

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

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## July 2009

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## It's in the Bag

The real world isn't filled with perfectly balanced, easy-to-grip weights. Training with odd objects such as sandbags is one way to build functional strength for use outside the gym.

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Josh Henkin

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It didn't begin with sandbags. For years I had been working with top strength coaches and had experimented with a variety of training methods. In 2002, a sports medicine doctor told me it was game over. The disks I had herniated at age 14 had come back to haunt me. I was devastated.

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I wasn't ready to accept that I would not be athletic ever again. Deep down I knew the doctors didn't have the last say, and I was going to investigate every method to get back to being an athlete. My exploration in trying to find an effective solution to my injury led me to the concept of odd-object training.

I've always liked using odd objects like stones, logs and tires as training tools, and kettlebell work eased the pain and strengthened my hips and trunk. Sandbags seemed the logical next step. After all, they're less expensive and more versatile than other objects.

Sandbags bridge the gap between the weight room and the real world because they aren't perfectly balanced, calibrated and easy to grip. Sandbags teach athletes how to efficiently co-ordinate different muscle groups precisely because they're awkward. The shape of a sandbag shifts on every repetition, requiring you to activate stabilizers and recruit a wide variety of muscle groups.

Used correctly, sandbags can be even more challenging than free weights. Wrestlers, often among the best-conditioned athletes, have long used sandbags. So have other athletes who need to be explosive, quick, agile and strong.

Everyone talks about "functional training" and "core training" these days. Both terms are overused, but sandbags are great for developing a solid core because both static and dynamic strength can be trained.

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*Sandbags bridge the gap between the weight room and the real world because they aren't perfectly balanced, calibrated and easy to grip.*

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Keith Wittenstein

***Hard up for equipment? Sand is certainly cheaper than steel.***

Keith Wittenstein



Exercises such as planks are great for static core strength. You can make this type of training more functional by performing standing drills that challenge static core strength. Front squats are a great example. The trunk has to resist the forward flexion of the body under a load while the body is moving. We can take this to another level by performing sandbag shoulder squats. This movement is based on the same principle as the front squat but loads just one side of the body. The athlete is challenged to resist rotating, bending forward and bending to the side.

Sandbags can be used very effectively to teach rotational movements. This can help prevent injuries that occur when performing even simple tasks that involve flexion or rotation, like setting a bag of groceries on the hood while looking for your keys.

Sandbags present other benefits to group-training programs such as CrossFit because they provide a way to obtain relatively large quantities of reasonably priced equipment that has little risk of injury. As such, sandbags can be especially valuable for new affiliates without much money to spend. You can use sandbags to teach squatting, pressing, pulling and other fundamental movements. You may even find that some new clients prefer sandbags to other equipment they find intimidating.

***When cleaning a sandbag your grip may not be ideal, so consciously avoid the temptation to curl it up with the arms.***

Courtesy of Josh Henkin



***The half-moon snatch is a great sandbag exercise that includes strong concentric and eccentric components.***



There are sandbag versions of many exercises. As in any training method, proper progression and planning is essential in getting the most out of sandbag workouts. I prefer to start people with bilateral strength lifts, then follow up with explosive bilateral lifts. The final step includes unilateral and complex exercises.

### The Exercises

**The power clean**—This great power move can easily be replicated with a sandbag. The movement is much the same as a barbell clean, but the rack position is different. You can clean the bag to your shoulder, hold it in a neutral grip with one hand on each end, or rack it on the biceps and anterior deltoids with the arms wrapped underneath and around it. Large loads can be used, and technique is essential.

**Clean and press**—As in any clean, avoid the temptation to use the arms because the middle of the sandbag will sink away from the lifter as it is lifted off the ground. The sandbag clean and press is great for developing hip power, but it's especially good for increasing stability and grip and core strength. The sandbag is awkward to grip and hard to balance overhead, so the athlete is challenged to maintain stability at all times. Any deviation from proper pressing form will result in power leakage and a poor lift or a shaky body. Gripping the sandbag is one of the greatest challenges. It's standard to grab the ends of the sandbag and roll the material to create a gripping surface, but there is a great temptation to pull with the arms because the gripping action is so unpredictable. Maintain straight arms, pull the weight with the hips and receive the sandbag so that the hands keep their tight grip on the ends and the elbows are close to the sides of the body.

**Thrusters**—Thrusters are great for overall body training. They also build strength and flexibility. The sandbag equivalent can be very challenging because the constant movement of the sandbag makes the lift hard to "groove." With some skill and technique, you can use a very strong rack position to transfer a great deal of power to a barbell during a thruster. With a sandbag, the variable shape of the load means you have to work harder to get the weight overhead.

**Front squat**—This movement should be in almost everyone's program, but limited wrist flexibility can make performing the barbell version a challenge. In the sandbag variation, athletes can learn proper squat



Courtesy of Josh Henkin

*The rack position for a sandbag clean requires the bag to rest on the biceps and anterior deltoids.*

technique and get its benefits while working on flexibility. The sandbag front squat would be performed with the rack position of the clean. Other variations include the classic Zercher squat (bag in the crooks of the arms, with the elbows lower than in the rack position for the clean), and the bear-hug squat (holding the bag vertically in front of you).

**Power snatch**—The snatch is great for developing power, and the basic sandbag snatch is no different. The bag is explosively driven overhead and locked out with the hands underneath or on either side of the bag. The half-moon snatch is a variation that was used by wrestlers to develop strength in sport-specific ranges of motion. Its principles are similar to those of the power

Courtesy of Josh Henkin



***If you want to challenge your core strength, try a get-up with a heavy sandbag.***

snatch, but an additional rotational component makes the half-moon snatch a highly valuable lift. Starting with the bag on the ground outside one foot, the athlete grips the bag with a neutral grip and snatches it overhead and lowers it to the ground outside the opposite foot in one smooth movement. This is a fundamental movement because it slowly introduces people to rotation and flexion. A further benefit is the strong concentric and eccentric aspects of the movement. You can modify the exercise based upon people's flexibility and fitness by adjusting both the weight of the sandbag and the height of the starting position. Placing the bag on a bench or box can be appropriate for those who don't have the strength or flexibility to start from the floor with proper technique.

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*Shouldering: This is where the fun really starts. Because the weight rests on the body, greater loads are possible.*

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**Bear-hug hold and squat**—Where you hold the sandbag also makes a large difference in the training effects and complexity of the movement. The bear-hug position is the usual starting point. It is the most balanced for holding the sandbag and actually makes it easier for the lifter to remain vertical. The spine is held in a neutral position and the bag is held so it's vertical. The weight

and size of the sandbag can increase over time. Larger sandbags are more challenging than smaller ones of the same weight. The bear-hug squat provides the athlete with a counterbalance and usually results in a quality squat of greater depth for athletes who have previously struggled to get low enough.

**Zercher hold and squat**—In the Zercher position, the lifter holds the sandbag in the crook of the arms with elbows elevated (unlike in the barbell version of the Zercher, where the elbows are usually closer to the hips during the lift). The sandbag is held higher than in the bear-hug position, so more emphasis is placed on the trunk.

**Shouldering**—This is where the fun really starts. Because the weight rests on the body, greater loads are possible. Nevertheless, only one side of the body is loaded and the lifter has to work hard to maintain proper alignment. There should be no twisting or side-bending. A solid core is essential for proper shouldering of a sandbag.

**Overhead hold**—This is the most challenging position. Everything is under stress: trunk, upper back and shoulder girdle. Holding a sandbag overhead also challenges overall stability and balance.

**Get-up**—Unlike the barbell or kettlebell version, the sandbag get-up places the greatest emphasis on the trunk rather than the shoulder complex, because the bag is held on the shoulder. In a well-performed shoulder get-up, the lifter should be able to rise to the seated position without the straight leg lifting off of the ground. When the leg rises during the first stage of the get-up, it can be a sign of an inability to co-ordinate the abdominals with the hamstrings and glutes.

**Carrying**—Carrying sandbags builds the back, glutes, hamstrings, shoulder girdle, arms and abdominals. It also develops anaerobic endurance in a compromised state. Carrying sandbags can be done for time or distance. Sandbags can be carried in the bear-hug, Zercher, shoulder, overhead or farmer's carry positions.

**Multiple sandbags**—For advanced drills, use more than one sandbag. Variations include one on the shoulder and one in the farmer's carry position, one overhead and one on the shoulder, and one overhead and one in the farmer's carry position.

### A Tool for the Toolbox

One training tool should never dominate an entire program. Every training method and piece of equipment has costs and benefits. Mixing and matching intelligently is the essence of coaching. By introducing odd objects such as sandbags, you can create a well-rounded strength and conditioning program that challenges athletes in new ways and helps them develop functional strength.



### About the Author

Josh Henkin, CSCS, has been in the strength and conditioning field for the past 15 years. He owns a private training studio in Scottsdale, Arizona, and is creator of [Sandbag Fitness Systems](#). Henkin has been published in over 15 fitness publications and has presented at national strength and conditioning conferences.

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**Thanks to sandbags and other odd objects, Josh Henkin is now able to work around herniated discs.**



Courtesy of Josh Henkin

**Keep a tight core when shouldering a sandbag. Bending and twisting out of alignment defeat the purpose of the movement.**

## Let the CrossFit Games Begin

Behind the Scenes at The Ranch in Aromas, California

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Mike Warkentin

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**The equipment presently at The Ranch reads like an affiliate owner's wish list:**

- 15,000 pounds of bumper plates
- 30 rowing machines
- 50 barbells
- 40 plyo boxes
- 50 med balls
- 12 GHDs
- 50 sets of dumbbells
- 15 squat/press stands
- 25 sets of rings
- 50 sandbags
- 60 kettlebells
- 50 jump ropes
- 20 sets of parallettes

*Just days from now, over 2,500 people will converge on The Ranch to watch the world's fittest athletes compete.*

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## The Gear

That list includes just about every piece of equipment you'll ever see in a CrossFit WOD—and it's all available for use during the 2009 CrossFit Games, to be held July 10-12 in Aromas, California. The workouts themselves are still a closely guarded secret, but it's clear that organizers will not be limited by gear when programming the WODs that will challenge the world's fittest athletes.

According to CrossFit HQ, most of the equipment was purchased from [Rogue Fitness](#) at a cost of about \$25,000. [Sandbag Fitness Systems](#) provided the sandbags, while the kettlebells came from [Torque Athletic](#). [Sorinex](#) delivered the GHDs, and [Regupol America](#) came through with \$10,000 in flooring.

[Garage Gym](#) supplied 10 bars and a host of bumper plates for the warm-up area. [Gymboss](#) provided over 900 timers, and [York Barbell](#) delivered the squat press stands. [Rage Fitness](#) is behind the jump ropes, and [Forged Clothing](#) will be supplying the athletes with shirts.

While you're trying to figure out what it all means, rest assured that the mountain of gear at the site will require the top athletes to be masters of every CrossFit movement. Specialists need not attend—and cheaters are similarly unwelcome.

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*Rest assured that the mountain of gear at the site will require the top athletes to be masters of every CrossFit movement.*

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The exacting standards of judging that characterized the first two CrossFit Games will be in effect once again, and [Skins USA](#) will be on hand to take urine samples from every competitor. The samples will be analyzed for performance-enhancing substances at a cost of well over \$20,000. Positive tests will erase an athlete's placing and result in the forfeiture of any prizes.

With competitors pushing themselves well into the red in the California heat, a large medical team of about 17



**With less than a week to go, Games Director Dave Castro discusses coverage details with filmmaker Sevan Matossian.**

will support the athletes as they compete. Made up of volunteers and health-care professionals, the crew will deal with everything from cramps to calluses.

## The Facility

The Ranch itself has been modified for this year's event—to the tune of about \$98,000. The main competition area was paved in May and June to offer athletes more stable footing, and the hill around the competition area has been re-graded. Rugged athletes will be happy to know that the nasty terrain of the surrounding trails remains savage and unaltered.

