [CrossFit Radio Episode 156](#).

Denise Thomas, a CrossFit HQ Seminar Staff member, has my all-time favorite tattoo. It says, "What stands in the way becomes the way."

A whole lot is standing in the way when a client is starting fitness from scratch, as there was for me. But in all these obstacles lies a golden opportunity—not just in how the client's fitness can be transformed but in a trainer having the chance to be a part of changing someone's life for the better. CrossFit is truly universally scalable. Through its philosophies and community, it is unique in its ability to transform and do so quickly. I am forever changed because of it. I want my success to be replicated for as many people as possible.

Thank you to all the trainers who have been a part of my success, as well as to trainers all over the world bringing success to those who might not have experienced it otherwise.



THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



SNEAKY FUNGI

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

overview

Every kid loves pizza, and these minis have the pizza flavor without all the other junk.

In fact, these “pizzas” are so good they could possibly trick your kid into eating mushrooms. The sneaky fungi are covered with a traditional pizza topping, pepperoni and savory sauce.

Just don't tell the kids what the “crust” is made of. You might even need to prepare the dish ahead of time to disguise the secret ingredient. Serve as an after-school snack or an appetizer.

6 servings

blocks per mushroom pizza

.25 carbohydrate blocks

1 protein block

ingredients

6 portabella stuffing mushroom caps

6 oz. pepperoni slices

1/4 can tomato sauce seasoned with a sprinkle of dried basil, oregano, fennel, garlic powder, pepper and salt

additional supplies

If you want to add a more mature taste, top each pizza with sun-dried tomatoes before baking. To balance the meal, serve with a salad. And remember: don't tell your kids these pizzas are made of mushrooms.

directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Chop pepperoni slices into quarters, or a size that will fit into your mushroom caps, then set aside.
3. Mix sauce and seasonings together in a small bowl. Set aside.
4. Wash mushrooms and remove stems by gently breaking them out.
5. Arrange mushroom caps empty side up on a foil-lined baking sheet and fill each cap with 1 tsp. of sauce.
6. Use 1 oz. of pepperoni in each cap and add a dollop of sauce on top of pepperoni.
7. Bake in oven for 12-15 minutes, until mushrooms start to get juicy.
8. Let cool and serve to your favorite friends.



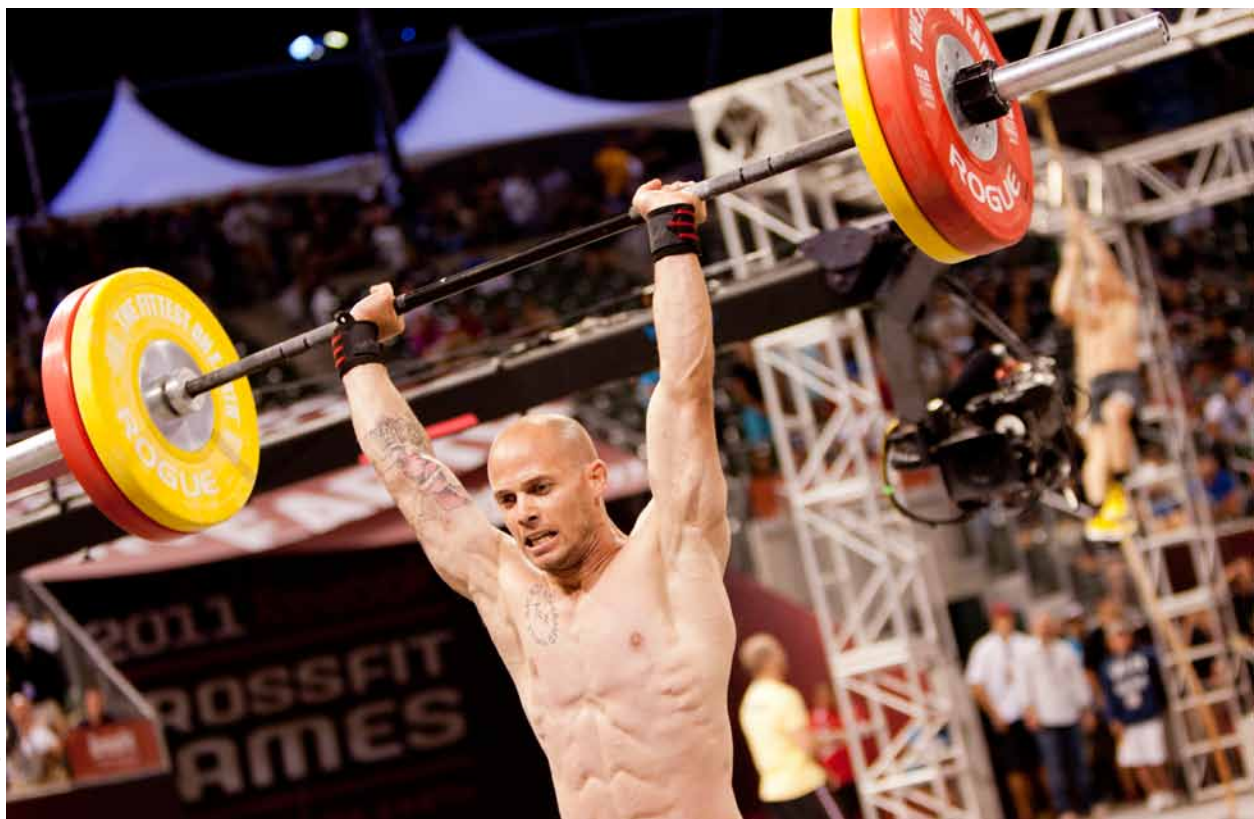
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Training the Mind

Andréa Maria Cecil looks at how three elite CrossFit athletes prepare their minds for competition.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

October 2011

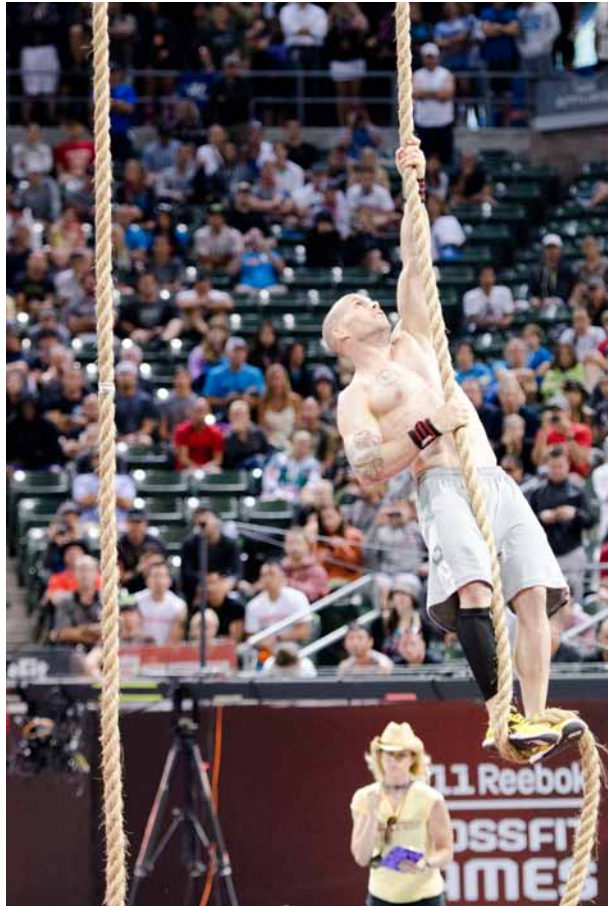


All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Like the body, the mind must be trained so there is a plan when things go wrong.

Such is the wisdom of David Yukelson, director of sports psychology services for the Morgan Academic Support Center for Student Athletes at Penn State University, an NCAA Division I school that is part of the Big 10 Conference. Yukelson is responsible for coordinating sport-psychology services for the college's 31 teams.

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During WODs, Games vet Chris Spealler tries to focus only on his own performance.

"The mental side of sport is very important at any level of competition," he said.

But there are many myths, said Yukelson, past president and fellow of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology in Madison, Wis.

"People talk about 'the zone.' It's not about 'the zone.' Teaching mental skills is about compensating and adjusting when things aren't going well," he explained. "There is no cookbook. You have to understand what the person's going through to develop a specialized plan for them."

Then that person must take ownership.

"An athlete needs a coach to provide instruction, give guidance and feedback," he said, "but then it's up to the athlete to execute."

Day 1, Event 3: Chris Spealler

The sky was dark, the stadium lights were bright, the crowd was loud, and the emcee's booming voice filled the arena.

**"People talk about 'the zone.'
It's not about 'the zone.'
Teaching mental skills is
about compensating and
adjusting when things
aren't going well."**

—David Yukelson

Rich Froning Jr., Ben Smith, Chase Daniels and Chris Spealler were in a hurried battle for a first-place finish in the final workout of the first day of the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

The workout:

15-foot rope climb, 5 ascents

145-lb. clean and jerk, 5 reps

15-foot rope climb, 4 ascents

165-lb. clean and jerk, 4 reps

15-foot rope climb, 3 ascents

185-lb. clean and jerk, 3 reps

15-foot rope climb, 2 ascents

205-lb. clean and jerk, 2 reps

15-foot rope climb, 1 ascent

225-lb. clean and jerk, 1 rep

Froning won the event with a time of 4:57.

Twenty-seven seconds later, Chris Spealler finished in fourth place.

Moments after the event, Froning said he could feel the other competitors figuratively breathing down his neck. He was acutely aware of where they were in the workout, he said.

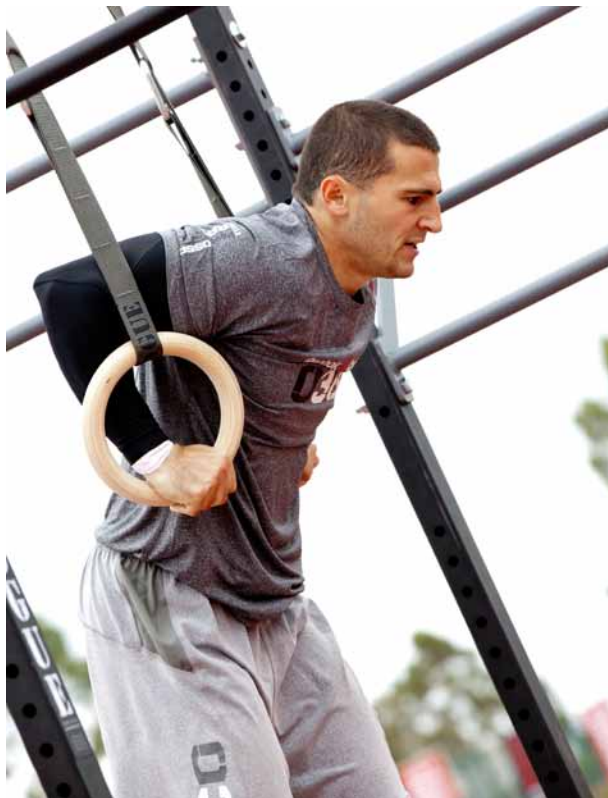
Spealler had a different perspective.

"I was just really trying to focus on my pace, on my own workout," he said minutes afterward. "I really just (was focused) on staying in my head regardless of the result because in the end it won't define me ... it won't satisfy me."

More than three weeks after the Games ended, Spealler said the mindset is one that must be learned.

"I just continue to think about focusing on what I can do and not thinking about the athletes around me," he said. "Even if I do win, it's not going to satisfy me completely. I think it's different (when you realize) that when you fail, it's not the end of the world."

The process is one Spealler called a "daily battle."



After a poor start to the Games, Austin Malleolo was forced to rework his strategy for the rest of the competition.

"I think it's different (when you realize) that when you fail, it's not the end of the world."

—Chris Spealler

Day 2, Event 4: Austin Malleolo

At the start of the second day of the Games, Austin Malleolo was in 43rd place out of 47 competitors—a position he described as "shitty." The former hockey player had finished sixth overall in 2010.

When the day's first event began, the intensity and focus on Malleolo's face said it all: He was on a mission.

The workout:

5 muscle-ups
245-lb. deadlift, 10 reps
15 GHD sit-ups
Sprint 50 yards
5 muscle-ups
245-lb. deadlift, 10 reps
15 GHD sit-ups
Sprint 100 yards
5 muscle-ups
245-lb. deadlift, 10 reps
15 GHD sit-ups
Sprint 150 yards
5 muscle-ups
245-lb. deadlift, 10 reps
15 GHD sit-ups
Sprint 200 yards

Daniel Tyminski was gaining on Malleolo, and the emcee made sure the crowd knew it, yelling the two men's reps almost as quickly as they completed them.

In the end, Malleolo bested Tyminski by 15 seconds with a time of 7:25.

The always-colorful Tyminski said he was gunning for Malleolo.

"I guess you could say he's a target of mine," Tyminski said with a smile minutes after the workout.

Malleolo, meanwhile, was focused on trying to drown out the noise, he said.

"I try not to pace myself off others because that's not CrossFit," he said just after the event. "The only person who can beat yourself is you."

Throughout high school, Malleolo played football, hockey and lacrosse. His one downfall, he said, was trying to please others.

"It's one of those things that really can creep in and really take control," he said two weeks after the Games ended.

"I try not to pace myself off others because that's not CrossFit. The only person who can beat yourself is you."
—Austin Malleolo

The exercise of focusing on his own workout—and no one else's—during a competition is difficult but necessary to ensure "I'm not falling back in an old pattern," Malleolo said.

Day 3, Event 7: Camille Leblanc-Bazinet

The sled was heavy.

For Camille Leblanc-Bazinet, it was roughly 150 lb. heavier than she was.

The first workout of the final day:

Three rounds of:

30 double-unders

95-lb. overhead squat, 10 reps

Then three rounds of:

10 handstand push-ups

40-foot sled push (sled plus 275 lb.)

The 5'2" 22-year-old had a difficult start with the sled, which was reluctant to move.

"The first time, I was totally stuck," she said minutes afterward. "Then I was like 'fuckin' no.'"

Leblanc-Bazinet ran into the sled, dropping her body into the lethargic equipment. And so it began to slide.



Weighing only 125 lb., CLB had to find the strength and the will to move the heavy sled.

**“Starting with a good attitude
can only lead you to a good
place and to a good workout!”**

—Camille Leblanc-Bazinet

Her mindset during the event was to enjoy it as much as she could, she said, and to try to remember “we do this because we like to play.”

Approaching competition in such a fashion is important because “you perform the best when you feel the best,” Leblanc-Bazinet wrote in an email nearly a month after the Games. “You can focus more on your body when you are calm and happy! Starting with a good attitude can only lead you to a good place and to a good workout!”

Pre-competition, she thinks about her athletic progress, her family and her friends, she said.

“I think about how lucky I am to have potential,” said Leblanc-Bazinet, who added that she also visualizes herself doing workouts to mentally prepare for competition.

Coaching the Mind

Twentieth-century folklore suggests bumblebees, according to aerodynamic calculations, shouldn't be able to fly.

This is the story Leblanc-Bazinet brings to mind when she coaches others.

“For me, the mental approach of (training) is a little bit like that. Since I don't know my limits or my real strength, I can do it!” she said.

Her boyfriend—and 2009 Games competitor—Dave Lipson told Leblanc-Bazinet the bumblebee story, which was told to him by Ben Bergeron, co-owner of CrossFit New England. The box handily won this year's Affiliate Cup.

At CFNE, there is a mantra, Bergeron said: “Think like a bumblebee, train like a racehorse.”



At CrossFit New England, the mental game is just as important as the physical training.



As most CrossFitters know, focus and confidence are as essential as strength and power.

Despite being “these really freaky animals that have these huge furry bodies and tiny little wings ... no one ever told the bumblebee (it couldn’t fly),” he explained. “You have to have 100 percent confidence in yourself and 100 percent confidence in what you’re doing.”

As for the racehorse: “They’re gifted athletes, they know they’re elite athletes. ... What they don’t do is they don’t second-guess the training program, they don’t second-guess the coach.”

“If someone is dialed in mentally, the performance just takes care of itself.”

—Ben Bergeron

If an athlete has 100 percent confidence in his or her training, programming and ability, “you have a huge advantage vs. someone who’s always doubting themselves,” Bergeron said.

There is much emphasis on mental coaching at CFNE and making sure to use positive cues—i.e., “finish strong” instead of “don’t quit”—to improve performance, he added.

“If someone is dialed in mentally, the performance just takes care of itself,” Bergeron said.

Offering the athlete an opportunity to entertain negative thoughts can lead to negative thinking, Leblanc-Bazinet said.

For his part, Malleolo said the mental, emotional and psychological aspects of CrossFit can easily be overlooked.

Malleolo went into this year’s Games having finished first at the Northeast Regional. He had high expectations for himself. So did everyone else.

"My first day of competition did not go as I planned. My physical preparation—where I was fitness-wise—was where I needed to be," he said. "The expectations and stress ... is what wore me down."

The 24-year-old ended this year's Games in 18th place.

"It's one of those things that if you're not on, if you're not ready to rock 'n' roll, you're going to end up at the back half," he explained. "I clawed my way back into it and finished in a reasonable position."

Malleolo said the mental aspect is a "huge part" of his coaching.

"It's not a competition with you and someone else—I drive that home," he said. "No one gives a crap about what you're doing, so focus on what you're doing."

