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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## Working out for Two

Lauren Joseph CrossFits throughout her pregnancy and is back on the C2 only a week after giving birth to a healthy baby girl.

By Lauren Joseph CrossFit Solano

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Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

I started CrossFit after the July 2008 CrossFit Games. Before then, my husband was following the main site in our garage. I had originally found CrossFit to be intimidating and “not for me.” After seeing all the beautiful—not bulky—and strong women at the CrossFit Games, I decided I needed to give it a try. Prior to CrossFit I typically put an hour in on the elliptical and bounced around on a few machines at the local Globo Gym.

After a couple of Garage WODs I quit the Globo Gym.

I was your typical Day 1 client: I didn't know how to do pull-ups, I had to do modified push-ups, and I didn't know my jerk from my snatch. The only thing I had going for me was running, which I discovered I could improve on. I found CrossFit to be fun and addictive, and I enjoyed working out with my husband and friends in our garage. Our addiction to CrossFit soon spread to others, and we quickly outgrew the garage. In October 2008 we moved out of our garage and into a 700-square-foot box. With our friends' help, we became affiliated and opened CrossFit Solano.

### WODs With Baby

To give you some history, my husband and I have always wanted a family. The bad news was that I was told in spring 2008 I might have some problems getting pregnant due to ovarian cysts. Several doctors and several ultrasounds confirmed the same diagnosis: there was a lot of damage to my uterus, and only time would tell if I could get pregnant. At the time of this news, my husband and I were not married and decided we would deal with it later. In spring 2009, we were married and decided we would start trying to have a family because we didn't know how long it would take. By this time, I had been CrossFitting for just shy of a year and following a strict Zone/Paleo diet. Within two months of being married we were pregnant!

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Upon finding out I was pregnant, I knew a lot of research had to be done. I began by searching through the popular [CrossFit Mom website](#) and reading anything I could on the topic of "being pregnant and working out." I didn't want to do anything that could hurt the baby, but I also knew there was no way I was going to be able to train clients at the gym and not get my name on the whiteboard!

I started out slow; I didn't want to raise my heart rate or my core body temperature. I never did WODs that involved finding a 1-, 3- or 5-rep max. On those days I used CrossFitMom.com for substitutions.

I loved all the workouts CrossFit Mom provided. I never felt like I wasn't getting a workout; however, I missed working out alongside my clients and friends. After the first trimester and a few doctors appointments to explain exactly what CrossFit was, I started following the WODs posted at our gym. I still had to make substitutions—no GHD sit-ups, no handstand push-ups, no AbMat sit-ups and no sprints. All the trainers and my husband had to get used to the fact that I had to talk or sing during my workouts to force myself to maintain a slower pace/heart rate.



*After consulting with her doctors, Lauren Joseph carefully started doing CrossFit WODs while pregnant.*

Courtesy of Dustin Joseph



***The author was preparing to endure the pain of childbirth, so a bloody toe wasn't going to stop her from finishing a half-marathon.***

In the beginning of this transition from CrossFit Mom WODs back to the main-site WODs, I kept the weights on the workouts light and continued to talk to my doctor, who by now had gone to peak her head into a local CrossFit gym. As my pregnancy progressed, I started to add weight and do most workouts as RX'd with less intensity. The focus was more on form and completing the task at hand. Throughout the months of my pregnancy I completed the following benchmark workouts in the following times:

- 7 weeks pregnant—Cindy: 13 rounds RX'd
- 8 weeks pregnant—5K: 31:20
- 10 weeks pregnant—Randy: 12:20 RX'd
- 12 weeks pregnant—Nancy: 21:20 RX'd
- 17 weeks pregnant—Karen: 13:54 RX'd
- 19 weeks pregnant—10K: 56 minutes
- 24 weeks pregnant—Helen: 12:43 RX'd
- 28 weeks pregnant—Nancy: 23:35 RX'd
- 30 weeks pregnant—Grace: 6:37 RX'd
- 36 weeks pregnant—Griff: 17:24 RX'd
- 37 weeks pregnant—Fran: 7:34 RX'd
- 38 weeks pregnant—Fight Gone Bad: 257 RX'd
- 39 weeks pregnant—Helen: 13:04 RX'd

At around 28 weeks pregnant I decided, with my doctor's blessing, to sign up for a half-marathon. I had read several *CrossFit Journal* articles, as well as affiliate blogs, in which other non-prego CrossFitters had entered full marathons and ultra-distance runs using only CrossFit training methodologies, so I decided to give it a shot. To prepare for my half marathon, I did nothing but follow CrossFit programming. I did no extra running, no specific endurance training—just CrossFit WODs.

My goals were simple: I wanted to complete the run in the time limit provided, I did not want to walk or have to stop, and I wanted to finish. I wanted to participate in this run because I wanted to show my clients, friends and family what CrossFit could truly do. I wanted to prove to myself that I was mentally and physically strong enough to finish this run. I also wanted to have a story to tell my daughter. I wanted her to know that her mother was strong and healthy during her pregnancy, but I also wanted to show all those people who are intimidated and overly cautious of CrossFit that *anyone* can do it. You don't have to sign up for a half-marathon, but anything can be scaled and any WOD can be finished.