Over 200 volunteers will help run the Games, keeping score, judging, compiling data and filling a wide variety of support roles. While many reside in California, volunteers are flying in from all over North America and beyond to be a part of the event.

Approximately 2,500 spectators are expected at The Ranch—a number that's three times larger than the attendance for the 2008 Games. To service the army of CrossFitters, the site will feature bleachers, a host of food vendors, a beer garden, a kids' area and a seemingly endless row of portable toilets. Space will be provided for both those who choose to "camp" in an RV and those who don't mind nylon walls and doors with zippers instead of handles.

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*Approximately 2,500 spectators are expected at The Ranch—a number that's three times larger than the attendance for the 2008 Games.*

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New to the event will be a JumboTron, which was added to the list after CrossFit Games Director Dave Castro saw one in use at the Hell's Half Acre Regional Qualifier in Texas in early May. Aside from broadcasting movement-standards videos and live coverage of the events throughout day, the JumboTron will screen Sevan Matossian's *Pulling John* on Friday evening, July 10. A recent selection of the South by Southwest Film Festival, the documentary follows world-champion arm wrestler John Brzenk as he defends his title against two younger challengers.

The Games promise to be a multimedia extravaganza. Justin Judkins will host special editions of *CrossFit Radio* on Friday evening and throughout the day on Saturday and Sunday. Four video crews and seven still photographers will document the events from every angle. An incredible 60 terabytes of hard-drive space will be at the Games site to accommodate the IT requirements of the media teams and event staff. Verizon and AT&T plan to increase network capacity in the area for the duration of the competition, allowing CrossFitters around the world to access instant updates that will be uploaded after



***About \$55,000 was spent paving the competition area and re-grading the land around it.***

the scores from each event are compiled. The staff of the *CrossFit Journal* will be on hand to produce constant updates and reports.

The official program *Unknown and Unknowable: The 2009 CrossFit Games* will be available online and at the Games site for \$20. A full-colour, 158-page publication featuring the history of the CrossFit Games, summaries of every qualifier, stats and pictures of every competitor, and a message from Coach Greg Glassman, *Unknown and Unknowable* is the definitive guide to the Games.

### 3-2-1... Go!

From start to finish, thousands of hours have gone into organizing the 2009 CrossFit Games and making sure they challenge the sport's fittest athletes. But when the competition begins on July 10, the Games won't be about hours.

They'll be about seconds.



### About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the **CrossFit Journal**. He'll be covering the CrossFit Games live from The Ranch, along with a team of video crews and still photographers. Visit the [2009 CrossFit Games](http://2009.crossfit.com) website for continually updated multimedia coverage from July 10 to 12.



**The large collection of gear at The Ranch is a programmer's dream: anything is possible.**



# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES



## The Names and Numbers Behind the Games

Things you didn't know about the CrossFit Games regional qualifiers and the athletes they produced.

Mike Warkentin



Elite CrossFit athletes from around the world are now gathering in Aromas, California, site of this weekend's CrossFit Games. As the excitement mounts, let's take a look back at the regional qualifiers.

The results are all online—every rep, every second, every pound. In the end, 61 WODs at 19 regional qualifiers produced 137 athletes, plus 11 who qualified on their past performances. The vital stats and PRs of these athletes can be found online on the [2009 CrossFit Games](http://2009.crossfit.com) website.

But names and numbers don't always tell the whole story....

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### More Than Meets the Eye

Of the 76 male competitors, 18 weigh 200 lb. or more. Most regions produced at least one heavy competitor, but the Northwest Qualifier produced more than its share. All four male representatives—**Moe Kelsey**, **Jerome Perryman**, **Jason Neago** and **Jordan Holland**—tip the scales above two bills. The lightest 1RM deadlift in the group is the 485 belonging to Kelsey. Perryman, on the other hand, can pull 606—more than any other Games competitor.

The Northwest Qualifier featured max press and deadlift events, which usually favour heavier athletes. The final WOD was a triplet that included five rounds of three muscle-ups, 30 wall-ball shots (20 lb.) and six sumo deadlift high pulls (60 kg). In an interesting twist, **Tommy Hackenbruck** finished sixth and out of qualification at the Northwest event despite winning the sole met-con workout by over 50 seconds. He then finished second in the Last Chance Qualifier. At the Games, he'll no doubt attempt to validate the importance of letting everyone try to qualify online.

**Chris Spealler's** 96 pull-ups were already 31 more than the 65-rep PRs recorded by **Josh Everett** and **Pat Barber**. In between training for the Games, Speal recently found time to knock out 106 before his grip failed. It was butterfly kips all the way, except for the last six. The Utah resident says it takes him about 70 reps before he has any idea how much gas is in the tank. He set the new record after three days of preparation, where he avoided workouts that would affect his pulling power. "I figured I'd give it another shot. I knew it was in there somewhere," Spealler says.

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*You'll find a host of big-time deadlifts in the bios of the Games competitors. Fifteen men can break 500 lb. off the ground, and three are over 600.*

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Sarah Spealler

**Chris Spealler did a grand total of 60 pull-ups at the Great Basin Qualifier—and then did 106 in a row a few months later.**

Only two qualifiers featured handstand push-ups (Great Basin and Europe), and three challenged athletes with double-unders (Iceland, Dirty South, Mid Atlantic). Muscle-ups showed up three times (Canada East, NorCal, Northwest). Ring dips showed up twice (Australasia, Europe). The Hopper Deck was used once (Hell's Half Acre), though the hopper method also figured in the third WOD in Central and South America.

Pat Barber finished fourth in last year's Games and didn't have to compete in a qualifier. After taking a look at all the regional events, Barber decided he would

have enjoyed tackling the NorCal WODs, especially the brutal Catch-22 workout on The Hill at the Games site. "I would have loved to compete in the NorCal Qualifiers. That would have been so much fun. The last workout was in the rain and it was on the Games hill. It looked like a really fun qualifier." Barber also noted that the Great Basin Qualifier looked like a good time, while he thought the SoCal event looked like a savage ass-kicker that produced stellar athletes. The only qualifier Barber wouldn't have wanted to tangle with was in the Northwest, where max presses and deadlifts made raw strength key to qualifying. As for his own training, Barber just does CrossFit workouts but alters his focus to spend more effort on weaknesses, such as running or rowing, during slightly longer met-cons. "I'm doing nothing crazy workout-wise: a wide variety of the same CrossFit workouts," he says. "Not the main site per se because of my schedule, but essentially the same flavor."

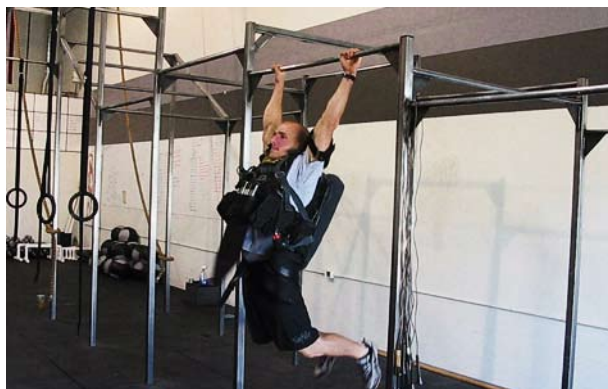
You'll find a host of big-time deadlifts in the bios of the Games competitors. Fifteen men can break 500 lb. off the ground, and three are over 600. The lightest competitor to crack the 500 lb. mark is Finland's **Mikko Salo**, who is only 176 lb. Perhaps the most impressive numbers are those of Josh Everett, **Lance Mosely** and **Rob Orlando**, all of whom can lift three times their body weight. Orlando and Mosely can also press 254 lb. and 240 lb., respectively. Everett, of course, rules the Olympic lifts by a large margin, with a 270 lb. snatch and a 347 lb. clean and jerk.

Of the 72 female competitors, almost a third did not submit PRs for the snatch. Of the ones who did, **Caity Matter**, **Tamara Holmes** and **Dawn Hutchinson** can all get 145 lb. overhead. Most women submitted clean and jerk PRs, and the 2008 CrossFit Games champ, Matter, leads the pack with a 190 lb. PR.

Sarah Spealler



*Pat Barber (right) says he would have enjoyed competing in the Great Basin Qualifier, where he would have gone head to head with eventual winner Chris Spealler (left).*



*Peter Egyed finished 11th at the Great Basin regional but won the Last Chance Qualifier with a total time 52 seconds faster than second-place finisher Tommy Hackenbruck.*



*Caity Matter, winner of the 2008 Games, boasts a 330 lb. deadlift—second only to Cyndi Frieling's 365.*

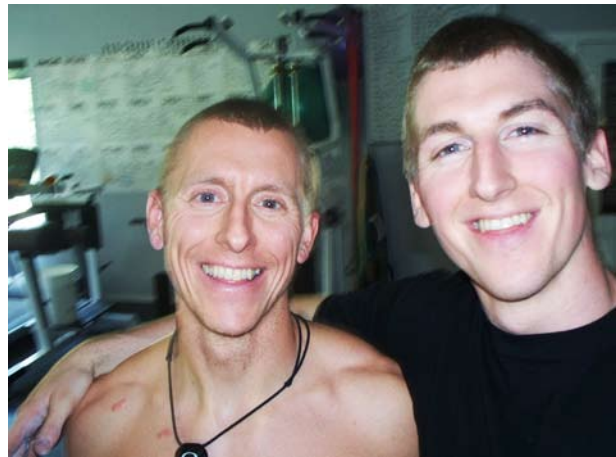


The average age of the female competitors is 29. The oldest competitor is **Nicole Verbrugghe** at 46, while **Kallista Pappas** is once again the youngest, at 15. Canadian **Katy Josephs** is only 16, while Icelander **Annie Mist Thorisdottir** (19) is the only other teenage competitor. For the men, the average age is 28, with **Andy Petranek** (42) and **Ben Smith** (18) taking up spots on opposite ends of the spectrum. Smith is the only teenage male competitor but still boasts a 30-round Cindy and a 2:04 Grace. Petranek, on the other hand, can rip off 31 rounds of Cindy and does Fran in 3:28.

The highest deadlift number on the women's side goes to **Cyndi Frieling**. Her 365 would put her above several male competitors. Frieling's closest female competition is Caity Matter. Last year's winner can pull 330 off the ground. A former university basketball player, Frieling was only deadlifting 65 lb. two years ago while she focused on running marathons. Then she started getting serious about lifting. "My goal was always to be above 300, and once I got that, then above 350," she says. Frieling prefers heavy WODs and workouts that include running, listing Eva as one of her favourites. And could she add a few more pounds to that already massive deadlift? "Yeah," she laughs. "Yes, I could."

Husband and wife **Sean** and **Mariah Provost** will both be competing in the Games—and Sean probably has Mariah to thank. When she introduced him to CrossFit, he didn't drink the Kool-Aid right away, so she threw down a challenge. "The day FGB was posted, I challenged him that if I beat him he would have to come three times a week for a month," Mariah says. "I beat him. I almost died, but I beat him. He held up his side of the bargain, and after that month he was hooked." Interestingly enough, the couple share an identical Fran time: 4:19 (chest to bar). "I would have beaten him but somebody said how many reps I had left out loud, so he stopped resting to try and catch me," Mariah explains. "He's a sandbagger!"

