

“GR8 Fran Time, BTW”

CrossFit was born and raised on the web, and now creative CrossFitters are developing online WOD-tracking applications. In the digital age, you can compete against athletes from all over the world with the click of a button.

Jessica Murphy



From San Francisco to Iraq, CrossFitters are logging on to compete with new workout buddies they meet online. One of them is Lee Hoy. And he is competitive.

“I’m the only smack-talking preacher you’ll ever run across,” the 40-year-old Texan admits. “I hated family-reunion volleyball because no one could play well.”

Hoy, a converted CrossFitter who heads the New Church in Georgetown, recently downloaded the As RX’d application for his iPhone so he could log and track his WODs. It’s taken his dog-eat-dog streak—belied by his affable preacher exterior—to new heights.

"The ability to track is a huge motivation," he says. "It makes me push a little harder. It's a source of pride and accomplishment that, say, I really did press that 170 pounds. I look at that number going, 'Holy Smokes!' Even if you shave off one second on your running time, you think, 'Well, I can shave off another second. I can always beat this.'"

CrossFit founder Greg Glassman says competition is the cornerstone of his challenging workouts. "Our workouts are competitive events," he's said. "They look like sport, and in all of our facilities what you'll see is whiteboards, and they become scoreboards... We say, 'On your mark, get set, go!' and what we get out of people, the motivational value there, is so potent that we have had people work so hard to prove their worth that they've seriously hurt themselves metabolically."

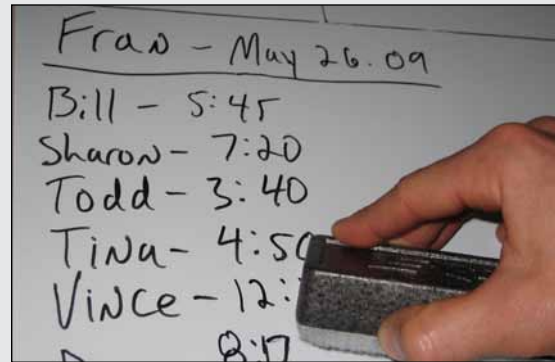
Now, software developers have taken CrossFit's famous scoreboard online, where technology is harnessing competitive energy in new ways.

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Digital Bragging Rights: You Know You Want Them

If you're ranking by membership, LogstAll wins the battle of the WOD-tracking applications. So far, it's got some 8,200 users who record, track, share, compare and rank their CrossFit WODs and other workouts on the LogstAll website, as well as on Facebook and Twitter. "The premise behind LogstAll is it's really flexible enough to log anything," says developer Bill Patton. "It could log your bowling scores."

Patton got into the software business back in 2000 when he was marketing director for the manufacturer of the CrossFit-favourite Concept2 rowing machine. When an online logbook he developed for his customers garnered 70,000 users worldwide, Patton knew he was onto something.



The Dark Side of Ranking

Ever fudged your numbers? Shaved off a second here or added a rep there?

You're not alone.

At a show-of-hands straw poll at a Level 1 Certification in Toronto, Canada, in May, participants were asked whether they used some form of tracking software. About 25 percent of the 65 people in the room raised their hands. Then came the follow-up question: how many thought other people cheated when reporting their results? Almost all the same hands went up again amid much laughter.

Cheating is something Malcolm Chisolm has seen, especially among some of the high-school athletes he coaches.

"It's a beautiful thing, the ranking," he says. "But that's one bad thing about it."

If Chisolm suspects athletes of inflating their numbers, he's got a simple remedy. He makes them repeat the WOD while he watches.

Chief Warrant Officer Paul McIntyre, regimental sergeant-major of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, told CrossFit it isn't always a case of outright lying.

"People are too easy on themselves," he said.

McIntyre's beef? With no trainer involved, there is no accountability in self-reporting and people count reps and lifts a trainer would likely dismiss.

He launched LogsltAll for CrossFitters on Sept. 7, 2007. It's built around three basic features: the ability to log results, share progress and compare your results to others of the same age and gender.

"Track, recognize and reward: it's really expanded the whole concept of sharing your progress," Patton says. The site's most popular feature is its flexible ranking system—people just covet that top spot.

