

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Supplementation for Competition

Chris Mason of AtLarge Nutrition outlines a plan of attack for CrossFit competitors interested in using supplements in hopes of optimizing their performances.

By Chris Mason

July 2010



A.Belani/Creative Commons

The CrossFit Games: perhaps a truer test of human fitness has never been devised. Of course, outside the CrossFit world, there are many definitions and opinions of what constitutes fitness. It's a word that gets bandied about quite a bit. Some might think the winner of the Marathon Des Sables (a 151-mile footrace across the Sahara Desert) is the fittest individual on the planet, while others might choose someone like Joe Decker, whom the *Guinness Book of World Records* certified as the world's fittest man after he completed a Herculean set of endurance tasks in a 24-hour period.

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For my money, the winner of the CrossFit Games is the true embodiment and owner of the title of World's Fittest Man or Woman.

CrossFit is unique in its all-pervasive pursuit of total physical development. Its Games are no different, as they test all the major categories of human physical expression. Varying events test absolute strength, strength endurance, generalized motor skill and aerobic endurance. Winning or even competing in the CrossFit Games is the ultimate goal for many CrossFit practitioners. For those of you who currently compete or want to compete in the future, the balance of this article will focus on one specific aspect of CrossFit performance optimization that has unfortunately heretofore been somewhat overlooked: supplementation.

CrossFit collectively is a no-nonsense, results-driven methodology, and the grossly exaggerated claims and misrepresentations that are so pervasive in the supplement industry simply have no place in the minds and hearts of its practitioners.

Until quite recently, supplementation was not part of the collective CrossFit consciousness. This was, perhaps, part of the CrossFit community's generalized disdain for hyper-consumerism. CrossFit collectively is a no-nonsense, results-driven methodology, and the grossly exaggerated claims and misrepresentations that are so pervasive in the supplement industry simply have no place in the minds and hearts of its practitioners. You know the sayings: "600 percent increase in your bench press!" "Mind-blowing pumps!" etc.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

It's up to the community to decide if supplements improve CrossFit performance.

Whatever the cause, I am glad to see the CrossFit brass willing to allow me to present my thoughts on the subject for the consideration of its practitioners. I truly respect the fact that those at the corporate level for CrossFit value the feedback of their members sufficiently to do so.

Specific Supplement Recommendations for CrossFit Competitors

The following is a list of my supplement recommendations for CrossFit competitors, a description of the benefits each can impart and instructions how to use them:

Creatine Monohydrate

This is the single most studied and proven ergogenic supplement. An overwhelming body of evidence (both university-level studies and empirical) indicates it promotes both anaerobic strength and lean muscle mass.

Creatine supplementation exerts its effects via two distinct pathways. The first involves increased intramuscular stores of creatine and phosphocreatine. Phosphocreatine enhances strength endurance (i.e.,



Athletes in many sports use supplements to improve performance, but the jury is still out on many of the products. The choice is yours.

the ability to do repetitions with a given barbell load) by helping to synthesize ATP to fuel muscular contraction after the initial stores are exhausted during high-intensity exercise (intramuscular ATP stores are only good for about 2-3 seconds of intense contractions).

The second pathway involves a direct promotion of increased muscular size. Both an increased store of intramuscular water retention (not to be confused with edema) and specific effects on other growth-related mechanisms are thought to be the motors driving creatine's hypertrophy-promoting effects. Interestingly, these two separate effects are very likely synergistic and possibly additive in nature (see more about cell volume and anabolism in the protein information below).

Creatine (in the form of a quality creatine monohydrate) should be incorporated into the athlete's daily regimen at least two months out from any competition. Many athletes choose to use it year round, and this is generally considered a safe practice. A loading phase may not be necessary, but consuming 20 grams per day for the first seven days of use is recommended, followed by a maintenance dose of 5-10 grams per day.

Beta-Alanine

An amino acid, beta-alanine is produced endogenously (in the body) but can also be consumed by eating protein-rich foods containing the dipeptides carnosine, anserine or balenine (most meats).

Beta-alanine's primary mechanism of action is considered to be via its increase of intramuscular carnosine stores. Muscle pH decreases during intense exercise. This exercise-induced acidosis leads to a decline in the muscle's ability to contract forcefully as well as generalized muscular fatigue. Carnosine acts as a buffer to this acidosis by sequestering protons, thus potentially allowing for prolonged intense physical activity.

