

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

February 2010

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Exporting CrossFit: Chris Spealler in India

In December 2009, Chris Spealler traveled from Utah to India to visit Sri Ram Ashram. While there, he traded CrossFit coaching for cricket and dance instruction, inspiring many young athletes along the way.

By **Rashmi Cole** Sri Ram Ashram

February 2010



All images courtesy of Rashmi Cole/Sri Ram Ashram

After spending one year training with Jim Baker at Crossfit Santa Cruz Central, I returned to India full of CrossFit gusto only to face the realities of training alone with less than optimal equipment. In what I now call “a moment of selfish inspiration,” I offered the oldest boys a bribe: CrossFit with me and skip morning group exercise.

They took the bait and we have never looked back.



Finding a Role Model

While I am happy with completion of workouts, young men eventually want to see where they stand against others, and I could see the demeanor of the boys changing upon discovering CrossFit monsters lifting impossibly huge weights. On average, the boys are 5'7" and weigh 130 lb. When they saw what a 180-lb. person can lift they immediately hatched plans to bulk up.

The last thing I wanted was for them to become dissatisfied with their body type. It was sad to watch them suddenly wish they were something other than what they are. I began a quest for positive smaller male role models and quickly happened upon Chris Spealler.

Together, the boys and I studied Speal's numbers. We hauled out the calculator and did the math. Yes, his deadlift is lighter but is still comparable to the big guys when you factor in body weight. We marveled at his Cindy performance (close to 40 rounds) and incredible met-con abilities. For us he became the ideal athlete, the one who made it OK to be small.

Last summer I met Chris at the CrossFit Games, when he sent a note of encouragement to the children. A few months later, he e-mailed with a proposal to visit.





A Visit From Speal

Meanwhile, our CrossFit program was growing. Along with the older boys, ages 16-19, CrossFit Kids started for the 12-15 age group. About a month ago we started *CrossFit Peelayas* ("puppies" in Hindi) for children 8-11. Almost half of our 65 ashram children are now doing CrossFit.

In his e-mail, Chris said he had one week to travel and didn't know what a trip to India entailed. It's a 20-hour flight (not counting layovers), plus a six-hour train ride to our town, so I assumed Chris would come to his senses once he figured that out. It was amazing he wanted to come at all, but I wasn't very optimistic about an actual visit.

In spite of the great distance between Utah and India, a date was soon set and tickets purchased. Lists of instructions flew back and forth: don't smile at monkeys, bring your own TP, expect zero protein, and always travel with a flashlight for electrical outages. I could finally tell the kids that Coach Spealler was on his way.

As Chris' visit grew closer, the excitement was palpable. Nine-year-old Deepak, who was born precocious, told me he needed to discuss his burpee technique with Coach Speal. Vijai Raj, our CrossFit fanatic, fretted that he wouldn't be able to come home from college. Our guests wondered what "a Spealler" was. The rest of the kids doubled their CrossFit efforts and continuously asked to see online photos of "Coach."

106 Pull-Ups?

Early in December 2009, we picked Chris up from the train station at midday. He had arrived at his Delhi hotel around midnight and caught the 7 a.m. train to Haridwar—the guy had to be tired. Within minutes of arrival, Chris' ashram tour was aborted when he immediately became embroiled in a field-hockey game. Who knew Coach Spealler could play field hockey?

Soon after, classes started. The *peelays* are a wonderfully enthusiastic group that's totally out of control. As they gathered around Coach, Deepak asked him how many pull-ups he could do. Chris said 106, a number that impresses CrossFitters worldwide. Deepak asked, "In one second?" Chris started to explain before realizing there wasn't a conversation to be had.

After mastering skin-the-cat, games and a WOD, the Crossfit Kids group had a class. In the final class with the big boys, Chris devised a team workout: two teams of three boys each with Chris alone as the third team. Jaws dropped when the boys realized Coach was going to do the full team workout alone: 50 power cleans (65 kg), 150 pull-ups and 150 box jumps. Jaws dropped further when they saw the smooth power of his cleans. I was just amazed that he was still standing after the long journey. I assume he eventually got tired, but I never saw it.

I always tell visitors to the ashram that if they want the inside track to the children, bone up on cricket and Bollywood. Day 2 started with Chris announcing he wanted to learn cricket. Obviously, Coach had done his homework. After an early morning technique class with the oldest group, Chris headed out to the cricket field for a batting and bowling lesson. Schoolchildren gathered around to see the visitor with huge muscles try to smack the cricket ball. Soccer followed, and the Frisbee flew whenever possible.



Crushing It With Coach Speal

We quickly settled into a schedule: early morning classes with the big boys, after-school classes for *peelays* and kids, followed by a lecture/demonstration and question-and-answer period for all who were interested. In between, Coach nailed WODs. Surrounded by a crowd each time, he showed the children the mental and physical power of an elite athlete.

There were many great memories of Coach's visit. Who can forget Deepak flying over Chris during the leap-frog relay? Or when the *peelays* challenged Chris and Vijai to a game of tug-of-war? The kids jumped the gun, pulled on the count of two and whooped their butts. After explaining the 80 percent vs. 20 percent ratio of proper technique to effort and intensity, the kids decided that Coach wasn't doing his workouts properly because clearly no one could go faster and his technique was perfect. He wasn't following the CrossFit rules.

I'll certainly remember the pure amazement on their faces as Chris tackled a workout they had just completed, and my favorite memories include watching Chris coach the kids onward. It's a sweet moment watching one of the best coach your child to completion of a WOD.

On Chris' final night, the children gave Coach their highest honor: a high-energy dance show and thank-you cards. I think Chris has safely sequestered the videotape featuring his dance performance, but it's safe to say that he now has a little education in the fine art of Bollywood.

For the rest of their lives these children will have Coach Spealler as their example. The intensity and max effort he puts out will always remain a marker for them—pretty heady stuff for children from rural India.

A huge thank you to Chris for coming to Sri Ram Ashram, and to Crossfit Headquarters for supporting his visit.



About the Author

An American from California, Rashmi Cole has been helping run [Sri Ram Ashram](#) near Haridwar, India, since the early 1990s. She discovered CrossFit in 2005 and was briefly trained by Greg and Lauren Glassman. She brought the program back to the ashram, and her success is documented in the **CrossFit Journal** article [CrossFit in the Ashram](#), published Jan. 19, 2009. If you would like to know more about Sri Ram Ashram or donate much-needed equipment, contact Rashmi Cole at rashmisra@gmail.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Missing Barbell Link?

Many CrossFit athletes start with a PVC pipe before jumping to a training, women's or full-size Olympic bar. Inventor and CrossFitter R. Don Hollinger introduces one more step to help smooth the transition from PVC to metal.

By R. Don Hollinger

February 2010



All images courtesy of R. Don Hollinger

After a good warm-up, I overhead squatted 400—a PR. I'll never forget that day.

I threw the Olympic barbell down, watched it bounce a few times and danced around like those lifters on YouTube: the ones who are built like fire plugs and prance like they have ants in their shorts. It really felt great!

An OHS of 400 isn't bad for a 62-year-old who has been CrossFitting for about a year. I can remember my first overhead squat with a weightless PVC pipe: I was leaning over so far that it looked like I was going to dive into the pool. I stretched for a month of mornings to be able to keep my arms and torso vertical during the lift. It felt wonderful just to be able to do the exercise properly.

The Real Story and the Birth of the Hyperlite Barbell

Everything I just said is true—the work, the ecstasy of success, the joy of a job well done, the pride of accomplishing something I couldn't do before. One little detail is missing, however. While the reader might think the "400" was pounds, it was actually ounces, which converts to 25 lb.

Well, it was a lot for me.

The piece of equipment that made this humble PR possible was a 5-lb. Olympic barbell I made out of common hardware or home-improvement-store parts. Even a naked Olympic barbell at 45 lb. was way too much for me. In fact, the standard Olympic barbell was almost twice what I could overhead squat.

At 45 lb. by itself and 65 lb. held the proper distance off the ground with two 10-lb. bumper plates, the Olympic barbell is very imposing to beginners, children and older athletes. I'm an older beginner, and the 45-lb. Olympic barbell was quite intimidating to me. After about a year of CrossFit, I still wasn't able to use the big bar on overhead squats, snatches and warm-ups for other exercises.

I solved this predicament by creating a "stepping stone" barbell that has the same basic characteristics as the full Olympic bar without the high weight. I fabricated a 5-lb. Olympic bar with common plumbing material. I call it the "Hyperlite Bar." Except for its low weight and slightly shorter grip length, it feels and works just like its big brother. It uses the standard Olympic plates with 2-inch holes and standard plate-retaining collars (see Table 1 and figures 1 and 2).



Table 1: The Hyperlight Barbell vs. the Standard Olympic Bar

	Weight	Diameter	Grip Width	End Diameter	Max Weight (Bar + Plates)	Cost
Hyperlite Bar	5 lb.	1.05"	50"	2"	65 lb.	About \$20
Olympic Bar	45 lb.	1.10"	51.5"	2"	Hundreds of pounds	\$100-\$1000+

The Hyperlite Bar loaded with two 10-lb. bumpers and 40 lb. of metal plates (65 lb. total) can be dropped from the overhead position without damage to the bar. And that's the real fun: now athletes like me can drop the bar just like an Olympian. After a great effort, a big, crashing barbell bounce is a just reward. Sixty-five pounds is the max needed on the Hyperlite because one can then move to the 45-lb. Olympic bar with two 10-lb. bumper plates. The Hyperlite is a bridge or stepping stone up to the standard Olympic bar.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

How to Make the Hyperlite Barbell

From your local hardware or home improvement store procure the following per Table 2 below:

Table 2: Materials Needed

Name	Nominal Size*	Quantity	Approx. Cost	Length	Figures
Black metal pipe	¾" diameter	1	\$10	5 Feet	Figures 3, 4 & 6
PVC pipe	1" diameter	1	\$2	10" (min.)	Figure 4
PVC pipe	1 ¼" diameter	1	\$2	10" (min.)	Figure 4
PVC pipe	1 ½"	1	\$2	10" (min.)	Figure 4
PVC pipe	2" diameter	1	\$2	10" (min.)	Figure 4
Sheet metal screws	No. 6	6	\$1	1"	Figure 5
Metal drill bit**	⅛"	2	-	-	-

* The diameters listed under "Nominal Size" roughly refer to the inside diameter of the pipe. But, it would be difficult to measure the diameter of any of the plastic or metal pipes and determine the nominal size pipe. Consider the "pipe diameter" to be a name and not an actual measurement property of the pipes. Also, it is important not to confuse the diameter in inches with the length required in inches. Typically, PVC pipe can be purchased in 18-inch lengths for a few bucks or 10-footers for a few dollars more. Extra PVC always comes in handy. If the store will cut it for you, let them do some of the work and get the PVC cut to the lengths I've listed above.

** You only need one ⅛-inch metal drill bit, but they break easily. I broke several of them. To save yourself a trip back to the store, buy extra. They always come in handy. Buy the most expensive ones they have; cheap ones don't last.

Step-by-Step Construction

Step 1— Cut the PVC pipes into “sleeves” as per Table 3, and refer to Figure 6. Most PVC sizes are cut off to 5-inch sleeves, except the 2-inch-diameter PVC, which is cut off to a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sleeve. Hold the pipe securely in a vice and do the best you can to make a square cut. A hacksaw gets its name because it does a hacked-up job, so don’t worry if it is not perfect. It won’t be.

Table 3: Measurements for PVC Sleeves

PVC Size	Qty.	Sleeve Length	Saw Axially
1 inch diameter	2	5 inches	Yes
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch diameter	2	5 inches	No
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter	2	5 inches	Yes
2 inch diameter	2	$\frac{3}{4}$ inches	No

Step 2— Axially saw through one side of the 1-inch-diameter and 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-diameter PVC sleeves as per Table 3. Hold about half the sleeve in a vise and cut the half that sticks out from the vise. The end of the sleeve held in the vise cannot be slit because the pressure of the vise pinches the saw blade (Figure 7). Switch the sleeve in the vise and make another cut on the piece that now sticks out from the vise. This second cut will mate with the first cut to form one cut along the entire length of the sleeve. Again, the final combination of cuts might not be pretty, but it will work. This will allow the sleeve to expand as it is installed. Note that not all the sleeves are slit axially. Use your file to de-burr all cuts.

Step 3— Place a 1-inch-diameter PVC sleeve over both ends of the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-diameter black metal pipe. Push the PVC sleeve on so it is flush with the outer end of the metal pipe (Figure 8). The axial slit will allow the PVC sleeve to expand to fit over the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-diameter black metal pipe.

Step 4— Install a 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-diameter PVC sleeve over a 1- $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-diameter sleeve. This is quite an interference fit, and a screwdriver will have to be employed to pry the pipe with the slit apart to get it started (Figure 9). These two sleeves are now a unit and will subsequently be referred to as the “combo PVC sleeve.”

Step 5— Find the seam of the metal pipe and mark the end of the pipe so the seam can be easily found (Figure 10). The seam is marked so you can avoid drilling into it. The seam is not homogeneous and comprises uneven metal hardness that will increase the chances of catching and breaking a drill bit.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Step 6— Drill one $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch hole in the 2-inch-diameter PVC sleeve. The hole is in the center of the surface (Figure 11).

Step 7— Hold the combo PVC sleeve made in Step 4 in a vise and slide the short sleeve you drilled in Step 6 over it. Hold the short sleeve flush to the end of the combo PVC sleeve and, using the hole you drilled in Step 6 as a guide, drill through the combo PVC sleeve (Figure 12).

Step 8— Insert the combo PVC sleeve combination drilled in the above step on the metal pipe with the hole *opposite* the seam in the metal pipe. The metal pipe already has a 1-inch-diameter PVC sleeve on it. Make the combo PVC sleeve flush with the outer end of the metal pipe. Using the drilled hole in the combo PVC sleeve as a guide, drill through the 1-inch-diameter PVC sleeve and metal pipe (Figure 13). By drilling the first hole opposite the seam in the metal pipe, you won't have to drill through the seam, which will reduce the chance of broken drill bits.

Step 9— Slide the 2-inch diameter sleeve overtop of the sleeves already on the barbell. This will be a very loose fit. Line up all the previously drilled holes. Install a 1-inch No. 6 sheet metal screw to hold the package together (Figure 14).

Step 10— As in Step 8, drill 2 more holes spaced at equal distances around the circumference (about every 120 degrees) and install a No. 6 screw in each (Figure 15). The last 2 screws will warp the 2-inch-diameter PVC sleeve as it is deflected to contact the smaller diameter sleeve underneath. Be sure to tighten the screws sufficiently such that the 2-inch sleeve contacts the combination sleeve underneath.

Congratulations! You are now the proud owner of the lightest Olympic bar on the planet. The metal pipe is under very low stress with only 60 lb. of plates and will last forever. The PVC sleeves could wear or loosen with repeated drops, but they can easily be replaced. Because the PVC sleeves are short, spring or mechanical clips should always be used to prevent the plates from falling off during use.



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

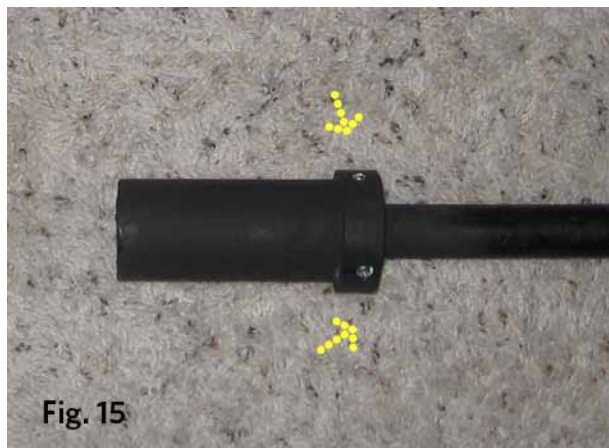


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

Figure 15: The Hyperlite Bar is painted for contrast. The arrows show two of the three attaching sheet metal screws.

Bumper Plates

This article is about barbells. However, one item that really makes the Hyperlite Barbell useful and fun is a pair of 10-lb. bumper plates. They are well worth the price. They are made entirely of rubber, with a steel or brass bushing in the center that rides on the 2-inch end sleeves of the Hyperlite Bar or Olympic bar. The plates will hold the barbell the correct distance (8.65 inches) off the ground for many CrossFit exercises, establishing a consistent starting position for exercises such as the deadlift, clean and snatch. Combine bumpers with a rubber mat to reduce damage to your concrete floor.

Bumper plates are available from a host of different equipment companies, and I found the best deal is at [Wright Rubber](#).

Lift Lite for Best Results

Even the unhandy athlete can fabricate the Hyperlite Bar using common bits found at home-improvement stores. The Hyperlite Bar increases the fun factor in a lot of exercises and provides an easier transition for those moving from a PVC pipe to a metal barbell.

I hope this article will be very useful to many CrossFit athletes, especially beginners, children and the elderly. I believe this segment of CrossFit is actually the majority, and the jocks doing three-minute Frans on the *CrossFit Journal* and [CrossFit.com](#) videos are the minority. Therefore, the Hyperlite Barbell can improve the workouts of many CrossFitters as they work up to performing Fran as RX'd.



About the Author

R. Don Hollinger, professional engineer, is retired from the automotive industry and a newcomer to CrossFit. After graduation, his activities included motorcycle racing on motocross, ice and flat-track courses. While raising a family, he jogged and rollerbladed. In retirement, when not tinkering, he's CrossFitting, mountain biking and volunteering. In 2007, he earned a master's degree in engineering 30 years after his bachelor's degree, and he has five patents. He can be reached at xfitdon@gmail.com.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Second Chances—CrossFit Works, Part 2

Two affiliate owners share how CrossFit helped them beat drugs and get new leases on life.

By Peter Egyed and Kevin O'Malley

January 2010



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The CrossFit community is full of amazing triumphs. In this regular feature, the *CrossFit Journal* compiles the most extraordinary stories from a community built by extraordinary people.

In this edition, we feature an athlete and affiliate owner who beat amphetamines to finish sixth in the CrossFit Games, as well as another affiliate owner who used CrossFit to pull himself out of the depths of addiction.

Irony: A Short Autobiography

By Peter Egyed

Months and months of preparation led up to this day. I went nearly a week without sleep. Refined carbohydrates were a staple of my diet. I had a pack-a-day habit. To top it all off, I had over 16 months of amphetamine use behind me.

I was ready.