Spealler said he tries to tailor his mental coaching.

"Each individual responds differently to pressure or the competition. So I think part of coaching is learning how to read people so you can give them what they need at that time," said the 32-year-old.

Yukelson echoed those statements.

"It's not a flip of the coin—ya know, 'I feel lousy today so I'm not going to perform well.' It's not a flip of a coin. It's systematic. It's not about thinking. It's about doing," he said. "The goal is to get to that frame of mind that is 'I'm ready and let's get after it.'"

He referred to this as "doing the doing."

"If they think too much, they might get into their own way because they're allowing the anxiety to get the best of them," Yukelson said.

His advice: Train, listen, observe.

"It's not genetic. It's not about being physically tough or mentally tough," he said. It's about "composure skills, so when things don't go the way you want, (you have a plan)."

Negative thoughts will happen, Bergeron said, but don't let them get the best of you.

"Obviously we're human. We're going to get freaked out," he said. "Don't stop the workout; don't let it destroy you. Realize it's a bad thought, then your next thought is positive and move on from there."



Courtesy of Andréa Maria Cecil

It's not a flip of a coin. It's systematic. It's not about thinking. It's about doing. The goal is to get to that frame of mind that is 'I'm ready and let's get after it.'"

—David Yukelson

About the Author

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

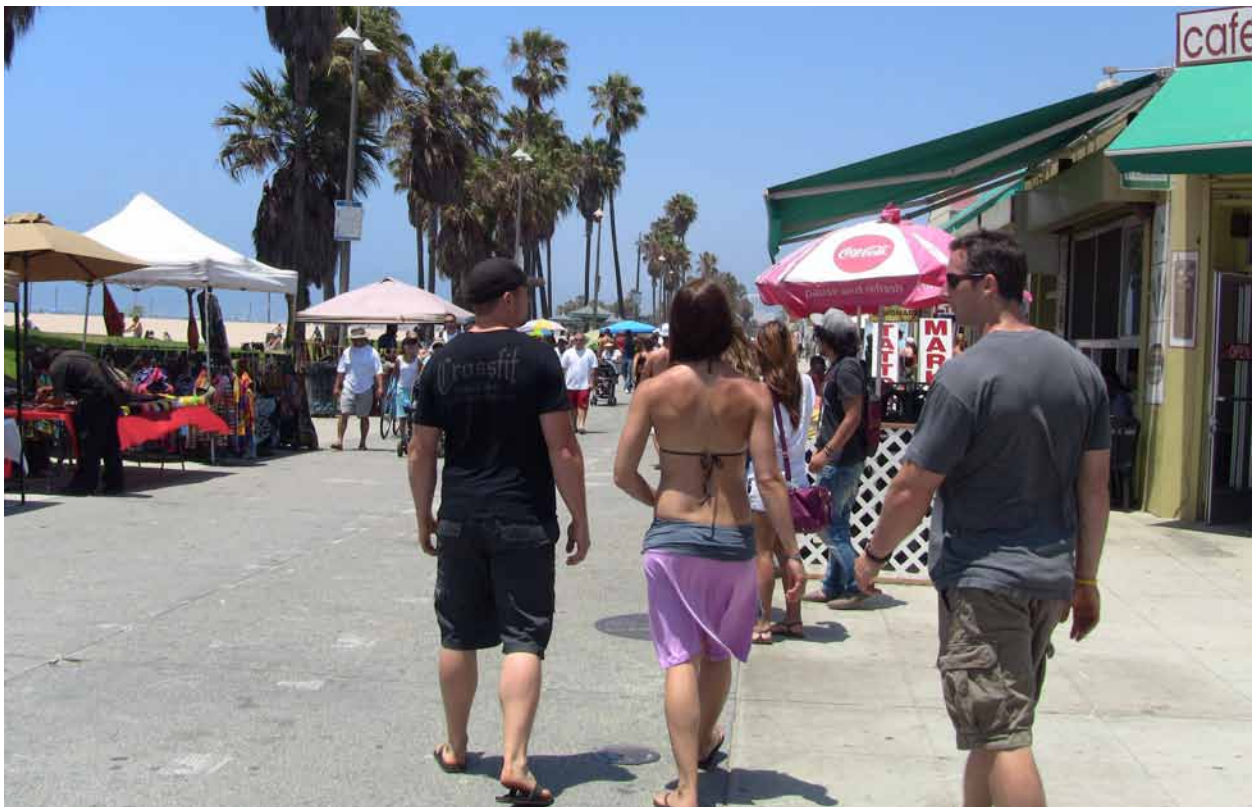
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

When Murph Met Cindy

Emily Beers explains why CrossFitters are happier dating their own kind.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

October 2011



All images: CrossFit Vancouver and Jen Broxterman

It all began when I started training a new client.

Attractive, charming, irresistibly bratty—he was the guy most girls are shamefully attracted to. He's the guy girls pretend they don't like, and while some of us successfully manage to avoid the pain these men cause, others are not so lucky. And although my client was a former pro lacrosse player and snowboarder, he had dedicated the last 10 years of his life to partying and getting girls as opposed to his fitness.

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Brad Leah and Mike Dahlman got married in Mexico while competing in the Reebok CrossFit Games Open.

Never having had trouble attracting a girl in his life, this CrossFit newbie was immediately intrigued, and offended, by the way CrossFit women think. It seemed he might have finally entered a world where, unless he started drinking the CrossFit Kool-Aid and added some load to his back squat, he might not be able to get the girl.

Sharing a Cup of Kool-Aid

"What do you mean you'd never date someone who doesn't CrossFit?" he asked me after our second one-on-one session. "That's bullshit. You're so superficial."

"I just don't think I could," I tried to explain. "Hear me out: CrossFit is just too important to me. It's not like this mystery man needs to be a CrossFitter when I meet him, but he damn well better get his ass in here soon enough," I said.

He shook his head, visibly appalled, and asked me if all CrossFit girls felt this way.

Putting the theory to the test, I called a girl over, a petite, lean, classic-looking hot CrossFit girl who was visiting our box from Calgary.

**It's not like this mystery man
needs to be a CrossFitter
when I meet him, but he
damn well better get his
ass in here soon enough.**

"No way. I could never date a non-CrossFitter," she said with unmistakable certainty in her voice.

"You guys are nuts," said my client, shaking his head.

After this, I started brainstorming to find a way to explain to my new client—let's call him The Outsider—why CrossFitters are better off with CrossFitters.

I came up with two concepts that helped both me and my client understand why CrossFitters have healthier relationships when they're with another CrossFitter:

1. Spiritual Compatibility—CrossFit is a lifestyle, not a sport. When we consider CrossFit as a set of beliefs about life shared by all CrossFit members, as opposed to a sport, it's easy to see why we're so compatible.
2. Practical Compatibility—I presented The Outsider with relationship evidence, a mini case study if you will, that showed the real-life cause and effect between CrossFitters and the growth of healthy relationships.

Concept 1: Spiritual Compatibility

Imagine, for a second, the following two hypothetical dating scenarios:

Situation 1: A first date between two college varsity athletes. The girl plays on the volleyball team. The guy is a quarterback on the football team. They're sitting down for dinner. Girl says: "You should try volleyball. Seriously, quit football and try out for the university volleyball team." Guy laughs and thinks girl is crazy. When he realizes she is serious, he bolts.

Situation 2: A first date between a CrossFitter and a cyclist. They're sitting down for dinner. Girl says: "You should come try CrossFit. Seriously, it will make your cycling better. Quit wasting your time pretending you're fit and actually become fit." Guy laughs and says he's never going to be interested in CrossFit. Girl bolts.

Situation 1 is arguably absurd. A basketball player doesn't try to convince his swimmer girlfriend to familiarize herself with Spalding and start working on her three-point shot. A figure skater surely doesn't want to convert her hockey-player boyfriend into a master of the triple Lutz.

However, Situation 2 is a familiar place for many CrossFitters. I can personally recount many disappointing dinners with prototypical bodybuilders, weakling triathletes and enthusiastic hikers.

This is why CrossFit isn't really a sport—it's an entire cultural system that creates meaning, a specific set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by most members. This also happens to be one definition of religion.



Loser does the dishes.

Then I arrive at my CrossFit box and am immediately surrounded by people who have chosen to stop making excuses ... When I see that, I'm immediately turned on.

In our case, instead of belief in a higher power, our beliefs are about taking action, embracing pain, and attacking our shortcomings to better ourselves and ultimately become better, stronger, happier, healthier human beings.

When I've tried to date someone who doesn't CrossFit, I find there is a lot of talk backed up by mediocre-to-pathetic amounts of action. Excuses constantly float around.

"Yeah, I need to get back in shape. Maybe when my schedule clears up a bit, I'll get back into it," says the man of the hour.

Then I arrive at my CrossFit box and am immediately surrounded by people who have chosen to stop making excuses and embrace what they know will make them better. When I see that, I'm immediately turned on, and it becomes hard to go back to the guy who says he's planning on joining a running group in the summer.

Damian Murray, a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia and a devout CrossFitter, agrees.

"I have much less patience for girls that routinely make excuses for why they aren't as fit as they'd like to be. Since starting CrossFit, I'm more attracted to girls who have an adventurous streak and are able to acknowledge their fears and act anyway," said Murray, who explained that these are the qualities he usually sees in CrossFit women.

Here's an analogy I presented to The Outsider to help him understand: CrossFit is like being a Christian who will only marry another Christian. An understandable concept, right?

Concept 2: Practical Compatibility (The Laws of Attraction)

Let's be honest: attraction matters. If you don't want to jump the person you're with 95 percent of the time you're around them, then what's the point?

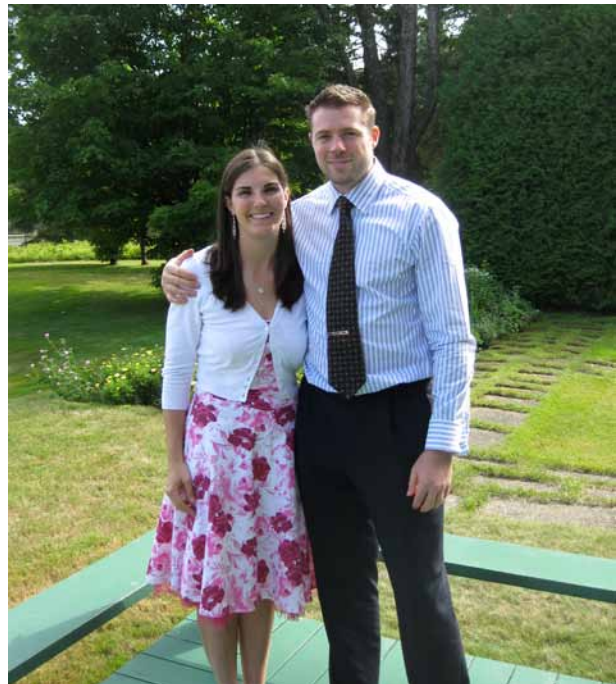
In my recent CrossFit Radio documentary ([Episode 164](#)), I explained that men who perform functional movements at high intensity are more likely to get laid. Simply put, after surveying 50-plus CrossFit women from around Canada and the United States, I discovered that CrossFit men are more desirable to women.

We heard Julie Collens, from CrossFit Milwaukee, explain why.

"You kind of want somebody who can throw you around—that's a functional movement," said Collens, who went on to say that men who can do a four-foot box jump become "worship worthy" to her.

And we heard from 27-year-old Lindsay McCardle, from CrossFit Zone in Victoria, B.C. When she began CrossFit, she was dating a professional golfer, but the more fit she became, the less attracted she was to the golfer, and soon her relationship disintegrated.

"Even though he was a pro golfer, he definitely was not (fit), and the longer we dated, the more and more that became obvious," said McCardle, who is now dating Lucas Parker, who won the Canada West Regional in May and qualified for the CrossFit Games.



***CrossFit couple Jen Broxterman and Dave Henry
of CrossFit London.***



Dahlmann will be competing in the Reebok CrossFit Games Affiliate Cup alongside her husband.

And we heard from Rhea Borkowitz-Stewart of Vancouver, B.C.

"I would never date any soft men Prior to CrossFit, I was definitely more lenient as far as my standards, but it's totally changed everything. And it makes the pool smaller because it's harder to find a man who is ripped," she said.

She added: "I've already checked out everyone at CrossFit Vancouver. I'm going to have to lurk at the other gyms around B.C. just to find some a beast of a man."

And it turns out these "beasts of men" are also more attracted to female CrossFitters.

**Parker is a man with a
posterior-chain fetish,
something only a CrossFitter
might truly appreciate.**

"Now, I have much more trouble being attracted to a girl that is soft," said Murray.

Similarly, Parker is a man with a posterior-chain fetish, something only a CrossFitter might truly appreciate.

"A good set of glutes is a glorious gift from God," he said.

Twenty-three-year-old John Gillis, from Kelowna, B.C., agrees.

"I'm an 'if a girls squats' kind of guy," said Gillis.

And Dave Kitchen, owner of Pure Athletics in North Vancouver, B.C., explains that skinny fat is no longer attractive.

"I now am more attracted to a woman who has some muscle. I would rather have a girl who is larger and more fit than a skinny fat girl, who only looks good in her clothes that hold it all together," he said.

Gift-Giving

Gift-giving in relationships often causes stress. From a missed anniversary to an inadequate birthday present, tensions often rise between couples when it comes to showing their love and affection through the act of giving a gift.

Jen Broxterman is the girlfriend of Dave Henry, owner of CrossFit London, in London, Ont.

She still remembers the first gift Henry gave her. They had been dating for a couple of months. It was her 25th birthday. It was wrapped in athletic tape. Broxterman tore it open feverishly and discovered a shiny callous brush.

If a callous brush is Henry's idea of a birthday present for his girlfriend, then it's probably a blessing he is dating another CrossFitter.

Communication

Miscommunications are often cited as being the leading cause of the death of a relationship. How many times has an intended compliment been misinterpreted as a dig? These kinds of situations arise significantly less when your partner is on the same page as you.

When Broxterman and Henry were in the early stages of dating, Broxterman had a hard time reading Henry, a man who wasn't always open and expressive about his feelings toward her. She was unsure whether Henry was truly into her or not. But he soon busted out his first verbal compliment.

Henry's uncharacteristic compliment might have offended a non-CrossFit woman, or at the very least left her to wonder what the intentions of his comment were, but Broxterman knew it was Henry's way of letting her know of his undeniable attraction to her.

His compliment: "Jen, you have a badass hamstring line."

Sex

They say sex doesn't make a relationship, but it certainly can break it.

The question I put to Craig Patterson, owner of CrossFit Vancouver, was this: "How is sex with a CrossFitter better than with a non-CrossFitter?"

His eyes lit up.

"I can make my girlfriend orgasm five times a night ... 10 if I haven't seen her in a while," said Patterson.

Final Reflections

Whether due to spiritual compatibility, a shared way of thinking, compatibility in gift giving and communication or just plain old primal attraction and great hard-bodied sex, CrossFit couples just seem happier to me.



Functional movements performed at high intensity can sometimes be enjoyable.

Broxterman, a registered dietician and founder of NutritionRX, says she loves how closely linked she is with both Henry and CrossFit.

"It's amazing to see Dave and I bring our two small businesses together and create an awesome package Working closely with your partner definitely has its challenges, but it's cool to see how much we both have helped each other grow," she said.

**"You know, CrossFit girls
are actually pretty hot."**

—The Outsider

I would argue that CrossFit plays an integral role in this growth, both for the individual and the couple. One trend I've noticed since being a CrossFit coach is that when a newbie who is in a relationship walks through the door, one of two things usually happens: either the newbie brings his or her significant other into the box within the first month or two and CrossFit becomes a shared hobby and passion for them, or the relationship with the non-CrossFitting partner disintegrates rapidly once he or she starts CrossFit.

If the relationship ends, what happens next is that I soon discover from my recently single client that his or her relationship had been poisonous in the first place and a blessing to have ended.

From this, I can only assume that CrossFit gives you the power and courage to leave bad situations and look for better ones.

I had a conversation with The Outsider the other day, my charming client who was at that point 14 weeks into CrossFit.

"You know," he said, "CrossFit girls are actually pretty hot."

Ladies and gentlemen, we might just have acquired yet another cult member.



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 Bathroom Graffiti, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness.

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 competition 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'll be competing in the 2011 CrossFit Games on the CrossFit Vancouver Affiliate Cup team.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Dialing It In

Not every athlete has ideal proportions for Oly lifting. Bob Takano goes over starting-position variations for the snatch pull, clean pull and jerk.