Forty-one-year-old **Linda Leipper** missed qualifying for the CrossFit Games by only one spot at the Southern California Qualifier. Undeterred, she entered the Last Chance Qualifier, where she encountered yet more adversity. During her first WOD, a 10-one descender of power cleans (105 lb.), pull-ups and kettlebell swings (16 kg), the camera stopped at 12:29 with Linda only three reps from completing the WOD. "I believe of the three cameras we had, two batteries died and one ran



Courtesy of Optimum Performance Training

**Michael FitzGerald (right) and older brother James (OPT) FitzGerald will bring their sibling rivalry to the 2009 CrossFit Games.**



Alissa Baltodano

**Linda Leipper finished seventh at the SoCal regional but redeemed herself online by winning the Last Chance Qualifier.**

out of disk space," Leipper recalls. The technical difficulties were explained at the beginning of her second WOD video, when it was revealed that she had notched an impressive 12:45. "Believe it or not, I didn't feel any dismay or frustration over this," Leipper says. "There were so many people that were there for me that day, and I couldn't have been happier for all the support and encouragement they gave me.... I in no way was going to do that WOD again. In fact, I don't think I could have done that WOD again if I wanted to or needed to." It turned out she didn't need to. CrossFit HQ accepted her performance, and Leipper will be competing in Aromas.

**Peter Egyed** had his heart broken at the Great Basin Qualifier, finishing 11<sup>th</sup>. He decided to enter the Last Chance Qualifier but didn't clear his schedule to do so. Egyed simply fit the workouts in when he could. "The first was Jackie, which I did at about 8:30 a.m.," Egyed explains. "From there I rested about two-and-a-half hours, ran the Saturday classes at the gym, then completed the deadlift/double-under WOD at about 11:15 a.m. From there we headed home, tried to eat two meals, did some shopping and some BS around the house, and we met back at the gym at 6. I probably started the WOD at 6:30 p.m." Egyed finished first in the Last Chance Qualifier but had no idea where he stood after completing the WODs. "The next day I began to search YouTube and Vimeo much more for other times and again began to get a little excited," he says. "It wasn't until Dave (Castro) e-mailed me with the congratulations that it all really set in."

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*You might have noticed two  
FitzGerals competing in the  
2009 CrossFit Games—and yes,  
they are brothers.*

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You might have noticed two FitzGerals competing in the 2009 CrossFit Games—and yes, they are brothers. **James (OPT) FitzGerald** was personally invited to the Games by **Coach Greg Glassman** and **Games Director Dave Castro** after OPT declined to compete in a qualifier



*With a 145 lb. snatch and 175 lb. clean and jerk,  
Tamara Holmes is one of the top female Olympic lifters  
at this year's Games.*

in order to run the Canada West regional event. At that competition, his younger brother **Michael** finished third and will join the 2007 champion at The Ranch. OPT says he can still take the 22-year-old Michael in most events but cautions that the "new breed of young CrossFitters" will be a force at this year's Games. Because the Calgary resident wasn't planning to compete this year, he had to put himself on a crash course to prepare. OPT promises to reveal his secret training program to the *CrossFit Journal* after the Games.

Some of the international competitors travelling to Aromas are actually coming back to their home turf. **Geoffrey Tudisco** (first, Central and South America), **Rob Gerdes** (first, Asia), **Vicky Zimmerman** (first, Asia), **Brian Bowen** (second, Europe) are all Americans who are now living abroad. They'll be joined by international competitors native to Iceland, South Africa, Finland, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ecuador and Canada.

Chris Spealler confirms that he will be bringing his signature headphones back to the Games this year. While many competitors are fuelled by loud and angry tunes, Spealler's selections are often softer. Artists such as Jeremy Camp and Jars of Clay are favourites. "It depends on my mood and my attitude," he says. "If I get a little bit nervous, I try to listen to some other stuff..."



where it's a little bit more mellow." In fact, Spealler selected *God Will Lift up Your Head* by Jars of Clay to get him through the challenging clean and jerk WOD at the 2008 Games. "I needed to be in the right spot. I knew it wasn't going to be any easy workout. I gave it everything I had, but I knew the chances of me being the first one done were probably pretty slim." When Spealler is feeling like ripping into a workout, he'll select the likes of 50 Cent and Nelly Furtado—anything with a good beat. He plans to add a little AC/DC to the mix for the upcoming Games.

### More Stories to Come...

The final countdown has begun. The CrossFit Games are now just hours away. With 148 of the world's fittest athletes converging on The Ranch in Aromas for an epic competition, who knows what stories will be told when the final bumper bounces?



### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He'll be covering the CrossFit Games live from The Ranch along with a team of video crews and still photographers. Visit the [2009 CrossFit Games](http://2009.crossfit.com) website for continually updated multimedia coverage from July 10 to 12.*





# Quest for the Cup

The Affiliate Cup Opens the 2009 CrossFit Games

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Mike Warkentin

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**"Our workouts are competitive events. The strength and value of CrossFit lies entirely within our domination of other athletes. This is a truth derived through competition, not debate."**

That message was printed on a sign hung on the west side of the Stadium at The Ranch in Aromas, California, site of the 2009 CrossFit Games.

The sign doubled as a target for wall-ball shots because CrossFit is about functionality, after all.

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With 97 teams in attendance, Games Director Dave Castro opened the proceedings on a misty and cool morning by introducing the movement standards and describing the workouts.

"The top 5 teams will advance to Sunday, and the rest of you can start drinking," Castro said to an outburst of laughter before fielding questions about the WODs.

Many of the athletes in attendance looked anxious, perhaps because of the hill looming over the proceedings. CrossFitters are all familiar with The Hill at The Ranch, but you can't appreciate its grade until you trudge uphill sucking serious wind.

"No wonder they looked so tired in the videos," Garth Huckabay of CrossFit Fire said on Thursday night after an uphill trek to get the lay of the land.

Castro cut off the question period off at 8:30, setting the athletes loose to prepare for their WODs. Each two-hour block contained three heats and a half-hour break, with each team scheduled to compete once per block.

By 9 a.m., Rage Against the Machine was pumping through the speakers, fans were screaming their support, and the 18-by-24-foot JumboTron was filled with CrossFitters ripping into their WODs with reckless abandon only reserved for competitions.

Right from the word "go" it was apparent that the wall-ball shots at the Stadium were going to be challenging for some competitors. With Adrian (Boz) Bozman overseeing the proceedings, judges strictly enforced standards that required wood on the 10-foot target to be visible below the ball.

When the first heat of the morning ended, three teams were listed DNF. More were added to that number throughout the day as the wall-ball shots and deadlifts separated the elite from the also-rans.

"The wall ball is pretty high," Bozman said between heats. "The bottom of the target is 10 feet, which is usually the middle of the target for most people, so it's a little higher than a lot of folks are used to, especially some of the women. It's been eating some people up."

The North Pad was a dense sea of pull-up stations and squat racks, and many competitors struggled just to jerk their barbells overhead to attempt a 3RM OHS.









Torn hands made their appearance within minutes, and spectators were caught wincing as athletes twisted their shoulders to unholy angles as they attempted to keep the barbell in the frontal plane. Dozens of reps were lost on the ground or disallowed because of range of motion violations, and judges were similarly strict on the pull-up bars. Other competitors set new PRs by pushing themselves well beyond where they thought their limits might have been.

On The Hill athletes started at a sprint before hitting the first steep climb and slowing to a purposeful stride or laboured jog. After a trek along a ridge, the competitors struggled to keep it together on the steep downhill run, some careening close to the scorers' tent as they raced for the finish line in a dusty cloud.

When the dust settled after the final heat of the third rotation, Northwest CrossFit was in first place with a low score of 19. Because Northwest is five points ahead of second-place CrossFit Central, the team from Washington State is all but assured of the overall Affiliate Cup title on Sunday, even if it places last of the five teams in the final WOD. If Northwest doesn't finish the workout, the title is up for grabs.

CrossFit NorCal finished third, Crossfit Invictus was fourth, and Oregon CrossFit rounded out the teams that will be competing on Sunday.

Paul Zavaglia, Zak Middleton, Alek Vlaski, Lindsey Dion, Amanda Barelli and Laura Asbell are all but assured of the overall title, but they aren't opening the trophy case yet.

"I don't want to think about it," Vlaski said of the unannounced final WOD. "We're just going to do the workout. We've done all the exercises, we know how to do them. I think we should be OK, but if they just create a crazy workout and we can't do it, well, we'll try our best and try and complete it."

"I will die before I don't finish it."



### Stadium WOD

30 wall-ball shots (14/20 lb.)

Row 300 meters

30 box jumps (24 inches)

30 kettlebell swings (16/24 kg)

30 dumbbell push press (25/40 lb.)

30 deadlifts (135/225 lb.)

### Hill WOD

2500 meter relay

### North Pad WOD

For a total score:

Overhead squat, 3 reps

Max total pull-ups (3 rounds)

### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He is covering the CrossFit Games live from The Ranch along with a team of video crews and still photographers. Visit the [2009 CrossFit Games](http://journal.crossfit.com) website for continually updated multimedia coverage from July 10 to 12*



## Day 1 2009 CrossFit Games

Five WODs have narrowed the field at The Ranch in Aromas. Only 32 competitors will compete for the overall title on Day 2.

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Mike Warkentin

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The contest to decide the World's Fittest Man and Woman began three seconds after the American national anthem ended.

"Three, two, one... Go!" said Games Director Dave Castro.

Moments earlier, Coach Greg Glassman had opened the Games with a brief speech to a loud and enthusiastic crowd gathered in the sunshine at The Ranch.

The athletes, all carrying computer chips, sprinted over the timing pads and across the Stadium to open the run down the road and up and around The Hill. As expected, Spealler came down The Hill first but was being stalked by Finnish firefighter Mikko Salo. When the two entered the Stadium in a sprint to the finish, it was Speal still in front, adding yet another impressive performance to a list that goes back to the 2007 Games.

Sarah Dunsmore won the women's event, Lauren Erwin was second, and Carey Kepler was third.

When asked if The Hill was as steep as he thought it would be, James (OPT) FitzGerald—who was covered in dirt and grass—was blunt: "It's worse."

After opening the competition with an endurance event, Games organizers chose a deadlift ladder for WOD 2.

Sixteen men managed to pull their way through a series of bars loaded from 315 to 505, creating a log-jam tie for first.

Jerome Perryman boasts a max deadlift of 606 and blitzed through the bars.

"It was pretty easy, yeah," he said. "I wish they would have gone up a little higher to separate us more."

Twenty-one females broke the 300 lb. mark, and Cyndi Frieling PR'd by 10 lb., lifting 375. Caroline Attmore and Jenny Olson tied for second, both with 355.

WOD 3 was a sprint with sandbags on shoulders—one 35 lb. bag for women, two for men. Athletes tore out of the Stadium and up the hill only to find a grind of a climb on the way up the viciously steep slope.

For some the sprint turned into a walk. For others, such as Pat Barber, it was top gear all the way. Barber set the pace early in the heats with a 1:06.8 that stood for several heats.

Barber actually had a false start, which oddly worked to his advantage. He was one of the few athletes to carry his sandbags behind his neck and dropped them as he was loading.

"I picked them up on my shoulders turned around and I was like, 'Well, whatever. Looks like I have to play catch-up,'" he said. After the restart, Barber loaded the bags with ease and ripped up the hill.

The men's event was won by Iclander Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson, with Spencer Hendel and D.J. Whickham close behind. Annie Thorisdottir won the women's event in 1:07.4, with Carey Kepler second and Lauren Pryor third.

The fourth event was a "blue-collar workout" that featured 500-meter rows bracketing a sledgehammer stake drive.

Jeff Tincher, a firefighter, set the tone in the first heat with 5:26.8. Other competitors struggled badly with the sledge, with one competitor breaking four of them before completing the event. Others were bleeding after wild swings found flesh instead of metal.

Tincher's strategy was simple: "I was tapping it.... I just made sure it was solid in my left hand. It stopped wobbling, I stepped back, and it wobbled a little bit. Three more taps and it stopped wobbling, and then it was just chopping wood or chopping a hole in a roof."









Tommy Hackenbruck crushed the WOD in a top time of 4:36 and attributes his success to his old job: up until three months ago he worked construction and used a hammer six days a week for three years.