LogsltAll profiles a top athlete of the day alongside daily rankings with regularly updated stats based on the workouts published on crossfit.com. Members can also customize rankings for non-CrossFit activities. "Suddenly, you have the ability to compare with everyone," Patton says.

You can also track, privately or publicly, your food habits and sleep patterns. If you shy away from competition, you can choose to opt out of the open ranking system.

"The dark side of LogsltAll can be the competitive aspect," Patton admits. "There're different things that motivate different people, so other cool things (the site) can do is highlight your weaknesses and your strengths. It lets you set realistic goals."

You're Stronger Now—And Your Laptop Can Prove It

Gym owner Malcolm Chisholm is one of the top fans of LogsltAll. He says the site has become one of his best tools for working with clients at his New Jersey-based RunJumpLift training center.

"It's probably more important than anything else," he says. "It's fact vs. feeling, and it makes you accountable. You can really see what was done. It's black and white. It's not emotional."

The coach, CrossFitter and former boxer says he's seen LogsltAll improve the quality of his clients' workouts by keeping them honest, crushing excuses and showing them their progression, no matter how small.



New online apps allow you to start talking smack on the web before the bumper plates stop bouncing.

“People go home with their heads held high,” he says. “You can work out for a year and not notice the gains you’re making. But you don’t realize 20 weeks ago you were a lot weaker. A lot of questions are answered by LogsItAll.”

Besides, the ranking system has fired up his clients’ training. “It’s the best shit ever,” Chisholm says.

LogsItAll itself is facing stiff competition from new kid on the block Beyond the White Board, which is still in beta but already has 5,000 members.

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“As CrossFitters, we realized the importance of tracking,” says Jonathan Kinnick, one of the website’s developers and owner of CrossFit Kinnick in Southern California. “You can’t pretend you’re better than you’re not.”

The site was launched Dec. 15, 2008, and lets you track your workouts and nutrition. It will soon feature a Facebook connect and let you feed your information to blogs and portable devices such as iPhones. “It’s all the benefits of having a log, and more,” Kinnick says. “We’re taking the legwork out of tracking. There’s even a community aspect you just don’t get writing in a journal.”

He says the site’s also gone a long way in solving one recurring issue: with weekly adherence rates made public, Kinnick’s clients are suddenly more diligent about making their workouts. “We don’t have a problem with people

The screenshot displays the LogsItAll website interface. At the top, there's a 'CrossFit Leaderboard' header with images of kettlebells and a stack of coins. Below this, the website is divided into sections for 'Today's .com Leaders' and 'All Time Leaders' for Fran Men. The 'All Time Leaders' table lists names like Ryan Redmon, Just Max, and Intigoc with their respective scores. Below the leaderboards, there's a 'CrossFit Ranking of the Day' section for 'CF Tabata 20-30', listing a top 20 ranking of users with their positions, reps, ages, and gym affiliations. The bottom part of the screenshot shows two iPhones displaying the mobile app. One phone shows a workout log for 'Eve' with exercises like 'Fight Gone Bad', 'Grace', and 'Griff'. The other phone shows the 'Workout of the Day' for Fran, dated April 10, 2009, with details on rounds, reps, and previous results.

Tired of competing against the same people every day? Geography is no barrier with online WOD-tracking apps.

working hard in the gym," he explains. "The issue we see is them not showing up enough. (The site) brings a lot of accountability. I've seen a jump in consistency."

The site's top feature—ranking—also fosters healthy competition, he says. "It's competition with camaraderie. Even non-competitive people are being motivated by it."

CrossFit Toronto jumped on board in late April. "It's an invaluable tool," says head trainer John Vivian. "You input the data and it creates the knowledge." Vivian expects to see the friendly rivalry in his gym ramped up once his members have more competition. "It fuels people to move harder knowing that someone's chomping at your heels one wall-ball shot behind you," he says. "You just can't stop."

So far, 24 members have registered, and Vivian's looking forward to being able to follow and analyze his clients' results, taking journaling beyond what he's been able to do with notebooks and a whiteboard. "In terms of a motivation tool, in terms of tracking, we really see the benefit," he says.