After a brief car chase and a head-on collision, I was on foot in an all-out sprint through a neighborhood at max effort, scaling every wall I could find, stopping for nothing—that is, until the final wall. As I dug my fingers in and scraped my feet up the sides, I finally got a view of the other side, a view of Freedom.

And then I failed.

I was done, face-down and handcuffed for the second time in a month. For the next eight months, I had some time to think—to think of failing and of what I would do with my life. It took me almost a year after my release to find the importance of my health.

I started running to quit smoking. You know, 4-5 miles two or three times a week. I began going to college and started lifting weights to kill time—legs, back, arms and chest, but I will tell you I did pull-ups because I never wanted to feel that failure again.

I put my lifting on hold to run a marathon. It was horrible. It cost me a few nagging injuries and decreases across the board in everything else, but I finished. I didn't run more than a mile for the next six months.

It was then that I knew there had to be something better. You couldn't be just a runner or a lifter. I wanted to be both, but not both of those. I wanted to be something else.

I was going to school for physics and filling an elective with a physiology course. I spoke to my instructor about fitness goals, and that's when I was referred to CrossFit.com. This was in February of 2007. A friend and I committed ourselves to the program in a corner of a run-down gym, and we thrived.

We knew nothing about CrossFit besides the website and videos. Then a competition was announced: the first annual CrossFit Games. We were broke college students, so we drove in my truck—which broke down twice—and



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Peter Egyed replaced smoking, drug use and a bad diet with CrossFit, and only a few years later he managed to finish sixth at the CrossFit Games.

decided to camp on-site. We also must have thought the Zone was a mental state in which you trained because we packed nothing but brownies and cookies for the ride out there and tons of Gatorade and other garbage for the days of the competition.

I remember being destroyed in the hopper WOD and stumbling through the run. I approached Dave Castro and Nicole Carroll and asked if there were any local gyms nearby. Nicole chuckled and asked if we didn't get a good enough workout. I looked at my bloody hands and replied that we actually needed showers. Dave took us in.

With the Games over, we felt part of something much bigger, and our training reflected that feeling. We began recruiting others, and not much later I attended a Level 1 Cert.

Before we knew it, another year had passed and I was making another trip to Cali, this time with my girlfriend in a rental. The event felt much better, and I was more prepared. I knew what insulin was, and our meals were packed ahead of time. I managed to finish 21st.

Something was much different coming home after the 2008 Games: we needed a real place to train. And so it began. Four months later, we signed a lease on a 2,600-square-foot building, and **CrossFit Fury** was born in Goodyear, Ariz.

For the next month, we built our gym and committed every moment to finding new clients and improving their lives. Oh yeah—we trained for the Games, too, but I kept thinking 2009 would not be my year. First, I did not qualify, finishing 11th in the Great Basin Regional, but then I won the Last Chance Online Qualifier.

Going into the Games, my only goal was to make it to the second day. To simply say I was among the world's 16 fittest men would have been enough. Hell, I'm still on probation.

Editor's note: Aside from the sandbag sprint WOD, Peter finished no lower than 15th in any event at the 2009 CrossFit Games, tying for first in the deadlift WOD and finishing fifth in the snatch/wall-ball couplet. At the end of the competition, Peter sat in sixth spot, one point behind 2008 Games champ Jason Khalipa.

Since the Games, I have had an even greater fire for the business and my fitness. Currently, I am working with two local police departments, introducing them to

CrossFit with great success—the irony! I was recently contemplating this irony and realized that were it not for CrossFit, I quite possibly would not be hired as a bag-boy at a local grocery store. Yet here I am running a business, changing lives and trying to make a difference.

Thanks for the second chance.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

My Journey From Addiction to CrossFit

By Kevin O'Malley

Three years ago, my life felt like I had just finished a brutal met-con WOD like Fran or Grace: I was beaten down, overwhelmed and utterly exhausted.

I was an average, middle-class American boy who had the world in front of him. I excelled in sports and education, but that all changed as my pattern of living went from normal to include daily abuse of heroin, cocaine and oxycontin. I delved into the dark, secluded life of drug addiction, and I abandoned my dreams, my family and my close friends. I gave up hope in myself.

My life was spiraling out of control. I gave up on college and my desire to play college basketball, and I was losing my family in the process. When you are deep into addiction, you never really see the anguish you cause the people who have loved and cared for you throughout your life. Your only purpose for living is to get that next high and find out whom you can manipulate the best.

Drug addiction is a leading cause of death in the United States, and in many instances it is looked at as an inner-city or lower-class problem. This is like saying anaerobic training is not as successful as aerobic training—it ignores large parts of the issue. Suicide, overdoses and domestic problems are at an all-time high in the middle-class, suburban areas where most people live and work. Addiction is a growing problem in all of America, and I believe CrossFit can heal the broken families and mend the broken hearts.

My own journey into CrossFit started about two and half years ago. I was sent down to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for rehabilitation for drug addiction because I could not seem to get sober in my home state of Massachusetts. I went through three intense months of rehab and was placed in a halfway house in Fort Lauderdale's inner city.

I was introduced to CrossFit during this time, and I credit this physical regimen with my recovery. CrossFit not only got me into the best shape of my life, but it also gave me the new, healthy lifestyle I had been craving throughout my life. I returned back to Massachusetts with over a year of clean living behind me and a determination to commit to my new-found love of CrossFit.

I went to a Level 1 Certification and met a group a firebreathers from [CrossFit New Hampshire](#), who took me in and gave me expert training. Through CrossFit, I



Courtesy of Kevin O'Malley

*Kevin O'Malley's world is still upside down,
but now it's by choice.*

gained confidence in myself and realized I can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it. CrossFitters amaze me with their tenacity and overall determination to finish anything put in front of them, no matter the blood, sweat and tears. I also went back to college and finished my bachelor's degree in history. And I went back to school in another way—I became an elementary school teacher in the inner city.

I look at CrossFit not only as my training program but also a way of life that has helped me overcome obstacles in the last two and half years. I embraced the CrossFit workouts, and I decided to open my own affiliate, **Vagabond CrossFit**, to give this same gift to my surrounding community. My overall goal is to give to the community something CrossFit has given to me: hope to accomplish goals.

Over the last year, I have finished triathlons and marathons, and I am currently in the process of training for the Vermont 100 ultramarathon in the summer of 2010. CrossFit has not only bettered me as an athlete, but it has also given me an opportunity to be a better person. Finishing marathons, triathlons and ultrathons is great for the resume, but seeing the smiling faces of the average person finishing a workout like Isabel is the real reason why I have committed to CrossFit both as my recovery program and my fitness program to achieve overall well being.

In the state of New York, there is a rehabilitation center for recovering drug addicts who are trained to run marathons. With a success rate of over 90 percent, the program has been an eye-opener for me. Through physical activity, you can better yourself physically and mentally, and it is utterly apparent to me that CrossFit creates a positive atmosphere and gives people a reason to push themselves to the limit. At the ripe age of 24, I am setting a goal to one day start a CrossFit rehab program for recovering drug addicts so I can give them the same opportunity CrossFit has given me: a second chance at life.



Courtesy of Kevin O'Malley

CrossFit helped Kevin O'Malley pull himself out of addiction and gave him hope, and so he started Vagabond CrossFit to pass that hope on to others.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit Goes to College

A doctor of kinesiology in Louisiana is asked to teach a weight-training course. He introduces his students to CrossFit in hopes of producing a new and better breed of fitness professional.

By **Dr. Andrew Hatchett** University of Louisiana

January 2010



Andrew Hatchett

CrossFit is an example of effective and efficient training.

That statement is no surprise to anyone who has chosen CrossFit as his or her fitness regime. As a faculty member and loyal CrossFitter who teaches in the field of kinesiology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I was recently presented with an exciting opportunity:

Adding CrossFit to the university's curriculum.

CrossFit for Credit

CrossFit has changed many aspects of my life. More specifically, CrossFit has allowed my definitions of fitness, technique in training, nutrition habits and philosophy of health to evolve from their rudimentary foundations. When the chair of my department approached me last fall about instructing a weight-training course, I naturally became excited about the possibilities the opportunity held. Without hesitation, I requested to teach the course from the CrossFit perspective.

Fortunately, the department chair is open-minded and very trusting of me. Prior to this opportunity, I was the pied piper of CrossFit in the department. I will endlessly talk about CrossFit to anyone—and I have. Therefore, a foundation of CrossFit knowledge had been established with the chair, as well as among the faculty in the department. I believe this made the idea of teaching weight training from a CrossFit perspective easier for them to comprehend, and ultimately it made them more comfortable granting approval.

Consequently, it was necessary to develop a course outline and subsequent syllabi. I have great enthusiasm for CrossFit, but determining how to structure a class that can convey this passion safely, efficiently and effectively was a bit of a conundrum. Like any scientist, I turned to the best resource available: the CrossFit main site.

An e-mail was sent informing the powers that be of my charge and asking if any advice could be offered. As another example of the positive, proactive CrossFit community that's reflected at every level of the organization, a response came in minutes, informing that my message had been forwarded to Coach Greg Glassman.

I have great enthusiasm for CrossFit, but determining how to structure a class that can convey this passion safely, efficiently and effectively was a bit of a conundrum. Like any scientist, I turned to the best resource available: the CrossFit main site.

Andrew Hatchett



Andrew Hatchett decided it was time to address fitness misconceptions at the university level, where so many students earn a degree but don't understand functional movement.

To be honest, I had a “Holy cow!” moment. “What have I done?” crept into my head. A few minutes later Mr. Glassman responded. His recommendation was to follow the format of a Level 1 Certification. An explanation of the certification content was offered, followed by an invitation for me and a colleague to attend any Level 1 Certification we wished. I was floored at this point. It was a truly phenomenal offer.

Andrew Hatchett: PhD, Level 1 CrossFit Trainer

A friend, Charles Allen (director of fitness at the University of Mississippi), and I participated in the Level 1 Certification in Charlotte, N.C., in December 2008. Anyone who has completed a Level 1 Certification is aware that a tremendous amount of information is offered. What I found equally as important as the information offered was the clarity the certification provided. The nine foundational movements were broken down in such a way that the understanding developed was profound. The lectures allowed for a free exchange of information.

Students were also told they would be expected to participate at a level of intensity respective of their current level of fitness. Effort and intensity were emphasized as paramount for success in the course.

As impressive as any aspect of the weekend was the ownership elite trainers such as Chuck Carswell, Pat Sherwood and Andy Stumpf had of the information. The training staff had a great ability to convey reasonably complex material, and fortunate are all participants who attend any of the certifications administered by CrossFit.

Upon return to Louisiana I felt confident not only in my ability to better instruct the movements but also to organize the course in the format of a Level 1 Certification. The course would be divided into specific phases:



Andrew Hatchett

Anyone who thought a weight-training class would be an easy credit soon learned what functional movement is all about in the form of burpees, Tabata intervals and full ranges of motion.

1. Foundational movements.
2. Lectures.
3. WODs.

The class is scheduled to meet in the weight room of the university's student recreation center. The space is woefully inadequate to support the instruction of any weight-training course. Included in this space are the traditional selectorized machines, some free weights, an assortment of benches, dumbbells, boxes and a squat rack. Luckily, a classroom is available for use not too far away, along with an indoor track (200 meters).

The classroom has technological capabilities that allow Internet access as well as projection for the display of the CrossFit main site. The track is shared with a jogging class at times, allowing the opportunity to coordinate with other faculty (and also to introduce other faculty to CrossFit). What follows are elements of the course syllabus and a description of the course format.

Syllabus Breakdown

Course title—Skills and Techniques of Weight Training. Due to the information presented in the Level 1 Certification and on the main site, convincing administration that the CrossFit method fit under this title was not difficult.

Meeting times—Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon until 1:15 p.m. These 75-minute blocks are perfect for the format of this course. They provide enough time to allow viewing of a video from the CrossFit main site to either inform, inspire or demonstrate movements or specific prescribed workouts.

Course description—This course is designed to provide skills and knowledge of weight training. Techniques and strategies applicable to teaching are emphasized. This course is taught from the philosophical and methodological perspective of an exercise program centered on functional movement. I chose to modify the existing description of the course to maintain consistency among other sections of the course being taught while informing the participants that their studies were going to be based on the CrossFit philosophy and methodology.

Required material—Four items were required for this course. Again, I modified the material required from previously taught sections in order to maintain consistency among sections while providing changes to facilitate the needs of the participants in this section.

1. The traditionally required item is a strength-training anatomy text used as a reference for the participants. During the course, comparisons were routinely made between “bodybuilding” movements and the compound movements we used. If the participants wished to examine the muscles used during a thruster, they were asked to break the movement down into segments and examine the muscular involvement in that manner. This, I believe, develops a more intimate knowledge of the movement, and the participants become more aware of what’s going on from a physiological perspective.

2. A copy of Mark Rippetoe and Lon Kilgore’s text *Starting Strength*.
3. A subscription to the *CrossFit Journal* was required of the participants. Without a doubt, this wealth of information is plenty for anyone to develop a solid foundation of the principles and tenets of CrossFit and a number of other subjects associated with the program. I’ve found the *Journal* to be a phenomenal teaching tool. Many discussions were initiated with, “I was looking at the *Journal* last night and ... ”
4. A 4.5-foot piece of PVC pipe. This equipment is necessary to instruct participants in the nine movements covered in the Level 1 Cert. It also served as advertising for the course. After all, only a select few students were walking around campus with a lengthy piece of PVC—an instant conversation starter.

Course objectives—As expressed in previous syllabi for this course, this is primarily a content-based course. Listed below are the objectives I felt needed to be met as a result of the participant’s experience in the course:

1. The ability to explain the purpose and value of functional movement.
2. The ability to explain how exercise training centered on functional movement can benefit various populations.
3. The ability to explain concepts of functional movement programming.
4. The ability to define terms associated with functional movement exercise.
5. The ability to apply concepts to ensure safety (i.e., cues to movement and movement etiquette).
6. The ability to identify the primary and assistant muscle groups in addition to the kind of joint movement involved in all movements.
7. The ability to practically demonstrate instruction of the nine foundational movements.
8. The ability to explain strategies for weight control as well as suggest nutritional guidelines.
9. The ability to explain the physiological adaptations of chronic functional exercise.

Course requirements—Included in the course requirements were the departmental attendance policy and notification of absence policy. Additionally, participants were informed that they would be required to perform exercise in appropriate attire. Students were also told they would be expected to participate at a level of intensity respective of their current level of fitness. Effort and intensity were emphasized as paramount for success in the course.

Course evaluation—Each time the class met, an attendance sheet was provided. Essentially, the sheet was used as a method to provide points at the end of the semester based upon the percentage of classes attended (i.e., a student who attended 92 percent of the classes earned 92 points). Two written examinations were administered during the semester. The first examination evaluated the participants' knowledge and understanding of the nine foundational movements. Questions were posed to determine if the appropriate cues to the respective movements were known and what to look for if certain form was not found during that movement. The second examination was used to determine the understanding of the various lecture topics throughout the semester. These topics included:

What is fitness?

What is functional movement training?

Programming for functional movement.

Nutrition.



Andrew Hatchett

Students were informed that intensity during workouts was required for a passing grade.

School Is in Session

The first class meeting was an introduction. I introduced myself, offered my credentials and a brief history of my experience instructing similar courses. I then informed the class that the course was going to be taught from the perspective of constantly varied, infinitely scalable, functional movement. I also informed them intensity was one of the criteria they would be evaluated on. It was my intent to make this element of the course abundantly clear. Requirements for the course were also discussed (attendance, material and attitude). What followed was an explanation of CrossFit and the nine foundational movements.

I was under no illusion that a few of the students enrolled in the class were thinking it was going to be their chance to earn credit for lifting weights in the manner of a high-school weightlifting class. This misconception was addressed.

I also talked about the development of a positive community and a team environment. Everyone was going to be treated equally, elitism would not be tolerated, and egos were to be checked at the door. The person who finished first on any given day would be expected to encourage those still working, because the first-place finisher would not be first every day. Course format was also discussed.

I was under no illusion that a few of the students enrolled in the class were thinking it was going to be their chance to earn credit for lifting weights in the manner of a high-school weightlifting class. This misconception was addressed: engagement in the prescribed activity was paramount to their success.

A need to become knowledgeable of CrossFit.com was also conveyed. I offered examples of how the tool can be used by the participants on the days the class did not meet, which led to a discussion regarding the assumption that the participants were to follow the main-site WODs after being taught the nine foundational movements. We discussed scaling and its importance for safety, development and optimal results.

This first meeting also allowed me to evaluate the type of students enrolled in the class. The 27 participants in the class ranged from freshman to seniors and included a few non-traditional students—from a former Marine to a former beauty queen, a few current Division 1 athletes and few people who had never taken part in any type of structured exercise. It was a wonderful opportunity to provide instruction to all.

Homework Assignment: Fran

The second meeting began the formal instruction of the class. A discussion of fitness was conducted, examining the class's perception of fitness and who they believed to be the most fit. Common answers included those who can run, swim or cycle further or faster or perform well at their respective sport.

The topics of specificity of activity and the components of fitness were explored. I took a moment to offer a different perspective on fitness: the most fit people may be those who can move more weight over greater distances in less time across broad modal domains. I believe this began the cognitive investment of the class: it allowed them to actually think about why they were doing what they were doing with this new training.

Making sure everyone performed to his or her highest level, regardless of any scaling of the WOD, was fundamental to the success of the entire class.



Andrew Hatchett

Coach Glassman sent Dr. Hatchett to a Level 1 Cert so the professor could use the information as the basis for his university course.

After this brief discussion we began the squat progression: squat, front squat, overhead squat. The class was systematically brought through the progression in the same manner as in a Level 1 Certification. We found an activity room with enough open space to have the class form a circle in order to perform the movements. The various cues to action were conveyed during each movement, reinforcements were provided and open dialogue was established.

When each member of the class had what I believed to be a proficient ability to perform each movement, a class activity was conducted. At this time the class was introduced to the concept of Tabata intervals. The eight rounds of 20:10 work-rest ratio provided the chance for the class to witness the intensity of the program. This activity also developed the cohesiveness of the class—nothing builds a team more than common discomfort.

The next few class meetings followed a similar format of discussion, review of movement and instruction of the next two sets of progressions (shoulder press, push press, push jerk; deadlift, sumo deadlift high pull, clean), with a class activity to reinforce the movements taught that day.

Bachelors of Burpees?