"I got a text message from my wife when the WODs were posted," Hackenbruck said. "She saw wall ball and sledges, so I got pretty excited being a tall guy who swings a hammer for a living."

The top men's finishers were Hackenbruck, Jeff Leonard and Moe Kelsey. Sarah Dunsmore won her second WOD of the day with a speedy 5:33.8, and she was followed by Katie Hogan and Carey Kepler.

Saturday's final WOD was savage: three rounds of 30 wall-ball shots and 30 squat snatches. Early in the first round of the first men's heat, it was clear the workout would be a challenge that would send many athletes home from the games with a solid kick in the ass.

The powerful Josh Everett was in the first heat, and other competitors were watching him closely to get a feel for the WOD. Everett is the best Olympic lifter in the Games, but 75 lb. is a met-con weight that had him struggling for breath, wincing and grabbing his back.

Vic Zachary from Bayou City CrossFit was in the same heat and said the WOD was brutal.

"On everything else today you were able to rest... but with this your legs were already burnt and you just keep going," Zachary said. "Your snatch and your wall ball, it was just legs, legs, legs."

At the end of the night, Jason Khalipa, Tommy Hackenbruck and Blair Morrison had the top times. For the women it was Carey Kepler, Sarah Dunsmore and Rebecca Voigt who crushed the WOD.

The regional qualifiers produced CrossFit's top athletes, and the Day 1 WODs distilled them further. Only 32 athletes will return to compete on Day 2, where one man and one woman will be crowned the 2009 CrossFit Games champions.



### Top 16 Men

1. Tommy Hackenbruck
2. Moe Kelsey
3. Mikko Salo
4. Peter Egyed
5. Steve Willis
6. Spencer Hendel
7. James FitzGerald
8. David Millar
9. Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson
10. Blair Morrison
11. Patrick Burke
12. Jason Khalipa
13. Jeff Leonard
14. Jeremy Thiel
15. D.J. Whickham
16. Michael FitzGerald

### Top 16 Women

1. Tanya Wagner
2. Annie Thorisdottir
3. Sarah Dunsmore
4. Carey Kepler
5. Charity Vale
6. Kristan Clever
7. Lindsay Smith
8. Cyndi Frieling
9. Laura DeMarco
10. Christy Phillips
11. Jolie Gentry
12. Lauren Pryor
13. Jenny Olson
14. Stacey Kroon
15. Crystal McReynolds
16. Tamara Holmes



## Salo, Wagner Win 2009 CrossFit Games

A Finnish firefighter and a Pennsylvania phys. ed. teacher are the World's Fittest Man and Woman.

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Mike Warkentin

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Mikko Salo and Tanya Wagner are the 2009 CrossFit Games champions.

Both athletes showed an incredible amount of skill and tenacity during the two-day event that included virtually every CrossFit movement. Muscle-ups, double-unders, handstand push-ups, Olympic lifts and a vicious trail run were but a few of the challenges the athletes faced, and Salo and Wagner proved they were the class of an elite international field.

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A Finnish firefighter and rescue diver, Salo served notice to the CrossFit community early on when he nearly beat legend Chris Spealler on the trail run that opened the individual competition. If the Finn was unknown before the event, his duel with Speal immediately raised his profile.

Over the next two days, Salo kept notching consistent performances that earned him the victory.

"I'm happy. I'm really happy now," Salo said after his win. "It has been a very, very hard couple of days."

The title came down to four athletes in the final heat: Salo, Tommy Hackenbruck, Steve Willis and Moe Kelsey all had a shot at the win. Sadly, James (OPT) FitzGerald was forced to withdraw from the competition before the chipper due to injury.

### The Final WOD

**15 barbells cleans (100/155 lb.)**

**30 toes to bar**

**30 box jumps (20/24 inches)**

**15 muscle-ups**

**30 push presses (25/40 lb.)**

**30 double-unders**

**15 thrusters (95/135 lb.)**

**30 pull-ups**

**30 burpees**

**Overhead walking lunges (25/45 lb.)**

Hackenbruck took the early lead. Salo managed a few doubles on the muscle-ups but was passed by Jason Khalipa on the way to the thrusters. The two headed to the pull-ups neck in neck, but Salo pulled away on the burpees, taking a large lead into the lunges.

The huge crowd roared as he crossed the line in 19:46 with a bright red bumper held overhead, winning both the WOD and the overall title.

"It was cruel," Salo said of the last workout. "But I kept thinking, 'Next rep. Next rep. Next rep—and the end will be coming.'"

Salo was uncertain about how the WOD would play out given that he had learned how to do double-unders earlier in the afternoon.

After Salo's win, Pat Barber was clear about who did the training: "He's my athlete."

"There are amazing people here," Salo said of the fellow athletes who coached him on the new movement.

The man from Pori, Finland, is proud to be bringing the CrossFit Games title back to Europe.

"I'm very proud," he said. "CrossFit is going to be very important to grow in Europe. It's coming like a storm to Europe now, and I hope this helps it."

Tommy Hackenbruck, who got to the Games via the Last Chance Qualifier, was second, and Moe Kelsey was third.

On the female side, Tanya Wagner of Pennsylvania improved on her second-place finish last year by taking the 2009 crown—but it didn't come easy.







The theme of this year's games was "Unknown and Unknowable," and Annie Thorisdottir from Iceland certainly provided both the unknown element and a challenge for Wagner. After only two months of CrossFit training, the 19-year-old Thorisdottir emerged as the only competitor with a chance to wrest the overall title away from Wagner in the final WOD.

But could Thorisdottir do muscle-ups?

After the final WOD was announced, CrossFit Director of Training Nicole Carroll and CrossFit Gymnastics Coach Jeff Tucker were teaching Thorisdottir how to perform the movement in the warm-up area. Thorisdottir is a phenomenal athlete, but no one knew if she could get 10 muscle-ups during the WOD.

It turned out she could get a muscle-up—but only one. The crowd roared as she struggled through it, but the teen could go no further than that.

Wagner had difficulty on the muscle-ups but was tenacious and kicked her way through them.

"After three, I just didn't want to try," she said. "I was like, 'Wow these are hard.' I just knew I could get one at a time, but it's so hard when you watch everybody else pass you.... I absolutely was just scared doing all of them, and the last two felt so good to be done."

Wagner completed the rest of the WOD and finished in 29:34.4, claiming the overall title with a consistent performance across the board. All told, Wagner only finished out of the top 10 in one event, proving she is truly the master of all 10 CrossFit fitness domains.

"This is a dream," she said. "Last year was so awesome, but it was a different feeling than it is this year. This year is just awesome."

Wagner didn't take any confidence from going into the final workout as the lead.



### Salo's Overall Performance

WOD 1: 2<sup>nd</sup>  
WOD 2: 17<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 3: 9<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 4: 32<sup>nd</sup>  
WOD 5: 4<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 6: 11<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 7: 2<sup>nd</sup>  
WOD 8: 1<sup>st</sup>

### Wagner's Overall Performance

WOD 1: 11<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 2: 6<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 3: 8<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 4: 9<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 5: 5<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 6: 2<sup>nd</sup>  
WOD 7: 6<sup>th</sup>  
WOD 8: 7<sup>th</sup>

"I hate going into something being first. I hate that," she said. "I like to catch up. So it's just fun to know that I was able to hold on to that. You don't even know. From workout two and three today, beforehand I (didn't think) there was any way I was getting through either one of them. I'm just so happy!"

Charity Vale, who finished the WOD in a brilliant 18:24, was second, and Carey Kepler was third.

At the ceremony after the competition, Jolie Gentry was given the Military/LEO Award, and Jason Khalipa was given the Spirit of the Games Award after finishing almost last in the run but then clawing his way back to fifth. Aside from his poor placing in the first WOD, Khalipa scored first in two events and finished second in the last three.



### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. His WOD at the [2009 CrossFit Games](#): write 10,000 words for time.*

### Top 10 Men

1. Mikko Salo
2. Tommy Hackenbruck
3. Moe Kelsey
4. Steve Willis
5. Jason Khalipa
6. Peter Egyed
7. Blair Morrison
8. Patrick Burke
9. David Millar
10. D.J. Wickham

### Top 10 Women

1. Tanya Wagner
2. Charity Vale
3. Carey Kepler
4. Kristan Clever
5. Lindsey Smith
6. Christy Phillips
7. Jolie Gentry
8. Jenny Olson
9. Crystal McReynolds
10. Stacey Kroon





## Redeeming a Bad Run

Jason Khalipa finished 72<sup>nd</sup> in the first workout at the CrossFit Games. Over the next seven WODs, he clawed his way back into contention and earned the respect of the CrossFit community.

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Mike Warkentin

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**Last year Jason Khalipa was the CrossFit Games champion.**

One workout into the 2009 Games, he was in 72<sup>nd</sup> place—third to last.

At one point, he was in danger of not finishing the first WOD: a brutal 7.1 kilometer trail run up and down the viciously steep hills of Aromas, California.

"Jason was sort of stumbling, and it took me a second to realize that he was disoriented," Tony Budding of CrossFit HQ recalled. "He basically ran right into me, and I had to push him, because if he had gone straight he would have gone off the course. I just had to push him to my left in the direction of the exit to the road. He took my push and he kept going, and then I heard people yelling for a medic about maybe 20 or 30 seconds later. I turned around and there was a guy down, and I thought, 'That can't be Jason.'"

It was. Khalipa was collapsed on the ground just outside the Stadium.

"He must have been down for I would say a couple of minutes," Budding said, "and then he got up and finished. It was extraordinary. People were talking about him cramping up. It was more than cramping up. I don't know if he actually went unconscious, but he was definitely disoriented."

After the Games concluded, Khalipa explained what had happened.

"There were cramps," Khalipa said. "My calves cramped up really bad and I was dry-heaving in my mouth. It was just a bad situation all around."

When the medical team got to him, he had a decision to make.

"They were asking me, 'What's going on?' I was like, 'I think I'm going to die. I feel like my calves are really bad.' They just asked me, 'Hey, do you want to keep going?' I thought about it and I was like, 'Fuck, yeah—I'm going to keep going.' I decided to chill out for a second and have some water and get my mind right, and then I just walked for a while. It was really my calves. They were insanely cramped up. I couldn't run. I just had to walk."

In 2008, Khalipa was totally unknown. In *Every Second Counts*, Sevan Matossian's story of the event, all cameras were focused on Josh Everett when Khalipa won the last WOD and the overall title. Games Director Dave Castro admitted that in the pre-workout briefing to the top 10 competitors, he thought Khalipa was in the wrong room. But the brawny athlete from CrossFit Santa Clara flew under the radar and claimed the title.

In 2009, all eyes were on the defending champion.

"I had lots of pressure going in," Khalipa said. "In the week before the games, I had hives and shit. Everything





just kind of came up on me and I had all this pressure for the Games, and then it all went away after I got 72<sup>nd</sup> on the run."

He continued: "You can't fear injury when you're doing this kind of stuff, because then you second-guess everything you do. And when you second-guess stuff, that's when you actually get injured. I second-guessed the run. I second-guessed everything I was doing. I had all this pressure, and look what happened: I choked."

It wasn't just the pressure of the Games themselves. Khalipa has actually been dealing with intense scrutiny ever since he was named World's Fittest Man one year ago.

"I had a lot of build-up over the year from all this pressure: 'Hey, Jason Khalipa, World's Fittest Man.' Fuck, that's a lot of load on your shoulders..." he said. "I'm just this regular guy just trying to run a gym and have some fun. So I had all this pressure and went out on the run and it all got to me. Mentally and physically, I just broke down 100 percent due to that combination of things. And it was a hard run. I'm not trying to make excuses. Ultimately that thing kicked my ass and I was playing catch-up the whole time."

With the pressure off and the focus on subsequent overall leaders such as Chris Spealler, J.C. Nessa, Moe Kelsey and Tommy Hackenbruck, Khalipa did what he did last year: he quietly crushed workouts and clawed his way back into contention.