By Bob Takano

October 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

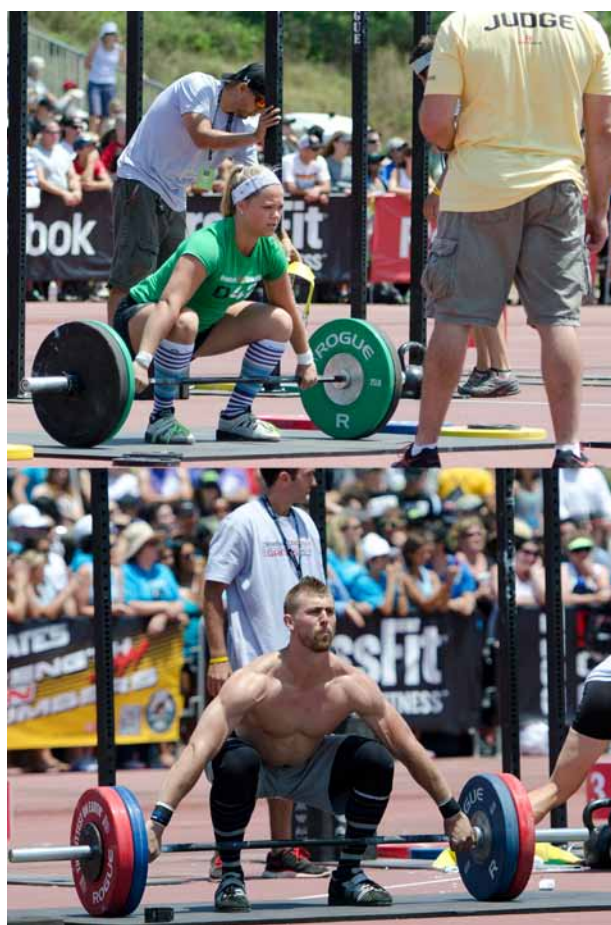
Most coaches and athletes who are first introduced to the Olympic lifts through the CrossFit Oly Seminar or the USAW Level 1 are taught technique that works for most people most of the time. It's the vanilla, one-size-fits-all version of technique that will cover most situations.

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If you are a coach, as you move along in your development, you will probably encounter individuals who need to vary their grip and/or stance because their proportions will not allow them to lift effectively using the vanilla prescriptions. This article will explore some of these variants. These alterations have been developed over an extended period of coaching not only weightlifters but also athletes from a variety of sports.

The Standard Technique

The standard techniques that are taught are based largely on the normal proportions for competitive weightlifters. Because a very specific activity such as the snatch or clean and jerk has very specific requirements, the sport tends to favor a certain body type in terms of proportion and body-mass distribution.



Alicia Connors takes a narrower grip in her snatch pull (top), while the broad-shouldered Spencer Hendel goes collar-to-collar.

Even if you are built like a lifter, you will find that some of these variants will come into play the more your body develops along your way through the sport.

Typically, competitive weightlifters have relatively long torsos and comparatively short arms and legs. The best ones have wide shoulders and hips, and the ratios of humerus to forearm and femur to lower leg are not excessive. Weightlifters also weigh more than other athletes of comparable height.

If you or the athletes you coach have proportions that are similar to those of the typical competitive lifter, you can follow the standard instructions and do very well. If you are not proportioned like a competitive lifter, small variations in technique will be required. Even if you are built like a lifter, you will find that some of these variants will come into play the more your body develops along your way through the sport.

Grip Variants for the Snatch Pull

Obviously, the longer the arms, the wider the grip. At this point, however, I must interject that the length between the inside collars of the standard Olympic bar is 1,310 mm for both the women's and men's bar. For athletes with proportionate clavicles who stand taller than 6'2" (187.96 cm), maintaining a reasonable snatch grip width may well be impossible.

Most beginning athletes will employ a grip width that allows them to comfortably support the weight overhead while performing an overhead squat. At this point, the narrower grip does not over-tax the wrists or the shoulder development. Furthermore, an optimal grip width will allow the athlete to pull and push under rather than swing the bar. Swinging will interfere with consistent placement of the bar overhead and negate the use of the full musculature.

As an athlete develops more strength in the shoulders, it becomes more efficient to widen the grip, as this will allow the lift to be made without pulling the barbell nearly as high as when the closer grip is employed. It does, however, cause the shoulders to extend forward at the start of the pull, places greater stress on the spinal erectors and latissimus, and raises the hips higher. That has the effect of moving the center of gravity further forward on the foot. This changes the angle of the back at the start of the pull but does facilitate the work of the hip and knee extensors.

Some athletes may find it necessary to narrow the starting snatch grip because of excessive stress on the wrists or a wrist injury. This will allow the athlete to support the snatch with the arms in a more nearly vertical angle, thus placing less lateral stress on the joint. This shift will cause the shoulders to start the pull more directly over the bar, lower the hips and place the center of balance further back on the sole of the foot.

Stance Variants For the Snatch Pull

Most beginning courses teach athletes to start the pull with the toes pointing straight ahead and the feet hip width apart. For athletes with a proportionately long femur, this stance will move the hip joint further behind the bar pathway and make it more difficult to generate explosive power. To move the hips closer to the bar, the stance can be widened.

This widening of the stance may best be achieved by pointing the toes and the knees slightly outward to shorten the distance between the bar and the hips.

The wide grip employed for the snatch will also cause the hips to be raised higher and thus changes the angle of the back as the barbell leaves the floor. If this places excessive stress on the back, the athlete might adopt a closer stance with the toes and knees pointing out slightly. This variant will enable the athlete to lower the hips slightly at the beginning of the pull.



Deb Corder's proportions dictate that her hips will be above parallel in her starting position.

Grip Variants for the Clean Pull

New athletes should approach the clean pull grip with the knowledge that the racking width changes for many individuals. It is not uncommon for a lifter to begin the clean with one grip width and then make it narrower upon racking the weight at the shoulders. All too many lifters take the front squat with the same grip width as the clean pull, and this is not necessary.

A grip spacing slightly wider than shoulder width is the norm. As the athlete develops shoulder musculature, the grip may move out. Long-armed lifters should move the grip further out in order to avoid having to start the lift with the hips very low and most of the stress on the legs. This is especially true if the legs are relatively short. Even though short-legged lifters may want to use the shorter levers to begin the pull, they will be at a more advantageous position with the hips being relatively higher. This may, however, put undue stress on the spinal erectors. Compromises might have to be made.

**The narrower the stance,
the higher the hips.**

Larger lifters with extreme thigh development may be forced to take a wider grip in order to accommodate the mass of the thighs in the starting position.

Stance Variants for the Clean Pull

The stance is more critical in the clean pull than the snatch pull as the weight is going to be approximately 20 percent heavier. The higher the hips, the greater the stress on the back musculature. The lower the hips, the greater the stress on the thighs and hips.

Athletes with long thighs need to start the movement with the hips relatively high. Fortunately most athletes with long thighs have relatively short torsos that can handle the stress on the back. The narrower the stance, the higher the hips. Athletes with longer thighs should assume a narrower stance with the toes and knees pointed slightly outward to bring the hips closer to the bar.

Athletes with short legs have better levers for initiating the pull with lower hips, and this can be facilitated by assuming a slightly wider stance. There is less of a need to point the feet outward.



***Athletes with long femurs will need to place
the hips relatively high.***

Jerk Grip Variants

The standard approach is to assume a slightly wider than shoulder-width grip. Problems arise when the upper arm is long compared to the forearm. This will necessitate a racking position where the elbows are especially high at the beginning of the jerk, which will inhibit the use of the arms in driving the bar off the shoulders. Any attempt to employ the arms prematurely will result in the athlete pushing the body away from the bar as soon as the feet leave the floor to split.

In an ideal starting position, the upper arms should form no more than a 45-degree angle with the vertical axis of the torso. This is not possible or is very difficult for those with an excessively long humerus. When the arms are held at the optimal angle or less, they can be effectively employed in the initial jerk drive.

Athletes with long upper arms should take a wider-than-normal grip and learn to use the legs to initiate the driving of the bar. They cannot use the arms until the bar has passed the top of the head, and at that point the arms are used to drive the body under the bar.

Most athletes with short arms have a short humerus and can comfortably rack the weight with a close grip and still maintain the elbows at an optimal angle for employing the arms in the initial driving of the weight overhead.

As a general rule, the wider the grip, the lower the height to which the weight must be lifted. It is not unusual for athletes assuming a wide grip to accommodate a long

humerus to move the hands outward in the middle of the jerk to catch the weight at a lower height. This is legal and efficient but requires considerable practice to perfect.

In Conclusion

Ultimately, all hand and foot spacings will have to be individualized over the course of a lifter's career. The initial one-size-fits-all prescriptions taught in most courses will work for most people, but those with extraordinary proportions should seek the guidance of a knowledgeable coach in making adjustments.

Due to developmental changes as the athlete progresses through a career, the spacings may have to be altered in order to maximize efficiency in performing the lifts.



Bob Takano



Chad Vaughn keeps his elbows slightly high in the jerk, while many athletes find success with the elbows lower.

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Kids Are All Right

Hilary Achauer travels to the home of CrossFit Kids to learn more about the future of fitness.

By Hilary Achauer

October 2011



All images: Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids

Jeff Martin needed a solution, and like most people looking for answers, he turned to the Internet.

It was 2003, and Jeff—a krav maga brown belt and fifth-degree black belt—was running a boxing, kickboxing and martial-arts gym. Two guys who had just started training with Jeff approached him and said they really wanted him to set up a kickboxing match for them. The problem was they didn't have much ring experience. Jeff knew that improving their technique would take months—maybe even years—of practice. The only way they might have a shot at doing well was if they could figure out a way to quickly improve their fitness.

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At the same time, Jeff was reaching his mid-40s and finding it harder and harder to maintain his fitness level.

"I hadn't made any significant progress in years, and I couldn't believe or accept that that was the way it had to be," said Jeff.

So he sat down in front of the computer and started researching. One of the search terms he remembers entering is "crazy body-weight workouts." Eventually he stumbled across CrossFit.com. This was 2003, when most people's concept of "functional fitness" involved biceps curls on a Swiss ball. The short and brutal CrossFit workouts, with their combination of gymnastics, weight-lifting and "cardio" movements, seemed strange to Jeff, but he thought he'd give it a try.

To experience what he'd be asking his fighters to do, Jeff tested one of the workouts first. He figured it wouldn't be too difficult because he was an experienced martial artist and gym owner.



CrossFit Kids demonstrations were a hit at the 2011 Arnold Sports Festival.

He was wrong.

"I thought I was in good shape," Jeff said. "But that first CrossFit workout laid me out."

"I thought I was in good shape, but that first CrossFit workout laid me out."

—Jeff Martin

The two fighters watched Jeff do CrossFit and were so alarmed by his post-workout appearance—lying on the floor, gasping for air—that they refused to try it. But Jeff was hooked.

"The other trainers said (CrossFit) wasn't good," said Jeff. They didn't want to try these new exercises, but Jeff had a plan.

"I could at least make the kids do it," he said with a laugh.

Jeff started taking his young teenage students through CrossFit workouts and began CrossFit training for his 12-year-old son, Connor, as well as Connor's best friend, 13-year-old David Shanahan (now the owner of CrossFit Maxim in Scotts Valley, Calif.). He said he saw a change in their athleticism within weeks.

Pretty soon, Jeff was integrating CrossFit into his martial-arts classes, having the kids kick the heavy bags and then run over and do kettlebell swings and burpees.

Jeff got his Level 1 certificate in 2004, and his wife, Mikki, got hers shortly after. Then in November 2004, Jeff and Mikki were in Colorado attending another certificate course. They went to breakfast with Greg and Lauren Glassman, and Jeff began telling Greg all about his work using CrossFit with the kids in his martial-arts gym.

Greg looked at him and said, "You should start CrossFit Kids."

Children Take the Lead

Eight years later, CrossFit Kids is a rapidly growing element of the CrossFit program. More than 200 elementary and high-school teachers have come through the CrossFit Kids course, and Jeff and Mikki have been contacted by over 1,000 teachers who are using CF Kids via the website (CrossFitKids.com) or using the lesson plans they provide. CrossFit Kids has also been adopted by about 400 CrossFit affiliates.

As a mom of a 3-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl, I have more than a passing interest in CrossFit Kids. My kids occasionally accompany me to the gym, swinging on the rings while I sweat through a WOD, and my 6-year-old just started CrossFit Kids at my affiliate, CrossFit Pacific Beach.

To find out more about CrossFit Kids and the Martins, I drove 36 miles northeast of San Diego to CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif., Jeff and Mikki Lee Martin's martial-arts and CrossFit facility, and the home of CrossFit Kids. I bumped down a dirt road until I found the 4,600-square-foot warehouse.

Jeff sat down with me in an office space outfitted with a beanbag and desks, which I later found out functions as a study hall during the school year, complete with twice-a-week tutors.

Jeff is soft-spoken but fiercely passionate about the benefits of CrossFit for children.

"We get as many emails asking about CrossFit Kids from affiliates as teachers," he said. "Most of the teachers don't do CrossFit. They find us by searching the Internet, looking for a better way to get their kids moving and fit. The standard fitness program offered by many schools just isn't working."

It's a common story—CrossFit appears when a person needs it most and changes his or her life. As I talked to Jeff, he looked out the window at a young man walking by and said, "You've got to talk to Cole. He came in here four years ago. He was 11 years old and was 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 235 lb. Now, at age 15, he's 6 foot 3 and weighs 190 lb. He can deadlift 455 lb., squat 330 lb., and has a 4-minute Fran time."

Jeff opened the door and brought Cole in the room. It was hard to believe this tall, lean boy was once so out of shape he had trouble getting up out of a chair.



Still a teen, Cole can put up numbers that are the envy of most adults.

Cole sat down and started telling me his story. He wasn't encouraged to try CrossFit by his mom, his dad or another adult. Unlike most of the kids who end up at Brand X, Cole came on his own.

"I was trying to get fit," he said, "so I could get faster on the racetrack."

Cole races International Motor Contest Association dirt-track modifieds, a precursor to NASCAR. He started off with go-carts and moved up the ranks until he began racing professionally against adults.

Jeff, who had been listening to Cole talk, spoke up.

"Ask him if he has his driver's license," Jeff said.

Cole and Jeff looked at each other and grinned. Cole said, "No, I don't."

"He doesn't have his driver's license. And he races against adults," Jeff said with bemused pride.

I asked Cole how CrossFit helped his racing, and he said, "I got a lot better at everything. Sometimes I'm strapped in the car for up to three hours, and my CrossFit training helps me stay alert. My mental and physical coordination has improved, which is important when you're driving 140 miles per hour."

Cole said he lost weight by following a Paleo diet. His friends are used to him carrying a big cooler every day at school filled with his Paleo-friendly food. Cole made such a strong case for CrossFit that his mom and aunt started coming in, and they each lost 100 lb. Now his younger brother works out at Brand X, too.

At CrossFit Kids, the children often lead the adults.

At CrossFit Kids, the children often lead the adults. Jeff tells stories of kids taking goldfish crackers out of the cupboard and throwing them away. He told me about children who won't let their parents shop in the middle of the grocery store. They ask their parents to stick to the outsides of the store and shop for fruit, vegetables and protein.

CrossFit Kids sparks more than physical changes in children. Time and again, Jeff said he's watched kids' grades improve and seen them become more focused and capable as they get better at CrossFit.

Jeff and Mikki both have extensive backgrounds in martial arts, which puts a strong emphasis on discipline and building positive character traits in children and young adults. There's never much discussion of building character and enforcing discipline in CrossFit Kids—everyone is too busy talking about improving form on the deadlift or learning how to do a kipping pull-up—but Jeff says these traits are natural products of the sport. Jeff says he sees results equal to or better than what he saw as a martial-arts trainer.



Under close supervision, young athletes are held to high movement standards and must earn the right to use weight.



What obesity epidemic?

Mikki walked into the room when we were talking about discipline and said, “Almost every 12- or 13-year-old cheats at the WODs when they start out. They don’t cheat by the time they’re 14. And that’s not because we say anything to them about it. They just learn about that sense of accomplishment and don’t want to cheat anymore.”

They’ve Got Time

The CrossFit Teens class, for kids 13 and up, was starting, so Jeff and I walked next door to watch from the area they call “the Hurt Locker.”

As the kids went through their warm-up, Jeff told me they use this time to assess the teens.

“They aren’t always very communicative,” he said. “They may have had a hard day or are tired from practicing a sport. We see how they are moving and scale accordingly.”

Jeff and the other trainers never tell the teens or kids to hurry up. They focus on technique and pay attention to how the kids are feeling.

“They have years to get this right,” said Jeff. “I want to make them move better, and eventually they’ll move faster.”

Next door to the CrossFit Teens class, a CrossFit Kids class was in full swing. Their teacher was Alison Patenaude, a petite but energetic woman who is also a middle-school P.E. teacher. The CrossFit Kids class is for children ages 5-12, and their workout includes common CrossFit movements like box jumps mixed in with more kid-friendly exercises like a 50-meter skip. The class moves quickly, with an emphasis on the joy of movement.

**“I want to make them
move better, and eventually
they’ll move faster.”**

—Jeff Martin



Fitness aside, CrossFit Kids is about having fun in every class.

After the class, I asked Alison about what her middle-school students think about CrossFit.

"One day a week I designate a CrossFit day," she said, "and the kids love it. It evens out the playing field, because it's new to everybody. It's so scalable, and we can see gains and improvements quickly. The fitness scores have improved, and the other teachers tell me they overhear the kids talking about their WODs and comparing air-squat times."

Alison teaches in a low-income district, so her equipment is limited. She uses cardio steps instead of boxes, jump ropes and some old tires given to her by her step-father.

But CrossFit doesn't need fancy equipment to change lives. At the beginning of the 2010-11 school year, Alison had a 12-year-old girl in her class who was a little overweight and extremely introverted. The girl spent most of her time with her head down, bangs covering her face, hanging out in the back of the class.