For the remainder of the semester, the format of the class was designed as follows: on days the main-site prescribed a WOD, the class would perform a version of that WOD. Due to the lack of equipment, variations were developed. Also, with the assumption the main site was being followed on days the class did not formally meet, this format was adopted to maintain the participants' three-on, one-off program. The days the main site prescribed rest, the class met for lecture and to complete written examinations. A positive environment during exercise sessions was translated to the lecture. Participants were engaged in the discussions, readily asking questions and displaying an active interest in the re-shaping of their view of fitness and health.

A typical class involved a brief meeting in the classroom. During this meeting, we engaged in open dialogue regarding any issues the class had with the WODs performed on the days the class did not meet. We reviewed the movements required for that day's WOD and followed up with a discussion of any variation that needed to be made—and why those variations were chosen. A video of the movements was played to re-familiarize the participants.

**CrossFit affords the
opportunity to eliminate a
tremendous amount, if not all,
of the mistruths that infest
the fitness industry.**

After this brief meeting, the class moved to the exercise area (track, weight room, outside—whatever the WOD demanded). When everyone arrived at the required destination, another explanation of the WOD was offered. This second explanation afforded the participants the chance to develop a more in-depth awareness of the necessary movements. We did a standard warm-up of squats, push-ups, sit-ups, back extensions (supermen) and Samson stretches, and then the class completed the WOD, scaled or as prescribed.

Interestingly, a competitive environment was established. Those individuals of similar ability or perception of similar ability began to compete, and the rivalry needed to be carefully cultivated for the improvement of the entire class. Holding each person accountable for the integrity of the movements assisted in maintaining equality. Making sure everyone performed to his or her highest level, regardless of any scaling of the WOD, was fundamental to the success of the entire class. If at any point the class perceived anything less than full range of motion was allowed, a tendency to sacrifice technique and at worst disengage from the class was likely to occur.

During and at the end of each class, critical assessments were offered. If a few participants were making the same mistakes, an announcement to the entire class was made. If an individual student was making a minor error, a specific guide was offered to that person. Also at the conclusion of each class, praise for effort and a brief review of each movement and its purpose were offered.



Andrew Hatchett

***Participants were educated about CrossFit culture
and were expected to complete the WOD and then
cheer on their classmates.***

Go Forth and Deadlift

I have been fortunate enough to teach this class the past two semesters (spring and fall) and found a positive reception by the students and fellow faculty. An additional two faculty members are currently using CrossFit as a guide for their sections of weight-training courses.

What I believe to be the most important result of this class is the fact that several of the participants have adopted CrossFit as their personal fitness program.

It is my intention to have multiple sections of this CrossFit-based course taught each semester. Together with another faculty member who participates in but is not fully sold on CrossFit, we are beginning to discuss the standardization of the weight-training courses offered by the university. I would very much like to have all weight-training courses based on the CrossFit Level 1 protocol, followed by programming for the class based on the main site. I do not believe it is difficult to visualize CrossFit transitioning into other courses, such as exercise testing and prescription, biomechanics, exercise physiology, and psychology of physical activity.

It is profoundly important to educate the future leaders of fitness science and the fitness industry in techniques and practices that allow for a change in the status quo. I view CrossFit as the most effective and efficient fitness program on the planet. CrossFit affords the opportunity to eliminate a tremendous amount, if not all, of the mistruths that infest the fitness industry. It's simply a better way to teach fitness and exercise.

The university level is a logical and influential avenue for providing an educational experience that can change lives. In order for this to occur, university facilities need to be equipped so as to facilitate this effective and efficient program.

As CrossFit gains greater momentum in the university setting, I can speculate that a competition will be created. A collegiate-level CrossFit Games or a national-level CrossFit club sport championship is foreseeable. This brings to mind questions such as affiliation of university programs, standards and procedures of course content, and development and maintenance of qualification to instruct such a course.

I'm sure a number of other questions can be posed with regard to the adoption of CrossFit as a course at institutions of higher learning, but the bottom line here is this: CrossFit is the most effective and efficient method to deliver functional fitness training.

In my opinion, the logical evolution is to offer this training to those who will lead and shape the standards of fitness for years to come. From personal experience I stand firm in my statement that this method is indeed the most effective in the development of fitness. CrossFit is the perfect tool to be used for instruction at any level of education and provides a positive community to operate in and use for support.

Like any course at any level of education, this course is a living organism—always evolving. The center of the course, however, will remain functional movement training.



About the Author

Andrew Hatchett is an assistant professor of kinesiology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He recently earned his PhD in exercise science with an emphasis in health behavior. He has participated in CrossFit for a little over a year. Since being exposed to CrossFit, Andrew's wife (Jamie) and their two daughters (Lily and Iris) have begun training with CrossFit as well.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fitness for the Force

The Indianapolis Police Academy successfully tested CrossFit methods on recruits, and now a CrossFit training program has been implemented for all 1,600 police officers. Nathan Barlow and Vincent Cascella explain how they beat bureaucracy to produce fitter cops.

By Nathan Barlow and Vincent Cascella

February 2010



Courtesy of Indy Shield CrossFit

In January 2009, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Academy conducted an experiment: how would full CrossFit implementation affect the quality of recruit physical fitness test scores when compared to the traditional model?

Sgt. Nathan Barlow, a Level 1 CrossFit trainer and member of the academy staff, took it upon himself to conduct the experiment despite the fact that he lacked funding, sufficient staffing and even mediocre equipment. What Barlow did have, however, was a powerful belief in the proven efficacy of the CrossFit program, and he was certain CrossFit could improve fitness within the agency at the entry level.

Over the course of six months, the 5th Recruit Class gathered in our small gym and at our outdoor track to learn the nine essential movements, the concepts of progression and intensity, and what a properly fed athlete looks like. Just prior to graduation, astonishing results—which are also typical of the CrossFit program—were realized: dramatically improved exit-standard scores with less time invested and zero PT-related injuries.

This is the story of large-scale CrossFit implementation within a major metropolitan government bureaucracy.

An Idea Gains Support

Timing, they say, is everything.

January 2009 was, coincidentally, about the same time I was asked by our chief of police, Mike Spears, to prepare a plan to improve the state of health for our officers. Our chief had become frustrated by the declining condition of fitness observed across broad segments of our agency, and he rightly recognized a need for a progressive blueprint.

At the time, I was serving as a field lieutenant in one of our service districts. Off duty, I was a Level 1 trainer at a local affiliate. Unbeknownst to the chief, we already had the solution to his problem—it was just a matter of giving him the right pitch.

In April, Sgt. Barlow and I gave a one-hour presentation to the chief and his command staff. During the discussion, we stated the problem, underscored the danger of continuing with the status quo, provided a clearly defined tool for solving it, and spelled out the strategy we felt would get us to our goal. Most importantly, we provided the chief with empirical evidence proving the efficacy of our proposal. This was easy, really. We simply provided the chief with the numbers we collected while training the 5th Recruit Class: zero injuries and a 100 percent pass rate on exit standards in half the time. What was not to like?



Courtesy of Indy Shield CrossFit



After CrossFit produced much fitter recruits at the Indianapolis Police Academy, the program was implemented for the entire department. Now, cops and firefighters train side by side for functional fitness.

Figures 1-4 show the average performance increases of members of each of five recruit classes when comparing entrance and exit tests. As you can see, the 5th Recruit Class used CrossFit training to produce substantial increases in push-ups (not pictured), sit-ups and vertical jump, as well as reductions in 300-meter and 1.5-mile run times. These changes were clearly greater than those seen with previous recruit classes. It should be noted that the entrance scores for the members of the 5th class were not abnormally low but rather consistent with those of the previous classes.

The increases in vertical jump show increased power, and the higher push-up and sit-up numbers show increased strength and muscular endurance. The most striking performance gains were seen in the runs, where the class lowered its average time by over two minutes in the 1.5-mile distance and over 20 seconds in the long-sprint distance of 300 meters. These improved times indicate significant improvements in cardiorespiratory endurance, speed and power.

After presenting these results to our superiors, the decision was quick, and I was immediately transferred to the academy to oversee implementation. We had been given the green light to fully implement CrossFit, not only to the next recruit class but also to the entire department of 1,600 officers. Readers who are familiar with the operation of a large city government will understand the rarity of this pace of movement.

Approval From the Chief—Now What?

Imagine you've been given a 5,000-square-foot box, \$10,000 cash and several hundred (at least) potential

clients on Day 1. What would you do? Our answer was to approach it like a typical WOD: one round at a time.

Our first immediate challenge was to decide how to provide access to a large and very interested population. In the past, our officers had free access to a typical free-weights/treadmill room housed within the academy. These rooms still exist, but they are mostly vacant. We have never offered, however, a *program*. We adapted an affiliate on-ramp program designed to bring newcomers into CrossFit slowly and in an organized fashion according to our department's needs.

With the on-ramp program as our curriculum, we sent out a department-wide bulletin inviting officers to sign up for 80 initial slots that would be divided up into classes of 20 held four times a day. The on-ramp is a 12-class, four-week program, and after successfully completing all 12 classes, officers would be free to participate in regular open-gym WODs. Within 48 hours, all available slots were taken.

To date, 160 police officers and firefighters have been through the on-ramp and now enjoy the privilege of daily CrossFit training Monday through Saturday. This is strictly an off-duty program; however, we have a great retention rate after completion of the introductory program. In our initial report to Chief Spears, we included 13 pages of testimonials from officers who had completed the first on-ramp. Many who offered praise had never heard of CrossFit before and were surprised at the level and speed of adaptation. This feedback made it quite easy for the chief to justify additional spending and resources. The goal, of course, is to hold as many

Figure 1: Recruit Class Sit-Up Improvement

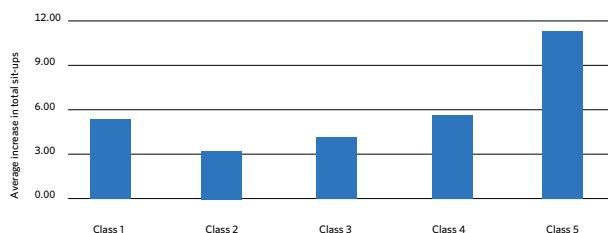
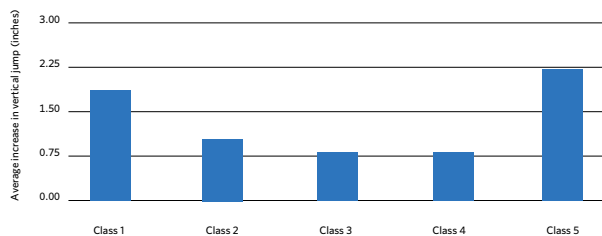


Figure 2: Recruit Class Vertical Jump Improvement



on-ramps as are necessary to accommodate any officer wanting to participate.

Concurrent with the first on-ramp class for officers, our newest recruit class began. At about the mid-way point, our results reflect a continuation of the success seen with the 5th Recruit Class. This new class is about twice as large as its predecessor, and to date we've experienced no PT-related injuries. As expected, performance improvements continue to be seen.

As of this writing, we are preparing to begin our third on-ramp class. Within 20 hours of the notice being posted, all slots were spoken for. We strongly believe that our careful preparation and slow initiation into the program has resulted in extremely positive feedback and word-of-mouth promotion—not unlike what a typical private-sector affiliate would experience.

Being Civil: Forming a Partnership

A key ingredient of our success is the partnership we share with the Indianapolis Fire Department. Due to the fact that we share the building housing both training academy programs, it was fairly easy to develop a mutual belief in the efficacy of CrossFit. A few firefighters who were ardent CrossFitters started volunteering their time and assisting with the police recruit training. And when equipment was needed, they brought in their plyo boxes, kettlebells and bumper plates to help us out.

This friendship between the two departments grew, and eventually we were able to present the same CrossFit proposal to the command staff of the fire department. Fortunately, they listened and agreed that the program was a great investment. We argued that by pooling our

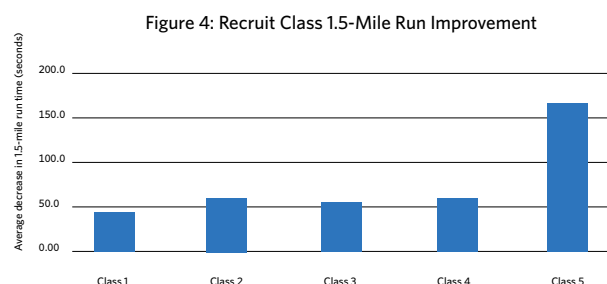
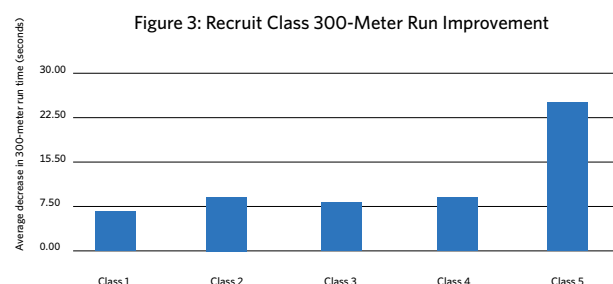
resources, our shared program could become greater than its individual parts. The fire department is now actively considering the idea of creating a new position in their manning table to mirror the one I currently hold so they can properly oversee their portion of the program.

We also contacted police and fire departments around the country that have already established reputable programs of their own. When initiating a large-scale project, it's best to learn from those who have already met the challenge. We were, of course, enthusiastically supported by everyone we contacted. Specifically, the Colorado State Police, the San Jose Police Department and the Parker Fire Department were instrumental in our education process.

The Blueprint for Success

Our CrossFit program is exceeding all expectations. Just recently, we've become an affiliate ([Indy Shield CrossFit](#)), hosted our second Level 1 Cert (with great reviews), and completed a \$40,000 retrofit of our box. Most of this money went toward equipment purchased from Again Faster. Some went toward custom-built equipment fabricated by an academy staff trainer who is also a certified welder.

The only limitation we have is a higher demand than we can currently accommodate due to a lack of Level 1 trainers. Unlike some programs, we are insisting that a Level 1 trainer be present whenever the facility is open. We are working to overcome that obstacle, and we look forward to the possibility of unlimited gym access for anyone, no matter the shift or assignment.



For those who would like to see similar progress implementing CrossFit with their agency, I offer some bullet points as a guide in summary:

- Numbers matter, especially to agency heads. Theory and passion are great, of course, but chiefs want to know how your idea will benefit the agency in tangible ways. We conducted our own experiment and used the results as our validation. If you don't have access to your own training academy, conduct your own experiment at the shift level. Build support from your smallest unit outward. Create a buzz. The bottom line is this: a fit workforce saves the agency money, and saving money is a concept that is very important to your decision-makers.
- Partnerships are great force multipliers. In our world, the police-fire team is a natural. The camaraderie and competitive relationship help maintain a high-energy atmosphere, and we expect to reap huge rewards by pooling respective budgets. In our case, the fire department was quickly able to justify re-allocating about \$10,000 into our program. Prior to our partnership, that money went to a Globo Gym for the purpose of training recruits. It turned out to be a substantial waste.
- Keep the boss informed. You must be your biggest promoter. Agency heads have lots of irons in the fire. In order to maintain interest in the program and keep the support coming from the higher-ups, you must engage in guerrilla marketing. Word-of-mouth is great and will engage potential athletes at the troop level, but in order to really maintain momentum, the boss must be informed regarding both the tangible and intangible (morale) benefits that can be had by properly investing in a fitness program that works. By actively soliciting testimonials from our folks who participated, we were able to provide our chief with validation that he might not have received otherwise.
- Another way to actively engage decision-makers is to challenge them to participate. During our presentation, we emphasized the importance of leading from the front. We stressed the need to be seen suffering among the troops. With CrossFit, understanding comes from doing. Our commanders believe in our program because they do it.

These are just a few points that helped us achieve lightning-fast progress in agency fitness. Given the nature of bureaucracies, timing of implementation plays a substantial role, of course, and certain people must be in certain positions in order for progress to be made. Be that as it may, we believe we are on course to become one of the largest public-safety CrossFit programs in the country.

Hopefully this information will help those of you endeavoring to accomplish the same progress within your agency.



About the Authors



Lt. Vincent Cascella is the physical training section supervisor for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Academy. He holds the following CrossFit certifications: Level 1, kettlebell, Olympic weightlifting, basic barbell and nutrition. He is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy, 205th session. For more information, visit [Indy Shield CrossFit](#) or e-mail c9087@indy.gov.



Sgt. Nathan Barlow is a member of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Academy training staff and is mostly responsible for recruit physical fitness. Nathan holds the following CrossFit certifications: Level 1 and kettlebell. He is also certified within the Cooper Institute.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

From Athlete to Coach

Being a great athlete is no guarantee you'll be a great trainer.
Robert Ord offers tips for those looking to make the transition.

By **Robert Ord** Brass Ring CrossFit

February 2010

Staff/CrossFit Journal



For anyone who has been a part of the CrossFit community for very long, it's obvious that the number of CrossFit affiliates has been growing at an incredible rate.

Some have taken exception to this growth, claiming the rapid expansion has caused the deterioration of the CrossFit brand. It has been my experience, however, that the recent explosion of affiliates is directly related to the number of athletes who have employed the method successfully and desire to share it with others. I believe that with the application of some basic training principles, they can effectively transition from successful athlete to successful coach.





Courtesy of Robert Ord/Brass Ring CrossFit

Having a great Fran time isn't enough. Great coaches need to know how to do the movements properly and motivate their athletes to great performances.

Think Inside the Box

Imagine a gym with a foundation, four walls and a ceiling. A good coach understands that training athletes requires more than just doing hard workouts, although hard workouts certainly have their place. Good training requires an understanding of, and adherence to, basic principles of physiological adaptation, as well as the psychological aspects of educating and motivating athletes. The following fundamental elements make up the four walls of a sound program. Each is important and must be solid, for if there is a flaw in any wall, it will cause weakness in the whole building.

1. Technical Accuracy

For an athlete, accuracy is essential. For an exerciser, it is not. For the exerciser who sweats to the oldies three times a week, the act of throwing him- or herself around the room in order to burn calories is fine. For the athlete, the training objective is to prepare for competition (another of the "walls"). As such, there is exactness

in movements, not just because of predetermined competition standards but because there is greater adaptation when the athlete uses a full range of motion. Each movement deepens the neuromuscular pathway of muscle memory. Do something wrong and you get better at doing it wrong; do it right and you become more competitive.