Theory aside, beta-alanine is a proven ergogen with demonstrated effects on total work capacity, power output at lactate threshold, delayed onset of muscular fatigue during high-intensity exercise and improved sub-maximal endurance performance. It also has beneficial effects on lean body mass via a decrease in body fat and possible increase in lean muscle tissue. All these benefits are highly desirable to the competitive CrossFit practitioner.



Noodles and Beef/Creative Commons

If you choose to use supplements, you've got thousands of options.

Beta-alanine, like creatine, should be introduced at least two months out from competition. Continuous use is considered safe and recommended. It should be consumed daily with a dose of 3-4 grams. No loading

reaction which is transient (typically only lasting a few minutes) and often reduces and or subsides with continued use.

Supplemental Protein and Carbohydrates

These supplements are recommended due to their potential for promoting enhanced recovery from intense exercise.

The post-workout (PWO) "window of opportunity" relative to nutrient intake is a well-known and much-hyped phenomenon. Hype and industry rhetoric aside, the consumption of protein and carbohydrates after a workout has proven benefits relative to optimization of recovery and the potential for supercompensation (adaptation by the body that allows for improved future performance).

Depending upon nutrient availability, the body may be in a net negative nitrogen balance after an intense training session. In other words, more protein is being broken down than is being created (or synthesized). While it is true that training stimulates protein synthesis (even in a fasted state), the net negative balance is a product of protein degradation also being increased to such

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phase is required. A phenomena known as paresthesia may occur with single doses exceeding 800 milligrams. It manifests as a tingling or itching sensation on the face and or extremities (in most cases). This is a harmless

a degree that it outstrips synthesis. The simple PWO consumption of protein reverses this catabolic state, but the addition of carbohydrates even further enhances protein's anabolic stimulus. In addition, the presence of carbs, and thus insulin (which is released in response to the consumption of carbohydrates, especially quick-absorbing carbohydrates), promotes the synthesis of glycogen, which is the energy source of choice for intense muscle contractions.

The above section addresses "what" happens when protein and carbohydrates are consumed PWO. Now we will delve into a very simplified scientific "why." As already stated, protein ingestion is in and of itself a stimulus for protein synthesis (PWO or not), but with the introduction of carbohydrates a turbo-charged effect takes place.

All the above might beg the question as to why protein and carbohydrates should be consumed in the form of a nutritional supplement To be clear, they need *not* be.

The concurrent ingestion of protein and quickly absorbed carbohydrates elicits a potent insulin response. This insulin response initiates a complex interaction that results in a greater increase in muscle protein synthesis (rate limited by the availability of amino acids, hence the consumption of protein with the carbohydrates) when compared to that stimulated by just protein. Insulin may also reduce muscle protein breakdown (there is some scientific argument on this front). The net effect of insulin is a greater protein synthesis response and total net nitrogen state (i.e., a more anabolic state).

Another very interesting phenomenon that occurs in the PWO environment involves muscle-cell volumization. You may have heard this term relative to supplementation, but probably not in the PWO context. Volumization of a cell is simply an increase in its size. The very cool and very interesting part of this phenomenon is that the swelling of muscle cells that occurs after intense training promotes the synthesis of both protein and glycogen. With the availability of both amino acids and glucose, this process can be optimized. In addition, the glycogen-synthesis effects of insulin seem to work additively (providing an *additional* and incremental enhancement of glycogen synthesis) with cell volumization, creating the optimal environment for post-workout glycogen replenishment.

All the above might beg the question as to why protein and carbohydrates should be consumed in the form of a nutritional supplement (a "protein" powder with carbs). To be clear, they need *not* be. Solid or liquid foods can certainly do the job. I recommend a supplement shake for two reasons. The first is that a shake is a highly portable and convenient manner in which to ensure a relatively quick intake of nutrients PWO. It is an easy thing to bring a shaker cup with some powder in it to the gym. Add water, and voila—an effective PWO "meal." The second reason is that there may be a benefit to consuming your PWO protein and carbohydrates in liquid form. The absorption rate may be slightly quicker, and it is definitely easier to drink your nutrients immediately after training.

I recommend a shake consisting of at least 30 grams of a high-quality protein blend (a blend of whey and casein at a minimum) and 30 grams of a quickly absorbed carbohydrate such as dextrose or maltodextrin. Some fats are desirable but not required.

The Crossfit Games competitor should use a PWO shake as a part of their regular training regimen. In addition, I recommend a shake be consumed between events, with a light meal following roughly an hour later if the schedule allows.

Microlactin

Microlactin is an ergogen you have most likely never heard of. Perhaps a bit less sexy than creatine or beta-alanine, Microlactin is still a supplement with great potential value to the CrossFit competitor.