"When I went home (after Day 1), I was just thinking in my head, 'Look: I started off in first place and went all the way down to the end.' All I could do is go up from there, right? So I just took it with that approach. I just took it easy and I just had fun with it. All the expectations were off after that first run, so it was awesome because I could just go out there and have a good time."

Khalipa's results in the last seven workouts are stunning:

**WOD 2:** 1st

**WOD 3:** 13th

**WOD 4:** 13th

**WOD 5:** 1st

**WOD 6:** 2nd

**WOD 7:** 2nd

**WOD 8:** 2nd





In the final standings, Khalipa was fifth. But if he had managed to knock just under nine minutes off his WOD 1 time, he would have finished 43rd and won the overall title. Khalipa says he earned something special at the 2009 Games even if he was unsuccessful in defending his title.

"I think after this weekend's performances I legitimized in my head that I deserve to be in the top people in CrossFit," he said. "To be there based on my performance last year, I feel like everybody had these second guesses: 'Who is this guy? He came out of nowhere and he won.'

"I just couldn't get it out of my head that when I showed up at these places people are always thinking, 'You know he's not really that good. He's just some guy that got lucky.' I think after this weekend and all the workouts I went through, I proved to myself and I proved to others that I've trained really, really hard for where I'm at."

When the Games closed on the evening of July 12, Castro recounted Khalipa's gritty performance to the spectators gathered in the stands. The Games director joked that when he saw Khalipa on the ground his first response was to make sure a camera crew got everything on video. Castro then explained how Khalipa's tenacity and toughness are a testament to the will power of CrossFit athletes around the world.

Khalipa received the Spirit of the Games Award for his tenacity—and earning it might mean just as much to him as winning the 2008 Games.



#### About The Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. His desk is made of bumper plates.*





## The Quick and the Deadlifts

At the CrossFit Games, 16 competitors completed the WOD 2 deadlift ladder, creating log-jam at the top of the standings.

Tony Budding of CrossFit HQ explains the rationale behind the workout.

Mike Warkentin



Pictured: Jordan Holland

*"Lightweight!"* an energized Jeremy Thiel screamed at the end of the deadlift ladder, borrowing one of Big Ronnie Coleman's better catch phrases. The crowd burst into cheers as the Texan bounded out of the Stadium after completing the WOD with a lift of 505 lb.

Jordan Holland boosted the final bar with ease and held it for a moment at lockout with a giant grin across his face, savoring the achievement.



Jerome Perryman (PR: 606 lb.) got to the end of the WOD with a slight trickle of blood running down his left shin. The big athlete from Portland, Oregon, gripped the bar and ripped it off the ground with ease.

"It was pretty easy, yeah," he said afterward. "I wish they would have gone up a little higher to separate us more."

Thirteen other competitors completed the workout that came hard on the heels of the treacherous and gruelling 7.1 kilometer hill run that opened the CrossFit Games. Peter Egyed, Spencer Hendel, Rob Orlando, Josh Everett, Lance Mosley, Scott Lewis, David Lipson and Jason Neago all made it through by pulling a high percentage of their 1RM. Moe Kelsey, Jason Khalipa, D.J. Wickham, J.C. Nessa and Graham Holmberg also finished the WOD—setting PRs in the process.

Sixteen competitors were rewarded with only one point for the workout, giving them a large lead in a scoring system with points assigned by placement. The lowest score at the end of eight WODs decided the CrossFit Games champions. Eventual overall winner Mikko Salo—who got 505 to mid-thigh but couldn't lock it out—and Patrick Burke both pulled 495 in the ladder but received scores of 17.

Shortly after the results were posted, the web was filled with people who were curious about how the 16-way tie would influence the overall scoring.

"I don't know if they were expecting that. They could have had 5 more bars to differentiate the real hulks," one commenter wrote on the Games site.

"That deadlift workout has kinda screwed things up. Who would have known so many guys were so strong?" wrote another.

Some got more aggressive: "Its (sic) ridiculous that 16 guys get a '1' when one guys (sic) max DL might be 505 and another's might be 600. Just absurd."

After the Games, Tony Budding of CrossFit HQ explained the rationale behind the WOD.

"Here was our assumption: there's absolutely no way that you're going to be able to pull a high percentage of your 1RM deadlift in that format to begin with—every 30 seconds—and especially after a seven-K hill run," he said. "We just made the assumption that your best lift in that environment is going to be a percentage of your



Pictured: Jerome Perryman



Pictured: D.J. Wickham



Pictured: Jason Khalipa



max lift, probably between 70 and 85 percent. What we saw instead was that people were pulling at 90 to 110 percent of their previous PRs."

He added: "If we knew then what we knew today, we would have either started at 375 or we would have gone up by 20 lb. instead of 10, or we would have just had more bars."

The assumption that the WOD would be harder on the athletes wasn't pulled out of thin air, and 505 lb. wasn't just a random number.

"We had decades of competition information to know that the way you set your PR is to rest three to five minutes between max attempts, and you try to do as few warm-ups as you can," Budding said.

On the women's side, things went according to plan. Only Cyndi Frieling was able to complete the ladder that topped out at 375 lb. Jenny Olson and Caroline Attmore tied for second at 355. Lauren Pryor was fourth, and Tamara Holmes was fifth. Eventual champ Tanya Wagner, Laura DeMarco and Joceyln Forest tied for sixth with 325. For the most part, the women were spread out in the standings, with the leaders clearly defined.

According to the stats submitted by the male athletes before the competition, 15 could pull over 500, while three could break 600. Of the 15, fully nine of them were below 529 lb. Only six were over 550. The average deadlift of all male competitors was 454 lb. All told, the athletes who completed the ladder lifted 20 bars in 10 minutes for a total of 8,200 lb.

Who would have thought Graham Holmberg would notch a 35 lb. PR shortly after a trail run that all but ruined Jason Khalipa, the defending champion? The feat is even more impressive when you consider Holmberg finished 56<sup>th</sup> in the run. He didn't have much time to recover between WODs because the athletes at the bottom of the run were fed into the deadlift ladder first via a system that rewarded performance with rest.

Maybe the best way to score a deadlift PR is to annihilate yourself on a trail run first—but probably not. So how did so many athletes complete the workout?

"You attribute it to the crowd and the competitive environment," Budding said. "The conclusion you have to draw is that the human mind and body are much stronger than what we access on a daily basis. There's no way, if you just look at their pure physicality, that



Pictured: Cyndi Frieling

running a seven kilometer hill run and then lifting every 30 seconds, that you are in ideal physical condition to set a PR. You're physically taxed. You're not fresh.

"Call it adrenaline—call it whatever you want—but there's got to be a lot of adrenaline going in (powerlifting) competitions, too. Speculate all you want. It doesn't really matter. What happened from our perspective was these fuckers are so much more competitive and more capable than we possibly imagined."

As for the leaderboard log-jam created by the 16 men who completed the WOD, Games organizers weren't about to change the scoring system on the fly.

"That's just the way the scoring was, and we stuck to it," Budding said. "It was just built in. Nothing was changed. They earned a tie—it just happened to be 16 people."



### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He does not do deadlifts after trail runs.*



Pictured: J.C. Nessa



Pictured: Jenny Olson



Pictured: Jeremy Thiel





## Sights of the Games

The CrossFit Games produced a host of great stories. Here are a few that you might not know about.

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Mike Warkentin

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Over the course of the CrossFit Games, media teams took over 100,000 photos and recorded hours of video footage. But the camera doesn't always catch everything. What follows is a compilation of some of the best behind-the-scenes moments from three days of total fitness chaos.

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Pictured: Mike Burgener



Pictured: Jeff Martone



**Mike Burgener** was on hand to watch his daughter **Sage** compete in the Affiliate Cup with CrossFit Invictus, who made it into the top five and won the final WOD on Sunday. After the last Affiliate Cup event on Friday, the coach was spotted in the Stadium leading yet another athlete through some Olympic lifts. A large crowd gathered around the impromptu session, but no burpees were handed out.

**John Welbourne** of CrossFit Balboa was on the scene Friday afternoon. The former NFL lineman and CrossFit Football founder seemed to be more relaxed than last year, when he was a competitor and had to carry 300-plus lb. of bulk up The Hill.

Kettlebell expert **Jeff Martone** was in the crowd on Friday for the Affiliate Cup and probably could have offered some advice to the competitors swinging the bell in the Stadium. Several reps were disallowed by judges because the kettlebell wasn't exactly vertical at the top of the swing. Perhaps Martone will serve as a judge if the Turkish get-up ever finds its way into the CrossFit Games.

Pictured: Brett (AFT) Marshall



**Brett (AFT) Marshall**, who finished second in the 2007 Games, helped CrossFit Calgary to a fourth-place finish in the Affiliate Cup. The team from **James (OPT) FitzGerald's** box originally finished out of the top five until a scoring error was detected. As a result of an incorrect total score of 825 in the OHS/pull-up WOD, CrossFit Calgary was slotted 35<sup>th</sup> in the workout, resulting in an overall score of 58 and a finish of 13<sup>th</sup> overall. The revised score of 925 put them seventh in the WOD, lowering their overall total to 30 and moving the outfit to fourth overall. In Sunday's final the team managed to finish second, with AFT ripping through burpees at a blistering pace.

CrossFit HQ trainer **Rachel Medina** was working the Volunteer Tent on the morning of the Affiliate Cup, and the cool a.m. temps were doing absolutely nothing for her. After signing in a few more volunteers, Medina vowed she was going to go find a pair of sweatpants to get her through until the sun came out of the morning fog. At a Level 1 Cert in San Diego in March, Medina was chilled from the bitter cold she experienced the day before in Edmonton, Canada. It's been a cool year for the California girl.



Pictured: Mikko Salo



Pictured: Jeff Tucker, Annie Thorisdottir, and Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson

WOD 2 in the individual competition was a deadlift ladder topping out at 505, with 10-pound increments to be lifted every 30 seconds. Even after a 7.1 kilometer trail run, 16 men pulled the big weight at the end, and a host of competitors set new PRs. **Cyndi Frieling** told the *CrossFit Journal* before the competition that she could lift more than her PR of 365, and she proved the point by pulling 375 and finishing first. Big **Jerome Perryman** and **Lance Mosley** have PRs over 600lb. and pulled the weight with ease. After the event, they both said they could have done a few reps at 505. **Mikko Salo** got the last bar off the ground but couldn't lock it out. Salo finished second in the run, and had he made the lift he would have taken a large lead into the final workout.

Icelander **Annie Mist Thorisdottir** distinguished herself early in the contest with raw athletic performances that had everyone amazed. Mist had never done GHD sit-ups before WOD 3 and found them "easy." She was similarly unfamiliar with the snatch, and when the 1RM snatch WOD was announced she received 10 minutes of intense coaching from Mike Burgener. Coach B's advice and Mist's athleticism combined to produce an ungainly but powerful 115, good enough for ninth

(tying **Jolie Gentry**). Later, CrossFit Director of Training **Nicole Carroll** and CrossFit Gymnastics Coach **Jeff Tucker** were teaching Mist and countryman **Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** how to do muscle-ups. Mist managed her first muscle-up during WOD 8 and drew one of the loudest roars of the weekend. She wasn't able to complete the workout but vowed to learn the movement as soon as possible. As of press time, she probably has. Sveinbjornsson also got his first and then went on to complete seven more, claiming each one more easily than the previous.

Eventual winner **Mikko Salo** was similarly unfamiliar with double-unders and picked up some tips from other competitors before Sunday's final WOD. When asked about the new movement before the event, Salo was uncertain if he would be able to pull it off. His strategy during the WOD: taking one single and then throwing in a double. Salo lost a bit of time on the rope but was still well ahead of **Jason Khalipa** when he threw a 45 lb. bumper overhead and started the lunges to the finish line.