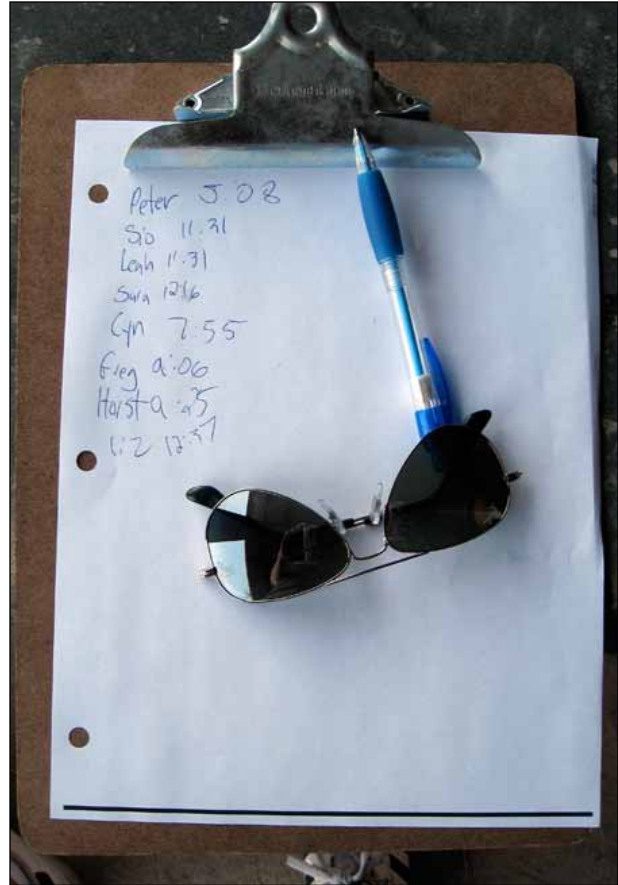
Let Online Competition Drive You

Like the creators of Beyond the White Board, Tyler Weir found logging his workouts in a notebook too 20th-century. "I'm a developer by nature and I had an itch to scratch," says the Toronto-based Weir. "So I thought I'd build an application I'd use myself and then distribute it to the community."

Weir's application is As RX'd, an iPhone app that was launched April 6, 2009. It lets you add scores for benchmarks such as Fran and Fight Gone Bad, build your own

"It fuels people to move harder knowing that someone's chomping at your heels one wall-ball shot behind you. You just can't stop."

—John Vivian



Courtesy of Greg Carver

**Looking for a better way to track your workouts?
Put down the clipboard and hit the Internet.**

WODs, and download the latest WOD from the main site or RSS feed. You can also publish your results to Twitter and WordPress blogs.

Weir says using As RX'd has made a difference in his own training. "One of the most important things in CrossFit is logging your workouts. I hit plateaus and I know it's time to adjust (various variables). Logging gives you an overall view of your progression. It hasn't changed my workouts, but the data is there. Just by looking at those numbers, it gives you context."

Another recent addition to the online logbook community is the CrossFit LeaderBoard. CrossFit Vancouver owner Craig Patterson was looking for a digital way to track his clients' WODs and results, and so he joined forces with a software developer to create a Facebook-style "workout ranking system and social space for CrossFitters, by CrossFitters."

Courtesy of Luis Albuquerque



Tyler Weir, developer of As Rx'd for iPhone, is also pretty good at double-unders.

The site was launched on Feb. 7, 2009, and Patterson thinks online logging will help legitimize CrossFit as a sport and benefit athletes training for the CrossFit Games by opening up the rankings. "Now you're a small fish in a big pond," he says. "It'll up your game."

He's also noticed it's strengthened the CrossFit community, if just in his own gym. "It brings the community together on a larger scale, the bonding of all the classes. The morning crew is talking to the evening crew. It's fostered a great camaraderie."

But beyond the warm and fuzzy, it's the raw competition that reels them back in. "They love to see their name on that leaderboard," Patterson says.

Members can rank themselves against others in their own gym and against all the site's members. There's also an all-time leaders section alongside the ever-popular daily rankings.

It seems like a lot of CrossFitters are convinced that tracking software has ramped up their workouts. But is all this anecdotal evidence backed by hard facts?