"In the first quarter, I had my students write one or two fitness goals they wanted to achieve by the end of the school year," Alison said. "Hers were to 'stay vegetarian through 2011 and lose 10 lb.'"

Alison began CrossFit training for the girl in P.E. and provided her with nutrition education and one-on-one discussions about the beliefs and methodology of CrossFit.

"She ended the year 15 lb. lighter, a non-vegetarian!" Alison said with pride. "She took 3 minutes and 30 seconds off her mile time, she was the girl *everyone* wanted on their team, and she became one of my top athletes."

The Future of CrossFit

The Reebok sponsorship and big-name star athletes make CrossFit exciting. The million-dollar purse at the Games lends the sport a high-visibility sparkle, ESPN2 broadcasts showcase the new sport of fitness, and it's encouraging to see professional athletes using CrossFit as part of their training.

But the heart of CrossFit is with people like Alison, who use it to change the lives of their students. It's with kids like Cole, a 15-year-old with big dreams and endless determination.

Alison told me the changes in her student were not only physical. After a few months of CrossFit as her P.E. class, the girl started wearing her hair back off her face. She made new friends and was volunteering to demo WODs in front of the class. The changes spread to other areas of her life. The girl's teachers saw an improvement in her grades and self-esteem as a result of her success in CrossFit.

CrossFit Kids is often called "the future of fitness." I always thought that meant future fitness stars—training kids to be little Rich Fronings or Annie Thorisdottirs.



The future of fitness.

What I realized after visiting Brand X and talking with Jeff, Mikki and Alison is that it's really about keeping our kids fit so they *have* a future. It's about giving them the discipline, strength and self-confidence they need to be successful and happy and strong adults.

That's the future of fitness.



Courtesy of Hilary Achauer

About the Author

About the Author: Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor with a background in marketing and communications. An amateur-boxer-turned-Cross-Fitter, 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

Cops and Robbers

Megan Atkinson uses the long arm of the law to create fitter kids.

By Megan Atkinson

October 2011



Number of Players

Unlimited.

Equipment Needed

4-8 cones

2-4 pool noodles that have been cut in half

Facility

Any open space.

Set-Up

Use the cones to create a square/rectangle in the middle of the floor.

Object

The cops (taggers) are trying to get everyone else (robbers) into jail.

Rules

There are between two and four cops who have pool noodles. If your group is less than 10 kids total, you should have two taggers. If you have more than 10 kids, use three or four taggers. Taggers can have one or two pool noodles, and the game starts with all cops inside the jail (the square created with the cones).

On "3-2-1 ... Go!" the cops try to tag as many robbers as possible. If a robber is tagged, he or she has to go to jail. To get out of jail, kids have to get 10 patty-cakes with any robbers outside the jail. A patty-cake is a clap and a high-five across the body of the pair. If the robber who is the partner runs away to avoid being tagged, the athlete does not have to start over.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Taking It to the People

Can CrossFit meet on the country's obesity problem head on?
Stacy McCann thinks so.

By Stacy McCann

October 2011



All images courtesy of Stacy McCann

It's Sunday and a friend hails me amidst the exiting crowd of the church. My non-athletic husband quickly panics and adopts an Olympic sprint pace toward the parking lot with the kids. Coward. I turn to my girlfriend and smile patiently.

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CrossFit can be used by people regardless of age and fitness level, making it accessible to everyone everywhere.

"We want you to start up an exercise group here at church," she bubbles. "The elders approved it and we want you to lead it. You're in such great shape!"

My armpits start to sweat. Six minutes later, I untangle myself from the gaggle of church ladies and promise to think it over. I duplicate my husband's Carl Lewis impersonation toward the car, cussing under my breath like an ambushed soldier in a foxhole. Someday I'll meet that damn Glassman guy and will punch him square in the nose for getting me addicted to CrossFit. Now even the church ladies want in on the secret. How ridiculous!

I slam the car door and relay their insanity to my husband.

"You should do it! You love that stuff (CrossFit), but can they sue you if one of them drops dead of a heart attack

or something? That stuff you do will kill 'em." My husband: always the optimist.

But he's not far off. The women are—with the exception of one other youngin' under 40 like myself—significantly overweight, and most remember where they were the day JFK was shot. They, like my aging parents, believe in cutting calories to slim down and good old-fashioned genetics to save them. They also collectively have a three-page list of medical ailments and joint issues, as well as bathroom cabinets full of pills. There's no way I could help those sweet, old church ladies find their inner tigresses and get healthy.

Or could I?

**I believe CrossFit has a role
in the grassroots movement
to build a stronger, healthier
populace.**

There's a verse in Matthew 9 (don't get nervous, this isn't about religion) when Jesus looks over the multitude of people and has compassion for them "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Spiritual discussions aside, I think the quote applies to the physical status of our country. America faces a national health-care crisis as millions grow in girth and disease, threatening the very future of our youth and our nation's destiny. There are thousands of CrossFit boxes cropping up around the world to help better the health of their respective communities. But I believe we, as a community, cannot only do a lot more to help address this national epidemic of obesity but can also offer a missing element in the government's plans for this hazardous situation. I believe CrossFit has a role in the grassroots movement to build a stronger, healthier populace. But how do we bridge the gap between elite fitness and Uncle Bud's couch, and why should we care?

Allow me to indulge in a quick anecdote for perspective on the latter. In 1996, my conservative upbringing compelled me to drive three hours back home with a girlfriend—a Democrat—to vote in the presidential election. Heading back to our beach-side college town, we talked politics and why she voted for Bill Clinton. After a couple of minutes I could sense she hadn't really voted because she understood the Democratic platform or found a particular issue burdensome. On the contrary, it was just something everybody should do and, "It doesn't really matter who you pick. After all, that's Washington. It has nothing to do with me." Ah, my young, dumb, sweet friend, it does. I preached for 20 minutes on how that box she just checked would hire a bunch of other people who, in turn, would hire a whole government full of people, including judges who will be sitting on the bench to hear her traffic violations and set tax rates that affect how much of our meager wages we keep each week. It affects all of us.

Journeying through my daily regimen, I observe volumes of people lumbering through life in extra-large jeans with diet sodas in hand. I recently volunteered at my

son's school for a party rewarding those students who spent four weeks reading a meager 15 minutes a day. As I served ice cream and soda punch with powdered-sugar doughnuts, I cringed watching child after butterball child roll up to the table sweating from a minute on the dance floor and looking for some refreshment. These kids were in third grade and not unlike many children across the country. It affects all of us.

Those third graders are the leaders of tomorrow. Their sedentary parents are our co-workers, neighbors, friends and even family. And their grandparents are part of the largest group of American people for whom President Barack Obama and our government are scrambling to figure out how to pay for health care. And guess who gets to pay for them all? It affects all of us.



Most athletes aren't ready for a parallel handstand push-up, but the CrossFit program is scalable and accessible to everyone.

The Problem: Obesity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses things like BMI, weight scales and risk to determine people's level of obesity, but we all know who they are. They include sedentary Baby Boomers like my parents who fad diet and scale their intake to 1,200 calories a day only to balloon up again when they can't resist the holiday cookies. America has grown slothful and sick. They are topping the charts in coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancers and soda consumption. Even if they're only 15 lb. overweight, it is only a matter of time before most weigh themselves into the obese category.

We've all tuned out the statistics: 72.5 million U.S. adults were obese in 2007-08, according to the CDC. The agency considers obesity to be a national health threat. In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion, according to an August 2010 [CDC report](#). Let me repeat that: \$147 billion. During that year, people who were obese had medical costs that were \$1,429 higher than people of normal weight, according to the report.

According to the CDC, obesity affects some populations more than others:

Non-Hispanic blacks: 36.8 percent.

Non-Hispanic black women: 41.9 percent.

Hispanics: 30.7 percent.

Non-high-school graduates: 32.9 percent.

And obesity prevalence also was higher in particular regions, according to the CDC:

The South: 28.4 percent.

Midwest: 28.2 percent.

In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion, according to an August 2010 CDC report. Let me repeat that: \$147 billion.



Sadly, physical activity is a rarity for many, and obesity rates are increasingly concerning.

Obesity has doubled in adults and tripled in children from 1980 to 2008. Click [here](#) and you can find the CDC's U.S. Physical Activity Statistics for your state. The numbers are alarming and growing.

There's something to be said for the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Solutions under the Obama administration to help the unhealthy and uninsured in this country will drive health-care costs upward of \$1 trillion and add \$230 billion to the federal deficit by 2019, according to a July 2009 letter Congressional Budget Office director Douglas W. Elmendorf wrote to U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means. Let that soak into your paycheck and stew.

Any CrossFit trainer will tell you to look up "hyperinsulinemia" on the Web and you'll never again look at that Oreo-cookie cheesecake as rapturously. Any CrossFitters will tell you how much better they feel, how much more efficiently they move, and how much less pain they're in because of their newfound passion for the CrossFit paradigm. So how do we bridge the gap between what we know works and take it to the communities around us, especially the low-income students in your hometown, perhaps in that neighborhood you avoid driving through where kids eat sugar cereal for dinner and know every level of Super Mario Galaxy by heart?



Changing a nation's fitness won't be easy, but it is possible.

Let's look at the government's approach. Fortunately, the medical community and our nation's leaders are aware of the problem and are building campaigns to battle obesity in our country.

"The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation 2010" opens by saying this:

Our nation stands at a crossroads. Today's epidemic of overweight and obesity threatens the historic progress we have made in increasing American's quality and years of healthy life. Two-third (sic) of adults and nearly one in three children are overweight or obese. In addition, many racial and ethnic groups and geographic regions of the United States are disproportionately affected. The sobering impact of these numbers is reflected in the nation's concurrent epidemics of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases. If we do not reverse these trends, researchers warn that many of our children—our most precious resource—will be seriously afflicted in early adulthood with medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. This future is unacceptable. I ask you to join me in combating this crisis.

There are many areas in which one could help overhaul the Big Mac culture: the health-care community, government programs, grassroots sports, local schools and so on.

The 21-page vision statement includes proposals to fix the epidemic. You can guess the logical ones: prevention, nutrition training, physical activity and more time restrictions for television and computer usage. Further, the surgeon general recommends taking these changes to all avenues of a child's world: day-care center, school, parents, doctor's office. Likewise, adults need to be reached at their work sites—from the construction workers to the CEOs.

The recommendations require much more space and time than can be simply highlighted here. The concluding appeal is for grassroots efforts to engage in the endeavor to snatch America from the road of sloth and disease and put it back on the highway of ingenuity and health. There are many areas in which one could help overhaul the Big Mac culture: the health-care community, government programs, grassroots sports, local schools and so on.

One Person at a Time

Josh Wagner of [CrossFit Apex](#) is trying to make a difference. Wagner co-owns the affiliate with his wife, Tanya, 2009 CrossFit Games winner.

Wagner expands his sphere of influence over the high-school students he teaches daily. Supplied with little more than a district-approved curriculum to teach various sports in 90-minute classes, Wagner challenged himself to bridge the gap between his brimming passion for CrossFit and the unhealthy sizes and lifestyles of his students. With most of his students prepared to stand around in class when not interested in learning the dictated sport-du-jour, Wagner began implementing fitness for half of each class, CrossFit-style. Running, swimming, burpees, lunges, push-ups,



Targeting young people might be a way to educate them and help them pursue lifelong fitness.

mountain climbers, push presses, dumbbell work and squats became part of the mandatory curriculum. Daily instructional topics range from functional movements to nutrition, sugars, cheating and integrity.

**“Kids will buy in based
on your passion.”**

—Josh Wagner

The result is that the entire school has bought into the program. All the teachers are CrossFitting, and all the fitness testing has been incorporated and standardized with CrossFit measurements. All push-ups at his school are chest-to-deck and performed in one of three variations according to ability. Heavier kids are pushing just as hard as the varsity athletes, and the community of support between them is astounding.

“Instead of running for distance, we run for time,” Wagner said. “So, in 10 minutes, the heavy kid may have only done three laps, and the jock may have done 10, but it doesn’t matter. Nobody cares how each of them did. They both pushed to their maximum and their greatest potential.”

Josh continued: “Most (physical education) teachers focus on the average numbers. There’s no accountability and they’re not pushing the kids.”

According to Wagner, students might hate it when they sign up for his gym classes, but most pine for it after the semester is up and they're off to another elective, craving and missing the accountability and growth.

"Kids will buy in based on your passion," he said.

And Wagner's kids are buying in bulk. He says his students are realizing muscles are byproducts of heavy effort and better functional movement across the board instead of just isolated jewelry to wear during the summer. Parents e-mail him, praising him for changing their children's lives, and he said one boastful mother wrote that her son used to eat nothing but cereal but now gets up at 5:30 a.m. to cook himself eggs every morning.

But some challenges still lie ahead.

The school's weight room, for instance, consists more of expensive machines than dumbbells, but Wagner remains undaunted. His heroic efforts are not unnoticed. He and Tanya have been invited a second time to a school-district meeting in April to present, promote, demonstrate and educate on the measurable health-forming habits promoted by CrossFit and how it can be implemented into other area schools.

"I would like to have everyone fitness test the same across the country. Just like taking someone's blood pressure, it's the same all across the country."

—Josh Wagner

"I would like to have everyone fitness test the same across the country. Just like taking someone's blood pressure, it's the same all across the country," he said.

CrossFit is simple, affordable, scalable and measurable. Wagner said he believes schools, government and health-care programs can use it to benchmark children and follow their health career through life. In preparation for that yet-obtained dream, Wagner has all his students journal and blog workouts. Even his 54-year-old mother has bought into the program.



Active kids are almost always healthy kids.

"She couldn't understand how eating differently would change things like cholesterol and sugars. She thought we were whacked out, but the body works the way the body works," Josh explained.

Wagner now is considering an affiliate patterned after the [Blue Flame CrossFit](#) program that would be a non-profit box for the children at his school.

Wagner's results at his high school and at CrossFit Apex—whether with adults or in its growing CrossFit Kids program—are encouraging and prove the unimaginable realm of influence of just one passionate trainer.

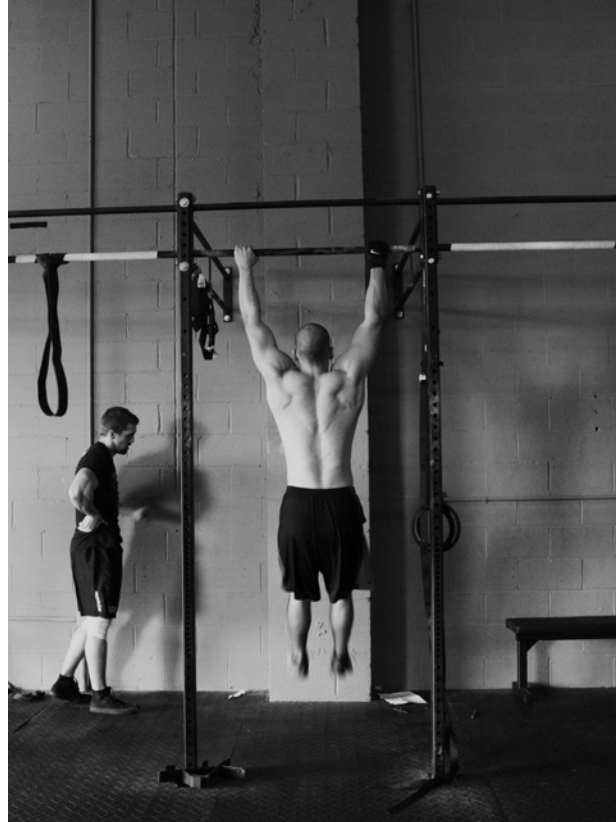
Grassroots energy like that of the Wagners is what makes CrossFit such a valuable tool for the populace. Whether in the realm of children, adults or aging seniors, more can be done to educate and reverse the grip of obesity on the country. Working with kids affords the luxury of changing lives before they are entrenched in bad habits and offers a brighter promise for the future.

But what about the older population?

Certainly, as the surgeon general advocates, the same principles guide the mission with regard to nutrition and lifestyle coaching, as well as physical activity. Yet, the years of accumulated experiences and often bad habits can preclude the success of even the most motivated adults.

Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer and political theorist Marcus Tullius Cicero said, "He who knows only his own generation remains forever a child."

**Working with kids affords
the luxury of changing
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"You can often change your circumstances by changing your attitude." —Eleanor Roosevelt

The Psychology of Obesity

There's a complex contributor conspicuously absent from the equation that needs to be mentioned: the psychology of obesity. As Eleanor Roosevelt put it, "I am today because of the choices I made yesterday." Years of patterned abuse cannot easily be overhauled by a couple of flyers or a New Year's resolution to join a gym.

Information and well-intentioned self-motivation will not necessarily transform the obese into Paleo-eating CrossFitters. Globo Gyms lose their new January clients by the end of February for a reason. Despite the logic you put in front of them, if it's not mirrored by an internal genuine paradigm shift and good coaching, the efforts will not come to fruition. It is critical for us to be knowledgeable on the internal issues commonly overlooked that are partly to blame for crippling the progress of millions.

"You can often change your circumstances by changing your attitude," Roosevelt also said.