Pictured: Spencer Hendel



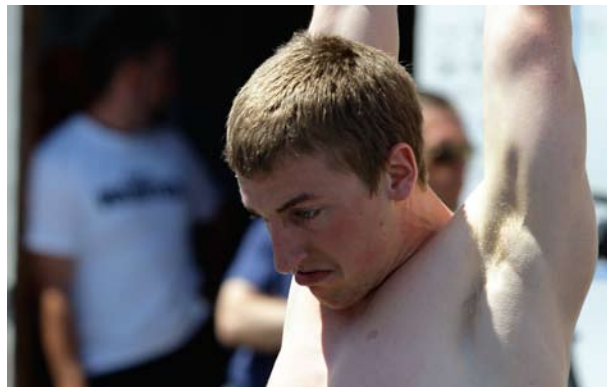
Pictured: Valerie Mackenzie



Pictured: Ed Rockowitz



Pictured: Michael (Bro-PT) FitzGerald



The men's snatch event saw some truly ugly lifts and bad bails, as well as some impressive performances. Eliminated the day before, Olympic lifting expert **Josh Everett** was not in the competition to give other athletes an example of how to get 270 overhead in a flash. After the event, Mike Burgener selected **D.J. Wickham** and **Jeff Leonard** as two of the better technical lifters. The coach was also very impressed with **Spencer Hendel**—a Last Chance online qualifier—who locked out 225 lb. "Give me three months and I'll make him a national champion," the coach said of Hendel.

A few athletes were injured during the trail run, including **Joy Nguyen** and **Valerie Mackenzie**. The latter athlete provided one of the more memorable moments of the weekend when she staggered into the Stadium bleeding from her head. She collapsed several times but shook off medical personnel to literally fall over the finish line, bringing tears from many who witnessed the heroic effort. Mackenzie's time: 46:15.2—the 10<sup>th</sup> woman across the line.

Ahhh Massage therapist **Ed Rockowitz** provided massage services for the athletes and reported some incredibly gnarled muscles found their way onto the two tables set up at the back of the athletes' warm-up area. Rockowitz noted that the trail run seemed to be the event that did the most damage. Many athletes reported that the team from **Ahhh** included some of the best massage therapists they had ever encountered.

**James (OPT) FitzGerald** finished sixth in the trail run, only 43.5 seconds ahead of his brother, **Michael (Bro-PT) FitzGerald**. The younger athlete has had shoulder problems in the past and struggles with overhead work but turned in a solid performance and found his way into the top 16 with big brother. Michael also found the sledgehammer WOD to his liking. He estimates that he pounded 1,500 stakes in the ground as part of a summer job in Newfoundland and Labrador, so he was in familiar territory. Unfortunately, OPT was forced to withdraw from the contest just before Sunday's final event with an injury. Michael finished 11th.



Pictured: Annie Sakamoto



One of the original CrossFit stars, **Annie Sakamoto** competed in the Affiliate Cup for CrossFit Santa Cruz Central. She said the judging was very strict but fair, especially during the wall-ball section of the Stadium workout. Some females struggled mightily with the height of the wall-ball shot, while a few others complained that sloped sections along the ground below the target put some competitors at a disadvantage.

**Charlie Dunifer**, a colourful character who got to the Games via the Last Chance Qualifier, had several creative programming suggestions for **Tony Budding** of CrossFit HQ. Perhaps most interesting was "stealing shit for time," an event Dunifer said he would utterly dominate. Dunifer also pioneered an interesting technique on the sledgehammer WOD. After getting frustrated swinging the hammer, Dunifer actually flipped it upside down and attempted to use the top of the sledge like a potato masher. The technique was unsuccessful and Dunifer finished 43<sup>rd</sup> in the WOD—but he laughed it off afterwards.

Pictured: Charlie Dunifer



Pictured: Nicole Gordon



**Lee Knight** finished fourth in the Mid Atlantic Regional. She showed up to compete with a broken foot and a special T-shirt. On the front: "75<sup>th</sup> place." On the back: photos of her shattered foot being repaired during surgery. She was determined to compete anyway and ran the flat part of the trail run. When the hills came up, the pain was just too great and she had to withdraw.

**Nicole Gordon** finished second in the Mid Atlantic Regional but had difficulty in the sledgehammer WOD. She mangled her fingers on one of the strikes but finished the workout with her hand a bloody mess. She was sent to Medical, and then the ER, where X-rays revealed she had not fractured any bones. Gordon got on the phone immediately and told organizers to hold a spot for her in the next WOD as she raced back to The Ranch.

Pictured: Pat Barber



Pictured: Chastity Slone



Pictured: Mikko Salo, J.C. Nessa



Pictured: Kyle Maynard and Jolie Gentry



**Pat Barber** does video work for CrossFit HQ and operates out of the same office as Tony Budding, who had some input in programming the Games. In the lead-up to the Games, Budding was often forced to have conversations outside so as to keep the events secret from Barber and maintain the integrity of the contest. Barber was eliminated after the first day and promised that he certainly would not berate Budding about the programming of the 2009 Games "every single day for the next year." (Although Budding reports that the berating has been pretty consistent so far.)

During the first heats of the rowing/sledge WOD, many male competitors were swinging so wildly that they were snapping and damaging multiple sledgehammers. With Games Director **Dave Castro** reminding competitors in the next heats that success with the stake drive came more from accuracy and skill than power, CrossFit HQ sent personnel off-site to buy as many back-up sledges as possible. Staff members made three stops and came back with about 24 reserve hammers. Luckily, competitors in the later heats learned from the mistakes of those who went first, and the back-up equipment wasn't needed.

**Tommy Hackenbruck** was overjoyed to hear about the sledgehammer workout. Hackenbruck runs an affiliate now but until three months ago worked construction jobs, swinging the big iron for a living. He annihilated the WOD in 4:36, and other competitors were amazed at how Hack was able to bury the last foot of the steel rod with one mighty but accurate blow. Other competitors who were adept with the hammer: firefighters **Jeff Tinch** and **Matt Chan**, and **Chastity Slone**, who grew up on a farm.

One of the best moments of the sandbag sprint came when **J.C. Nessa**, the overall leader at the time, was leading his heat with his "balls to the wall" approach. Passing is incredibly difficult on the steep terrain near the end of the run, and only a few meters from the finish it looked like Nessa would win. When he slipped and nearly dropped his bags, **Mikko Salo** seized the chance and snuck past for a dramatic win.

Featured in the moving *Wounded Warriors* video series, **Kyle Maynard**, one of CrossFit's most inspirational athletes, was spotted greeting athletes in the warm-up area and watching the chipper WOD with **Coach Glassman**.





Pictured: Sarah Dunsmore

**Libby Dibiase** from Omaha, Nebraska, was almost as famous for her performance in 2008 (sixth) as she was for the tiny bright red shorts she wore to the Games. Dibiase did not disappoint her fans, and the shorts once again made an appearance at The Ranch. The dynamic Dibiase finished 47th.

The top three female competitors from the Rocky Mountain Qualifier decided to forego the individual competition in Aromas to instead compete in the Affiliate Cup. All from Front Range CrossFit, **Kristen Olsen**, **Cori Gobell** and **Jasmine Dever** led a team that flew out in front after all Affiliates had completed one WOD. They faded as the competition continued and finished in 10th place.

**Sarah Dunsmore**, who weighs 120 lb., managed to pull 270 in the deadlift, stopping short of an all-out effort. Dunsmore revealed afterward that she's had spinal fusion of her L5 and S1 vertebrae and felt it was a smart play to back off and save her body for the rest of the contest. It turned out to be a solid plan: Dunsmore went into WOD 7 as a contender for the title. The energetic woman from North Carolina was eliminated from contention when she couldn't complete a handstand push-up. She did, however, have the option to complete the final workout to distinguish herself from the other women who were also unable to complete a handstand push-up. Her heroic effort to finish just before the time cap moved a half dozen judges to tears.





Pictured: Fred Zabala



Pictured: Geoffrey Tudisco



Pictured: Jolie Gentry

In one of the more imaginative cross-marketing ploys, **Geoffrey Tudisco's** CrossFit Bogota shares space with a cardio-strip-tease/pole-dance studio. It's doubtful that any main-site WODs will include the phrase "remove clothes for time," but if they do, Tudisco is set. Josh Everett happened to be nearby when Tudisco was explaining his intriguing set-up in Columbia, and the colourful character originally from New York asked Everett if he might want to come down and do an Olympic lifting cert.

On Saturday night, statistics from the beer tent revealed that about 364 gallons had been sold to CrossFitters, and some of it found its way into CrossFit Ventura's "crunk bat"—a hollow plastic baseball bat that served as a cup. Four ounces of beer represent one block on the Zone diet, but the team from Ventura did not provide volume figures for the crunk bat.

The Games were rocking from start to finish with a live DJ who showed a preference for metal and hard rock, with some rap thrown in for good measure. The thumping bass and rhythms helped keep both the crowd and the competitors pumped.

During the pull-up/OHS WOD in the Affiliate Cup, one competitor loosely interpreted the instructions of Games Director **Dave Castro** and hung from the pull-up bar by his legs while letting his arms recover. He did this several times before **Nicole Carroll** happened by and informed the judges that the playground technique was creative but not legal in the CrossFit Games.

SWAT operator **Jolie Gentry** was in the warm-up area after the Games wrapped up, teaching a very young female friend how to launch a powerful kick into a heavy bag hanging from the pull-up rack. Shortly after, Gentry was given the Military/LEO Award by Viking Tactics during the closing awards ceremonies.



#### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He shares Rachel Medina's distaste for cold weather.*



## The Sweet 16

Thirty-two men and women made it to Day 2 of the CrossFit Games. The *CrossFit Journal* takes a closer look at these elite athletes and how they got to Aromas.

Mike Warkentin



The CrossFit Games champions have been crowned, and you'll be hearing a lot about **Tanya Wagner** and **Mikko Salo** over the next year.

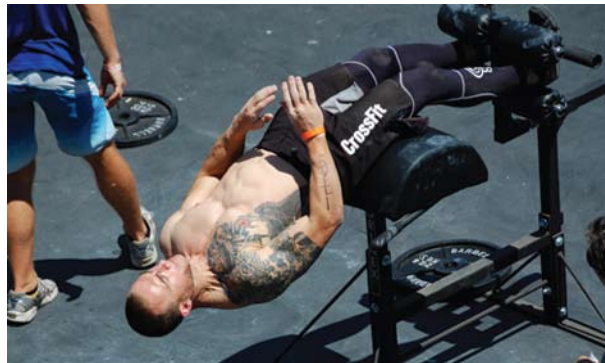
A host of other elite athletes turned in similarly outstanding performances at the Games, perhaps setting themselves up for a run at the title next year. What follows is a closer look at the top 16 male and female competitors who distinguished themselves at [The Ranch](#).



Pictured: Lindsey Smith



Pictured: Steve Willis



Pictured: Kristan Clever



On the men's side, the Last Chance Qualifier produced three athletes—all of whom finished in the top 12 when the Games wrapped up. **Tommy Hackenbruck** (second) **Peter Egyed** (sixth) and **Spencer Hendel** (12<sup>th</sup>) used the Internet to punch a ticket to the Games. For the women, all Last Chance qualifiers were eliminated on Day 1.

Of the 11 Legacy competitors who qualified on past performance, six made it through to Sunday's final WODs. **James (OPT) FitzGerald**, **Jeremy Thiel** and **Jason Khalipa** made the top 16 males, and **Tamara Holmes**, **Jolie Gentry** and **Tanya Wagner** represented the female Legacy qualifiers.