The coach should create an environment that helps create an athletic self-image in each athlete. Not everyone will come to CrossFit with a competitive athletic background, but everyone quickly understands the difference between training and exercise, and people are quick to notice when performance improvement is the main objective. Within the culture of athletics it is clearly understood that there is a pretty squat and an ugly squat, and that coaches do not like ugly. With technique, it all comes down to this: it doesn't matter how much you sweat in training. If you swing at the ball and miss, it's a strike.

2. Adherence to Prescribed Intensity

The breadth and depth of movements utilized in the CrossFit method are unparalleled in any other strength and conditioning program. We use powerlifting, Olympic lifting, gymnastics and high-intensity interval training, as well as kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells, rings, pull-up bars, rowers and body-weight exercises. Understanding the intricacies of developing a complete athlete is a never-ending quest, but one that starts with understanding the basics of stimulus and response:

Movement + Intensity = Stimulus

If the movements are the overhead press, the back squat and the deadlift, and the prescription is a 1RM of each, as in the CrossFit Total, the response is going to be the development of strength. If, on the other hand, the prescription for these movements is 21-15-9 for time, where the weights are set at 65-70 percent of 1RM, the stimulus will elicit a much broader response that includes strength, stamina and high-powered cardio-respiratory endurance. Although both workouts used the same movements, the prescribed intensity was vastly different. Different stimulus produces a different response.

With some athletes I have found that prescribed intensity for a CrossFit Total, or any other strength-based workout, can be tough because they have little experience training in strength modalities. For these athletes, strength work often gives them the impression that they did not do enough. It was heavy for a moment, but at the end of the session they feel that they did not really get a workout at all, so they decide to go for a long run, thereby changing the stimulus and minimizing the effects of the training.

On the other hand, for the athlete who performs a high-rep workout from a strength-focused perspective and takes time to fully recover between lifts, the training again fails to meet its objective.

It is the responsibility of the coach to understand stimulus and response and then clearly convey the principles to the athletes. In training, it is incomplete to say that I want you to run 400 meters and do 50 squats without prescribing intensity. On the other hand, if I say I want you to do four repeats of a 400-meter run at 70-80 percent perceived intensity and 50 squats in unbroken sets, I am linking movement and intensity—the stimulus. This will result in the development of improved lactic-acid recovery, aerobic capacity and stamina—the response.



Courtesy of Robert Orr/Bass Ring CrossFit

Great trainers understand the link between stimulus and response, and they tailor their programming to help athletes achieve the greatest fitness gains possible.

3. Healthy Competition

Training and competition are two different things. Training is a means for developing the ability to compete at a higher level. Competition is the proving ground for the efficacy of training. Training is methodical and purposeful. Competition is unrestrained. In most sports, an athlete trains 80 percent of the time and competes 20 percent of the time. If it was the other way around, the athlete's career would be short.

Good coaching includes an element of healthy competition so the training objective is ever present. Without this direction, the purpose of training can mutate from a productive, focused pursuit to something more like a leaf in the wind, going this way and that. Such training is counterproductive and even harmful.

The two kinds of healthy competition are competition with self and competition with worthy rivals.

Today you must have victory over the "you" of yesterday in order to become the "you" of tomorrow. Competition with self requires recording the results of efforts. Benchmark workouts like Angie, Fran and Cindy are great for this, but a coach may also create a few of his or her own. A coach should ensure that records are kept on their athletes, whether in personal training journals or permanently on the wall for everyone to see. The coach should engender a spirit of self-competition in their athletes so that when athletes approach a benchmark workout, they do so with seriousness. All the training one has done between then and now—the blood, sweat and tears—is on the line.

For the competitor, it is often a worthy rival who is the greatest ally in developing elite fitness. A good coach realizes this and cultivates healthy competition among athletes. This not only makes both competitors better, but it is also an example of what training and competing are all about. The energy of a great contest, where athletes push the very edge of their perceived capabilities and then return to train side by side as partners, is the true spirit, not just of CrossFit, but the human condition.

When it comes to competition, the value of victory over self precedes victory over others. So with athletes, it is important that the coach watch closely how an individual adheres to technical precision in movement during self-competition before allowing him or her to compete with others. If there is no discipline in correct movement in

self-competition, if the clock and "winning" are more important than the raw beauty of proving the merits of training and desire, then that individual has not earned the right to compete with others, and more harm than good can come out of it.

Competition is beautiful. Our desire to be a part of it in one way or another is the reason that a handful of gifted athletes make millions of dollars a year. In the gym, competition should be regarded with respect, for whether it is with yourself or worthy rivals, it is the reason athletes train.



Courtesy of Robert Ord/Boss Ring CrossFit

Robert Ord believes competition makes an athlete better. That competition doesn't always have to be with other athletes, however. Sometimes competition with yourself provides all the motivation you need.

4. Variance in Programming

The phrase “broad, general and inclusive” should not be new to anyone thinking about crossing the line from athlete to coach. As a coach, the challenge in developing athletes to their full potential is to ensure that your programming is balanced. A common problem that often interferes is a preferential bias a coach or his athletes have for training certain physical skills more than others. Weightlifters like to lift weights but not run. Runners like to run but not lift heavy. Olympic lifters want to program Oly lifts into every workout but don’t enjoy rowing. Some are good at body-weight met-cons like Cindy. Some are good at heavy workouts that require a great deal of strength, like Elizabeth.

I realize that this is a broad overgeneralization, but if you are the guy or gal who gets to figure out the workout every day, you can be prone to doing what you are good at.

A good exercise I recommend for any coach once in a while aids in the development of balanced programming: review the most recent workouts that appear on the main page, and then break them down into stimulus and response. For example, at the time of this writing, the workouts were as follows:

WOD	Stimulus	Response
400-meter walking lunges	High-volume lower-body movement with minimal rest.	Lower-body strength and stamina, as well as balance and coordination at high lactic-acid levels.
Shoulder press 1-1-1-1-1 Push press 3-3-3-3-3 Push jerk 5-5-5-5-5	Increasingly demanding heavy shoulder-press movements that progress from simple (shoulder only) to complex (full body), with programmed recovery between efforts.	Strength and power in the functional movement of pressing, as well as accuracy and agility in utilizing the whole body to accomplish complex tasks.
AMRAP in 20 minutes of: 25 burpees 15 body-weight back squats	Fast-paced, demanding, full-body workout requiring continuous high metabolic output.	Strength, power and endurance under extreme physical (and mental) stress.
21 handstand push-ups Run 400 meters 21 weighted pull-ups 15 handstand push-ups Run 400 meters 15 weighted pull-ups 9 handstand push-ups Run 400 meters 9 weighted pull-ups	Multi-modal heavy pressing and pulling movements with intermittent runs at high intensity (minimal rest).	Upper-body strength and overall stamina, as well as speed and agility.
Deadlift 1-1-1-1-1-1-1	Heavy lifting with optimal recovery between efforts	Strength, and lots of it.

I have purposefully made the descriptions in this example fairly general in order to show the obvious, far-reaching effects of balanced training. Even in this short period, all elements of fitness are present because of the diversity of the programming. What is also important to note is that this period will probably never exactly repeat itself.

After employing many different methods over two decades, I, like many others, have found that the variance of the CrossFit method is more effective than any other for developing competency and balance across a broad range of physical skills. The main requirement for programming is that it must include constant variance in functional movements, and the bulk of those movements should be performed at intensities high enough to elicit a noticeable response from the body.

The Foundation: Community

While the four walls of a great program are primarily technical in nature, the foundation is not. The foundation of a program is more about people, friendship and love of their teammates. It's about the level of camaraderie that exists before, during and after training. It's about knowing that they are cared for. It grows out of the members of the team, but it starts with the coach. From my experience, the bottom line in engendering a healthy community is this: care deeply about your athletes, treat everyone with respect, and treat everyone equally.

Three things to watch for:

1. Ignoring the many because of the few—

Three common situations can cause this.

- **The elite group**—When a small group becomes the major focus of the coach, it often results in a fracture in the community. This is not to say that the coach cannot not give them special attention. It only means that the coach must not abandon the rest of the group. One solution is to create a special time for coaching the elite that allows for optimal coaching of the rest of the mere mortals.
- **The opposite sex**—For a coach, all are “athletes,” regardless of gender. A coach who shows overt signs of favoritism to one person due to sexual attraction may not offend that person but can often create a division within the rest of the community. This is not to say meaningful relationships and even marriages don't occur between coaches and athletes, but only that it is important to keep things mature and professional.

- **The chronically needy**—There are those who, for reasons that probably go back to childhood, take up far more time than is befitting them. Some are extremely skilled in their craft and can, without a coach's knowing, draw an undue amount of time and effort to themselves. They will often flourish once they are made to adapt to the environment the coach creates, but they prefer to have their own way.

2. Allowing disruptive athletes to be part of the team—

It is sometimes difficult, especially when a coach is building a business, to make a distinction between individuals who belong and individuals who do not. The athlete who is derisive or ultra-competitive to the point of negativity does not belong. Think of it as your team. Would you allow one person on your roster to spoil the rest of your players? No, you would fire them, of course. So fire them.

3. Getting burned out as a coach—

One of the things that makes a good coach great is passion. Coaching is tough, though, and it takes a great deal of effort to connect with your athletes in a personal way that allows you to truly motivate them. Each time you coach, you give a little bit of yourself away to your athletes. With that in mind, look ahead and make sure you build in time to restore yourself before you get to the point that you are so tired that you just don't care.

As a community grows under the leadership of a good coach, the foundation becomes stronger. As a coach develops technical skills, the walls grow taller. Both of these things together—an unshakable foundation and four well-built walls—continually raise the level of the ceiling.

The X Factor

Anyone with experience as a coach, or anyone who has been coached by multiple individuals, recognizes another intangible element that makes a great coach. With it, an individual of average athletic competency can excel at developing elite athletes. Without it, an elite athlete can fall short of developing even average athletes. This quality, which I call the “X factor,” is more about psychology than technique. It is a change of perspective from competitor to mentor and teacher.

The coach understands that the focus of the successful athlete is predominantly inward. “How fast I can go? How much I can lift?” An athlete’s motivation for growth is personal and as unique as the individual. Put five athletes in a box and give them a workout, and each will have their own personal reason for sacrificing comfort in order to achieve a higher objective.

The focus of the successful coach, on the other hand, is to connect with their athletes in a deep and personal way in order to develop them to their fullest potential. For some coaches this is easier than others. Some people inherently have the talent for reading body language and sensing emotions, which allows them to build a blueprint they can work from. For others it requires more effort to cultivate these skills.

The following are brief descriptions of the elements that make up the X factor, as I see them:

1. Develop trust—Form a connection with your athlete built on their belief in your desire to partner with him or her in achieving goals.
2. Identify motivations—Listen not only to the words of your athlete, but also to your intuition, which picks up on the things your athlete does not say or may not even be aware of.
3. Inspire—Communicate a vision of success to your athlete that utilizes their motivations but pushes him or her beyond current abilities and on to the next level.
4. Motivate—Provide a firm, guiding hand that pushes your athlete to keep focusing on a goal.

It’s obvious that there’s a lot more to being a good coach than doing a two-minute Fran. In fact, it’s a total change of perspective. The ultra-competitive athlete cannot utilize the thing that makes him or her successful and become a good coach. Coaching is more like art; it requires hard elements and soft elements commingled together in a variety of ways based on a particular situation and a unique athlete.

A Never-Ending Journey

I lived in Southern California at the beginning of my journey into coaching, and I was blessed to be able to spend time with Olympic lifting coach Mike Burgener on a semi-regular basis. At the time, I didn’t understand exactly why our visits meant so much to me, but later as I continued to develop and grow as a coach, I realized that

I had sat at the feet of a master. It didn’t matter whether we talked about training or mowing the grass. I always left awed and with a new understanding of coaching.

What is it that Coach Burgener has, or that any great coach has, for that matter? Is it an unparalleled understanding of form and technique? I don’t think Coach B. would agree that his effectiveness is simply a matter of knowing how to snatch or clean and jerk. Or maybe it’s more about personality and charisma—“Yay, Burpees!” To be honest, it’s hard to precisely define the X factor that makes a great coach.

What I do know is that becoming a great coach starts with mastering the basics—technical accuracy and an understanding of intensity, competition and programming—and involves building a community. For those who succeed and rise to a high degree of effectiveness, coaching stokes an ever-burning fire within. The best coaches are hungry for knowledge and willing to try new things, and they seek out every opportunity to sit at the feet of a master.



Courtesy of Robert Ord/Brass Ring CrossFit

About the Author

Rob Ord is the creator and founder of *Brass Ring CrossFit*, which specializes in training for the Warrior Athlete (something Rob believes all CrossFitters have the heart for). Rob travels extensively and runs *Full Mission Profiles* at multiple locations, including *Battleborn CrossFit*, *CrossFit Fort Vancouver* and *CrossFit HEL*.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Get With the Program

Guiding new members into CrossFit classes can be tricky. Monique Ames of CrossFit Evolution explains how she does it and why her methods are always evolving.

By Monique Ames CrossFit Evolution

February 2010



Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

Most people recognize the need for some type of foundation or elements class for new members. The tricky part is knowing how to implement the best program.

At CrossFit Evolution, we've used many different models, and all were great at inception. The numerous models used were based on internal factors (our abilities and knowledge) and external factors (the market and economy) at the time of implementation. You need to recognize that you and your business are constantly growing and evolving. What works today may not work tomorrow and, as in CrossFit, you need to learn the many applications in order to scale and adapt when called to do so.

When building your business, keep in mind that a one-man show will not run the same as a couple's box or a box with multiple trainers. How the marketing and sales are done is dependent upon the personality of the business and the comfort level of the owner (based on experience and knowledge). Your idea of success will also play into how to best run the box. Do you want one box or many? Do you want a couple of trainers or a crew? Do you want 50, 100 or 300 members? Do you want a hobby, a part-time job or a career? Do you want to make just enough, enough to support your lifestyle or a quarter-million?

There is no wrong answer. You just need to decide what you want and understand that you, your business and your goals may and probably will change. And change is good, because that's how we get better—always. No one gets better by standing still, doing nothing or doing the same old tired routine.

CrossFit Evolution's Current Model

Our current Foundations Program is set up to clearly delineate the levels of entry into our gym. This allows our prospects, new members, current members and staff to understand and appreciate the coaching involved in our program. This is one of the many steps used to demonstrate excellence. A clear program also helps sell the membership. When someone shells out \$250 for a 12-class on-ramp program or \$330 for a six-session fast-track program, they will have absolutely no problem signing up for a membership with a six- or 12-month term at \$150-225 per month. Of course, this value is detailed during the all-important free intro.

Change is good, because that's
how we get better—always.
No one gets better by standing
still, doing nothing or doing
the same old tired routine.

Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution



Foundations classes are tremendously important to CrossFit. The magic is in the movements, and the misery is in poor movements. Teach your clients proper technique early and you'll watch them flourish with the CrossFit program.

Our Foundations Program is a set curriculum that teaches basic nutrition and introduces and develops the movements of CrossFit. Some of the movements covered include the nine basic movements from a Level 1 Cert, as well as thrusters, kettlebell swings, rowing, Olympic weightlifting drills and the snatch. Class set-up includes a warm-up (which varies), review of movements from the previous class, introduction of the new skills of the day, the WOD, and nutrition talk and a homework assignment. Each class is a progression, each building on the previous day.

Graduation requires basic competency in all movements taught: correct form, proper technique, full range of motion and consistency. Graduation is required for entry into our CrossFit classes and is not guaranteed by mere attendance.

With that said, the Foundations Program is broken down into four subsets or entry levels. Each entry point is based on the client's fitness level and experience, general health, availability, and finances. What follows is exactly what we use today.

Who Goes Where?

You decide where clients go. Their options will be limited to what you decide during their free intro. If people are messed up (fat or with serious physical limitations) and you can tell that they will really slow down the speed of the group class, they will go to 12 private sessions. If they are not messed up (see previous definition) and can be relegated to a fixed schedule of your choosing (possibly Monday-Tuesday-Thursday at 7 p.m.), then give them the option of private sessions or the On-Ramp. Why not just stick them in the On-Ramp? Because maybe they like a more personal touch and want to pay more money. Don't rule it out unless you just don't have the time for privates.

How about the healthy, active and reasonably fit individual? Give him or her the option of private sessions, the On-Ramp or the Fast-Track. How about someone who's already sort of a badass, who can deadlift and clean? Same answer. Clients don't even get the option of a Test-Out unless they obviously have CrossFit and Olympic lifting experience. Again, I determine this during the intro.

The Foundations Program

12 Private Sessions

\$660

One-on-one sessions are one hour and include warm-up, skill training, a workout and nutrition talk. A food log and completion of homework are required. The client sets the dates and times for sessions.

12-Class On-Ramp

\$250

Classes are limited to six trainees. Class curriculum is the same as the private sessions. Dates and times are fixed and cannot be changed. Each missed On-Ramp class must be made up with a private 30-minute session (\$30 each) before moving forward. The On-Ramp program is four weeks long, with classes three days per week.

Six-Session Fast-Track

\$330

These one-on-one sessions are one hour long and include skill training only. Eligible participants must be healthy and active and currently training regularly. Eligibility is determined by staff. The client sets the dates and times for sessions and can add a nutrition talk for \$50 more.

Test-Out

\$60

This one-hour test is based on the curriculum of the Foundations Program, and candidates must prove competency in all movements. Participants must have experience with CrossFit and Olympic weightlifting. A pass will allow the athlete to enter the CrossFit classes, while a fail will require any deficiencies to be made up with private training (at \$60 per hour).



Having several introductory options allows clients to be placed in the right program. New athletes learn the basics, while true firebreathers can test out and join the main classes.

When to List Your Prices Online

The prices and definitions for the Foundations Program can be easily viewed on our website under “Getting Started.” We make this available because it helps eliminate anyone who does not have the financial means, the commitment or the desire. I do not recommend that everyone do this. Listing the price or not listing the price is an individual decision. I’ve done both and based my decision on what fit me and my gym at that particular time.

Listing the price or not listing the price is an individual decision. I’ve done both and based my decision on what fit me and my gym at that particular time.

I despise fielding calls from people who are not good candidates, so I expect intelligent people who get to my website to follow directions, like clicking on the link that

says “Getting Started.” And you know what? They do. When I field a call, the person is coming in for the intro and will most likely sign up on the spot. I love that, but again, it’s not for everyone. It would also be a mistake to expect this kind of thing if your website sucks. If your website can’t clearly explain what the prospect will be getting, then do not list your prices. Let him or her experience you and your coaching first and then get to pricing. If your website and intro sessions suck, then you need to get that shit fixed ASAP.