Socioeconomics, culture, medical issues, stress and lack of exercise are significant contributing factors in obesity. There is also emotional eating, sleep deprivation, biochemical imbalances and cycles of dysfunctional psychological thinking.

A group of Australian scientists investigated the psychology of three groups of women and their weight in a study published in 2003 in the *International Journal of Obesity*. Unlike people of normal weight—and more importantly, unlike formerly obese women who had lost and kept off their weight—women who had regained their weight alone had certain psychological factors that weren't found in the other two groups, the scientists found. The most notable factors were a tendency to evaluate self-worth in terms of weight and shape, dichotomous thinking, and a tendency to use eating to regulate mood. The re-gainers also were found to have failed to achieve their desired weight goal and were dissatisfied with their progress.

In this situation, there are many who might argue the theory of which came first: the chicken or the egg? These women wouldn't feel depressed and have low self-esteem if they ate more vegetables and less pizza and did some intense interval weight training. But it's not just women and it's not just overeating that have led so many down this destructive path. Denial, projection, lack of motivation and biochemistry can play into the equation.

There is a social stereotype that overweight people are such because they're lazy, eat into the wee hours of the morning and have no self-discipline. The fact is, according to *Psychology Today*, that it is a complex interconnected entanglement of biology and psychology that entraps so many in super-sized jeans.

"At the center of obesity-depression link is biology, notably the hormonal pathway known as the HPA axis," according to *Psychology Today*. "It is the route of communication between the hypothalamus, the peanut-sized part of the brain that governs parts of the nervous system, and the pituitary and adrenal glands, which secrete a variety of hormones.

"These three points of the body work together to maintain chemical equilibrium when the body is under stress. The HPA axis is responsible for releasing cortisol, the so-called 'stress hormone.' It plays a critical role in energy metabolism as well as other functions. The problem is, cortisol prompts the body to deposit fat around the abdomen, a pattern that is especially hazardous to health. Chronic stress also begets depression."

So do we all check in with a local psychologist or psychiatrist for counseling? No. But there is a social stereotype that overweight people are such because they're lazy, eat into the wee hours of the morning and have no self-discipline. The fact is, according to *Psychology Today*, that it is a complex interconnected entanglement of biology and psychology that entraps so many in super-sized jeans. More research is needed, but for the sake of our efforts we have to understand it's not always a simple choice of changing to a Paleo diet. Some of these people really feel helpless, hopeless and trapped in an ongoing, never-ending circuit of pain and frustration, harassed by the media and social stereotypes that isolate them further in their struggle.

Having said that, people can be motivated to change when you explain the profits to be gained. This is commonly known as "what's in it for me?" There are hundreds of motivators for people: money, pride, challenge, emotional investment, love and vengeance, to name a few.

I believe CrossFit and its unique blend of fitness excellence, quality training and unprecedented passion can satisfy a missing element in the battle against obesity like no other entity.

Is CrossFit the Answer?

Superior CrossFit trainers around the world are zealously taking on the challenge one person at a time. I believe it's all about connection.

"(Abraham) Maslow's theory is that people are motivated by a hierarchy of needs: that hierarchy being physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs and self actualisation needs," wrote Kevin Dwyer, founder of Change Factory. The Australian-based business consulting company specializes in change management.

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Motivating others is a myth, he said.

"People cannot be motivated by others. They are motivated from within. Leaders can however set up an environment in which people are able to motivate themselves," Dwyer wrote.

Can you see how the CrossFit box fits into that mold perfectly?

How many of us haven't used the strain of lifting a maximum weight over our heads to burn off the ire of a failed meeting at work or a squabble with a significant other?

There's something to be said about the fire of affliction and using it to burn off the dross. I believe CrossFit is that fire.

"It's the confidence and empowerment," said Sam Fariss, head trainer at [Southern Maryland CrossFit](#). "The first time you put a bar overhead ... that's serious. It bleeds into real life."



Creating a culture of effort and excellence will create people who are better equipped to tackle the challenges of life.

Southern Maryland CrossFit owner and co-founder Lonnie Zeimetz agreed.

She lamented CrossFit HQ's decision to frequently publish pictures of bikini-clad, or even less-clad, people on the main site. She said she believes it's counterproductive to the health movement and to CrossFit and only serves to intimidate the millions of average people out there who investigate CrossFit.

"We started removing those pics off our website and put up pics of average people. And no shit, since we've started that, we've gotten more people!" Zeimetz said.

The affiliate has tripled its membership numbers in four months and has Zeimetz surveying new location prospects for the summer. Tools like a great website, monthly videos and, most significantly, Facebook have helped attract inquisitors.

Social media is key, Zeimetz said: "When they watch a video or see pics on our website, they say, 'Hey, this lady does it and she's as big as me.'"

Southern Maryland CrossFit's athletes come in all colors, shapes and age groups, and they all have their own difficulties, Zeimetz and Fariss said.

Although they admitted to wanting more athletes for local competitions and even CrossFit Games contenders, their goal is to have a positive impact on more people, Zeimetz and Fariss said. Like many affiliates, Southern Maryland CrossFit brings in newbies with one-on-one coaching, free sessions, trial group sessions and lots of scaled workouts.

"We want everyone to be part of what we're doing," Zeimetz said.

That is exactly why CrossFit must join the national battle against obesity and stand as a significant contributor in the fight. Whether it's men who need a competitive challenge to get them in the door or the very real concern



Repeatable, measurable results can help people really buy into a fitness program.

of a supportive trainer to cheer on a struggling wrestler on the local JV team, CrossFit can meet the need. Nutrition, physical demand and supportive training are the very qualities CrossFit can market to the world.

Quantifiable results and progression can help compel some of these struggling people to find success. Redefining success for weight-losers and transforming their goals from losing inches to lifting more pounds or conquering double-unders combat some of the challenges people face when engaging in a weight-loss program. The consequent empowerment and success for the newcomer shifts the focus from calorie counting to topping last month's PRs.

And CrossFit is slowly redefining beauty for women in particular. CrossFit confronts the media's portrayal of impossibly skinny models as the template for health and desire. But of all the innumerable benefits we could list for taking CrossFit to a larger scale in helping the country to get healthy, its most precious selling point is the symbiotic client-trainer relationship and its consequent community of knowledge and support.

**"We want everyone to be part
of what we're doing."**

—Lonnie Zeimetz



Melissa Garner decided to get fit so she could raise a healthy child.

Case in Point: Garrett Smith, owner of Crofton CrossFit, and Melissa Garner

The Client-Trainer Relationship

"I'm not a half-asser," said Garner, January Athlete of the Month at Crofton CrossFit. Like many, she struggled with her weight for years. Long hours in the weight room with the high-school football coach had her muscled and ready for college volleyball. College came, and so did a tumultuous storm of health issues in her sophomore year. Unknown to many around her, Garner not only struggled with her weight but was diagnosed in college with bipolar disorder. Years of combating different medications and strategies to try to

"What started my change back to a healthy lifestyle was the fact that I wanted to have a child and I knew I had to do everything I could to set up a healthy lifestyle for that child."

—Melissa Garner

get the chemical imbalance under control sidelined her athletic career and threatened her physical health. The proverbial negative cycle began and left her on the couch, despondent and unhelpful.

Despite her growing health issues, Garner said she had an inspiring husband and extended family that supported and loved her through the tough cycles.

Then, she said, "I had my fuck-it moment."

Garner said she knew she wanted kids, and the risks of the medications she was on, as well as the health risks of her obesity, were restricting her.

"What started my change back to a healthy lifestyle was the fact that I wanted to have a child and I knew I had to do everything I could to set up a healthy lifestyle for that child," she said.

With the support of her husband, Nick, on her weight-loss challenge—they have collectively lost 115 lb.—Melissa embarked her new start at a Globo Gym and found some initial success.

Six months and 25 lb. later, however, a new chemical knocked Garner out of her routine and landed her on the couch, virtually halting all progress. But her husband wouldn't let her quit, she said. Appealing to her competitive nature, he begged her to join him at his CrossFit box. Once there she said she spied a girl lifting and thought, "That's all that girl's doing? I can definitely do more than that!"

Enter Smith.

"When I started I could not do the six-inch box jump when I got there. Now my last max is 32 inches. He would always be there to encourage me. He doesn't judge a single person he sees. He will do everything he can to help you. Every single person was open ... I fell in love with it," Garner said.

One year and three months later, Garner has lost another 40 lb. and 10 percent body fat and dropped to a size 12 from a 26W, she said. She continues to PR, has gained control of her medical issues and, because of CrossFit's health effects, has been able to considerably decrease her medications, she said. And on the days Garner struggles during that last set of pull-ups, Smith casually walks over and says three words to her: "Remember those goals." For her, it stokes the fire and she pumps out the blood and sweat for another max effort, she said.

A self-proclaimed perfectionist, Garner admitted to trouble with goal setting. It's difficult for many people, according to Smith.

"It's a lifestyle change, not a 90-day fad," he said.

Coming from a successful career at a Globo Gym, Smith said he got tired of coaching the same clients through cycles of dieting and temporary fixes. Himself a possible contender for the upcoming Games—in addition to a handful of others from Crofton CrossFit—Smith lives and breathes CrossFit. He spends one-on-one time with every person who walks through the doors and befriends them.

"You have got to get a feel for them ... and be part of their life," said co-trainer Paige Kline, Smith's girlfriend.

Set small goals at first, they said.

"The first month, get here three times a week. Then work up to four to six times Then we start setting goals that are scaled, spend lots of time practicing and being realistic. There's always someone here getting a goal. Even if," he said with a chuckle, "it's the inner unspoken goal of the guy who finally has the confidence to take (his) shirt off."

**"It's a lifestyle change,
not a 90-day fad."**

—Garrett Smith

Crofton CrossFit recently moved to a larger space to meet client demand.

"People grow family here," Smith said with a smile.

"It's figuring out those little things for each person's personality," Garner said about Smith. "He knows how to judge a person's personality and how to work with them. If you're willing to put in the effort, he's right there saying, 'We're going to get this. Let's work on this.'"

That encouragement has prompted Garner to take the CrossFit Level 1 Seminar in March and the CrossFit Kids course in April.

"I would love to do whatever I can to help (people) with the experience I've had," she said.

**"Here, you're still an
individual, but you're
pushing each other. It's a
community. You all have
your goals. We're all going
to make sure we're all going
to get to all of those goals."**

—Melissa Garner

Garner's advice to those out there who might be trapped inside their own brand of medical issues and overweight bodies: "It's not going to be easy. You're gonna cry. You're gonna want to quit ... the fact that you want to make the effort, that's what matters. You're gonna love to hate it!"

Plus, the CrossFit family helps you get through it, Garner said.

"They (are) so supportive. I see how much this has helped me," she said. "Here, you're still an individual, but you're pushing each other. It's a community. You all have your goals. We're all going to make sure we're all going to get to all of those goals."

Garner's story is just one of the many successes within the Crofton CrossFit family and not unlike the many that could be spotlighted. CrossFit's goal-changing, athlete-conditioning, success-finding, family-inspiring style of fitness offers a unique and powerful tool that can help change the crisis of obesity and put us on a path toward strength and achievement.

Bust Out the Kool-Aid Stands

Certainly there are innumerable other sports and activities that are health-forming and satisfying. CrossFit is not the end-all, be-all to fitness. But at the very least CrossFit can be a significant tool used by many more in our country to reverse the path of unhealthy living.

"CrossFit is about taking everyday movements and putting it into an exercise program," Alamo CrossFit owner Rick Martinez said Feb. 9 on CrossFit Radio.

It's not just for MMA fighters, special ops and SWAT teams. It's for grandma, and her five-year-old granddaughter, too.

If Alex Scott can have **lemonade stands** all across the nation collecting money to fight childhood cancer, why can't the nation of CrossFitters start Kool-Aid stands around the country collecting to fight obesity?

Grab that Brian MacKenzie guy, swap some tattoo stories and get his recipe for that coconut milk post-WOD drink. Build some stands and put them in the parks, the spring festivals, the grocery stores, the schools, the nursing homes, the seniors' centers, the doctors' offices and outside every McDonald's in the land and collect for the fight against obesity. Staff them with your gray-haired Kool-Aid drinkers from your box and some of your friendliest coaches. Sell the CrossFit Kool-Aid—and MacKenzie's coconut juice—and preach the gospel of how CrossFit is the answer.



CrossFit is about creating a community of healthy people, not just a "gym."

While most of us are focusing on the upcoming Games and championing our box's contenders, it's hard to stop and ponder the rest of the world. A wise friend at the *CrossFit Journal* told me, though, that the bullet-eating commandos of the SEALFIT movies and the superhuman athletes competing at the Games account for only a small percentage of the CrossFit population. If CrossFit can partner with Reebok, one of the most well-known athletic brands in the world, we also can build a partner somewhere, somehow to bring the passionate ideals and life-saving benefits of CrossFit to the people who need it most.

**As a country and as a global
human community, we
are only as great as our
weakest members.**

Thankfully, we have hundreds of excellent affiliates like Southern Maryland CrossFit, CrossFit Apex and Crofton CrossFit with passionate trainers who invest in the life of every member who walks through the door. Many affiliates out there have some grand ideas on marketing and finding niches in the community, be it young, old or in between. How do we consolidate these ideas and use that knowledge for all affiliates so they can reach out to the growing number of aging Baby Boomers—another 4 million will turn 50 this year—and their sedentary progeny? What can we as the CrossFit community do to address the strain of their failing health on the economy, our health-care system and our own lives? And what of their children and children's children?

What can we do collectively to help reach more people and implement CrossFit on a grander level? The SEALFIT movies should remind us all that those teams of men and women who are unsurpassed in stamina and performance are only as great as their weakest link. As a country and as a global human community, we are only as great as our weakest members. You can do anything you want in this life, but no one does it alone. Even Mike Tyson had a coach.

Whatever your motivation for helping, I implore you to take a few minutes to ponder how we, as a community, can compile a plan to take it to the people. As for the gaggle of church ladies I love and adore, they have no idea what's coming.

They certainly have no idea that my role as an exercise leader would consist more of push-ups and air squats than dancing to the oldies.

Will they revolt? Probably.

Will I have to scale down and adjust considerably for their age, ability and tastes? You bet.

Am I qualified? Not really, but I've now got a Level 1 certificate, and I've been picking the brains of the great trainers around me.

Will I try to do something to help these ladies? Yes.

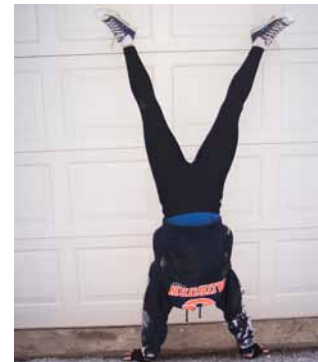
Why? Because it affects all of us.



About the Author

Stacy McCann found CrossFit after fighting (and winning) a five-year battle of advanced Lyme disease. Despite permanent damage, she continues to find ways to prove to friends and family that the elite fitness CrossFit creates is attainable by even the weakest, sickest and smallest. She lives in

Annapolis, Md., with her husband and two boys and looks forward to the Masters Games competition in a few years.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

31 Heroes, 1 WOD

Julie Kelly reflects on the 31 Heroes WOD performed on the flight deck of the USS Midway in San Diego.

By Julie Kelly

October 2011



All images: Jessica Elaine Tyler

Sept. 3, 2011: Just another September day to many, but to those of us in the CrossFit community, it was much more than that. It was a day to remember the 31 heroes whose NATO helicopter was shot down in Afghanistan's eastern Wardak Province on Aug. 6, 2011.

1 of 4

A Salute to the Fallen

It was 6:34 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 3, when my alarm went off. I didn't know if it was the five IPAs I had consumed the night before, the fact that I had gone to bed only three hours earlier, or the six straight days of hard and heavy WODs that made my alarm sound more like a freight train than a piece of cheap Japanese engineering. All I know is there was nothing I wanted to do less than 95-lb. thrusters on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. (In fact, I didn't do 95-lb. thrusters. I had to scale down to 65 lb. Fran weight was good enough for me!)

Alas, I rallied and made my way down to the historic landmark that resides in San Diego's harbor. The USS Midway is a World War II-era aircraft carrier that is now used as a military museum and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to San Diego every year. The Midway is arguably as much a part of the San Diego skyline as the Opera House is to Sydney's, or dare I say as the World Trade Center was to New York's.



Laid down in 1943, the USS Midway saw action in the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm. She was decommissioned in 1992 and became a museum ship in 2004. She hosted a memorial CrossFit WOD in 2011.



Heavy thrusters started the memorial workout, which was timed much like Fight Gone Bad.

The CrossFit San Diego crew and AM 760's Mike Slater Show welcomed the participating boxes aboard the ship, bright eyed and bushy tailed for the 7 a.m. registration. This event was similar to other CrossFit functions I've attended in that no one in the crowd seemed to mind the early registration time on a day usually meant for catching up on a few Zs. What made it different, however, was the reason we all gathered on that chilly morning with coastal fog in the air: our country had lost 31 of our most respected, honored and courageous soldiers.

The workout was suitably challenging.

Three rounds for total reps of:

Thrusters (155/105 lb.)

Box jumps (30/24 inches)

Push-ups (hand release)

Double-unders

Burpees



At 24 and 30 inches, the box jumps were a tough test for the athletes.