While the Last Chance and Legacy athletes made up almost 40 per cent of the men's top 16, only Canada West (**D.J. Wickham**, **Michael "Bro-PT" FitzGerald**) was able to place two athletes in the ranks. The Dirty South, Hell's Half Acre, Great Basin, Midwest and Northeast were all shut out of the men's side of the Sweet 16. Hell's Half Acre managed to place three females in the top echelon: **Carey Kepler**, **Lindsey Smith** and **Crystal McReynolds**. The Northwest placed two: **Charity Vale** and **Jennifer Olson**. Incredibly, only **Kristan Clever** made it to the final day to represent women from either

of the California qualifiers. Only Canada East, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia failed to send a single athlete through to Sunday's final events.

The average stats of the top four men (**Mikko Salo**, **Tommy Hackenbruck**, **Moe Kelsey** and **Steve Willis**) are as follows: 30 years old, six feet tall, 200 lb. For the middle men (36<sup>th</sup>-39<sup>th</sup>: **Pat Barber**, **Brad Posnanski**, **Ricky Frausto** and **Darren Rosten**), the numbers were 30 years old, 5'8" and 171 lb.—which, coincidentally, are almost exactly Mikko Salo's stats. For the bottom four men (**Mike Giardina**, **Rob Gerdes**, **Dutch Lowy** and **Nelson Barriga**) the numbers are: 25 years old, 5'7" and 170.

The top four women (**Tanya Wagner**, **Charity Vale**, **Carey Kepler** and **Kristan Clever**) averaged 29 years old, 5'4" and 134 lb. The bottom four competitors (not eliminated by injury) were **Dana Lynch**, **Tia McDougall**, **Nikki Hall** and **Jenni Orr**. Their numbers: 29 years old, 5'3" and 137 lb. The female competitors in 34<sup>th</sup>-37<sup>th</sup> place (**Apollonia Helm**, **Michelle Benedict**, **Stacie Tovar** and **Danielle Dionne**) averaged 26 years old, 5'4" and 133 lb.



Dr. Harold Doran is a statistician with a PhD, and he's also a CrossFitter. He analyzed the results of the competition and drew the following general conclusions (Doran reminds that the sample sizes are too small to have produced definitive results):

*Age does not matter and never correlates with any of the results.*

*Weight seemed to work slightly against athletes in the run but gave them a fairly substantial advantage in the deadlift. Taller athletes were also better at the deadlift.*

*Age, height and weight had no bearing whatsoever on the sandbag sprint.*

*Height produced a small advantage in the sledgehammer WOD.*

*Weight appeared to matter a great deal for the snatch WOD.*

*Smaller stature appeared to give athletes an advantage on the triplet.*

*Height and weight were big factors in the chipper. Taller athletes did worse, as did heavier athletes.*

Six of the top 16 men were international competitors. Three came from Canada (**OPT**, **Bro-PT** and **D.J. Wickham**), while **Steve Willis** came from Australia, **Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** came from Iceland, and eventual winner **Mikko Salo** came from Finland. Of the top females, only **Annie Thorisdottir** (Iceland) and **Lauren Pryor** (Canada) had to come through customs to reach California.

Former Games champion **James (OPT) FitzGerald** from Calgary was forced to withdraw from the competition shortly before the final WOD due to injuries. "He was so disappointed and he was saying, 'I've let so many people down,'" Tony Budding of CrossFit HQ recalled. "The reality is he didn't let anybody down. He gave his best... I can't imagine that anybody would ever look at him at the end of that even in that scenario and say, 'You failed.'" Any disappointment OPT might feel as an athlete should be remedied by his stats as a trainer: **CrossFit Calgary** finished fourth in the Affiliate Cup, and CFC athletes **Bro-PT**, **Lauren Pryor** and **D.J. Wickham** all made the top 16.



Pictured: D.J. Wickham



Pictured: James (OPT) FitzGerald

Pictured: Jeremy Thiel



Pictured: Gillian Mounsey



Pictured: Josh Everett



CrossFit Central had similar success. Their Affiliate Cup team finished second, while **Jeremy Thiel**, **Crystal McReynolds** and **Carey Kepler** all represented the Texas box at the top of the standings.

Several notable athletes failed to make Day 2. Last year's winner, **Caity Matter** from Ohio, was forced to withdraw from the contest due to heat exhaustion after the third WOD. **Gillian Mounsey**, who finished third last year, was eliminated after the fourth WOD. **Josh Everett**, second in 2008, did not make the second day to the surprise of many, and **Pat Barber**, fourth in 2008, was similarly left out. Notable men who were eliminated at the first cut included **Dutch Lowy**, who won the Hell's Half Acre Qualifier, and **James Hobart**, who was first in the Northeast. **Jenni Orr** won the Dirty South and **Hilari Eaton** won the Great Basin event, but both were dropped at the first cut on Day 1.





Pictured: Stacey Kroon



Pictured: Moe Kelsey



Pictured: Cyndi Frieling

A host of male competitors spent some time on the gridiron. **Tommy Hackenbruck** (middle linebacker, University of Utah), **Moe Kelsey** (high school), **Jason Khalipa** (guard/defensive end, high school), **Jeremy Thiel** (high school), **Jeff Leonard** (defensive end, Wyoming), **D.J. Wickham** (linebacker, University of Calgary), **Blair Morrison** (wide receiver, Princeton) and **Pat Burke** (high school) all spent time on the football field. **Spencer Hendel** didn't play football, but his father, **Andy Hendel**, was a middle linebacker for the Miami Dolphins in 1986. **David Millar** played the other kind of football—soccer—for four years at UC Irvine.

A host of women were collegiate athletes, including **Tanya Wagner** (soccer, Georgia Southern), **Sarah Dunsmore** (rugby, UNC), **Stacey Kroon** (multi-sport, Keene State), **Tamara Holmes** (volleyball, UC Berkeley), **Jolie Gentry** (volleyball, San Francisco State), **Lindsey Smith** (multisport, DePaul), **Cyndi Frieling** (basketball, Briarcrest), **Christy Phillips** (lacrosse, George Washington University), **Charity Vale** (soccer, Oklahoma City University), and **Carey Kepler** (basketball, Angelo State).



Pictured: Blair Morrison



Pictured: Annie Thorisdottir



Pictured: Laura DeMarco



Pictured: Pat Burke



Pictured: Jason Khalipa and Ashley Fini



**Laura DeMarco** was adamant that she was not an athlete and had never played high-school or college sports. The former art director/graphic designer who runs **CrossFit RX** in Atlanta finished 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson** was an alpine skier in Iceland and currently works as a civil engineer in Reykjavik. **Annie Thorisdottir**, who went into the final WOD in second place and with a legitimate chance to beat Tanya Wagner, wants to be a doctor and recently wrote a medical entrance exam. The outstanding raw athlete also took up pole vaulting in the last year.

Both **Moe Kelsey** and **Pat Burke** admitted they did some bodybuilding in the past but saw the light and put down the biceps curl bar when they started CrossFit. Moe is also a 6'2", 225 lb. triathlete who competes in firefighter challenges.

**Jason Khalipa's** preparation for the CrossFit Games included renting a tux. The fifth-place finisher married Ashley Fini on July 18. Khalipa says his better half is an incredible athlete in her own right. Khalipa trains her but maintains it's probably best not to coach your partner. "You can teach somebody something, but you can't push them because when you go back home with them you have to live with them," he said.

Pictured: Peter Egyed



Pictured: Carey Kepler



**Peter Egyed** takes physics at Arizona State University but doesn't want to be a physicist. He runs **CrossFit Fury**, and his outstanding performances in the Last Chance Qualifier and the Games prove he understands force equals mass times acceleration, even if he doesn't want to wear a white coat for the rest of his life.

Firefighters in the top 16 include **Tamara Holmes**, **Jeff Leonard**, **Mikko Salo** and **Moe Kelsey**, while military and law-enforcement agencies are represented by **Steve Willis** (Australian Special Forces), **Jolie Gentry** (SWAT operator) and **Pat Burke** (U.S. Marines).

**Charity Vale** and **Jenni Olson** both made the Sweet 16, and the two are related by marriage. Olson's brother Jeff is married to Charity, and the two women drew on each other for support throughout the competition. The self-named "insta-buddies" have three kids each.

Both **Cyndi Frieling** and **Carey Kepler** jumped into CrossFit at the deep end by tackling Nasty Girls as their first WOD. **Tanya Wagner** found CrossFit through the 300 workout, together with her husband, Josh, who also competed in the Games. Josh finished in 40<sup>th</sup> place, and the proud husband said after the event that the couple wasn't coming so he could win; they were coming so Tanya could improve on her second-place finish last year.



#### About the Author

*Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. His favourite WODs at the 2009 CrossFit Games were the deadlift ladder and the 1RM snatch.*



# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

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## By Any Means Necessary

San Francisco CrossFit is basically a parking lot, a canopy and two shipping containers. It's also San Francisco's best fitness facility, according to readers of *SF Weekly*.

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Mike Warkentin

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Behold the modern fitness center.

Its selectorized machines gleam under spotlights. Someone triumphantly breaks the 150-pound mark on the torso-rotation machine as another person gives the hip flexors a proper thrashing during a set of biceps curls. A spin class begins in an air-conditioned studio where Top 40 hits are pumped out of an expensive stereo.

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1 of 5

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All that's missing is a plaque from *SF Weekly* proclaiming the facility San Francisco's Best Fitness Gym. That plaque, however, will not be forthcoming. The title actually belongs to San Francisco CrossFit, which was awarded the accolade on May 20, 2009, as part of the readers' poll portion of [SF Weekly's Best of 2009](#).

"If they had a category for best place to train under a canopy in a parking lot, we would have definitely taken that title, too," jokes SFCF founder Kelly Starrett.

### Reclaiming the Presidio

According to [SanFranciscoCrossFit.com](#), the facility opened its doors in the Presidio in 2005, but that isn't really accurate. The facility doesn't have any doors.

The home of SFCF is an all-but-abandoned concrete wilderness behind a building that used to house a U.S. Army commissary. The building is now home to the Sports Basement, an outdoor outfitter Starrett used to manage before he was a doctor of physical therapy and [CrossFit Journal](#) video star. When he decided to open a CrossFit affiliate, he didn't want to pay the king's ransom it would require to rent space in San Francisco and instead approached his old boss about using part of the old loading dock behind the Sports Basement.

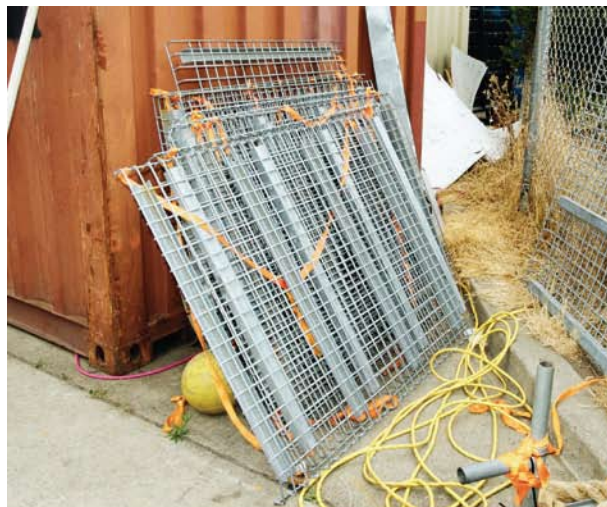
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*"We have a fenced-in area that's literally in the woods in the Presidio, and you can see the Golden Gate Bridge... We have a world-class location."*

*—Kelly Starrett*

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"It was unused and tucked back there and full of debris and three inches of mud and 400-pound refrigerator doors and just junk," Starrett says. "I approached the owner because we were good friends, and they're so gracious and they're really into supporting community and creating community projects. I said, 'I have this idea. What do you think about it?' And they said, 'Go for it.'"



**At San Francisco CrossFit, objects others might call "debris" are actually used for functional training of elite athletes.**

Starrett spent a few weeks shovelling mud, hauling trash and playing MacGyver to create equipment out of random objects. Soon the facility was ready to host its first Frans.

