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"I WOD for Ted Hoyt"

After one of its members is diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor, CrossFit Mission Gorge shows what it means to be part of the CrossFit community. Jack Goodson reports.

By Jack Goodson

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All images: Geoffrey Pascua and Roger Cerros

Fall 2009.

CrossFit Mission Gorge was not two months old. And times were understandably difficult.



Ted Hoyt (center) was one of CrossFit Mission Gorge's first members, helping them stay afloat when times were tough.

The first rent was coming due. And there was no membership base at the San Diego, Calif., box.

Concern gripped co-owners Ian McHugh and Geo Rockwell.

It was clear they likely would have to reach into their own pockets—and funds were already low after investing most of what they had into their California dream.

"We had less than 10 members at the time," Rockwell said. "Most people who came through the door of our semi-empty warehouse were not convinced, sold or even slightly interested in paying for a membership at this point."

Warren Hoyt is not most people.

Hoyt was—and still is—a true believer. He was all-in from the start.

"Ted," as he is known, didn't hesitate. He offered to pay his membership in full for the year.

There was no convincing from the staff. No "Hey, do you think you could front us? We could really use the help." This was simply Ted being Ted.

Rockwell and McHugh didn't think much about it at the time. They were just excited to make rent.

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—Geo Rockwell

Now, the business partners call the moment a significant one—for them and their livelihoods.

"The fact that he believed in us so much during the start of our CrossFit journey here at CFMG is absolutely amazing to think back on," Rockwell said. "People would ask us about our 'expensive' prices and 'why does CrossFit cost so much?' all the time. Ted just wrote a check and did not think twice about it."

This summer, CrossFit Mission Gorge had an opportunity to pay him back.

A Moment in Time

May 2011.

Hoyt, a protective services worker for San Diego County, was on his lunch break. The 43-year-old endurance junkie went for a run along the San Diego River.

Beautiful afternoon, Hoyt said. That was until he began to feel a gradual numbness travel from his right foot up his leg, hand and arm and through half of his face. The incident lasted maybe a minute. Hoyt said he nearly fell but managed to limp it off.



The entire CrossFit Mission Gorge community immediately united to help Hoyt.

His right foot had been bothering him earlier that day; Hoyt had shrugged it off as a pinched nerve.

“I knew just looking at the tech’s face as I got out of the machine that the news was not going to be good.”

—Ted Hoyt

During another run, the numbness returned; Hoyt was able to walk it off again.

He felt it later during a session at CFMG—this time in his feet while doing push-ups. His performance was, as Hoyt said, crap.

The symptoms still were simmering after a week. The sensation, Hoyt said, was like wearing a hat for too long—no pain, just pressure, particularly in his right hand. Hoyt was scheduled to run in the Rock ‘n’ Roll San Diego Marathon on June 5, but at the urging of friends and his wife, Julie, first went to see his doctor.

Hoyt’s doctor recommended he skip the event until tests were completed, as they believed there was a possibility he had suffered a stroke or had an aneurysm. He returned to the hospital on June 12 for an MRI.

“I knew just looking at the tech’s face as I got out of the machine that the news was not going to be good,” Hoyt said.

The usual technician-to-patient chit-chat didn't happen. Hoyt only was told to call his doctor once he got home.

That was at 2 p.m. At 5 p.m., the doctor called.

"Mr. Hoyt, are you OK?" were the first words out of the physician's mouth.

"I was before you called," Hoyt said.

The diagnosis: glioblastoma multiforme, or GBM.

GBM is the most common and most aggressive malignant primary brain tumor in humans. It is considered the most prevalent form of primary brain tumor, though it only occurs in two-to-three cases per 100,000 people in Europe and North America. Median survival time is about 14 months.

Scripps Green Hospital's ER admitted Hoyt that night. Three days later, he had intensive surgery to resect the tumor.

Call to Action

June 15.



Working together, CFMG members provided Hoyt with meals in the hospital and helped out with household chores.

McHugh got a text message from Dawn Fletcher, a fellow coach at CFMG. It was vague. All either knew was that Hoyt was in the hospital having something checked out.

Information remained sparse until the next morning, when Rockwell got a call from Hoyt's sister. The news spread quickly: Ted was in recovery after having surgery to resect a cancerous tumor from his brain, he was doing well but under anesthesia, and, amazingly he already was talking about returning to the gym to work on his double-unders.

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—Geo Rockwell

Fletcher, McHugh and Rockwell and were inspired. It was time for CFMG to act.

The trio decided that providing Hoyt with meals during his initial series of hospital visits would be a great way to get the ball rolling for the support effort. Assisting with household chores also was mentioned as a possibility. CFMG member Mark Lin ran from there, first establishing a Facebook group in a move he deemed necessary in terms of organization.

He was right.

More than 70 people joined the group almost overnight. That success saw Lin expand the support's reach even further with the use of Google Calendar to coordinate tasks and meal delivery. These community-driven ideas proved to be crucial, allowing those involved to communicate without overwhelming Hoyt or his wife with questions.

"It all started with Mark," McHugh said. "He immediately wanted to know how he could help."

"Mark was the one who really headed things up for the Facebook group," Rockwell said. "It all started with that. Before we knew it there was a ton of people who were throwing out ideas. The Facebook group let people communicate, interact and feel as if they were really part of something special. There was a buzz around CrossFit Mission Gorge."