Teams consisted of two people, and only one athlete worked at a time. Teams stayed at each station for 2:04 before moving on, and there was a 1-minute rest after Round 1, and a 2-minute rest after Round 2. The total WOD time was 31 minutes.

In a recent debate with a former Zumba-instructor-turned-CrossFitter, I couldn't help but notice that she seemed to use the term "exclusive" when mentioning reasons why she hadn't tried CrossFit earlier. I simmered on it for a moment when I realized that her comment bothered me for a reason that wasn't readily available. I now wish I could find that Zumba instructor to explain to her that it's not exclusivity that makes CrossFit unique; rather, it's the degree in which we deviate from that notion. CrossFit has been the most inclusive and welcoming experience of my life.



In CrossFit, the fallen are never forgotten.

All the Navy SEALs and other U.S. servicemen whose lives were taken on July 6 might not have been CrossFitters, but that's not the point. The point is we've always taken care of our own, and we consider "our own" to include the families of the men and women who dedicate their lives to serving our country, CrossFitters or not.

So if that's what she meant by "exclusive," then hell, where do I sign up?



About the Author

Julie Kelly lives in San Diego, Calif., and has been CrossFitting since mid-2010. An avid dog lover and mountain girl at heart, Julie has two mutts who proudly serve as her constant sidekicks, patient listeners and outdoor recreational consultants. When asked what she loves most about CrossFit, the workouts are rarely at the top of her list. Rather, she says, "It's the feeling that all CrossFitters share in knowing we can go anywhere in the world, walk into a box, and be welcomed with open arms and embraced as family."

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Follow Your Heart Rate?

Brian MacKenzie and Anthony Roberts explain the origins of the maximum-heart-rate number and why it so often tells us so little.

By Brian MacKenzie with Anthony Roberts

October 2011



CrossFit Affliction

Most people are familiar with the formula $E = mc^2$, even if they can't explain Einstein's theory of relativity. Luckily, most don't need to explain the speed of light in a vacuum, so this isn't much of a problem.

What about this formula?

$220 - \text{age} = \text{MHR}$

Most probably know that one, too. It's the standard formula for determining maximum heart rate, or MHR. Subtracting your age from 220 represents the highest heart rate one can safely achieve through exercise stress. This formula tells us a 15-year-old has a maximum heart rate of 205 and a 25-year-old has a maximum heart rate of 195.

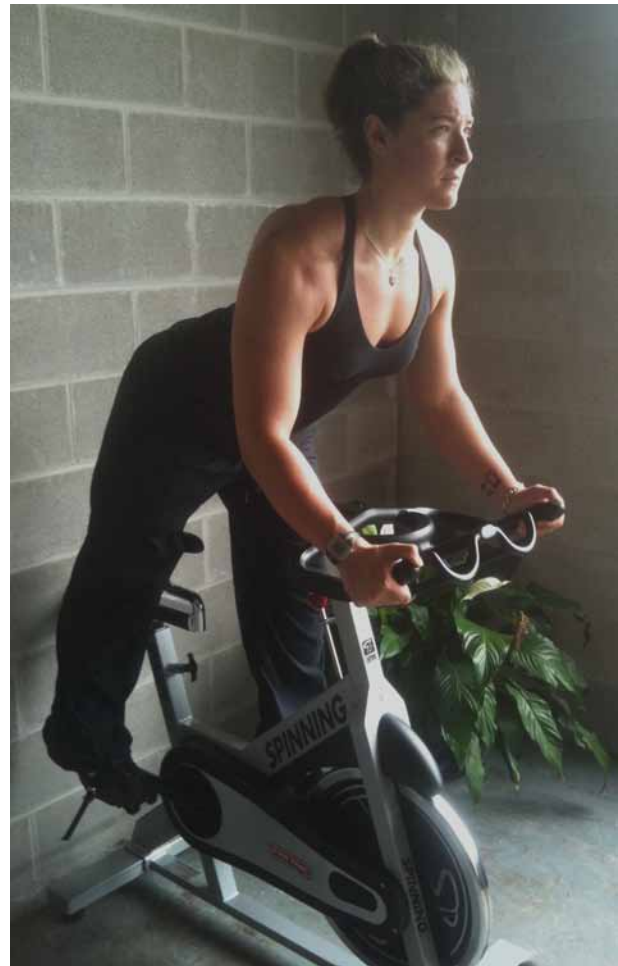
If I started training for 5K races at the age of 15 and continued for 10 years, my MHR still would be 195, according to this formula. After 10 years of endurance training, it would be lower, according to the formula. It tells me I'd have the same maximum heart rate as an untrained person of equal age after endurance training for an entire decade!

**It's pretty well known that
220 minus your age is the
standard for your maximum
heart rate. Yet, after a few
years of training, it becomes
just as well known that this is
a dog-shit marker.**

Ever wonder where MHR estimates or heart-rate training came from? Have you ever strapped on an HR monitor to see what your heart is doing? Or maybe you checked your resting pulse? It must be important, right? The mainstream medical industry, as well as the general fitness community, has set up parameters for what is healthy based on your resting HR, or RHR. Fair? Not in the slightest.

A Formula's Origins

It's pretty well known that 220 minus your age is the standard for your MHR. Yet, after a few years of training, it becomes just as well known that this is a dog-shit marker. With regard to HR, the most common thing I've seen with every athlete I've ever tested or worked with, and even with myself, is the number was never correct. Ever. In fact, our research has shown it's roughly 15-20 percent off with athletes.



Courtesy Jamie Flier

"Grab handles to measure heart rate" ... or don't.

The formula itself relied on metadata originally compiled for a 1971 study that examined physical activity and the prevention of coronary heart disease. Obviously, this formula is biased in origin; it was developed to help prevent heart disease.

Even worse is the fact that the formula, which has numerous flaws for the purposes of athletics, has become so ingrained in the training world that we never question it, and most people don't even know where it came from.

Care to guess what the American College of Sports Medicine 2001 textbook cites as the reference for this formula? The same textbook from 2000. The textbook published by the National Strength and Conditioning Association provides no reference for the 220 formula; this is how accepted it is to most. But not by us.

The first clue: when we look at something that doesn't work for us and can't even figure out where it came from.

To put it into perspective, a ton of folks are coaching people off the 220 marker. Most commercially available HR monitors even use this formula, yet these monitors are sold to fit people and coaches. It doesn't add up.

We've long known the fitness industry is upside down in its thinking and practices.

In a 2001 *New York Times* article ("Maximum Heart Rate Theory Is Challenged"), Donald Kirkendall, the famed exercise physiologist from the University of North Carolina, talked about how he strapped an HR monitor to a twentysomething member of the U.S. Rowing Team and had him row as hard as possible for 6 minutes. The result: a heart rate of 200 beats per minute (BPM) within a minute and a half; it continued for the remainder of the test. Impossible? Obviously not.

We've long known the fitness industry is upside down in its thinking and practices. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) sets a standard of what people should be able to do, and the "fitness" world, along with exercise physiologists, is supposed to use these standards for training subjects and recording data points. Prior to rolling an ankle, Lon Kilgore wanted to test the ACSM's protocols for fitness and in doing so was actually becoming less fit as he continued. The standards for measuring MHR at the ACSM: 220 minus age.



CrossFit Affliction

Does 220 minus age apply to this athlete? Why or why not?

William Haskell first proposed the 220 formula in the '70s as an attempt to determine how strenuously heart-disease patients could exercise. As scientists typically do, he checked out existing literature (compiled by his mentor, Samuel Fox) and saw that on average the HR maximum was about 200 at age 20 and 180 at age 40 and so on. The population he examined mostly was under 55; some were smokers and/or had heart disease. By plotting a straight line through the data points, he got roughly 220 minus age.

A Rogue Equation

In 2002, a couple of scientists took the information provided in support of this infamous 220 formula, plotted a perfectly straight line through the data points and published the following:

$$215.4 - .9147 \times \text{age}$$

So even internally the original formula everyone is familiar with isn't quite accurate. In 1938, the formula $212 - .77 \times \text{age}$ was proposed (very close to what was ultimately accepted), but it never caught on. You know why? Try doing that calculation in your head, then try doing the 220 formula.

Since then, Haskell has said numerous times he never intended his formula to be used in a fitness environment or by trained individuals.



CrossFit Affliction

William Haskell has said he never intended his 220 formula to be used by trained individuals.

Even if it were accurate, the standard deviation for the formula is plus or minus 16. That means our hypothetical 25-year-old me could have an MHR of 180 and 210, and 32 percent of 25-year-olds still would fall outside the 220 formula. So we're left with a formula that even on its best day is only scoring 68 percent.

One of the stopping points for me using HR monitors was when a friend and I were running and he repeatedly told me we needed to slow down because his HR was at 166 and he was going to "blow." Finally, I said, "Shut up and just run. If you were going to blow, you wouldn't be talking about it."

**We're left with a formula that
even on its best day is only
scoring 68 percent.**

How many endurance athletes out there go through this? How many people scale back their intensity during a training session because their heart rate gets too high? Lots. And if you take a look at any marathon or triathlon you will see lots of people with chest straps and fancy watches that measure that little ticker's beat. Why? They want to stay in the correct training zones so they don't blow!

Here is an interesting observation. I originally heard Greg Glassman bring this up, so I looked into it: Take a look at NASCAR drivers. They can hold their HRs exactly where a marathoner can—around 142 to 152—for three hours while driving a car around a track at 180 mph. The literature indicates drivers have HRs reasonably close to boxing, basketball and soccer athletes. Formula 1 drivers average 160 BPM—about the same as a tennis player. Do we have any doubt as to which athlete is in better shape?

Playing a game of championship beach soccer will produce an average heart rate of just more than 165, while case studies examining some collegiate baseball pitchers have demonstrated a 175.8 mean HR. This is similar to the average seen with professional rugby players. Are the demands and fitness requirements of these sports similar? Even worse, HRs for referees officiating a rugby match can approach those of the players.

Intuitively, we know a NASCAR driver or F1 racer would be shredded by a boxer, marathoner and a soccer or rugby player in terms of endurance, even though the literature tells us they have similar heart rates during competition. Practically, we can all imagine a driver telling us he's getting out there and playing some ball to get in better shape or maybe putting in some running. But imagine if the situation were reversed: Imagine a marathoner telling us he was going to do some driving to prepare for his next race. We don't need a study to tell us this isn't going to work, even though the heart rates would be similar.

In other words, physical stress doesn't necessarily play a role in HR because sitting in a car driving around a track does not require much physical activity. And pitching nine innings is unarguably less physical than playing a rugby match.

We know a NASCAR driver or F1 racer would be shredded by a boxer, marathoner and a soccer or rugby player in terms of endurance, even though the literature tells us they have similar heart rates during competition.

But if we were to include the heat and the stress of racing at 180 mph, that would change something. Now if we factor in the idea that tennis players serving the ball have a higher heart rate than those returning the serve, we start to get into the idea of psychophysical stress. This is why your heart starts beating faster when you simply think about a challenging situation or get involved with outside physical stressors that don't necessarily require action.

This is the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems at work. It's why the heart rates of archers go from 71-126 BPM pre-draw to 88-147 BPM at full draw, even though they haven't done much physical work. It's also why we see a significant increase in the HRs of chess players—75-86 BPM (I must admit my heart skips a beat when I fianchetto the bishop for a Nimzo-Indian defense).



CrossFit Affliction

If we ignore heart rate, what's a real measure of fitness?

What Does It All Mean?

So HR numbers—while fun to look at—don't tell us what we think they do.

If you were to run a mile with a heart rate of 140, then do that same mile with a heart rate of 160, what does it tell you? Maybe you're exerting yourself more on the second run, but are you necessarily running faster? Of course not. What if we reverse those numbers and your HR is lower on the second run? Is that because you pump more blood per stroke (from a training adaptation)? Is there more oxygen per unit of blood pumped? Or is the run actually easier, or, or, or ... ?

What do those numbers tell us? Surprisingly little. They tell us that if you're a trainer earning minimum wage at a big-box gym, watching your client move from the triceps press-down to the pec-dec to the elliptical machine, you probably won't kill him if you keep his heart rate below a certain level (that knowledge only requires a second-grade math education to figure out).

Let's put it another way: according to a 2011 study, the heart rate of an experienced boxer during a sparring workout in the gym is around 180, while the heart rate of a college kid playing a boxing video game is about 90 percent of that. Is the latter actually working 90 percent as hard as the former? Can you play a boxing video game and get 90 percent of the fitness level of an actual boxer? Again, we don't need a doctorate or a bunch of scientists to tell us the answer is no.

Even if you're a bona fide endurance athlete of the three-sport variety—swimming, biking, running—monitoring your heart rate is going to have severe problems in practical application.

Even if you're a bona fide endurance athlete of the three-sport variety—swimming, biking, running—monitoring your HR is going to have severe problems in practical application. A study published by the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* in 2008 showed that although the cycling and running HRs of a triathlete could be similar, additional data showed a 12-point difference in aerobic-threshold values—a huge margin of variability and potential error.

And as far back as 1998, a group of researchers at the University of Tennessee determined MHR intensity actually declined by up to 7 percent during long endurance events. But you already knew that, didn't you? After several hours of running or cycling, you can't reach the same intensity level as before. Yet your age didn't appreciably change during that time, and neither did the 220 formula.

Our personal experiences and those of our clients and friends, along with much of the published scientific data, provide incredibly strong evidence that HR is a poor correlate for intensity or training. This again shows us that not everything is what it seems. Yet, leaders in the medical industry and fitness community are basing training programs and even textbooks on a formula that's both inappropriate and inadequate.



About the Authors

Brian MacKenzie is the creator of CrossFit Endurance. He has worked directly with CrossFit for the last five years in developing the CrossFit Endurance Seminars. He has worked with athletes from every facet of athletics. MacKenzie has been involved with the fitness industry for 20 years, from powerlifting

to ultra-running and everything in between. He and his programs have been featured in *Competitor Magazine*, *Triathlete Magazine*, *Men's Journal*, Tim Ferriss' New York Times best-seller *"The 4-Hour Body,"* *Men's Running U.K.*, *L.A. Sport and Fitness* and *Rivera Magazine*.



Courtesy of Anthony Roberts

Anthony Roberts is a CrossFit Level 1 trainer and holds a Crossfit Endurance certificate. He is also a USA Rugby Football Union Level 1 coach.

THE CrossFit LIFE

It's All for the Boobs

Hilary Achauer checks in with Barbells for Boobs, a month-long event to raise money for breast-cancer screening and diagnostic procedures for women and men under age 40.

By Hilary Achauer

October 2011



All images: Mammograms in Action

Cecy knew something was wrong.

The healthy, active 26-year-old noticed a lump in her breast in early 2009, so she went to her doctor and asked for a mammogram. Her doctor denied her request, because at age 26, she was not at risk for breast cancer. He said she should come back when she was 40.



In 2010, the Amazing Grace events generated over \$300,000. That amount has already been topped in 2011.

Over the next few months, Cecy began experiencing pain. She returned to her doctor and demanded a mammogram. He agreed, and she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had a mastectomy two weeks later.

One of Cecy's best friends, Zionna Munoz, was rocked by the news. She couldn't understand how her friend, who had a good job with comprehensive health insurance, could be refused a mammogram because of her age.

Munoz, a CrossFitter since 2007 and owner of CrossFit Next Level Performance, felt helpless.

"And CrossFitters hate being helpless," she said.

It was the summer of 2009, and Munoz decided to put on a CrossFit-style fundraiser. The workout would be Grace—30 clean and jerks for time. Munoz called the event Amazing Grace.

Three local affiliates participated, and about 60 people turned out at the event held in Corona Del Mar, Calif. They raised \$2,000, and when Coach Greg Glassman heard about the fundraiser he gave a matching donation, bringing the total up to \$4,000.

Munoz tried to give the money to her friend, but Cecy refused.

"This is bigger than me," Cecy said.

That was the encouragement Munoz needed to set up a non-profit organization. With guidance from a leader in the fight against breast cancer, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Munoz founded Mammograms in Action, a non-profit dedicated to funding mammograms for women and men under 40.

In 2010, the organization put on its second fundraiser, which it called Barbells for Boobs. The name came after Munoz and her friends were celebrating in a bar following the first event. They were trying to think of a name, and someone shouted out, "Barbells for Boobs!" It stuck. More than 400 affiliates in five countries participated in Amazing Grace 2010, raising over \$300,000.

In 2011, the event is even bigger. It runs throughout the month of October, and as of Oct. 13 \$300,000 had been raised.

A new element in 2011 is the Pink Bra Tour. Munoz, DJ Sly (who lost his mother to breast cancer) and Katie McNeilly are driving a wrapped van across the country, visiting 20 states and participating in 17 Amazing Grace events.

"We are so grateful, and we wanted to meet everybody," Munoz said. "Each affiliate that hosts an Amazing Grace workout will receive a \$10,000 grant to a breast center in their community. There are no administrative costs; 100 percent of the money raised goes to screening and diagnostic tests."

Throughout the Pink Bra Tour, Munoz and her team are handing out pink-bra necklaces to survivors of breast cancer, many of whom are in their 20s.

"It gets really emotional," said Munoz. "The bra is so symbolic to women—especially if they've survived breast cancer—so with this necklace we are giving a bra back to survivors as a symbol of their courage."