Starrett says: "We built our pull-up rack from an old military tire stand and put up a canopy and dropped in a shipping container... We have infinite parking. We have a fenced-in area that's literally in the woods in the Presidio, and you can see the Golden Gate Bridge. We're right across the street from Crissy Field. We have a world-class location."

Since 2005, SFCF has grown to service approximately 250 athletes, including about 150-200 CrossFitters, as well as some high-school athletes and a rowing team. SFCF's gear is now stored in not one but two giant shipping containers. Its roof is still a tarp.

"We don't say 'tarp,'" Starrett corrects. "We say 'canopy.' It's way more sophisticated."

### That Junk Isn't Junk

Whether it's a tarp or a canopy is irrelevant. The fact remains that the rugged CrossFit affiliate managed to beat out a host of high-tech fitness facilities in the *SF Weekly* poll. At SFCF, the equipment isn't pretty. In fact, some of it looks positively post-apocalyptic—but it works.

"If we thought something was a public-safety issue, we would either buy it or have it professionally made," Starrett says. "But if there's something that we can make ourselves, then we try to make it ourselves."

He continues: "We have 10 dragging sleds that we threw some webbing on, and they're the racks from the old commercial commissary pallet racks. We flipped them over, tied some straps to them, and we can load them up with weights and get a ton of people doing a bunch of sled drags."



***Odd objects, great results: CrossFit Games competitor Jamie Crichton drags a makeshift sled while carrying a "french fry."***



"We have these gigantic steel pipes—we call them 'french fries'—that they used to prevent cars from backing up or prevent trucks from backing into the building. They were all cut off the ground, and we taped up the bottom, and now we have these 60-pound steel cylinders for odd-object training."

And the crowd-control barriers near the shipping containers? Those aren't just for keeping bodybuilders away.

"We saw these barriers around in the Presidio, and we appropriated a couple of them," Starrett explains. "They're not ours, but they live back near us, and those are the kinds of things where that's a spare squat rack for a short athlete. They can push press off of there and do dips... There's a lot of that sort of thing that's very CrossFit. You look around you and say, 'What is my need, and how can I meet that need?'"

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*"What is it about? It's about really good coaching and really good programming—and that's the difference."*

*—Kelly Starrett*

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Of course, SFCF has purchased equipment, but Starrett believes the *Road Warrior* training implements give the affiliate character. He also believes forsaking standard equipment forces you to examine your programming, break movements down and decide exactly what is required to train those movements.

"You win that experience when you make your own equipment and you're forced to improvise," he says. "And you're able to kind of win that experience that maybe would take you another 10 years of programming... Any time you can advance your understanding, your tinkering aspect of what it is you do, then you have a better understanding and you become a more effective coach."



**Fay Collinson of the U.K. and Adrian (Boz) Bozman demonstrate a few uses of "french fries" that were formerly anchored in the parking lot behind the Sports Basement.**



**SFCF also has standard gear: trainer Diane Fu coaches Charlene Lagac on proper snatch technique.**



**Kelly Starrett and Boz: two reasons for SFCF's success.**

Starrett, Adrian (Boz) Bozman and the seven or so other trainers at SFCF knew they were doing good things out in the parking lot but were still surprised when *SF Weekly* called to say they'd won a category in the alternative mag's annual awards issue.

On June 29, *SF Weekly* published an article titled "*Ripped, Literally: As in the Muscles of Some Recruits to the Fad of Fitness Bootcamps.*" In it, author Anna McCarthy detailed various injuries participants suffered in intense fitness programs, lumping CrossFit in with "bootcamps" and of course mentioning Pukie and Uncle Rhabdo.

Subsequently, *SF Weekly* published an updated version of the story with several corrections, but as of press time a lengthy debate is still ongoing on the [SF Weekly website](#). Many people think the coaches at SFCF are top notch and are vocally defending both CrossFit methods and the trainers at SFCF.

"This article enrages me," Catherine Gravelle wrote on the site. "I have been a member of San Francisco CrossFit for a year and a half now and I cannot say enough about it. The coaches are extremely high touch and take great care in making sure all the athletes have the best possible coaching. I am appalled at the way this article has spun what SFCF is."

CrossFit certainly isn't bootcamp, and readers of *SF Weekly* agree—hence the award for **San Francisco's Best Fitness Gym**.

"What is it about?" Starrett asks. "It's about really good coaching and really good programming—and that's the difference."

"This experiment has been replicated a thousand times across the United States and across the world, and I think we showed that you don't need a fancy gym. You need the quality core equipment and programming that is CrossFit. You may not even have walls, and yet this is good place to train in the city."



#### About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the **CrossFit Journal**. He somehow recently managed to set PRs on Fran, deadlift, clean and jerk, and snatch in the same week.



## The Newbie's Guide to Running Faster Races

After the training comes the race-day strategy.  
These tips may help you race like a pro and set a PR.

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Parker Morse

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Alison Wade/Elite Running.com

Maybe you've never really thought of yourself as a much of a runner. Maybe you were inspired by the two running events at the 2009 CrossFit Games. You've been training for weeks or months, and you've been pleasantly surprised to see much-improved times. Now you've decided to try out a road race, most likely a low-key five or 10 kilometer event not far from home.

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It sounds like something you should be able to manage. You'll get a benchmark number for your training log. And there will be plenty of other newbies lined up at the starting line with you. Nobody will make you do it over if your form isn't exactly right. What's not to like?

But, like most athletic pursuits, racing is not really as easy as it looks. If all we had to do was push the pedal all the way down and dash to the finish, racing would actually be a little boring. How you run the race can make a lot of difference in your results.

### Avoiding the first mistake

Jack Daniels (the coach, not the distiller) says: "Most mistakes in a race are made in the first two minutes, maybe even the very first minute." Another way of putting this is that very few races are won in the first minutes, but plenty of races are lost there. The gun fires, or the horn sounds, or the race director shouts "Go!" and you bolt.

That's the first mistake, and the easiest one to make. You're psychologically pumped up, you're full of energy, and you just got a signal to release all that energy. In some cases, the start even triggers a fight-or-flight response. What's more, the half-dozen high-school kids on the starting line have energy to burn. These kids are going to start like dogs chasing a squirrel, which will make it even harder for you to hold back.

The problem is that starting too fast can lead to a slower pace later in the race. It's such an obvious point that it's often overlooked. Consider these words of wisdom from John Parker's *Once a Runner*, a cult classic novel about a collegiate miler: "A runner is a miser, spending the pennies of his energy with great stinginess, constantly wanting to know how much he has spent and how much longer he will be expected to pay. He wants to be broke precisely the moment he no longer needs his coin." If you're going to make a mistake with your pennies, it's better to finish still holding a few than to risk going broke before you reach the line. If you start too fast, you're borrowing money; when you pay it back, you'll pay interest.

That brings me back to those high-school kids standing next to you. They're about to learn pacing the hard way, or they are really, really good. If you're patient, you'll likely see the first group later as you pass them. So let them go.



Alison Wade/Elite Running.com

**The author in action at the Fourth of July Heritage Days Five Miler in Bath, Maine, a race he tries to run every year.**



### First split, second mistake

Before long, you're going to reach a marker in the road, or a person standing next to a sign with a watch, calling out split times. This is going to be your first indicator of your pace for the race—except it's probably wrong.

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*Once you've settled into a pace,  
you should trust your body's  
feeling for the right pace more  
than someone with a watch.*

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It's not that the time is wrong. It's that it's not an accurate reflection of the pace you're running. Let's say you ran the first quarter mile in 1:30, then settled back to even 2:00 quarters (8:00-mile pace). It's a pace you could handle for the rest of the race, and let's say that 90-second starting quarter didn't sabotage the rest of your race. But the guy with the watch at the first mile marker is saying "7:30" when you run by, and you're thinking, "Rats! I thought I was on a good pace, and here I am 30 seconds too fast!"

But you're not running 7:30 pace; you're running 8:00 pace. You don't need to slow down. Also, ask yourself how likely it is that the marker is placed within 10

### Aid Stations

Nearly every race is going to have an aid station or two. Here are a few things to remember:

- Anything you drink within two to four miles of the finish is for recovery and won't help you in the race. This means you can safely skip the aid stations of most five-kilometer races and even many 10-kilometer events.
- If you're getting a cup from a volunteer, make eye contact with them as you approach so they aren't giving your cup to someone else. It can't hurt to point if things are busy.
- If you can gulp the fluids and move on without stopping, more power to you. (Often it's easier to handle the cup if you crush the top enough to make the rim into a spout.) If you have to stop, make sure you're out of the way of anyone coming behind you.
- Most of the time it's acceptable to drop your cup on the road if you're still close to the aid station. Sometimes the volunteers will have a trash can out. You can also hang on to the cup until the next aid station if it's not a distraction to you.
- Say: "Thank you!" The people at the aid station came out to help you.

Alison Wade/Elite Running.com



**When you pass someone, don't slow down. Keep up your speed until you're well clear of them.**

seconds of a true distance. Plenty of races are precisely and accurately measured, but not all of them. By and large, you should bet on the race organizers placing the mile markers with a car odometer. Once you've settled into a pace, you should trust your body's feeling for the right pace more than someone with a watch.

### Get racing

Now is a good time to remember what's really going on here: this is a foot race. The point is to arrive at the finish line before as many other people as possible. Nobody is checking where you stand until then. A lot of runners forget this and focus on their second goal, which is to cover the distance as quickly as possible. While racing well can lead to good times, chasing a time will not help you race.

It's time to start racing. This is where your patient start pays off. For most runners, it's psychologically easier to overtake other runners and pass them than it is to be passed. Executing a successful pass gives you a little psychological lift and makes it easier to catch the next runner. One way to reinforce the racing mindset (and a conservative start) is to pick a milestone, anywhere from a quarter to halfway through the race. Establish a goal. Decide that you're not going to be passed after this point, or that you're going to pass more runners than pass you.

Most runners use the metaphor of "reeling in" the people in front of them. They mentally attach a string to their target's back and gradually reel in the string until it's time to make the pass. This is much easier to do if you keep your eyes on your target's head or back, but not their feet. Don't back off once you're in front of another runner. They may pick up their pace and try to pass you back. Keep pushing until you have three or four clear strides on them.

In the same way, you want to use the hills. You don't need to attack them. Maintaining a steady effort is enough. But it's important not to relax when you reach the crest of the hill. Almost everyone else is going to make that mistake. It's natural to ease up as you feel the work getting easier, but you want to push past the crest of the hill. Pass the other guy when he makes the mistake you just avoided: easing up at the top.

### At the finish

Unless you got a timing chip at registration, when you cross the finish line you're going to find yourself in a "chute," a narrow aisle fenced by signal tape of clothesline or strings of flags. The point of the chute is to keep runners in the order they crossed the finish line until race officials can write down their numbers. (This is why you wear your number on the front.) Stay in order lest you screw up the results for everyone.

It's hard to emphasize this point enough: keep moving through the chute. You might have run hard, and you might feel as if you've earned the support of the ground, but you have enough power left to walk 15 meters and get out of the way before you collapse. If you cross the line and immediately drop, you're endangering yourself, you're endangering other runners, and you're going to alert the race medical staff, who will try to put you in an ambulance. Get through the chute, and then sit down.

One last point, which has nothing to do with racing and everything to do with laundry: on a sweaty shirt, safety pins rust fast. Take your number off before you put the shirt in the laundry or the pins will leave rust marks on your shirt that will never come out. Of course, the whole problem can be avoided if you run in true CrossFit style: shirtless. Some runners may think your lack of a top weird. But these are the same folks who can't understand the point of kipping pull-ups.



### About the Author

*Parker Morse is a web programmer and freelance writer in Amherst, Massachusetts, who has been running and racing for 22 years and has competed in over 100 races. He's written for **Runner's World**, **Running Times**, and **New England Runner**, and his profile of miler Scott Hartley appeared in the **CrossFit Journal** in June. He wins every race where nobody faster than him enters.*