Other Options and Programs

As I said in the beginning, there are many ways to introduce a new member to your gym and its recurring CrossFit Classes. Here are some other options:

Go right to classes—This may entice more people to start immediately, but at what cost to your current clientele? Imagine your long-time clients who need detailed coaching to improve performance mixed with newbies who need attention because they have no idea what’s going on. Getting right into classes is where most new gyms start, and it serves its purpose well in the early stages of your business. It’s also useful when you need a quick influx of revenue, like when you move into a bigger box that costs two or three times as much in rent.

The three foundations sessions—This is a very popular choice and is the next level up from “jumping right into classes.” This method attempts to teach the nine basic movements from a Level 1 cert in three hours (like that’s even possible). It’s a start, and you’ll make a difference, but the athletes are not really going to get it. This method does, however, show the client your coaching ability and starts to build excellence through said coaching via a display of your communication skills, interpersonal skills, customer-service skills, passion and knowledge base. Sounds like a lot? It is, but we are talking about coaching here, not Globo Gym training.

Graduated classes—This approach could move athletes from beginner to intermediate and advanced classes or from an on-ramp program to an elements class followed by graduated classes. I won’t talk too much about this plan because I don’t know much about it. We don’t use it. All I can do is tell you why I don’t like it and direct you to someone who uses it for the other half of the argument. In my opinion, it’s too much of a pain in the ass to manage all those different levels and have different versions of the same WOD posted when

I and my trainers know how to scale on the fly. Or you're dealing with completely different WODs. With this method, I would also limit people to specific class times, which goes against my current culture within the gym. I am not against learning more about this program as we continue to grow. Never say never because you never know.

Why It Works

Our Foundations Program allows you to quickly direct new members to their next step. The layout allows them to understand why they need a specific option or why they cannot enter through another. No one has ever questioned me at the end of the intro, which is when I recommend the next step. Everything done in the intro leads us up to this point.

This is a tested method—tested by me—on my unsuspecting newbies. Do you have to use all of it? No, not really. At its inception, the Foundations Program only contained the 12 private sessions. This made us a lot of money but was very time consuming. At one point, I became so busy with newbie private sessions that I had no time to run the members' auto debit payments for over two weeks. It was not good, or at least not time efficient.

To fix the time issue, we added the 12-Class On-Ramp, which was great because suddenly I could put six to eight people into the same class. However, I also needed another trainer with me to assist. We could've dropped the class to four so we could use one trainer, but we didn't want to. Besides, I like between six and eight because it allows me a chance to further develop a trainer at the same time. Bonus!

If your website and intro sessions suck, then you need to get that shit fixed ASAP.

Around this period, the Test-Out was born. Every two weeks, a healthy and athletic individual with weightlifting experience would show up. It didn't seem right to stick

him in with people who had never done a squat because his advancement would be much faster than theirs. The privates seemed too pricey, and 12 of them seemed unnecessary. Thus came the birth of the Test-Out.

After a short span, as the private clients, the on-rampers, and the testers filled out our schedule, we introduced a brand new Gymnastics Warm-Up. This freed up some coaching time after the initial start and allowed us to spend more time on skills advancement with all the members. This is where it got messy again. Almost everyone who tested out was lost during the skills advancement because their foundation just wasn't strong enough. We created the Fast-Track in order to fill that gap.



Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

Not all clients fit into a pigeonhole, so Monique Ames recommends having several different entry points for your box.

CrossFit: A Constantly Varied Business

A successful business first has to be defined by each individual. The business model and structure should be based upon the knowledge, experience and abilities of the owner and the staff. One size does not fit all. Your clients are all different as well, and to make them all adhere to the same beginner program might be a mistake. The advanced athlete doesn't need 12 private sessions, and the sedentary, obese client with knee and back problems and a bag containing several different meds needs more than what the On-Ramp is designed to provide. To even suggest it may deter that prospect from joining your facility because it's not suited to him or her. Clients want to know you care about them and that you will put them in the correct starting block.

In the world of CrossFit,
it's always been about trying
everything to see what
works best.

In the world of CrossFit, it's always been about trying everything to see what works best. If it works, keep it. If it doesn't, toss it. When it stops working, find something else. Success is based on you, not a stagnant program, system or model. That's not to say you don't need a system—you do. Just make sure it's evolving, just like your training. In the gym, you can't expect to get better by doing the same thing over and over, and maybe the CrossFit business model is the same way: always evolving and always requiring you to chase excellence in everything.



Courtesy of Monique Ames/CrossFit Evolution

About the Author

Monique Ames is the owner and co-founder of [Crossfit Evolution](#) in Longwood, Fla. She is a coach and business manager. She holds certifications in CrossFit training, Olympic weightlifting and nutrition. Her expertise includes general sports conditioning, law-enforcement training, corporate/management training and business management. Monique is a former U.S. Marine, law-enforcement officer and operations manager. She loves CrossFit training and the business side of fitness.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Berlin, Prague and Ansbach CrossFit Europe, Part 3

Blair Morrison visits Germany and the Czech Republic and discovers
CrossFit culture is growing quickly in Europe.

By Blair Morrison

February 2010



Courtesy of Blair Morrison

My impressions from the five days I spent in Germany and Czech Republic are immeasurably positive. From a personal standpoint, I could not have been better cared for, reaffirming my faith in the qualities of hospitality and generosity so often maimed and left for dead by popular culture.

1 of 7

Further, I was exposed to a range of histories and cultures (German and Czech, urban and rural) about which I knew very little. If I had only ridden the train to Prague and back, never getting off, I would have experienced growth. But from a broader, more global fitness perspective, I think this trip taught me even more.

During the course of five days I did five WODs in four locations with three different groups of CrossFitters, and my experience taught me a lot about the future of CrossFit in Europe.

Friday, Oct. 16, 2009—Berlin, Germany

I spent the evening with the guys from the Lactic Acid Factory, Berlin's first and only existing CrossFit group. They don't have a facility, so we trained at an East Berlin fire station where they have an arrangement. This was very cool. The place was *huge*, with more potential for crazy-creative training than anywhere I've ever been.

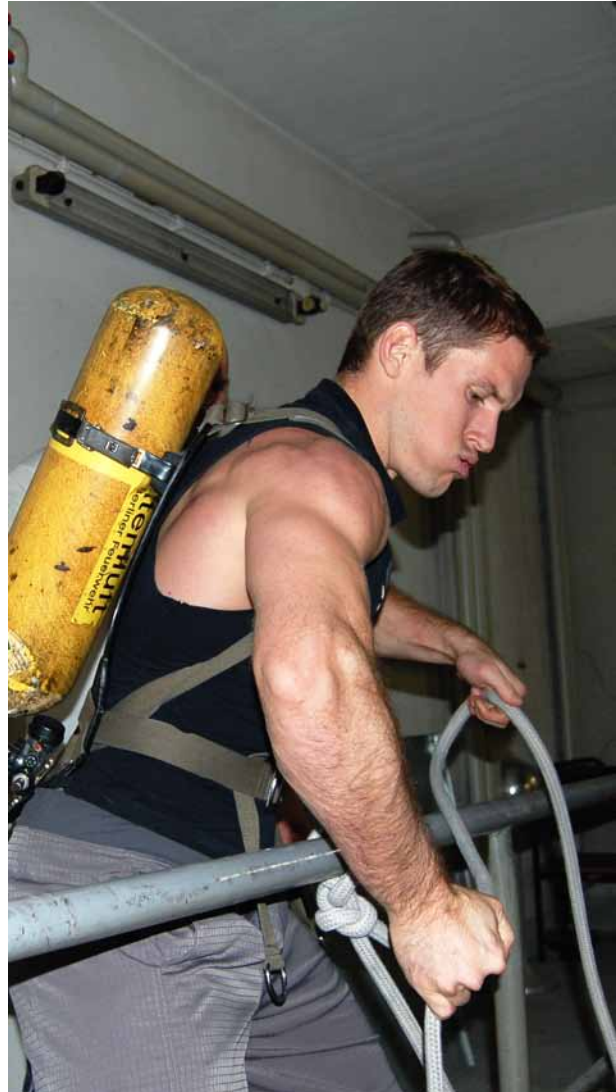
The workout was based on the firefighter challenges that are held around the world with athletes wearing full turnout gear—boots, suit, mask, oxygen tank, helmet, etc. (see [Firefighter Combat Challenge and the Definitions of Fitness](#)). The challenge in Berlin includes a four-story climb carrying a 20-kg hose, a four-story vertical 20-kg pull, a four-story downstairs sprint, an 80-kg horizontal sledge pound for 1.5 meters (using the Keiser Force Machine), a 25-meter hose drag, a zig-zag cone run, and a 25-meter rescue drag to the finish line. (I'm approximating the distances from what I could gather from our workout and the videos I checked on YouTube.)

Head trainer Alex Battisti and the rest of the group have been using CrossFit to help the firefighters at the East Berlin station train for this competition, and for the rigors of the job. Today, Mike and the firefighting crew were to return the favor and show the group what it was like to meet some of these challenges, plus/minus a few stairs, meters and cones.

After a very creative dynamic warm-up including heavy-bag hand-offs and medball passes, as well as some technical work with air squats and deadlifts, we headed downstairs to begin.

Part 1 (for time, all wearing 20-kg of gear):

7 floors up with hose (20 kg)
4-floor vertical weighted-rope pull (20 kg)
7 floors down



Courtesy of Blair Morrison

The Fire Combat Challenge was created to test the capacity of firefighters, and Blair Morrison found CrossFit helped him immensely with the various evolutions that make up the event.

We trained at an East Berlin fire station This was very cool. The place was huge, with more potential for crazy-creative training than anywhere I've ever been.



Courtesy of Blair Morrison

Real workers should be good at real work, and the Firefighter Combat Challenge presents firefighters with challenges they're sure to see on a regular basis. Success at these tasks would hopefully indicate success on the job, where lives are at stake.

This WOD was hardest during the climb. As one can imagine, sprinting up stairs with 40 extra kilograms of weight will tire your legs out pretty quickly, and by the last flight things were slowing down considerably. The vertical pull was a strength movement, but with a ton of technique (this is an awesome exercise I have since employed using the ledge of Leiden's Burcht citadel and a fisherman's rope). Surprisingly, the run back downstairs was difficult as well. According to the rules of the competition, you have to touch every stair on the way down, meaning a whole lot of extra steps that require coordination and patience when your body is lacking both. It took the majority of the group somewhere between 2:30 and 3 minutes to finish this series. I did it in 2:00. Mike did it in 1:45. He's an animal.

Part 2 (for time, all wearing 20 kg of gear):

1.5-meter sledge pound on Keiser Force Machine (80 kg)

50-meter hose drag (2 hoses plus steel frame)

25-meter Rescue Randy drag

This took us outside to one of the storage areas, of which there are many. Inside, there were old med balls from the Iron Curtain days, kettlebells, hoses and all kinds of cool stuff for these guys to use. Also in there was the Keiser Force Machine, a device firemen use to train the power needed to chop through walls, doors, etc. with their axes. I loved this! You're basically pounding away at this piece of metal as hard as you can until it moves 1.5 meters.

As soon as we finished that, we had to run outside and drag two hoses connected to a steel box for 50 meters. The legs were now dying. Then we sprinted back and grabbed Rescue Randy (a really heavy dummy simulating a person in need of rescue) and dragged him 25 meters to safety. The legs were like Jell-O. On this series, the group averaged somewhere between 1:30 and 2:00. I finished in 1:10, and Mike the fireman smoked me again with 1:02.

Doing Part 1 and Part 2 back-to-back would've been a huge challenge. Adding full fire gear and a mask? Lights out. Major respect should be given to the firemen competing in these challenges.

Sunday, Oct. 18, 2009: Prague, Czech Republic, and Ansbach, Germany

After spending Saturday mostly sightseeing around the city, I went with Zdenek Weig, owner of [CrossFit Praha](#) in Prague, to his newly opened facility. It's located on the ground floor of a great building, and the space looks like it used to be a cafeteria of some kind. He has the entire floor at his disposal, though only the main room was finished as of my visit. It's got everything you'd need and expect from a top-notch box: bars, bumpers, bands, kettlebells, pull-up racks, rings—you name it. In their first week of operation, they had 10 new members buy monthly packages.



As we were in a bit of a rush to get me on the train, we came up with a workout that would only take 11 minutes to complete. Naturally, those were 11 pretty intense minutes:

3 rounds of 3-minute AMRAP
(1 minute rest between rounds):

5 sumo deadlift high pulls
5 thrusters
1 muscle-up

I used 60 kg, and Zdenek used 50 kg. This gassed us both pretty badly. SDHP and thrusters are a great combination if you want to test your metabolic conditioning. I was sucking for air by the fourth round, and by the end my arms were having trouble keeping the bar racked during the thrusters. In all, I was able to complete 9 full rounds, plus 5 SDHP and 2 thrusters. Zdenek finished 8 full rounds, plus 5 SDLHP and 5 thrusters.

Afterwards I felt like a nap, but the next thing I knew I was in and out of a cold shower and on the train back toward Germany. This was a wonderful experience in

Prague, mostly due to the amazing hospitality of Zdenek and his wife, Keri. During the course of two days and nights I walked practically the entire city, seeing it from above and below, and we raised more than a few half-liter beers in a toast to the town.

**Then, in a true send-off, I got
a kick-ass workout at what
will soon be Prague's premier
elite fitness location.**

We explored the inside of Prague Castle, including the historic church where countless Czech kings are buried. We strolled the old hunting grounds where the medieval princes and knights spent their summers tracking game. We watched professional Czech League soccer, drinking grog (hot water and rum) to stay warm while the diehards to our left burned opposition paraphernalia. Then, in a true send-off, I got a kick-ass workout at what will soon be Prague's premier elite fitness location.

I got off the train in Ansbach, a small German town of 40,000 or so, at around 4 p.m., and I was immediately met by Robert Powell, head trainer and co-owner of [CrossFit Ansbach](#). After a brief stop at his home, where I met his lovely wife Susie, we headed over to the facility for his evening round of classes.

At the moment, CrossFit Ansbach runs three one-hour classes nightly at 5:30, 6:30 and 7:30. Although they've only been open to the public for three months, they've already just about outgrown their space. The first class had nine participants, the second 14, and the third five. The space they have is built to accommodate 10 at the most, so it took some creative programming by Rob, Ralph, Simon and Rolph to make it work on this night, but they handled it well.

The overwhelming impression I got from watching these sessions was the palpable excitement of everyone involved. Of course it starts with the coaches—extremely positive, motivating and intelligent guys, all of them—but the clientele were equally impressive. Representing an age range from 14 to 80, these people were getting *after it*.

Having been denied an opportunity for functional physical exercise for much of their lives, they literally could not get enough CrossFit. Box jumps, handstands, kettlebell swings, knees to elbows—you name it. All of them embraced the challenge of whatever movements they were asked to perform. With that zeal came some over-eagerness, but no more so than what we see routinely in the States. It's obvious that they have something here, and it's only going to get better.



After the people had gone, Rob put me through a workout he had pulled from the site of CrossFit Jacksonville. It was as follows:

- 10 deadlifts (60 kg)
- 20 wall-balls
- 10 hang power cleans (60 kg)
- 20 kettlebell swings (24 kg)
- 10 front squats (60 kg)
- 20 box jumps (24")
- 10 push jerks (60 kg)
- 20 pull-ups
- 10 back squats (60 kg)
- 20 burpees

This was a fun, short chipper that I ended up finishing in 5:28, and it had me ready for bed. It put the finishing touches on what had proven to be an incredible weekend.

Reflections on the Trip

Riding back on the train the following morning, a few things started to sink in regarding the people I had met, the places I had seen, and the impact CrossFit is having in Europe.

First, the motivating forces that propel people to train and keep them coming back are not cultural; they are natural. Cultural forces simply meter the availability of the outlets needed to discover one's natural physical drive. I heard the same success stories and saw the same pride in accomplishment this weekend that I heard and saw during three years of personal training in Washington, D.C. Miraculous cures for knee pain, decreased lower-back stiffness, increased shoulder mobility, strength on the job, increased vitality—these were the things that had made people believers.

Things quickly mushroomed and, now in its second location, CrossFit Ansbach is over 30 members strong and growing in a town of 40,000 where people don't really work out.

I saw the same effort and felt the same enthusiasm here that I saw and felt when I trained at [CrossFit Fairfax](#) in Virginia and at [CrossFit East Sacramento](#) in California. People were working to exhaustion, breaking through barriers and building confidence in their ability to achieve. If nothing else, this weekend convinced me that these qualities/motivations are in everyone, regardless of the thick layers of social propriety, cultural taboo and relative ignorance under which they may be hiding.

Second, CrossFit is growing from the bottom up. There is no concerted, connected effort through which these various affiliates are being organized. They are pockets with loose, peripheral knowledge of one another at best. It is through the effort and inspiration of a few individuals that the groups I visited this weekend have come into existence. Yet, they follow similar paths. In what turned out to be a divine stroke of luck, the order in which I visited the three locations (Berlin, Prague, Ansbach) mirrored the relative stages of development each is currently in.

The Berlin group organizes itself through e-mail and Facebook contact, with no regular location in which to train. The trainers have Level I certifications but it is not an official affiliate. They train in parks, schools and firehouses in good weather and in bad. Their number is modest, but they are dedicated, and the group is held together by the commitment of the trainers, the merits of the program and the community that is starting to take hold. It doesn't get more grassroots.

The Prague affiliate is a similar product, just slightly more advanced. Zdenek and his wife used CrossFit when they were living in the state of Washington and didn't want to stop when they moved back to Czech Republic last year. Soon, they had a group to train with outdoors and around town, but with winter coming they needed a place to call home. After much trial and error, they were able to land a space and opened shortly before my visit. Zdenek told me his goal was to have five full-time memberships by the end of the first month. He had 10 in the first five days. His and Keri's dedication, plus the quality of the product, have proven, thus far, to be the foundation for something more than either expected.

CrossFit Ansbach more closely represents what we see in the States. It began when Robert Powell and his training partners Ralph, Simon and Rolph got "asked" to leave the local Globo Gym for making too much noise. Rob is a former marathoner, cyclist and bodybuilder. He told me he came across the program in his search for a workout more complete and more fulfilling. In his words, "There had always been something missing, no matter what program it was."