The 2011 Pink Bra Tour will visit 20 states in 2011, raising funds and awareness along the way.



The CrossFit community has come out in full force to support Barbells for Boobs. CrossFit Games athletes Kristan Clever, Katie Hogan and Rebecca Voigt were on hand throughout the first weekend in Southern California. Camille Leblanc-Bazinet and the Again Faster crew attended the Oct. 15 event at CrossFit Centex in Texas.

Amazing Grace 2011 continues through October, wrapping up at Reebok CrossFit One on Oct. 31. Visit [Barbells for Boobs](#) to find an event near you, or to make a donation visit [Mammograms in Action](#). Donations are accepted even after the Pink Bra Tour wraps.

Take action, get involved, and pick up a barbell for boobs.



THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



FLYING FOOD

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

overview

It's a bird! It's a plane!
No, it's a "nutterfly!"

Makes 1 serving

blocks

2 carbohydrate blocks

2 fat blocks

ingredients

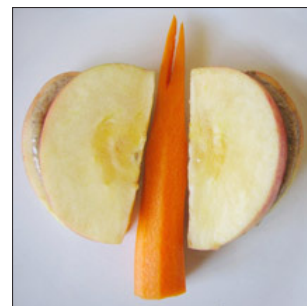
- 1 half apple
- 1 carrot
- 1 tsp. almond butter

notes

Serve with 2 rolled-up slices of turkey breast for 2 protein blocks.

directions

1. Cut the half apple into 2 thick, flat slices. Then cut the slices lengthwise to make wings.
2. Peel the carrot. Chop off the bottom. Cut a "V" out of the tip of the carrot to make antennae.
3. Evenly spread the almond butter over one side of the apple wing and top with another half wing.
4. Place apple pieces on either side of the carrot.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Barrel Boy

No longer “the fat boy,” Rick Martinez talks about teaching children the value of activity and nutrition.

By Rick Martinez

October 2011



All images: Rick Martinez

“Hello, my name is Rick, and I’m overweight.”

“Hello, Rick!”

Seems that nowadays there are groups for everybody—drinkers, gamblers, drug addicts, and, yes, overeaters. Seems like nowadays we try to blame someone else for our woes and then join a group to learn how to accept and move on.

Try telling that to a 9-year-old.

The Fat Kid

I was the chubby kid in school. I was the kid who had to shop in the “husky” section at Sears. I was the kid who ate my little brother’s leftovers, and I was the kid who got teased. Even had a teacher call me “the little barrel.” My seventh-grade science teacher. That was back in the 1970s, when “PC” didn’t exist, so if I was fat, then the kids called me exactly that: “fat.” Nowadays we say “hormonally challenged” or “over-loved.”

Nope. I was fat.

Here’s the thing, though: I was also very active. Sounds crazy, but it’s the truth. I played soccer and baseball. I ran track and long distance. I rode my bike all over the neighborhood. One might think, “Well, heck, how come this kid’s so chubby then?” Well, here’s why: because I ate like I was taught.

But let me clarify and qualify that. I’m a born and bred American, but my ancestry is Mexican. In fact, English is my mom’s second language. So of course that meant kick-ass Mexican food and a culture that is surrounded by food I know now is not the best. Of course I mean refried beans and homemade tortillas, flour and corn. Everything deep-fried in corn oil or any other not-so-good-for-you oil. And then throw into that mix *pan dulce* (sweet bread), Coke at most meals, and good ole Kool-Aid.

**We ate what the USDA said
was good for us. And I was
chubby, chunky, fat.**

I might also add that around this age, my parents started to earn a measure of success, so of course we added Twinkies and Ho-Hos. We frequently ate out, and I always had dessert. We had a stock of Froot Loops and Sugar Corn Pops. You get the picture. We essentially ate the way our culture dictated, and as we grew up, we ate what the USDA said was good for us.

And I was chubby, chunky, fat. I think I even remember reading a physical where a physician described me as obese. Not cool.

I never knew the difference.

My parents love my brothers and me. Of that there is no doubt. They wanted and still want the best for us. I know now that the problem was that we just didn’t know what we didn’t know. We didn’t understand, nor was it taught, the power of food and of balancing protein, carbs and good fats. “The Zone” was a football term and “Paleo” brought visions of a T-rex, not good food. So we just didn’t know what we didn’t know. And this continued throughout my childhood. In fact, it continued up until I discovered CrossFit many years ago.

Losing the Barrel

In a nutshell (maybe macadamia), that was my childhood. I don’t feel scarred, and I’m not about to write a memoir about my chubby-boy existence. I was and am happy. I love life ... and food. I love exercise ... and sleep. But I am also empowered now with knowledge gained through CrossFit—the exercise modalities and, more importantly, the dietary teachings. I have learned how to effectively exercise and to coach. I have learned the importance of real, whole food. Not only do I eat this way, but so does my family, and we teach and preach it every day at our gym, Alamo CrossFit.



Caption

Our gym has grown tremendously since we opened in 2007, but the thing that's even more important was the founding and growth of our CrossFit Kids program. Watching some of the kids exercise and listening to our CrossFit Kids coaches talk to them reminds me of the things I wish I had heard when I was a kid. No, not the caring, compassion, and love a parent has, because all these kids have that, but the knowledge and the ability to take charge of one's health and well-being from a very young age. And we ask the parents to stay for class too. It becomes a time for families to learn together.

How do we teach not only the kids, but also the parents, the virtue and value of eating "healthy"?

But I suppose the burning question nowadays is how do we stop the cycle? How do we teach not only the kids, but also the parents, the virtue and value of eating "healthy"? Sure **us** coaches get it, and our own kids get it, but the challenge for us now lies with helping our young CrossFitters get it. And furthermore, we must present it in a fashion that does not strike mom and dad as food heresy or some crazy granola cruncher-fad.

So we involve the parents from the get-go. For our under-12 kiddos, we ask the parents to remain for the first few sessions. We start each class reviewing what they had for dinner last night or breakfast that morning. We use words like "protein" and ask questions like "what does 'protein' mean?" and "what kinds of things do you eat that are protein?" We also stress to the kids that they should be eating protein at every meal, a serving about as big as their fist. We discuss healthy snacks too, because if kids are eating healthy, maybe their friends will be more likely to try that food as well, or vice versa.

Skeptical parents? We haven't really experienced a resistant parent because from the onset we offer adults nutrition information that provides data supporting the nutrition regimen we discuss at a simplistic level with the kids. This gives the parent the ability to have a more in-depth discussion with us to better understand our position but also to share our philosophy at home with their families.

Now that's power.

Take it from me, the chubby kid.



About the Author

Rick Martinez is a registered nurse of over 15 years and the founder of Alamo CrossFit in San Antonio, Texas. He loves most doing his darnedest to make sure there are as few chubby kids out there as possible. He can be reached at rick@alamocrossfit.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Ditching the Donkey Kick

Hall-of-fame Oly coach Bob Takano addresses Oly form errors common to the CrossFit community.

By Bob Takano

October 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

For the last two years, I've been an instructor/coach in the CrossFit Olympic Lifting Seminar program under the management of Coach Mike Burgener. Those experiences plus the several USA Weightlifting Sports Performance Coach certifications I've conducted at several different CrossFit boxes have provided me with the chance to observe CrossFitters and their approach to the Olympic lifts. Furthermore, I've been coaching my own weightlifting programs within two other CrossFit boxes.

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

Before the CrossFit Games, Annie Thorisdottir worked with Coach Mike Burgener to sort out her Oly lifts, so she was prepared when a heavy snatch showed up.

All this has provided me with a perspective on the phenomenon of Crossfitters' involvement and struggles with the O-lifts. What I've encountered is a panorama of situations, and the fact that *CrossFit Journal* editor Mike Warkentin asked me to write this article is an indication that there are others who are aware of this situation.

Let me begin by saying the problems that commonly arise occur less frequently in those boxes where the owner/coach and coaching staff have taken the trouble to learn the lifts under the tutelage of an experienced weightlifting coach. In this way, they learn the importance of spotting technical errors and the strategies to correct them. They appreciate good technique and are vigilant about spotting and correcting errors in performance. Just as relevant is the fact that they've internalized the kinesthetics and can describe the "feeling" of the various aspects of the lifts to their clients.

For example, I've done quite a bit of coaching with James Lee, the owner of Team CrossFit in Woodland Hills, Calif., and he has developed very good technique. Consequently, his clients have been taught that same technique and exhibit far fewer technical errors than their counterparts at many other boxes.

I'm going to break this discussion up into two large categories: technical errors and training errors. I'll run through the problems I've seen and then hopefully offer some exercises that might remediate each problem.

Technical Errors

The primary reason to develop optimal technique is that it is the most efficient way to perform the snatch or the clean and jerk. Secondly, optimal technique enables the lifter to derive the most benefit in terms of the development of explosive force and to create a balanced development of the body for athletic endeavors. Ultimately, this will lead to the ability to lift more weight with less expenditure of energy.

The primary reason to develop optimal technique is that it is the most efficient way to perform the snatch or the clean and jerk.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

A large jump is often evidence of incomplete extension at the top of the pull.

Now because many CrossFit WODs are calculated by the number of reps performed or the amount of time taken to perform them, efficient technique is going to save energy on each rep, enabling one or two more reps to be performed during the course of the session. Each rep will also be performed with greater speed, so time is saved as well. Both of these reasons should be enough to convince Crossfitters to hone technique so that it is most efficient.

Another factor that is often overlooked is that optimal technique minimizes the chance of injury. When the technique is well executed, the muscles involved are

in balance and do not create imbalanced forces around joints. This stabilizes joints and puts them in less jeopardy.

Those individuals who minimize the importance of technique have historically been those who lack the ability to coach proper technique or the motor learning skills to perform the lifts with solid technique. There is no question, however, that the best outcomes will be achieved through the mastering of good technique.

The Donkey Kick or “Crossfit Jump”

I didn't come up with these terms but rather heard them used by individuals within the CrossFit community. Because the movement is prevalent enough to get a name, it must be somewhat common.

This phenomenon occurs when athletes lift their feet off the ground prematurely in order to increase the volume of the sound of their feet striking the floor. Somebody once figured out that the volume of the sound was an appropriate indicator that a good lift was being performed.

It reminds me of a group of fitness buffs I read about a few years ago. They were into aerobic fitness and reasoned that the slower their heart rates, the more “fit” they must be. They regularly compared heart rates to see which ones were lower. After a while, some of them began to take beta blockers in order to lower their heart rates. They were caught up in trying to achieve the symptom, rather than what it represented.

The donkey kick works the same way. Someone figured out that the volume of the sound of the feet was the symptom to be achieved. It really means that you don't complete the triple extension and subsequently aren't making full use of the legs to perform the pull. Any competent weightlifting coach knows this.

The exercise I use to correct this is to have the lifter start with the snatch or clean in the hang position and the legs fully extended, with the heels off the floor and the balance on the balls of the feet. The only pull that can be employed is by pulling upward with the arms, as in an upright row. The athlete must then skim the feet quickly from full extension to the squatting or receiving stance and go under the bar very quickly. Light weights and low reps per set should be employed.

The Premature Arm Pull

This is a fairly common phenomenon among guys who want to “gorilla” the weight, although some girls do it too. I think this error really comes from an excessive focus on what the arms are doing while forgetting the legs, hips and perhaps the entire rest of the body.

One thing that is infrequently taught—but is applicable here—is to forcibly contract the triceps during the early and middle phases of the pull. I advocate this and teach it through extensions (pulls without bending the arms). In this way, most of the work is done with the legs and hips, while the function of the arms is merely to remain tight and straight. Furthermore I emphasize not bending the arms until the hips have fully extended and the traps contracted.

The Premature Trap Contraction

I think that this is related to the previous problem, with many of the same motor neurons working synergistically. It is, after all, difficult for many athletes to bend the arms in a pull without shrugging the shoulders.

My coaching cue for this problem is one I picked up from Jean Holloway. She always emphasized a “long neck.” If the athlete thinks about keeping the neck long until the hips have fully extended, the premature shrugging can be practiced away. This cue, combined with the aforementioned extensions, can go a long way toward remedying premature involvement of the traps and arms.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

An early arm pull can rob you of precious power in the snatch or clean.

Excessively Rapid Pull Off the Floor

This is a common error both within and without the CrossFit community. My personal observation is that many people see the speed at the top of the pull and can't comprehend that the speed changes. While the concept of generating as much speed immediately off the floor is a valid one, what is ignored is that most people don't have the ability to maintain proper position for the later acceleration if the first pull causes a bending of the back and a mis-positioning of the hips.

Dozens of biomechanical studies of the greatest weightlifters performing the heaviest lifts in history have confirmed that the body must pass through the power position in order to generate the most explosive pull possible. An attempt to initiate a rapid pull off the floor will cause the body to assume positions that will make the attainment of the power position impossible.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Tommy Hackenbruck on his way to the pockets position, where he'll unleash all his power on the bar.

An attempt to initiate a rapid pull off the floor will cause the body to assume positions that will make the attainment of the power position impossible.

The best solution I've found is to have athletes practice a controlled pull while feeling the pressure on the feet move in the correct pathway. This is best achieved by performing halting deadlifts with two-to-three-second halts at the point below the knees and at the power position. The reps should be from 2 to 4 per set at 85 percent and above. Four sets should be appropriate to "rehearse" the proper first pull.

Improper Rack

Proper racking of the bar on the shoulders in front of the neck can be performed if the athlete can comprehend the concept of supporting the bar on the deltoids. A great many athletes with a background of bench pressing are comfortable trying to rack a bar by placing it across the chest with the elbows held low.

In a proper rack, the deltoids are moved forward as when the athlete attempts to touch both elbows together in front.

The second error that commonly occurs when attempting to rack is gripping the bar tightly. The athlete needs to be coached to open up the hands, rest the bar on the fingers and keep the elbows at a 45-degree angle or higher.

Re-positioning the hands so that the grip is more comfortable is another adjustment that can be made. Other than moving the deltoids forward, relaxing the grip and adjusting the grip, the athlete with a racking problem needs to do a considerable amount of front squatting in order to become comfortable with the position.

Tight Shoulders

Many times what passes for tight shoulders when performing the snatch is actually a weakness of the middle spine that keeps the torso from holding a position that will allow the arms to support the weight. Otherwise it really could be a case of tight shoulders. Occasionally it could be a problem with tight hip flexors that inhibit the maintenance of a sufficiently erect torso to support the weight.

The best exercise to work on this problem is to perform snatch-grip presses from behind the neck while sitting in a squat. This will force the athlete to stimulate the musculature that maintains an erect torso while forcing the shoulders through the range of motion necessary to support a snatch.

Tight shoulders can also present a problem in the jerk. This can be remediated by performing behind-the-neck presses from a split position. One can begin with a wide grip and over time narrow the grip until a sufficient jerk width is achieved. Both of these pressing movements can be performed for 3-4 repetitions per set for 4-5 sets.

Tight Ankles

Limited range of motion at the ankles can make the overhead squat awkward and unstable and the squat clean almost impossible. If a good pair of lifting shoes don't remediate the problem, then barbell ankle stretches where the athlete performs a static stretch with a weight across the knees in a squatting position will help greatly.



Bob Takano

This static stretch should be performed at the end of workouts to increase ankle mobility. The heels should remain on the floor.

Training Design Errors

Some of the problems with employing Olympic lifts in CrossFit WODs arise from program design. The placement within the WOD and the dosages can become problematic.

Too Many Reps Per Set

The Olympic lifts have evolved as movements of explosive power, and when performed at less than optimal speed, they lose their effectiveness. If the number of reps performed in a single set exceeds a certain number (it varies by individual), they lose their explosive nature, and certain muscles begin to take over tasks for which they are not trained. This can result in an injury or a loss of the qualities for which the movement was included to enhance.

My suggestion would be to limit the number of repetitions to the point where speed deteriorates and to use the snatch and/or clean and jerk as an exercise to fatigue the body before embarking on another exercise.

If the purpose of CrossFit training is to prepare the body for a variety of physical stressors, then the Olympic lifts need to be employed for the function for which they are most appropriate—the development of speed and power.

Training When Fatigued

If the Olympic lifts are performed when the body is in a fatigued state, they will only cause more fatigue. This may be desirable for some, but if the purpose of CrossFit training is to prepare the body for a variety of physical stressors, then the Olympic lifts need to be employed for the function for which they are most appropriate—the development of speed and power. They should not be employed as simply agents of fatigue.

Improper Sequence

Olympic lifts best serve their function as developers of speed and power when they can be performed effectively. Performing full clean and jerks immediately after running a long distance would be counterproductive. Performing jerks or snatches immediately after handstand push-ups to failure could be just plain dangerous.

Coaches should be cognizant of the sequence of exercises in a workout in order to gain the most benefit of what each exercise has to offer in terms of training a variety of qualities.

This may require a change in perspective in which the workout—rather than the individual exercise—is viewed as the functional unit of training.

Conclusion

The errors acknowledged in this article are the ones that I've found to be most consistent with CrossFitters. It's hoped that the solutions offered are helpful in remediating them.

Training should be directed at the final product of the training: the general fitness of the individual. Placing the athlete in a position where unnecessary injury is a possibility, or employing exercises improperly, might have some appeal to those coaching to expect the unexpected. Using the proper exercise for the explicit purpose for which it is being employed, however, is the best way to prepare the body for a variety of conditions.