Shane Murphy says it is.

A sports psychologist with a background in competitiveness research out of Western Connecticut State University, Murphy says science suggests you can change behavior just by tracking it.

"There's a process in psychology known as self-monitoring, which is quite strong," he says. "It becomes much easier to change just from the process of tracking. You've brought the attention to your own behavior and you can control it. Online tracking would be very liable to have the same effect."

So Murphy's not surprised that software seems to create good results in the gym. "It's something that we notice in goal-setting literature: public goals do produce stronger adherence than private goals. You're more likely to persist, even with some setbacks," he says. "That's probably what's going on here."

Still, he cautions that it's important to realize not everyone is competitive. "There's no one-size-fits-all prescription for people," he says. "For some people it's just not their style."

Skipping WODs? Prepare for Online Heckling

Chris Cooper has also studied the role of logging and feedback in exercise adherence. He's the president of Catalyst Fitness in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, and in 2006 he decided to find out exactly why his clients weren't doing their workouts. You can read a detailed version of his story in the [CrossFit Journal](#).

Exercise adherence rates across the industry hover around a dismal 50 percent—and that's an optimistic estimate. Cooper's two-year study led him to CrossFit and the development of his own tracking software, which will be launched to the general public on Aug. 1, 2009. It also helped him score an 80 percent adherence rate with his clients.

"What we found works best is, No. 1, novelty—not knowing the workout in advance, the length of the workout, and feedback," he says. By linking the three together he saw instant 11 percent jump in adherence.

"If you were to do one thing it would be to add individual feedback," Cooper says. "It's our nature to compare ourselves to others and to yourself. The feedback doesn't have to be

that personal to have an effect. It's more important that you get regular feedback, that you know somebody's watching." Now, his clients log into the Catalyst software every morning, where they find their WOD and can check their personal best. Cooper says it pushes his clients into working out, even on rainy Friday evenings.

"You see people showing up on a day they probably wouldn't have before," he says. "It's so much better to have an objective to measure." So with results like these, do you really want to be the last one to log on?

Of course, there's nothing wrong with logging your workouts the old-fashioned way, using a pen and notebook. In a 2007 blog post, Adrian Bozman of Boz and Todd fame offered tips on how to keep a training log in a notebook. He suggested logging not only WODs but also warm-ups, skill work and cool-downs. The last few pages of the log should track progress in benchmark workouts. Read Boz's complete tips at the [San Francisco CrossFit Blog](#)

That said, the online tools take your WODs out of the notebook and create a sense of community that self-confessed competition junkie Hoy admits to liking. He even hears from other members when he posts a good score.

"I'm getting comments all the time," he says. "I'm pretty surprised how much encouragement and support I see online."



About the Author

Jessica Murphy has covered diverse topics from the worlds of travel, art and politics, as well as poutine festivals and Sarah Palin prank calls—all published by well-regarded Canadian media outlets such as the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, Yahoo.ca, CBC.ca and Macleans.ca. She also thought her workouts were hardcore until she watched some CrossFit videos.



The Apps, as of May 2009

As RX'd

- » 150 users
- » 1 month old
- » An iPhone application that can be used with Twitter and WordPress blogs
- » Cost: One time fee of \$9.99
- » Most popular feature: The Workout Builder
- » Available through iTunes or via the [App Store](#) application on the iPhone and iPod Touch

Beyond the White Board

- » 5,000 members
- » 5 months old
- » Can be used online and will soon feature plugins for Facebook and portable devices
- » Cost: Free until July 2009; \$3 per month thereafter
- » Gym pricing also available starting at \$35 per month for up to 25 members
- » Most popular feature: The ranking system
- » Available at www.beyondthewhiteboard.com

CrossFit LeaderBoard

- » 1,000 members
- » 4 months old
- » Allows users to post pictures, videos, messages and blogs
- » Cost: Free
- » Most popular feature: Daily ranking
- » Available at www.crossfitleaderboard.com

LogsitAll

- » 8,200 members
- » 2 years old
- » Can be used online with Facebook and Twitter
- » Cost: Free
- » Most popular feature: Daily ranking
- » Available at www.logsitall.com