When he and the group got bounced from the gym for doing CrossFit WODs, their only goal was to find someplace they could train their way. The purpose for starting the affiliate was simply to offset the cost of the lease and the equipment they would need to escape the silent whirl of treadmills and elliptical machines. Things quickly mushroomed and, now in its second location, CrossFit Ansbach is over 30 members strong and growing in a town of 40,000 where people don't really work out. This is incredible. The community there is so strong that Rob couldn't stop even if he wanted to. The classes show up 20 minutes early just to cheer on the group before them!



Courtesy of Blair Morrison

CrossFit culture in Europe is growing quickly and organically. With more and more boxes springing up in cities across the continent, it appears the "old country" is embracing a new brand of fitness.

The third and final thing I'm taking with me from this trip stems from this last observation: Shared physical burdens build community. This is no epiphany, but it warrants attention nonetheless. Any athletic team I was ever on grew closer after a tough practice or a hard-fought game. There's something about being totally physically committed—and recognizing the same commitment in another—that breeds mutual respect.

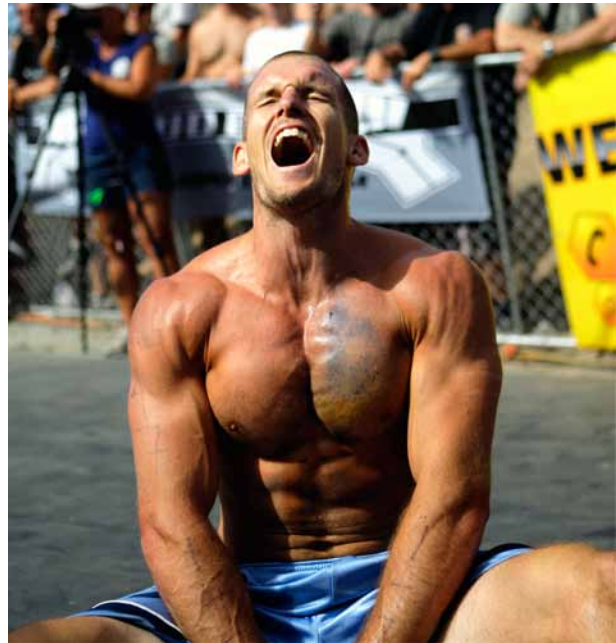
This is the case in group fitness as well. My old haunt, Balance Gym in Washington, D.C., was more like a family than a business. Members who went through the bootcamps together during the week organized rafting trips, cookouts and birthday parties together on the weekend. When one member was competing or performing somewhere, everyone was interested, watching and involved.

The same elements are present here, and they are flourishing. A short example: During the morning session in Ansbach, two "friends of the program" wandered in to check out what was going on, having seen Rob's car out front. These guys are local painters and semi-regular members at the affiliate. They did a few workouts early on, after which they chose to contribute their time and effort to helping put the place together for nothing in return. They enjoyed training and wanted to help. The morning I saw them they were messing around on the rings, one doing muscle-ups, the other trying, failing and laughing. They hung around for about an hour and even encouraged Rob, Stefan and me while we did the WOD. Their presence was a reminder of how communities can galvanize around just about anything, fitness being no exception.

None of this is meant to say that building such a community is easy, regardless of the location. There are certainly challenges. Resources are scarce (outfitters like Rogue and SteelFit don't exist out here), social structures are resistant to change, and times are tough financially. But, thus far, these are challenges that are being met and overcome, even in the most adverse situations, because the product is valuable and necessary.

Each of the places I visited on this trip had a personality. Each had its own distinct interpretation of what it means to be fit and what it wanted to offer those involved, while still being under the CrossFit umbrella. This is, without doubt, the strength of the program in my eyes. The principles are strong enough to give guidance yet broad enough to leave room for creativity.

I think this is one reason why there is a promising future for affiliates like those in Berlin, Prague, Ansbach and other cities in Europe. As long as there is a method substantive and flexible enough to challenge the existing fitness culture or lack thereof, there will be individuals and communities willing to embrace it.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Blair Morrison is 27 years old. He was born and raised in Sacramento, Calif., where his family still lives. He received his undergraduate history degree from Princeton University and is now studying European history through Europaeum Masters Programme at the Universiteit Leiden. Formerly a personal trainer at Balance Gym in Washington, D.C., Blair placed seventh in the 2009 Crossfit Games.

He is dedicated to the pursuit of the physical challenges and the mental fortitude that comes from the ability to overcome them. You can follow Blair's travels on his blog, [Anywherfit](#).

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Importance of Power, and the Irrelevance of Measuring Power

Calculating the power output of a workout in foot-pounds per minute can be interesting, but does it really tell us anything about improving fitness?

By Russell Berger CrossFit Huntsville

February 2010



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Power is intensity, and intensity brings results.

In CrossFit, we maximize intensity by using a stopwatch. We apply this stopwatch to a wide variety of functional movements performed with full range of motion. More than any other single factor, this practice is responsible for the unprecedented results of our athletes. Therefore, many believe it logically follows that measuring power will allow us to maximize intensity, and thus results.

Unfortunately, this simply isn't true because life demands the completion of tasks, not the maximization of power. There is an irony here. Measuring the physical power output of our workouts in terms of foot-pounds per minute is mostly irrelevant to the success of our efforts even though maximizing power output is vital. This distinction may appear contradictory at first but is nonetheless tremendously important.

Why Power Matters

In countless gyms, garages and hotel rooms across the world, diligent CrossFitters race against the clock every day to shave a few extra seconds from their workout times. They do this as a competition, with themselves, their friends or other CrossFitters posting results to CrossFit.com or an affiliate's site. They are also doing it because CrossFit tells them faster times mean they are fitter.

Why go faster? Because going faster both requires and produces higher levels of fitness. It's also true that you are producing more power in the process. Power is calculated as force multiplied by distance and divided by time. It's simple: maximize your load and the distance you move that load while minimizing the time it takes you to do so. Power and fitness are intimately linked.

If you doubt this, try a simple experiment. Do 20 air squats in a minute (at a pace of one every three seconds) and notice the effect this has on your muscles and respiratory rate. Recover fully, then do 20 air squats in 20 seconds (one every second). Notice the effect again. The same work performed in a third of the time is dramatically more potent.

This is generally true: increasing the average power of any workout makes it both harder and more effective. In fact, intensity (power) is the independent variable most strongly correlated with optimizing the results of a workout, taking precedence over volume, duration, target heart rate, etc. CrossFit's success is largely due to our maximization of intensity and power. We do this by using combinations of functional movements in relatively short workouts. (For a thorough definition of functional movements, see the *CrossFit Journal* article [Foundations](#) by Greg Glassman, April 1, 2002.)

The main downside to increased power and intensity is discomfort. The greater the intensity, the greater the discomfort. CrossFit can virtually guarantee you'll get fitter than you've ever been, but you'll work harder and have to manage the pain of intensity. Indeed, much of fitness is nothing other than the tolerance of discomfort.



The snatch is a high-power movement, but only performing the snatch won't result in an elite level of fitness. Many low-power movements are just as important to health and fitness.

Training and Fitness

While it's true that maximizing power (intensity) is the key to fitness, it is not the only factor, and it must be applied in context. The CrossFit Games aside, the goal of CrossFit is not really to excel at CrossFit, but to improve real-world fitness. Performing constantly varied functional movements at (relatively) high intensity is CrossFit's prescription for optimizing fitness.

Over the years, a core stable of exercises has emerged and provides the primary components of CrossFit workouts. These are all functional movements, but not all functional movements are as effective as others. You see the best movements coming up most frequently in the main-site workouts:

Gymnastics: Pull-up, push-up, sit-up, squat, burpee, handstand push-up, rope climb, ring dip, muscle-up, box jump, back extension.

Weightlifting: Thruster, clean, jerk, snatch, deadlift, barbell squats (overhead, front, back), press, kettlebell swing, wall-ball.

Metabolic Monostructural: Run, row, jump rope.

A large number of secondary exercises can and should be incorporated, but experience shows that those listed above generate the best bang for the buck—but not all for the same reasons.

For example, the thruster and the snatch are optimal movements for generating absolute power. Elite CrossFitters can sustain output of about one horsepower for a full minute with these movements at the right weights (typically around 100 lb. for men). In contrast, the best CrossFitters can only generate about a quarter of that output with a minute of handstand push-ups or muscle-ups.

If we only considered power, we should conclude that abandoning handstand push-ups and muscle-ups in favor of snatches and thrusters would lead to better fitness. This, of course, is ludicrous. Optimized real-world competency requires proficiency in both handstand push-ups and muscle-ups. By specializing in the highest power moves and thus rejecting all inherently low-power functional exercises, we would improve power but not real-world work capacity.



Susanah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Power was important in the sandbag sprint at the 2009 CrossFit Games, but athletes also had to be good at low-power movements such as handstand push-ups and heavy deadlifts.

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It's pointless to compare the power generated in Fran and Elizabeth. Both workouts are equally important for different reasons.

A second misguided application of power is revealed when you consider the fact that you could theoretically increase power without improving performance. This is unlikely to happen practically but is certainly theoretically possible. For example, imagine moving 100 25-lb. sandbags up a flight of stairs. You could, over time, gain 20 lb., which would increase the work performed during the task. If you then finished the task a little slower, you could actually see an increase in average total power output. In other words, you are demonstrating lower real-world capacity (taking more time to finish the task) but generating more physical power. This is not an improvement in fitness as we define it.

Apples and Oranges

Power is sometimes also used for comparative purposes, but these comparisons provide few conclusions. For example, who is fitter: the little guy with a better Cindy but slower Grace or the big guy with fewer rounds of Cindy and a faster Grace? Or which workout is better: Fran or Elizabeth (Fran having a much higher average power for most CrossFitters)?

Different workouts and different bodies are apples and oranges. Relative fitness and relative merit, in several ways, are artificial concepts, or at least limited to some predetermined normative value. It is not necessarily true that you should be able to definitively rank them.

Either way, if you just look at power, you'll get a skewed answer. Real-world abilities require more than just power output. They require power as measured through the productive application of force. In life, this power output requires skills (coordination, accuracy, agility and balance). Solely maximizing power in training without addressing the breadth of skills (many of which operate at a lower power output) doesn't translate into optimal real-world capacity.

Better, but Not Perfect

Fortunately, there is a very easy and effective way of maximizing the practical application of power and intensity for fitness: time your workouts, count your reps and know the weight of your barbells.

If you reduce the time of completion for your workout, your power output increases (assuming you stay the same height and weight). Reducing your Fran time is a legitimate, measurable improvement in your power, even if you have no idea exactly what that measured power output is in terms of foot-pounds per minute or watts.

If you increase the work completed in the same amount of time, your power output increases. Increasing the number of rounds of Cindy completed in 20 minutes is a legitimate, measurable improvement in power. If you complete Diane in exactly the same time but went from 185-lb. deadlifts to 225-lb. deadlifts, that is a legitimate, measurable improvement in your power.

These examples are actually better measures of real-world fitness than knowing the power output of the workouts because life requires the completion of tasks. The driveway has a certain amount of snow that needs to be moved. There is a fixed amount of time to move the greatest number of sandbags to the river before the flood. The groceries have to be unloaded from the car and brought to the kitchen. Fitness is the ability to accomplish the task at hand in the least amount of time.

An Easy Real-World Solution

Counting your reps, weighing your barbells, and timing your workouts is really all you need. If you complete the same workout in less time or do more work (reps) in the same time, you have increased the average power in real terms. No other data is required to maximize results.

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Many in the CrossFit community, including Coach Glassman, have dug into measuring the power outputs of different athletes in different workouts. The overwhelming conclusion of these analyses is that tracking times and loads is as much data as we need to develop elite levels of fitness. Secondly, these investigations concluded that calculating actual foot-pounds per minute didn't contribute any additional benefit toward that fitness.

In other words, cutting your Fran and Helen times, increasing your max deadlift and getting more rounds of Cindy or Mary is really all you need to know about power. Knowing that you can generate over 20,000 foot-pounds per minute in Fran but just under 10,000

foot-pounds per minute for Elizabeth provides no additional benefit (these are Greg Amundson's actual numbers, by the way).

This doesn't mean the CrossFitting nerds out there shouldn't play around with actual power calculations a bit. There are some interesting observations to be made. But beyond basic geeking out, you'd be hard-pressed to demonstrate improved results from the specific calculations.



About the Author

Raised in Atlanta, Russell Berger spent four years in 1st Ranger Battalion and saw numerous combat deployments. After starting CrossFit in 2004, he left the military, moved to Alabama and opened [CrossFit Huntsville](#). He currently splits his time between running his gym, training for the CrossFit Games (he won the 2009 Dirty South Regional Qualifier), writing for CrossFit, and spending time with his family.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Garage Gym 101: How to Grow a Successful Garage Gym

Original CrossFitters Greg and Mallee Amundson learned about creating a garage gym at the historic CrossFit Headquarters. Now they've got one of their own in Imperial, Calif.

By Greg and Mallee Amundson CrossFit Amundson

February 2010



All images courtesy of CrossFit Amundson

From the Ocean to the Desert

My wife Mallee and I were blessed with great opportunities in CrossFit while living in Santa Cruz, Calif. After the original CrossFit Santa Cruz Headquarters gym closed its doors, Mallee continued the legacy by founding the "new" CrossFit Santa Cruz on the west side of the beach community.

1 of 7

In addition, several other CrossFit affiliates began to take root on the outskirts of Santa Cruz County. In one instance, two CrossFit affiliates found themselves within 800 meters of each other! Needless to say, there was never a shortage of inspiration, instruction, community and competition for CrossFitters in Santa Cruz. Mallee and I were living the good life in one of the most beautiful towns in the United States.

Although life was ideal in Santa Cruz, the nature of working for the federal government requires flexibility and an advance agreement to relocate on short notice to domestic and international posts. In June 2008, I was notified my surfing days in Santa Cruz would be “temporarily” suspended in lieu of hiking sand dunes in the middle of the Southern California desert. “Temporarily” actually meant my wife and I had to prepare ourselves for the long haul—at least five years in a brand new land.

The first thing Mallee and I did when we were informed of our post of duty was check the [CrossFit Affiliate page](#). With the incredible success of CrossFit around the world, we anticipated having a friendly CrossFit gym we could join upon our arrival. However, we were shocked to discover no CrossFit affiliates anywhere in the entire county of Imperial, Calif.—and Imperial is one of the largest counties in the state.

Training on a cul-de-sac means the athletes at CrossFit Amundson don't have to worry about traffic while they work out.

The Hunt for the Perfect Garage

During our house-hunting trip to Imperial, my wife and I knew we would likely be training in our garage. As avid CrossFitters, finding a house with a suitable garage was paramount in choosing where we would live. After viewing several houses, we had to make a choice between a residence with an air-conditioned, one-and-a-half-car garage and one with a larger two-car garage and a 12-foot ceiling but no air conditioning. The houses were next to each other at the end of a cul-de-sac, which was perfect for sprints without having to worry about traffic congestion. Despite the 115-degree heat the day of our house-hunting trip (which is average spring and summer weather in Imperial County), we decided on the larger garage. During our 400-meter sprints we run by the house with the air-conditioned garage, still thankful we have the few extra space.

Mallee and I were eager to share our passion for CrossFit with our new community. The question was where to find people to work out with us?





Greg and Mallee didn't have to work out alone for very long after arriving in Imperial, Calif.

Upon our arrival in Imperial County, we had the bare necessities a garage gym needs to sustain athletic development: two 45-lb. barbells, 185 lb. of bumper plates, a GHD machine, a 20-lb. medicine ball, a 24-inch plyometric box, two 45-lb. dumbbells, one 24-kg kettlebell and one 16-kg kettlebell. Our first workouts were creative and involved a lot of sprinting, Olympic lifting and Tabata squat intervals. However, we longed for a more complete garage gym that would allow us to complete any workout posted on CrossFit.com. Additionally, coming from what Mallee and I considered to be the most beautiful CrossFit box in the world, we wanted to transform our garage into a full-fledged gym. We wanted the look, feel and inspiration of a regular CrossFit box.

Building a Gym—Forging a Community

In addition to building our garage gym, Mallee and I were eager to share our passion for CrossFit with our new

community. The question was where to find people to work out with us?

I knew from experience in Santa Cruz that the key to attracting people to CrossFit is leadership by example. If people saw the benefits of dedicated CrossFit training, they would want to experience the transformation themselves. With this in mind, Mallee and I started taking our CrossFit workouts on the road. We would frequent the Navy base a few miles outside of town and complete workouts on the track and the adjacent pull-up bars.

The momentum started
to build just like it always
does when people see
CrossFit in action.

At first we got a lot of questioning looks from the Marines and airmen assigned to the base. “Who are those two crazy people sprinting and swinging kettlebells in 115-degree weather?” they must have thought. The track was only feet away from the air-conditioned Globo Gym on the base, and this meant everyone walking into the cool building had to pass by our track workouts. Despite the blazing sun, Mallee and I both wore CrossFit T-shirts. In addition, I hung a large canvas banner from two wooden beams next to the pull-up bars: “CrossFit—Forging Elite Fitness.” We invited people who expressed interest in CrossFit to work out with us on the track.

Within just four visits to the Navy base, we had a small gathering of brave Imperial County residents and dedicated servicemen from the Marine Corps meeting us on the track every Friday afternoon for their first CrossFit WODs. For “constant variance,” we completed some of our Friday workouts at the large swimming pool on the Navy base, bringing along our medicine ball and dumbbells. We had no trouble inspiring curiosity in the lifeguards and pool patrons by tearing through a workout comprising a 50-meter swim, 50 burpees, a 50-meter swim and 50 thrusters, then lying in a puddle of water gasping for air.



New CrossFitters in Imperial had the spectacular opportunity to learn about CrossFit from the original firebreather himself, Greg Amundson.

I also joined a boxing gym and Brazilian jiu-jitsu school a few weeks after relocating to Imperial. However, instead of driving to class every day, sometimes I would run. I kept my jiu-jitsu gi and MMA gloves in a weighted rucksack I would run across town with. Again, this drew raised eyebrows from the martial artists I was training with. They sensed I was onto something and wanted to know what it was.

The momentum started to build just like it always does when people see CrossFit in action, and soon the track workouts were starting to feel like a regular CrossFit class. But Mallee and I knew the outside track and pool were no longer enough. We needed a classroom where the study of CrossFit could really begin. It was time to start building our box.

Our first major investment was rubber flooring. There's something about a cement floor covered wall-to-wall in black horse-stall mats that just fires me up. Our garage was exactly 400 square feet, and Mallee found a local ranch supply store in Lakeside, Calif., that sold us 4x6-foot stall mats. On a budget, the stall mat is the perfect alternative to the more expensive roll-out rubber matting.