It is my hope that all of the remediations presented herein will be incorporated by coaches to solve the various errors as they present themselves for the betterment of their athletes.



Marta 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 is a coach in the CrossFit Oly Seminar program. Website: www.takanoathletics.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Confessions of a Naval Pentathlete

Kasper Hansen, a member of the Danish armed forces, rekindles his love of training and sport through CrossFit.

By Kasper Hansen

October 2011



All images courtesy of Kasper Hansen

I stumbled upon CrossFit in fall 2009. Two of my friends started working out in one of Denmark's first CrossFit gyms, Butcher's Lab in Copenhagen, and they took me there a couple of times when I was in town. I had long been in search of new inspiration for my training to keep me motivated. CrossFit proved to be that inspiration.

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As its name implies, the naval pentathlon is not for “landlubbers.”

I had been training and competing in Denmark’s naval pentathlon since 2005 with good results. I was a two-time national champion and finished second in the Nordic championships in 2007 but still felt as if I had yet to fully realize my potential.

I loved the pentathlon. It was the first sport that kept me going since I ended my swimming career in 2002. I had been swimming since childhood and was pretty good at it. I had several junior and senior national championships under my belt, and my big goal was to qualify for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. But the joy of training and competing had disappeared in the last two years due to reoccurring shoulder issues and long periods of rehabilitation. During those two years, I was training between 25 and 30 hours a week at a national training facility.

By the time I stopped swimming and had joined the Danish armed forces, I was stuck in a rut. I was fed up with training and lacked the desire to stick with one sport for more than two years. My workouts at that point were limited to what was required of me in the service. I tried several military pentathlons, but the finishing 8-kilometer cross-country run was never really meant for a heavy guy like me. I was always in the mix, still profiting from my years of hard work, but I lacked the same passion I had earlier.

It wasn’t until a friend from the military academy brought me to a naval-pentathlon training session that I finally found something that sparked my interest. With my swimming background, I had a clear advantage over the other athletes in the two swimming events. One of the events even required wearing fins, which I had grown quite accustomed to as a swimmer, as they allowed me to stay in the pool while I rehabbed from my shoulder injuries. I had even competed at the national championships and won the 100-meter surface event. The naval pentathlon seemed like an excellent choice for me.

**I had long been in search
of new inspiration for
my training to keep me
motivated. CrossFit proved
to be that inspiration.**

While at the military academy, it was easy for me to train because all the tracks and most of the other national-team members from were in Copenhagen. However, when I graduated in the summer of 2007 and moved to a regiment two hours away, things got a bit harder. Most of my training sessions were done on my own, and I had to spend many weekends in Copenhagen, sleeping on friends' couches to keep up with my sport-specific training and my competition.

After the world championships in Germany in the summer of 2009, I had a hard time keeping up my motivation—always training on my own and never really getting the opportunity to train on the tracks enough. The visits to Butcher's Lab were inspiring, but I couldn't really figure out how to implement CrossFit into my daily training. I knew too little about it.

Rediscovering the Passion

In early 2010, I was invited to a CrossFit seminar along with other personnel from the armed forces working with physical training and education. Some of the pioneers of Danish CrossFit were teaching, and CrossFit Royal Danish Defence College was the host. With them was Blair Morrison, who was visiting Denmark and competing in the Danish CrossFit Open the day after. The day was great!

We talked a little about the foundations of CrossFit, watched some video from the 2009 Games and did three WODs. I was totally spent but enjoyed it so much I immediately started doing research and workouts I created myself or found on the Internet. I kept in touch with Blair, who has become a great friend and inspiration to me. [His blog](#) has given me great ideas and inspiration.

I finally found joy in training again. For the first time in a very long time I began really looking forward to the next workout. I had a limited amount of time to travel and train in Copenhagen on the weekends, and when the first competition of the season arrived, I had barely been on the tracks at all. The obstacle-course race was my first since the summer of 2009, but I was only 1 second off my personal best. I won the championship. And although I didn't set any personal records, the results were so close to my previous bests that I was sure my CrossFit training had positively affected my performance.



The Naval Pentathlon

Obstacle course: 10 obstacles of varying difficulty divided over 305 meters.

Watch Blair Morrison go through the course with me by clicking [here](#).

Life-saving race: 75-meter life-saving swim. Swim the first 50 meters wearing a jacket and pants and go the first 15 meters submerged. Then undress and dive to the bottom of the pool to pick up a dummy and carry it for the remaining 25 meters.

Utility-swim race: Swim 125 meters wearing fins, then pick up and carry a gun for 25 meters, going under a net 3 meters under the surface, as well as other obstacles. The longer the distance you go submerged, the faster you will be because of the fins. The best athletes' total submerged distance ranges from 100 to 110 meters.

Naval Pentathlon continued ...

I finally found joy in training again. For the first time in a very long time I began really looking forward to the next workout.

Over the next couple of months, I continued doing CrossFit and even attended a Level 1 course. Later that summer I went to Finland for the third stage of the Nordic Cup Series. As the competition went on, I exceeded my own expectations, winning my first international competition and setting an all-time national record.

At the end of the season I finished the last competition of the Nordic Cup Series in Sweden in third place, missing the top two spots due to minor technical errors and not due to my physical conditioning. Despite that, I won the Nordic Cup Series with the highest point average.

When the pentathlon season ended, I competed in several CrossFit competitions in Denmark and Sweden. Apart from being great fun, they were a good way to keep myself in shape outside the season. I did very well, though I haven't claimed any top spots yet.

What CrossFit Did for My Naval Pentathlon

Being a seasoned athlete and having years of experience not only in the naval pentathlon but also in a high-level performance environment definitely deliver some of the answers. I don't have to practice the more technical aspects of the sport as much anymore as new athletes do, and I can rely more on my experience. That still doesn't change the fact that I have to work hard to reach my potential.

I find it hard to pinpoint one or several of CrossFit's general physical skills that prepared me well for the naval pentathlon or the other way around. I'm not going to lie: I've always been a good athlete. I've been physically active since I was a kid, doing gymnastics, track and field, and swimming. First and foremost, rediscovering the joy and pleasure of training has been key to the success of using CrossFit in my training routine. A love for what you are doing is the single most important factor to continuing. I really enjoy CrossFit, and I always have some sort of workout in my mind that I can't wait to try.

Naval Pentathlon continued ...

Seamanship race: The most technical event. Start on land by climbing a 5-meter pole. Stick pins in a color-divided board and slide down the pole. Perform various tasks on land before jumping into a rowboat. In the boat, row slalom through five buoys and back, moving a chain from one buoy to another and picking up a big shackle on the last one to bring it back to the first.

Amphibious cross-country race: Wearing uniform pants and a jacket, carry a rifle on your back while running 2,500 meters. During the run, shoot five targets at a distance of 50 meters. Then paddle 100 meters in a small rubber boat and throw dummy grenades at a target before crossing the finishing line. The fastest guys do this in 9:30-10 minutes.



—Kasper Hansen



On land, naval pentathletes are challenged by an obstacle course.

Sure, I could probably say the agility and balance I obtained from running the obstacle course have prepared me well for those aspects in CrossFit, and that the feeling you get during a CrossFit workout with constantly varied and functional movement patterns resembles the feeling you get during the obstacle run. But as I said before, the love of doing what you do is the single most valuable gain I got from CrossFit.

A lot of people praise the CrossFit community, and I definitely stand in line to do the same. I have gained so many new friends through CrossFit, and everywhere I go I experience the same passion for it. I have met a lot of great friends through CrossFit, and as an instructor I have also experienced how CrossFit inspires people.

A love for what you are doing is the single most important factor to continuing. I really enjoy CrossFit and I always have some sort of workout in my mind that I can't wait to try.

Lately I've started a blog called [CrossFit Submerged](#) to suggest ways to incorporate swimming into WODs. It has proven to be a great opportunity to contribute to the CrossFit community with my knowledge on swimming.

In July, I'll compete in the Military World Games, which can best be described as the Olympic Games for armed forces around the globe. My goal is to finish in the top five. Shortly after I return, I will be deploying to Afghanistan for six months. I hope to be able to train enough there to be prepared for my quest to qualify for the 2012 CrossFit Games.



About the Author

Kasper Hansen, 28, is a 1st lieutenant in the Danish Army. He has completed several CrossFit courses, including the Level 1, endurance, powerlifting, and movement and mobility seminars. Among his athletic achievements: Danish junior champion in the 100-meter and 200-meter freestyle, semi-finalist at the European Junior Championships in the 100-meter freestyle, Danish record holder in the 4 x 50-meter freestyle relay, Danish junior record holder in the 4 x 100-meter medley relay, Danish fin-swimming champion in the 100-meter surface race, three-time Danish naval pentathlon champion, second place at the 2007 Nordic Championships, and two-time second-place finisher and two-time third-place finisher in the utility-swim race at the world championships. His best result at the world championships was 13th overall in 2009. Some of his CrossFit stats: a 1:55 Grace, a 2:57 Fran, a 7:28 Helen, an 11:03 Nancy, a 192-lb. snatch, a 264-lb. clean and jerk, a 462-lb. deadlift, a 407-lb. back squat, and a 297-lb. front squat.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

I Believe in Zombies

Andréa Maria Cecil advises you prepare for the Zombie Apocalypse not just with weapons, but with fit people.

By Andréa Maria Cecil

October 2011



Forget the word “zombie.” It’s a loaded term.

Next, think “infectious disease.” Better yet: “pandemic.”

1 of 5

Nivaldo Arruda/Creative Commons



The condition spreads rapidly, has no known cure and affects humans in such a way that they no longer behave as such. Their minds and bodies become controlled by the disease. And what diseases want most is the same as every other living thing: To survive. Thus, their primary goal is to spread.

What I'm talking about here is a pandemic—one that turns people into flesh-eating monsters.

You think I'm joking?

Take a look at our culture.

What you see nowadays are not just a few live-action role players (LARPs) in their moms' basements entertaining the idea of zombies.

What you see is the undead—or allusions to them—on TV via AMC's *The Walking Dead* (based on Robert Kirkman's comic books), zombies in popular music with so-called "Zombie Boy" appearing in Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* video, hosts of movies focusing on various forms of the Zombie Apocalypse, and, on Oct. 23, more than 10,000 people willing to test their athletic prowess against people acting as zombies during the inaugural Run for Your Lives zombie 5K in Darlington, Md.

It's no coincidence.

Someone—or something—is trying to prepare us.

Would you really put it past the government to use media and pop culture as a way to warn the population?

Would you really put it past the government to use media and pop culture as a way to warn the population? Think *Zombieland* was just a movie and not a cleverly disguised instruction manual? Think again, my friend.

The message is this: Be ready, assholes. Things are about to get fucked up.

Nora Lives/Creative Commons



Are zombie walks (top) and characters like Zombie Boy (bottom) part of an education and preparedness program?



Some dead things need to be killed again ... with a chainsaw.

Trust No One

I have yet to mention the most compelling evidence, which is that America's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—the federal agency that for more than 60 years has dedicated its existence to “protecting health and promoting quality of life through the prevention and control of disease, injury, and disability”—has drafted [Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse](#).

Originally published in May, the post was written by Dr. Ali S. Khan, who leads the CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. Before moving into his current position, Khan was deputy director of the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases at CDC. He is an assistant surgeon general.

Yeah, he's big time.

An excerpt from his post:

“If zombies did start roaming the streets, CDC would conduct an investigation much like any other disease outbreak. CDC would provide technical assistance to cities, states, or international partners dealing with a zombie infestation. This assistance might include consultation, lab testing and analysis, patient management and care, tracking of contacts, and infection control (including isolation and quarantine).

“It's likely that an investigation of this scenario would seek to accomplish several goals: determine the cause of the illness, the source of the infection/virus/toxin, learn how it is transmitted and how readily it is spread, how to break the cycle of transmission and thus prevent further cases, and how patients can best be treated. Not only would scientists be working to identify the cause and cure of the zombie outbreak, but CDC and other federal agencies would send medical teams and first responders to help those in affected areas (I will be volunteering the young nameless disease detectives for the field work).”

This is no joke.

Of course, the CDC's official line is the post is all part of a “fun” campaign to get people—especially children—to prepare for “real” emergencies like earthquakes, floods and hurricanes.

So it claims.

“I don't think anyone's really thinking seriously (that) the CDC is worried about the Zombie Apocalypse,” said CDC spokeswoman Maggie Silver.

Oh? Why, then, are you on the so-called “Zombie Task Force,” Maggie?

I call bullshit.

**Any video game that includes
zombies recommends both
long-range and short-range
weaponry.**

But enough with the case building. I've proven my point beyond a reasonable doubt. Let's talk defense.

Apocalyptic Weaponry

- The Crovel, which was awarded to the first-place finisher of the Maryland zombie race, is a shovel, a crowbar, a saw, an axe, a storage device, a bottle opener and a hammer all in one. Need I say more?
- Guns. Lots of guns. And, of course, a shit ton of bullets. A pistol would be great—easy to carry. But don't dismiss rifles; long range is good, my friend. Any video game that includes zombies recommends both long-range and short-range weaponry. A sniper rifle is great on a rooftop but worthless when searching for food in a walk-in freezer. At that moment, you need a shotgun loaded with buckshot, and consider double-ought the bare minimum size. At least half of CrossFit HQ's staff can assist you with any firearms purchases.
- A machete. A strong one that can slice through rotting flesh—like the one my grandmother used to chase her first husband out of her house in Guatemala.
- Gerber Gear. The company offers apocalypse tools/ weapons worth investigation. I like the Gator Machete Pro. "If the undead come calling, let the Gator Pro answer the door." Damn straight.
- Body armor. One scratch from the undead and you're changing teams.
- Gym equipment. Undoubtedly, some of you will not heed my advice and will end up caught at the box while the undead work on outnumbering us (don't say I never gave you anything). So, your barbell can be your makeshift staff, and bumper plates can be used like Frisbees to lobotomize the enemy. Light kettlebells can be thrown or swung with skull-crushing ferocity. In each case, you must be strong enough to maneuver such items, which brings me to my final weapon: people.

(P.S. I don't recommend chainsaws. The last thing you need is something that requires a power source.)

Zombie Apocalypse Team

My Olympic-lifting coach, Mike McKenna, has taught me two valuable lessons:



Moggs Oceanline/Creative Commons

***This guy wants nothing more than to eat your brain.
Show him your machete.***

1. The fast is in your ass.
2. Make sure you have the right people on your Zombie Apocalypse Team.

His first choice: Arden Cogar Jr.

Cogar won the Stihl Timbersports Series U.S. Championship earlier this year. He can cut up massive hunks of wood in a matter of seconds.

"My father gave me my first axe when I was 3. By the age of 4, I had chopped down all the trees surrounding our home," he told the Stihl Timbersports website.

Hand-to-hand combat during the Zombie Apocalypse is inevitable. You have to be fast and you have to be strong. Choose your teammates wisely.

Some suggestions:

- Every Navy SEAL or ex-SEAL you know. Josh Bridges, Dave Castro, Andy Stumpf. They're no-brainers.
- Tony Blauer, founder of Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management Systems, would be a good choice. Time to get "outside 90" on the undead.
- John Hackleman, founder of The Pit professional mixed martial arts association and training camp in Arroyo Grande, Calif. Anyone for Fight Gone Dead?
- Deborah Corder, a former scholarship sprinter at the University of Northern Iowa. You will put her to good use, I'm sure.
- Tommy Hackenbruck. Watch him use a sledge to drive his spike in footage of the 2009 CrossFit Games. He buries the thing with about three strokes, and he'll bury a few zombies with less.
- Jason Khalipa and Rob Orlando. You'll need brute strength.

Apply To Andréa—With Shotgun

As for me, I ran the zombie 5K and stayed alive in the cute little game of "Let's pretend zombies are real and they're chasing you."

That's right: I stayed alive, bitches.

My team would look something like this:

- Chuck Liddell, former UFC light heavyweight champion. He's proven and he's got his fair share of piss and vinegar. Love that.
- Neal Maddox, who finished 32nd at this year's Games. Weren't expecting that one, were you? Here's why: When I interviewed him after the Games' muscle-up/deadlift/GHD sit-up/sprint workout, he was visibly pissed. "If it wasn't for that judge that kept making me touch that line, I would have been ahead." Everyone had to touch the line. It was one of the rules of the workout. My point: Maddox has attitude.
- Rizelyx Rivera, an Olympic hopeful who snatches 90 kg and clean and jerks 110 kg. Not only that, but she also releases a wicked, high-pitched yelp seconds before she lifts that could quite literally rupture the rotting flesh of the undead.

- Daniel Tyminski, who finished 25th in this year's Games. You might say, "Why in God's name would you pick the guy who wears pink shorts and a girl tee that says 'Prize Winning Snatch' on it?" Because obviously he's fearless.
- Anyone from CrossFit New England, one of my favorite boxes filled with fantastic coaches and athletes. Not only is CFNE known for its impressive workout times, but, as owners Ben and Heather Bergeron have said, they emphasize training the mind. That's essential in apocalyptic times.

Nonetheless, I continue to accept applications for Zombie Apocalypse Team members.

The non-fit need not apply.



Chris Miller

About the Author

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