Lin was, like most at CFMG, Hoyt's friend. They had met in April 2010, when Lin joined; the two quickly found they had a lot in common within those concrete walls.

"When someone like Ted, someone who is part of your family, is in need, jumping to their aid isn't even a question," Lin said. "Short of actually operating on Ted myself, I wanted to do everything humanly possible to help him."

For Lin, that meant juggling the support effort with the fast-approaching launch of his own affiliate gym, CrossFit 858, and a full-time marketing job.

**"Short of actually operating
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—Mark Lin

"What was funny was that within a typical five-minute window at my old job, I would decide what type of bumper plates to buy for my box, coordinate who from CFMG would bring Ted a Paleo meal that night and haphazardly fill out a TPS report," Lin joked.

Office Space references aside, it was chaos.

"I wouldn't have had it any other way," Lin said. "It was a labor of love—less emphasis on labor."

Before Lin and company knew it, members were walking dogs and mowing lawns. Trimming hedges, even. Paleo-friendly meals worthy of a Michelin star regularly arrived at the Hoyt residence.

Hoyt said it morphed into some sort of amateur chef competition—one, of course, without the benefit of its own cable television series.

"I honestly think people were trying to out-cook each other," he said. "I hate to state it—Julie, forgive me—but I never ate better in my entire life. They would have kept going, too, had I not called it off. It was very cool and awesome and overwhelming."

And that was only the beginning.



***The benefit WOD for Hoyt was, appropriately,
a team workout.***



Ted Hoyt, working through his burpees.

One Community

Aug. 6.

It was a surreal day in America's Finest City: beautiful, cloudless, warm, with a touch of cool air to accent the chill, Miles Davis mood in town—a 1950s postcard. In a sense, perfect.

CFMG was jazzed. They were holding a benefit WOD for Hoyt at Mission Bay Park.

The event was a massive success, more so than the organizers could have imagined.

CFMG members came out in droves, with members from three other affiliates joining.

Everyone was decked out in green—Hoyt's favorite color—for a day capped, fittingly, by the man himself knocking out some burpees alongside some 100 people.

CFMG friends and family joined strangers and non-CrossFitters in support of a singular cause.

"I was, for the lack of better words, thrilled, excited and maybe even a little emotional," McHugh said. "Geo and I have worked hard to create a sense of community within our gym, so to see all these people wanting to help was a great experience. I knew that those at our gym who know Ted would be willing to help out, but I never expected strangers to jump aboard."

What had started with a few coaches wanting to help a friend in need had grown.

"In CrossFit, we cheer each other on," Lin said. "We suffer together, and we rejoice together. We feel each other's pain and happiness. There is undoubtedly a bond among the CrossFit community that you will not find in any other fitness realm. As a matter of fact, this type of bond is rarely found in any community, aside from perhaps the military or sports." He added: "The benefit was a true testament to the spirit of CrossFit and the kind of people that this program creates and draws in."

Hoyt agreed.

**"I would expect a similar
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CrossFit's just that way."**

—Ted Hoyt

"In a way, while it was me that was being supported, it was also the 'CrossFit athlete' that people really wanted to support," he said. "There was nothing special regarding me with the exception of having fantastic coaches. It was really about Mark, Geo and Ian bringing the CrossFit community together. I would expect a similar reaction from any affiliate with any member. CrossFit's just that way."

Hoyt added: "But, to answer your question on what it was like to see that kind of support, I have to use words that seem to resonate: awesome and super cool."

"It's time for enjoying life for me."

—Ted Hoyt

The Best of You

At the Hoyt benefit event, there was a brief introduction followed by a pair of gifts.

One was tickets to a baseball game. The other was a pair of tickets to a Foo Fighters concert. Foo Fighters is Hoyt's favorite band. CFMG viewed the tickets as more of a symbolic gesture—a date, a goal, to which Hoyt could look forward.

Hoyt was speechless. Well, almost.

"CrossFit has given me more than I ever expected," he said.

Lin yelled from the crowd: "I better see you moshing in the pit with the young bucks."

Hoyt has done his fair share of moshing in the pit of life of late. Although he has not been able to train at CFMG since his diagnosis, he has refused to allow his condition to have a negative effect on his lifestyle.

A trip to Kenya—for Julie's birthday—and another to the Panama Canal preceded the diagnosis. One week might include chemotherapy, but the next might include a beach party, maybe another trip, who knows?

Simply put: there's no stopping Hoyt from living.

"It's time for enjoying life for me," he said.

"Ted is exemplifying the 'never quit' mentality that makes us all proud of who we are," Lin said. "I think other athletes see this, too, and look up to him because of it."

"Is someone getting the best of you?" asks the Foo Fighters' song *Best of You*.

Hoyt, for one, is making sure nothing is going to wrestle the best from him.



Courtesy of Jack Goodson

About the Author

Jack Goodson, 29, is a professional journalist in northeast Tennessee. A graduate of the University of Richmond, Jack has been a member of the sports staff at the **Kingsport Times-News** since 2004. Additionally, his musings about the English Premier League can be seen on a variety of national websites, including [The Offside](#). Jack began his CrossFit journey in June 2009 and has since been satisfying his addiction daily.