We also needed a pull-up bar system and a rack. Due to the cost of transporting construction material into the Imperial Valley, most houses are framed with metal instead of wood. Therefore, Mallee and I were unable to secure a pull-up bar, such as the Stud Bar, into our garage. Instead, we chose the king of free-standing pull-up bar systems: the BaseFit system from Sorinex. Along the way, Mallee and I decided on our gym's theme colors: black and red. We custom-ordered our BaseFit system in fire-engine red, and the finished product was a work of art that became the centerpiece of our gym.

We had nine athletes training with us at the Navy base on a regular basis. Therefore, we decided to gather equipment that would support a CrossFit workout and class of at least four people at a time. Due to the limited size of our box, we knew we would likely be running workouts in heats of four to five athletes. Mallee found a Concept2 rower for sale on Craigslist, and we invested in two sets of 45-, 35-, 25- and 10-lb. bumper plates from Rogue Fitness, as well as two new 45-lb. barbells and one 33-lb. barbell. From the Garage Gym Store, Mallee and I purchased three new medicine balls in increments of 10, 15 and 20 lb., two 24-kg kettlebells, and two sets of rings. I found a local tire-recycling business and negotiated the pick-up and transportation of a 400-lb. tractor tire.

For inspiration and motivation, I framed some of my favorite CrossFit affiliate shirts I had gathered over the years, along with some historic photographs from CrossFit Headquarters, and hung them on the perimeter of the garage. Mallee and I also hung 3x6 sheets of whiteboard on the walls of the gym and made our own "CrossFit Board" complete with all the famous workouts and room for our new athletes and friends to record their scores. Finally, a huge 6x10-foot American Flag completed the gym. It was time to invite our friends over to play.

From the Track to the Garage

The athletes we were training with on the track were eager to continue their CrossFit education in a "classroom environment" and jumped at the opportunity to visit our garage gym. Because most of the athletes who joined us in the gym were brand new to CrossFit, it was very important to Mallee and me to ensure they received a solid foundation in the proper mechanics of functional movement. In addition to the physical movements of CrossFit, Mallee and I wanted to inspire these athletes with a new way of living: the CrossFit way.

**The benefit of CrossFit
training for our new friends
was immediate and immense.**

In the same manner CrossFit founder Greg Glassman instructed me on the physical and mental aspects of CrossFit, Mallee and I provided our athletes with lessons on the foundational CrossFit movements, as well as educational whiteboard discussions on key CrossFit concepts such as nutrition, work capacity and the theoretical development of an athlete. Not only did we teach our athletes how to squat and deadlift, but we also taught them *why* these movements are essential to their development as athletes. We took nothing for granted.

Because we were starting with a blank canvas, we taught everything from proper mechanics to goal setting and mental toughness. Our mission was to educate and inspire our new friends about their unlimited athletic

potential. For many, this was a radical notion. Very few of the people who stepped into our box had ever been referred to as "athletes." Mallee and I had left CrossFit Santa Cruz with a strong conviction that words had incredible creative power and influence. Therefore, we constantly used constructive and positive words when coaching and cueing our new athletes:

"You guys are natural athletes!"

"You were born to do this stuff!"

"Believe in yourself! You can achieve anything!"

"You're getting stronger every time I see you!"

Soon, our constant positive affirmations paid off. One member of our gym told us, "Nobody ever called me an athlete before. But I believe today that I am!"

Starting with new athletes who had never seen or experienced CrossFit workouts or movements posed some programming challenges. Mallee and I had to frequently remind each other that for a new athlete, learning and refining the foundational CrossFit movements with a PVC pipe had the potential to create soreness, discomfort and even some frustration. Therefore, Mallee and I made a concentrated effort to start slowly with a special emphasis on mastering the mechanics of the nine foundational movements (squat, front squat, overhead squat; deadlift, sumo deadlift high pull, medicine ball clean; press, push press, push jerk).

We ran our group classes in the same manner that we would instruct at a CrossFit Level 1 Certification. With the athletes in a circular formation, Mallee would demonstrate a series of CrossFit movements that followed a logical progression. For example, she would demonstrate the squat, front squat and overhead squat. While Mallee moved through the ranges of motion, I would point out to the group the significant points of performance for each skill. As a group, we then performed repetitions of the movements together. Mallee would lead from the center, and I would assist from the perimeter with verbal cues and posture adjustments for the new athletes.

This proved to be an excellent learning modality for the group. Mallee and I witnessed steady learning taking place in our gym. The smiles on the faces of the athletes and their words of encouragement and congratulations to each other proved their confidence and ability in the movements were increasing on a daily basis.

Mallee and I were eager to introduce the concept of intensity to our new athletes. However, because we were working with a wide range of athletic capacities and abilities, we introduced the term “relative intensity” and made it clear that the goal of the workout was always completion with a focus on proper mechanics. We instructed our athletes to push themselves as hard as they could individually while remaining vigilant in their execution of the points of performance and ranges of motion they had previously been taught. This proved to be an excellent strategy for keeping the collective intensity of the group high while at the same time insisting upon virtuosity in our athletes’ movement.

The benefit of CrossFit training for our new friends was immediate and immense. It was also readily apparent to the people our athletes associated with during the day. Soon the inevitable happened: our athletes wanted to bring their friends and family to work out with them at the box.

Within just four months of opening our garage door, we had 25 people attending our daily evening class. Within six months that number had doubled, and it continued to grow each week.

The large numbers of athletes attending our evening class proved to be a challenge unto itself. We solved the problem in two ways. First, we turned our one evening class at 6 p.m. into two classes: one at 6 and the other at 7. That helped thin the ranks of our one previously large class. Second, and most rewarding for the athletes, was that Mallee and I introduced a concept of “athlete-coach” for the workouts where we ran two heats of the workout of the day. The athletes were paired up, and while one athlete performed the workout, the other athlete acted as the “coach.” The coach for the workout was instructed to provide motivation, count repetitions and, most importantly, insist upon the proper execution of the mechanics. Within just two workouts of implementing this strategy, it was common to hear our new athletes cueing each other, “Drive through the heels! Keep the chest up! Maintain your lumbar curve!” For Mallee and me, this was music to our ears.

Mallee and I had decided early on we would not charge any money for our instruction. We wanted to share our passion for CrossFit with our new community, and we wanted to do it for free. With full-time jobs that kept us both very busy, we had determined CrossFit would be one of our hobbies and would remain in our garage.

However, with close to 60 people participating in CrossFit workouts, the little equipment we had started to take a severe beating. Our new friends realized this as well, and soon a monthly \$25 “equipment donation fund” was established. We used the fund to purchase new equipment and maintain existing gear.

We also recruited the talent of our athletes in improving our box and building equipment. Athletes who were skilled in trades such as welding, electrical work and construction donated their time to build 12 plyometric boxes of various heights and install a lifting platform and indoor garage lighting. Other athletes donated equipment such as kettlebells, jump ropes and dumbbells. And everyone always stayed late to return the gym to order and clean and mop after the workouts.

Within just four months of
opening our garage door, we
had 25 people attending our
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Within six months that
number had doubled.



Different location, same result: satisfied athletes.

Over the course of about nine months, Mallee and I witnessed a simply awesome transformation take place at our gym. Although hard to describe in words, we noticed our athletes had “got CrossFit.” This wasn’t just evident in their CrossFit T-shirts and newly forged levels of fitness. Conversations revolved around new Zone-friendly diet recipes and techniques for learning double-unders, kipping pull-ups and handstand push-ups. Everyone walked around with notably more self-confidence yet maintained an air of humbleness.

One evening during a workout, Mallee and I watched the beautiful sight in front of us with smiles: our new friends and CrossFit athletes were running the show on their own. Athletes held stopwatches for each other and helped record scores on the whiteboard. More experienced CrossFitters offered movement cues to the beginners. Athletes sat outside the garage in the grass reading laminated *CrossFit Journal* articles on nutrition and programming. And above the roar of the cheering for the last evolution of Fran that night, we heard a voice scream out, “I love this stuff!”

Enough said.

Top 10 Lessons for Building a Garage Gym That Will Inspire You and Others

1. Conceal or store off-site anything not essential to the gym (i.e., water heater, door to house, Christmas boxes, etc.).
2. Invest in rubber floor covering. Doing so is vital to creating the finished and professional look of a CrossFit box and prolongs the life of your equipment.
3. Add some motivation to the walls. Hang affiliate shirts, photographs, posters—anything that provides inspiration for you and your athletes.
4. Build a library. Laminate key *CrossFit Journal* articles and have them available in your box. Select books that offer education and inspiration and have a check-out system for them.
5. Install whiteboard. It should be part of every box and provides a surface on which to capture workout times, diagram workouts, explain key CrossFit concepts and write fun quotes.
6. Lead by example. Work out in public places. Run down your street. Invite your neighbors over for coffee and teach them how to squat!
7. Be clean and tidy. Because of the limited space of a residential box, everything must have a place. Keep the gym pristine—it is a reflection of you and your attention to detail.
8. Refer to the “garage” as a “CrossFit gym.” Words are important. Your athletes should associate their workout space with a true gym, not just someone’s garage.
9. Choose quality over quantity. Make the investment in safe, durable equipment you can be proud of. Rogue, Sorinex, Concept2, Iron Mind and Garage Gym have become our dear friends.
10. Create a sense of gym ownership for your athletes. Have them take responsibility for welcoming new athletes, leading warm-ups, cleaning and recording times. Remember: it’s *your* home but it’s *their* gym.

The CrossFit Way in 50 Words

Pursue virtuosity in functional movement. Believe unconditionally in yourself and the ability of others. Learn new skills—teach them to a friend. Forge an indomitable body and spirit. Apply character traits learned in the gym to life: perseverance, honesty, integrity, resilience, courage, loyalty, respect and service. Be humble. Encourage others.



About the Authors

Greg and Mallee Amundson met at the historic CrossFit Headquarters in Santa Cruz, Calif. As Greg completed a muscle-up and Mallee finished her post-workout flexibility training, their eyes met and it was love at first sight. They were married in Santa Cruz on July 4, 2008. They run the garage gym [CrossFit Amundson](#).

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Axels, Salchows and Thrusters

With only eight weeks to train, Italian athletes use CrossFit to prepare for the World Figure Skating Championships in Torino, Italy.

By Maurizio Guarrata

February 2010



All images courtesy of Maurizio Guarrata

It is my great pleasure to write about the marvelous success obtained by my athletes, who will soon compete at the World Figure Skating Championships, March 22-28, 2010, in Torino, Italy.

Weak Core No More

As a former athlete, I've always had a taste for natural, compound, functional movements. Almost two years ago while surfing the web in search of something new, I came across CrossFit, and it was love at first sight. I started collecting all the information on the method, and I read, practiced and studied to be well prepared for my Level 1 Certification, which I got along with a CrossFit Kids Certification in June 2009.

I found many applications for CrossFit as strength and conditioning coach of the Italian National Ice Skating Team. I'm very lucky to work with the majority of the best national athletes, both women and men, though I haven't got the honor of training European champion Carolina Kostner, who trained in the U.S. in the past months.

When I watch our athletes training on ice, they're simply outstanding. It seems everything is possible. The athletes show power, grace, strength and balance as they skate, jump, spin and launch partners in the air and then hold them in a perfect overhead position—all on ice skates.

When I first saw these athletes, I thought I had my job almost done: what could I give them that they hadn't got? After just a few discussions with the national technical trainer, the one in charge of ballet and all technical figures on ice, I discovered they all lacked core stabilization and had never followed a core strength and conditioning program in their entire lives as elite athletes. You can imagine what I thought at that moment.

The athletes soon started to learn and practice the nine fundamental CrossFit movements, which they digested quite well and incorporated into their daily workouts. After just one month of working out five days a week, the athletes were moving differently on the ice. They were more aware of their bodies and much more secure in their legs. Even though, at first glance, ice skating would appear to be based on the lower part of the body, the athletes tested to be strong in their quads and partly in the butt but very weak in their hamstrings. An attentive study of the squat and deadlift has been used to start readjusting this muscle imbalance.

After CrossFit training, the athletes felt much more stabilized in the midsection, especially women in the couples disciplines, as the majority of the movements—twisting, jumping, bending—originate from the core. We now see more power and strength in these particular actions.



Stefania Bertoni and Ondrej Hotarek demonstrate the impressive core strength needed to succeed on the ice as an elite figure skater.

After CrossFit training, the athletes felt much more stabilized in the midsection ... as the majority of the movements—twisting, jumping, bending—originate from the core.

By watching these athletes train six days a week for four to five hours a day on the ice, I discovered their absolute lack of a metabolic-conditioning program. The work done on ice includes repeatedly performing four or five movements, which takes about 30 seconds. The athletes briefly rest, talk to the chief ice-skating coach and then perform again. To remedy any conditioning deficiencies, I introduced some met-con couplets and triplets based on body-weight exercises (squats, push-ups, pull-ups with band assistance as needed) to build up cardiorespiratory endurance, as well as muscular endurance. Then I introduce some weighted exercises alternated with short periods of sprinting to produce strength and power.

Even though it might sound
crazy to most of you, I
proposed that my athletes
train the complicated
CrossFit movements on the
ice and off the ice.

These athletes have to sustain anaerobic activity with the production of a high dose of lactic acid, and the allotted time for a performance in a normal competition is about four minutes. In that short, intense period, athletes have to perform their routine, which usually includes CrossFit elements such as strength, power, cardiovascular and respiratory endurance, balance, coordination, stamina, and flexibility. Figure skating also includes three elements Coach Glassman emphasizes in *Fundamentals, Virtuosity and Mastery: An Open Letter to CrossFit Trainers*. Yes, I'm talking about risk, originality and virtuosity. I work to pass Coach's message on to my athletes so they will perform the common uncommonly well.

CrossFitting for Figure-Skating Gold

I started introducing the CrossFit method of training in October 2009 with the two couples who will most likely participate at the World Championships. We have one junior couple and one senior couple. The junior couple is Carolina Gillespie (16) and Luca Demattè (19) (this couple is still waiting to be confirmed to participate at the world games). The senior couple, Stefania Berton (19) and Ondrej Hotarek (26), is the best known, and both members are top skaters. Hotarek, a naturalized Italian (2005), is from Czech Republic. He is a kind of hero in Czech Republic and would be competing in the Olympic Games in Vancouver if he did not choose to come to Italy. Luckily, it is his intention to live in Italy, and he has brought couples figure skating to a level unseen in Italy since 2002.



Lifting a partner overhead in figure skating is almost identical to a thruster, push press or jerk. Strength and core stability are essential, and any deficiency can result in poor performance and injury.



Athletes must be both powerful and graceful, and a four-minute routine requires a great deal of stamina. Interestingly, Hotarek's Fran time is around four minutes.

In preparing these athletes for the World Championships, the final goal is to bring them to the next Olympic Games in 2014 in Sochi, Russia. During the year they have various competitions, and the European Championships and the World Championships are the most important. They always have to be at the top of their game.

As far as specific training preparation and general conditioning is concerned, these couples—and a great many national athletes—have never had any idea how to start or what this training would do for them. Actually, they only had a few basic thoughts on some past exercises introduced by some guy who showed them how to train strength in a normal bodybuilding way: leg presses, lateral raises, biceps curls and bench presses. In a certain way, it was easy for me to start from the beginning and set them up with CrossFit, so we started with all fundamental movements, as well as Oly-lifting drills and powerlifting lifts.

I started the training preparation in October 2009, but many of the national and international ice-skating competitions, as well as Grand Prix and other test events, start in September each year, and they are mainly held on weekends at least twice a month. Conditioning and preparation have to be scheduled accordingly. All these events then culminate with the European and World championships. I wanted the athletes to start

CrossFitting with a general three-on, one-off cycle, but that was impossible due to their competitions, many of which were outside Italy. So from October to early December, I just saw them once a week (sometimes twice, thank God!).

The competition schedule limited their CrossFit training, but so too did their lack of confidence in training hard, and they didn't yet trust CrossFit as the best way to lead them to their best levels of fitness. I finally introduced a simple training plan based on working three times a week at the beginning of December and gaining one more day before Christmas. At the beginning of January, John Zimmerman, their American figure-skating coach and one of the best Olympic skaters in the world, told me that the couples were finally ready to participate at the next World Championships and that he needed me to prepare them to do their best.

"Maurizio, you only have eight weeks to give them the best preparation possible," he said.

Good to know! This was a heavy responsibility, but I thought I might pull off the miracle. I met with the couples and talked to them nicely, recalling the purpose of what we were all doing, the reason and the goal. I asked them for their total willingness to work with an eight-week total-immersion program. They have an intense training

schedule already: four hours of on-ice skating training seven days a week, ballet choreography for two hours three days a week, posture and presentation work two hours a day twice a week, and pilates for one hour once a week. Besides that, they had a great many medical and lab checks to test their improvements and proprioceptive training on a stabilometric plate. I train them every day of the week for almost one hour.

In pairs figure skating, as in most sports, the diet is critical. Females have to keep very fit, and weight is a very important factor given that their partners have to train hard for all the lifts to be performed during the routine. All of them, as with many Italians, were starving for carbs, and when they had their carb intake reduced or limited, they started to cry and get furious. Luckily it was only for a few days.

After just a few weeks of hard training, the core stability has changed dramatically, and squatting, overhead squatting and deadlifting have been of great help optimizing this midline stabilization.

In order for them to get used to the Zone, we evaluated their meals and made plans for the rest of the day. It was important to find a new balance and a good mix of macronutrients consumed five or six times a day. We worked out a plan to help them stick with the diet, but none of them got used to the idea of consuming good fats. The females especially were afraid to gain weight. We soon started to talk about fish oil and "good fat," and we talked about how to prepare a healthy snack when they are away from home all day long.

Now things are going much better. They have finally left that weird sense of hunger behind for a better health balance, and they all feel much better, with clearer minds and more strength than before.



CrossFit on Ice

For all CrossFitters worldwide, movements such as the squat, deadlift and press are very challenging in the gym. Now imagine trying to do all the CrossFit movements while balancing perfectly on a sharp blade.

Even though it might sound crazy to most of you, I proposed my that athletes train the complicated CrossFit movements on the ice and off the ice. If you have ever tried proprioceptive training, you know it is challenging, but you should know CrossFitting on ice is terribly devastating. Of course, I had to ensure perfect movement off the ice before introducing it on ice.