I finished the half-marathon in just over two hours with my shoes covered in blood thanks to a blister that exploded in Mile 4.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

***The extra weight of a growing baby made workouts a challenge for Joseph, but she did almost all of them as RX'd.***



### **Pregnant and Fit**

Throughout my pregnancy and especially while I was doing CrossFit workouts, many people questioned what I was doing. I often had to explain that I had my doctor's blessing and felt that what I was doing was "safe" for both my baby and me. With the big skeptics of CrossFitting while pregnant, I had to drive home the point that I could complete any WOD on the board as long as my heart rate was controlled, I stayed cool and hydrated, and I made the appropriate substitutions.

My personal opinion is it would have been unsafe for my baby and me to take 40 weeks off of CrossFit, gain unhealthy weight and, for lack of a better term, be like most mothers in America and "let myself go." During my pregnancy I had a few clients who were new to CrossFit come into our affiliate for our Introduction to CrossFit program. Some of these new clients would look at me and want to train alongside me or be trained by me. A few people who walked in to see me doing pull-ups, kettlebell swings, cleans, overhead squats, etc. stated that they were initially intimidated and overwhelmed by this sight. When I asked them why they felt this way, they stated that when compared with their own level of physical fitness they realized they could not keep up with an obviously pregnant lady.

During my pregnancy I managed to never miss a day of training. I continued to follow three days on and one day off during the months of my pregnancy. While out of town I visited other CrossFit affiliates just to make sure I didn't miss a day (thank you CrossFit One World, CrossFit Orange Coast and CrossFit Vallejo for your hospitality). I often heard on those visits that I was the first pregnant woman to work out in their box.

Most folks were astonished that a pregnant lady was still working out because a typical perception of pregnancy is that of inactivity until after the baby is born. Hearing I was supposed to be inactive or stop training from various folks is what made me want to write about my experience. I want women to know you can still work out and be pregnant, you can still run a 5K at 39 weeks pregnant, you can still watch what you eat, and you can still do pull-ups! I am not suggesting a woman already pregnant start CrossFitting now, but for those who have been CrossFitting and become pregnant, please consult your physician and continue at a rate at which you feel comfortable.



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

*The author together with Caden Ansley, future firebreather.*

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Thankfully, I never had any problems with my pregnancy. My morning sickness lasted about a week and was over with before I really suffered. I gained moderate weight (33 lb.), was never anemic, never had swelling or discomfort, never battled fatigue and managed to train our clients until the day I gave birth. I attribute all of the above to CrossFit, Paleo/Zone eating habits (which I maintained while pregnant), and the support of my husband, family, friends and clients.

### **Labor Is Just Another Workout**

Truly CrossFit-style, my water broke at the gym mid-WOD. I was three days past my due date and decided to go work out. The WOD was Jackie, and I wasn't feeling 100 percent or too energetic. I decided with a friend, Seth, we would split the WOD. I would row 500 meters, he would row 500 meters. I would do 25 thrusters, he would do 25 thrusters. I would do 15 pull-ups and then he would do 15 pull-ups. To make things fair, he would wear two weighted vests for a total weight of 40 lb.

Everything was going smoothly until 400 meters into the row. My water broke! I stopped rowing, told everyone I had to use the bathroom and excused myself. Everybody was used to my frequent potty breaks due to the fact there is so much pressure on the bladder during pregnancy. Seth finished my remaining 100 meters and then rowed his 500. Due to a previous false alarm, I didn't want to alert anyone, so I came out from the bathroom and finished my thrusters and pull-ups! I then left the gym, loaded up the car and drove myself to the hospital.

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until 400 meters into the row.  
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Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

*One would guess carrying a new baby isn't a challenge for a woman used to hoisting kettlebells and barbells on a regular basis.*



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph

**The CrossFit Solano team.**

Once there it was confirmed my water had in fact broken, and I called my husband at work and asked that he join me. He was shocked. He knew that I had been at the gym and expected a call from every trainer and client there.

My contractions were painful but manageable, perhaps due to all the grueling workouts I had done. It only took five hours from the time my water broke to the time my daughter, Caden Ansley, was in my arms. I was able to deliver my daughter through a natural vaginal birth with no medication. I was in good spirits throughout most of the birth and attribute my physical condition to my CrossFit WODs.

### **Baby's First WOD?**

Two days later, Caden and I were sent home from the hospital. One week after birth I was able to sneak away to the gym while she slept and row a 2K. I gradually worked my way up to a 5K, and only 2 weeks later I participated in regular classes with my doctor's approval. I am not as fast as I used to be as I need to rebuild my endurance, but I am proud to say I have not lost any of my strength.

Our daughter is adjusting well to the world. My husband and I now take her to the gym with us and she loves it. She might actually take her best nap there. The loud music and weights don't startle her but are more like a familiar sound. I can't wait until she is doing burpees, squats and pull-ups, mimicking our clients, our friends, her dad and me.

I don't recommend someone who has never CrossFitted start doing WODs when she finds out she's pregnant. However, to those who have been exposed to CrossFit, I encourage you to continue doing so with your doctor's approval and while listening carefully to your body. I owe my pregnancy, delivery and recovery to CrossFit.

Thank you, CrossFit.



### **About the Author**

*Lauren Joseph is Level 1 CrossFit trainer. She, along with her husband and a few friends, owns, operates and trains at CrossFit Solano. She looks forward to seeing her daughter compete in 2030 CrossFit Games and seeing the CrossFit community continue to grow.*



Courtesy of Dustin Joseph