The challenge for me was to think up some weird variation to reproduce in training the most realistic version of what they are called to perform when competing on ice, and I was amazed to see how they perform some of the CrossFit movements with a partner. Just imagine a push jerk done with a partner instead of a barbell, the female with straight arms outstretched and held at shoulder level by the partner. Or imagine a crazy Fran executed this way: thrusters with the partner as load followed by pull-ups.

Many CrossFitters have seen Jeff Martone do a Turkish get-up with his wife. While some might view that as a party trick, consider the strength, balance and core stability required to perform many of the lifts one sees in figure skating. Push-pressing a partner or using a partner for a thruster may seem strange at first, but think about what this type of training could do for an elite pairs figure skater.

Training the athletes' strength and endurance, all 10 recognized domains, and the three metabolic pathways was very hard. It was also very mentally challenging for athletes who are under great pressure to perform. Even though I try to stick with a schedule of five days on and two off, I always have to bear in mind that I am working with athletes who have tremendously busy schedules and are also human beings at the end of the day. Despite these facts, the athletes are still able to amaze me. The more I push them beyond their limits, the more they respond. I'm not sure if they perform well out of a desire to show me how good and strong they are or if they just want to prove it to themselves. Either way works so long as they succeed with consistency and feel confident.

As far as metabolic conditioning and strength are concerned, I noticed a big difference in less than one month of training. Now all the skaters feel much stronger and have much more stamina. They don't feel fatigue as before. At the start of training, only the Czech athlete had an acceptable level of general conditioning and, generally speaking, none of them had good midline stabilization, which is so very critical to figure skating. After just a few weeks of hard training, the core stability has changed dramatically, and squatting, overhead squatting and deadlifting have been of great help optimizing this midline stabilization.

Initially, the PR numbers of both the females and males were outdated and quite ridiculous. Females started the program with the following data: 77-lb. bench press, 132-lb. back squat, 100-lb. deadlift, 30-lb. overhead squat, 44-lb. clean, 15 jumping pull-ups or 3 elastic-band-assisted pull-ups. The junior male numbers were as follows: 135-lb. bench press, 177-lb. back squat, 180-lb. deadlift, 55-lb. overhead squat, 90-lb. full clean, 5 pull-ups. For the senior male: 200-lb. bench press, 240-lb. back squat, 198-lb. deadlift, 60-lb. overhead squat, 88-lb. full clean, 10 pull-ups.

At the time of writing, I checked them on these exercises, and they registered new PRs averaging between 30 and 50 percent more than their previous numbers. On the metabolic-conditioning side, I registered an average increase in resistance and intensity of about three to five times, with similar decreases in time noted.

The athletes also tried Fran for the first time very recently. We scaled for the females, while the men did the WOD as prescribed. The women averaged around 5 minutes, and the men were around 4—not bad at all!

On to the World Championships

I must say that CrossFit gave me the necessary confidence and strength to make the difference. I always wanted to transfer these feelings to my colleagues, athletes and friends, and I know we can change people. I saw this in CrossFit, and also in life in general. I hope the best for my athletes in the long run and also hope to give you the announcement of first place at the World Championships.



About the Author

Maurizio Guarrata is a fitness manager, personal trainer and the strength and conditioning coach for the Italian National Figure Skating Team. He is a Level 1 CrossFit trainer and has also obtained his CrossFit Kids Certification. He is also a IV Dan Judo and self-defence coach for FIJLKAM (Judo, Wrestling, Karate and Martial Arts Italian Federation).

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Warning Signs

Ignorant people often blame their mistakes on a fitness program rather than their own misuse of that program. Maj. Dan Blackmon, U.S. Army, believes athletes need to get educated to take responsibility for their health, safety and fitness.

By Maj. Dan Blackmon Black and Gold CrossFit

February 2010



Courtesy of Maj. Dan Blackmon

One of the most common misconceptions among military/LEO folks is that CrossFit is dangerous.

I'm a major in the United States Army and a trainer at [Black and Gold CrossFit](#) at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and I'm saying CrossFit isn't dangerous. What's dangerous is an unsupervised version of "CrossFit" performed by athletes who don't understand the movements, the programming and the methodology behind Coach Glassman's program.

Get Educated: Safety Is Your Responsibility

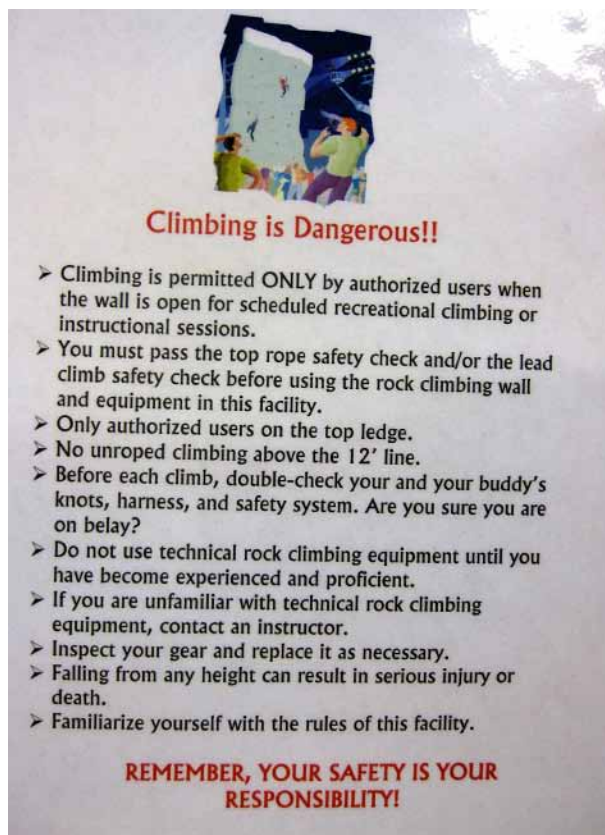
The reason CrossFit has become the whipping boy in some military circles is because it has a name and a brand, and ignorant people often make incorrect assertions based on the failures of knock-offs looking to capitalize on the success of the real deal. To the untrained eye, a broken Rolex is a broken Rolex, whether it was purchased from a jeweler or a vendor displaying his wares on a blanket in a subway station.

“Weight training” is an incredibly generic term that makes the standard back-and-bis routine difficult to label, even when it’s misapplied and results in injuries. CrossFit, on the other hand, is a recognizable brand—and it’s revolutionary, flying in the face of traditional military training methods. It’s a prime candidate for skepticism, and when some bastardized version causes an injury, it’s CrossFit—the actual CrossFit program—that takes the blame. That’s unfortunate, because many members of the military believe CrossFit is an essential part of safe and effective training for combat fitness.

In an organization that has
a manual for everything, we
take the most fundamental
skill—fitness—and leave it to
the discretion of individuals
who may or may not
have the first clue
about training.

Participation in any sport or training program has the potential for injury regardless of methods, instructions and any other safety precautions. That potential increases when people don’t understand what they’re doing. HQ trainer Pat Sherwood made that point abundantly clear a recent Level 1 Cert.

During a tour of our extensive facility, Pat spotted something near our climbing wall. It’s a pretty unassuming 8x11 piece of laminated paper with the



Courtesy of Pat Sherwood

Climbers are usually confronted with a list of rules before they can scale a wall. People entering a weight room are usually given a towel and directions to the torso-rotation machine.

words “Climbing is Dangerous” written in big, red, bold type at the top. Below the warning is a list of rules for the climbing wall. I’ve walked by this piece of paper hundreds if not thousands of times and really never gave it a second glance. Why would I? I don’t climb, and everyone knows climbing is dangerous. It wasn’t until Pat brought the sign up in his lecture on technique that I finally had my a-ha moment and took a closer look at the assorted warnings on the sign (see photo above):

Climbing is permitted only by authorized users when the wall is open for scheduled recreational climbing or instructional sessions.

You must pass the top rope safety check and/or the lead climb safety check before using the rock climbing wall and equipment in this facility.

Only authorized users on the top ledge.

No unroped climbing above the 12' line.

Before each climb, double-check your and your buddy's knots, harness and safety system. Are you sure you are on belay?

Do not use technical rock climbing equipment until you have become experienced and proficient.

If you are unfamiliar with technical rock climbing equipment, contact an instructor.

Inspect your gear and replace it as necessary.

Falling from any height can result in serious injury or death.

Familiarize yourself with the rules of this facility.

At the bottom in big red print: "Remember, your safety is your responsibility!"

Isn't it ironic that we, as an institution, would put this kind of message or warning on a rock-climbing wall but nothing on or near the weightlifting facilities?



Courtesy of Maj. Dan Blackmon

The military has a list of standard operating procedures for everything, and yet few resources are available to those looking to improve their fitness. As a result, many men and women in uniform don't know how to achieve true combat fitness.

The Dangers of Ignorance

Guess what, everyone? Climbing is dangerous! So is driving, playing soccer, playing basketball, combat, going to the shooting range, rappelling, jumping out of airplanes, putting on a tourniquet You know what all those things have in common? Soldiers do them every day.

They have another thing in common: there are rules, standard operating procedures, coaches, classes, etc. in place to teach soldiers how to do these activities or at least warn them of the dangers of doing them incorrectly. Believe it or not, during my deployments more soldiers were deemed combat ineffective in Iraq and Afghanistan for basketball injuries than combat-related injuries. We used to joke that if Al Qaida really wanted to get us out of the Middle East, they would just organize a huge street basketball tournament and let us incapacitate ourselves. It got so bad at one point we actually had to ban hoops just to keep our numbers up.

As a leader, I would hate to see the same thing happen to CrossFit and functional fitness. Therefore, it's extremely important to teach people how train correctly. As the sign said, "Remember, your safety is your responsibility."

The sign basically says, "Hey! Before you climb, make sure you know how to do these things." On the other hand, we don't have such a warning anywhere near any of our weight rooms. We allow people to come in and achieve some version of fitness in whatever way they want. In an organization that has a manual for everything, we take the most fundamental skill—fitness—and leave it to the discretion of individuals who may or may not have the first clue about training.

The issue we have here at West Point ... is that a lot of people claim to do CrossFit but only a handful of them are actually doing it right.

Courtesy of Maj. Dan Blackmon



Black and Gold CrossFit at West Point gives soldiers a chance to train using functional movements that will keep them alive on the battlefield.

Think about what folks ask their bodies to do in CrossFit workouts, and yet some people dive in headfirst, completely ignoring the recommendations and warnings on CrossFit.com if they've even bothered to research the new program they're about to employ. For anyone who has attended a Level 1 Cert, you assuredly remember that one of the tenets of functional movement is that it is safe. Any movement we do can be done at any weight, and good technique will prevent injury when we fail. If I maintain the points of performance on any lift or movement, the weight will not matter. Once one of those points breaks, bad things can happen. If someone has no idea what he's doing, bad things are more likely to happen due to ignorance—and the movement and the method take the blame.

Let's take a fairly simple benchmark workout, Diane, and have a look at it. It's 21, 15 and 9 reps of 225-lb. deadlifts and handstand push-ups. For many of us, doing a 225-lb. deadlift once is fairly easy. We focus on the fundamentals, maintaining our lumbar curve, keeping our weight back on our heels and so on through all the other points of performance.

Now take the strong but inexperienced athlete (insert "average soldier" here) and ask him to do the same thing. Chances are he's going to make some small mistakes, but nothing that will hurt him. He will successfully move the weight up and down, and it may be a little ugly, but it will be "functional." We are still outside the realm of dangerous at this point and just hovering around stupid.

Where we get dangerous is when he gives himself the "3-2-1... Go!" with little preparation and no understanding of the WOD and its demands. That bad technique is going to get worse. By Rep 10, we will see all the points of performance deteriorate, and the athlete will be in real danger of getting hurt. For argument's sake, let's just say the athlete's spine withstands the pressure and doesn't shoot the L2 vertebrae across the room. The very next thing he does is heave his failing muscles upside down in expectation that they'll lower his head to the floor under control and press him back up.

As a trainer at West Point, I am extremely lucky to have the athletes I do. This is exactly why I know how dangerous the HSPU can be. As part of their athletic curriculum, every cadet takes a class called "Military Movement." Our Department of Physical Education teaches handstands and how to do them properly, yet I still have cadets who flip themselves up against a wall and immediately crumble into a pile. Luckily, the other thing they are taught is how to tuck and roll, so as of right now we have no injuries. But it's still possible for an untrained, unspotted or uncoached athlete to crack his skull open or break his neck. It's also possible for a trained, athletic person to hurt himself. That's life—but the probability of injury goes way down with proper training and instruction.

CrossFit is not dangerous, but a half-assed version of something you think is CrossFit, devoid of common sense and appropriate scaling, could be incapacitating.

Real CrossFit: Safe and Effective

The issue we have here at West Point, and I'm sure other military posts face similar challenges, is that a lot of people claim to do CrossFit but only a handful of them are actually doing it right.

For many months here, we had a group that did a workout every Friday. They called it "CrossFit Friday." It was a phenomenal smoke session. I did a couple of the workouts when I was new to CrossFit and enjoyed them, but what I did not realize at the time was that they were not CrossFit at all. The sessions were consistently 30-plus-minute chippers that included all sorts of movements that missed functionality. They were not measurable, observable or repeatable. Most importantly, at times it was borderline unsafe. Luckily no one was ever injured during these sessions, but as I look back on them, I realize it may have been by sheer luck. The real truth is that if someone had been hurt by something that was CrossFit in name only, I would never have been able to convince anyone that CrossFit is a great way to train our future leaders and warriors.

These training sessions also convinced a large population that such workouts define CrossFit. I had a hard time convincing people to sign up for an everyday workout like that, and who could blame them? No way would I continue CrossFit if every single day featured some ridiculous Filthy Fifty type of workout.

CrossFitters know that endless chippers only place the athlete in one energy pathway, which is not the way to achieve fitness. But traditional military folks love the oxidative pathway. If we can't run 5 miles all the time, we just feel inadequate. Breaking through that mindset is our biggest obstacle. Telling a young man that he does not have to do a 45-minute chipper or 10K every day to be in shape is difficult, but it's damn-near impossible to convince a 40- or 45-year-old career military man that you can be in the best shape of your life and very rarely do anything related to long, slow distance running.

The Benefits of Certification

A couple of months ago, I was posed with a question. I was in the process of getting a Level 1 Certification brought to West Point so we could increase the number of coaches and expand our current program. The cost of doing this was going to be fairly significant, and every dollar is scrutinized in today's economic environment. The question was, "Dan, why are we spending money



Courtesy of Maj. Dan Blackmon

***"Here is the plain and simple truth about CrossFit and how it relates to military athletes: their lives depend on their fitness."
—Maj. Dan Blackmon***

to teach these kids how to work out? What is so special about CrossFit? Isn't it just glorified circuit training?"

Of course, I immediately went on the soap box with the constantly varied, functional movements performed at a high intensity lecture we're all so fond of. I got on a whiteboard and started drawing the work-capacity chart. I discussed the 10 general physical skills and how they relate to a soldier in combat. Essentially, I gave the CliffsNotes version of the What Is Fitness lecture I had heard Pat Sherwood give a year and a half ago.

A few days later, we got the money and I patted myself on the back for a job well done. What I didn't realize at the time was that although I may have moved the proverbial weight of the CrossFit ideals a fairly good amount of distance, I surely did not do it very quickly. I was effective but not efficient in getting my message across.

So what is CrossFit and why should we pay to send our soldiers to certifications?

Well, a CrossFit Level 1 Certification is not always going to make Todd Widmans, Adrian Bozmans, Pat Sherwoods, E.C. Synkowskis and Chuck Carswells. What it will do is give soldiers a good baseline on which to build their knowledge. I've heard it said that the Level 1 is a mile wide and a couple of inches deep. Some would have an issue with that assessment, but I embrace it. The Level 1 is the base of your knowledge pyramid. It has to be wide because only from there can you build. In a very short period of time, you will learn how to lift safely, how to get fit, and how to train others. CrossFit certs provide a solid list of information that helps people learn how to train the human body safely and effectively. I could not break CrossFit down into a PowerPoint presentation, but I do know that there are some simple rules you should follow because I have taken the time to get some education.

Here is the plain and simple truth about CrossFit and how it relates to military athletes: their lives depend on their fitness. As a leader in the Army, I know this firsthand, and subsequently my career depends on fitness. The Army knows this, too. The proof is that every day we have a dedicated time to conduct physical training.

Unfortunately, Rome wasn't built in a day, and we are not going to change the "Army way" of training overnight. The training we are doing right now in mass quantities is wrong, ineffective, improperly resourced and not conducted by the right people. Sometimes misguided attempts at functional training actually represent a step away from where we need to go. We need to take the time to properly train our athletes and coaches. CrossFit can provide that training, and it is important that we continue to leverage that.

As a leader in the military I take it as my responsibility to educate and train myself in the best way that is out there. I've decided that's CrossFit. Our other trainers and cadets here have taken up that flag as well, and we are hoping to seed the rest of the U.S. Army with that knowledge. We have to take these lessons and teach them to others.

In short, we have to put up a sign:

You are responsible for your own safety, and you are responsible for how you train your body.

Do not misinterpret the goals and methods of the CrossFit program.

Go to a Level 1 Cert to learn from elite trainers.

If you don't know how to perform a movement safely, ask a CrossFit trainer.

Familiarize yourself with CrossFit movement standards. They exist for your safety and will also help you achieve the best results.

Do not attempt WODs you are unprepared for. Ask your trainer about scaling for maximum results.

Educate yourself by visiting CrossFit.com and reading the *CrossFit Journal*.

Share that knowledge with others.

Pursue virtuosity in every movement.

If we do not spread this message throughout the military, then we will have injuries due to straight ignorance, a bad name given to a truly effective fitness program, and an entire generation of soldiers doing half squats, skull crushers and biceps curls to get ready for combat.



Courtesy of Maj. Dan Blackmon

About the Author

Maj. Dan Blackmon received his Level 1 CrossFit certification in August 2008. He has actively trained cadets and leaders at West Point since that time and was one of the founders of Black and Gold CrossFit. Prior to West Point, Dan had two tours of combat and considered himself to be in pretty good shape. After doing CrossFit for a short time, his perspective on physical training for combat changed forever.

He recently attended a Level 2 Cert and missed it by a couple of points but plans to give it another shot ASAP. Dan grew up with a sports background and played Division 1 golf at West Point, and he still carries a scratch handicap. He believes CrossFit has made him a better golfer, soldier, leader, husband and father.