Its primary ergogenic benefits are improvement in speed of recovery and anti-inflammatory action. It is theorized to aid recovery via its effect on creatine kinase (CK) levels. Blood CK levels are a generally accepted marker of skeletal muscle damage and spike after intense training. Microlactin has been demonstrated to significantly reduce the time required for CK levels to return to baseline after intense training. This indicates either a protective effect against muscle damage or more rapid repair. CK levels also highly correlate with delayed onset muscular soreness (DOMS), and Microlactin reduces DOMS duration for most users.

Microlactin's anti-inflammatory effects work via a different pathway than that of aspirin or NSAIDs. It can thus provide an additive benefit in terms of the reduction of the minor aches and pains inherent to all intense training regimens.

In a nutshell, Microlactin can allow its user to train harder and more often—and that is a *great* thing for any CrossFit competitor.

Microlactin should be taken daily in a 2-4 gram dose.

Because Every Second Counts

CrossFit competition is intense, incredibly demanding and highly competitive. Every participant has the opportunity, within the confines of safety and the rules, to use any and all ergogens at his or her disposal. While the world of nutritional supplements is rife with products that are ineffective, dangerous or outright scams, a few select supplements are key for anyone looking to optimize performance. The list contained in this article, while not comprehensive, notes the safest, most proven sports supplements known (to the point that some of them are health promoting). I believe they should be a staple in the daily regimen of all active and aspiring CrossFit competitors.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Chris Mason is the co-owner of [AtLarge Nutrition](#), where you can find the supplements listed in this article. Chris has been involved with bodybuilding and powerlifting for over two decades. He is an accomplished writer in the genre, having published articles in *Athlete*, *Planet Muscle*, *Ironman* and *Powerlifting USA* magazines, as well as online. You can view several of his articles on his website [WannaBeBig.com](#).

Chris currently resides in Charlottesville, Va., and makes monthly treks to Ohio to train at [Westside Barbell](#) with Louie Simmons. He is also a member of Louie's team for CrossFit Powerlifting Certs.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

To Game or not to Game

The only way to win is to do more work faster—so how do we do that most efficiently?
John Mc Evoy outlines one strategy.

By John Mc Evoy

July 2010



Courtesy of John Mc Evoy

In our world, the stopwatch is king. It doesn't lie and it doesn't have favorites. It simply states.

On our journey to ultimate fitness, we work on strength, speed, agility, etc. to help us achieve more rounds or faster times in any given workout. A lot of variables will come into play and dictate how the workout goes: time of day, food intake, hydration, personal proficiency with the movements involved, injuries The list goes on, and an article could be dedicated to how each variable can affect a workout. This particular article is about strategy for WODs, which some refer to as "gaming a WOD."

You can approach a CrossFit workout in a host of different ways, and you have no guarantee that any approach will result in success given the amount of variables at play. Still, some athletes rip into workouts with reckless abandon and come out the other side with PRs. Other athletes maintain a steady pace throughout and achieve equally impressive results.

In the recent [Data Driven](#) video by Patrick Cummings, we see exactly how athletes move through a workout. Pat Padgett gets out to an early lead but fades down the stretch and is passed by Mat Frankel, who kept a steady pace even as he fell behind early on. Would Padgett have been better served by a slower pace?

Some athletes rip into workouts with reckless abandon and come out the other side with PRs. Other athletes maintain a steady pace throughout and achieve equally impressive results.

This is not a new question, but it's interesting to note that many athletes, even those competing at regional and sectional levels, do not have a plan for the WOD they are facing. And some don't need one. Chris Spealler needs no strategy when he does Fran. He will go all out until he's done. Others, however, might benefit from thinking about the workout and creating a simple plan to get the most work done in the shortest amount of time.



Courtesy of John McEvoy

Some WODs require no strategy, but you can use a little planning to beat others.



Courtesy of John Mc Evoy

Time spent resting and recovering adds seconds and minutes to your time. Sometimes a measured approach can cut down rest periods and produce PRs.

At the Europe Regional, for example, competitors were given 15 minutes to complete two tasks: run 2.2 kilometers and then complete as many reps as possible of ground to overhead lifts at 70 kilograms. So how fast do you run to allow yourself the most time and energy to complete the highest number of reps?

Stick to the Plan?

I discovered one method for gaming WODs in the beginning of January when I did Cindy. My score was 18 rounds and 2 pull-ups. Every time I have done this WOD I have gradually been progressing. After analyzing my performance, I came to a realization: I was able to complete 12 rounds in the first 10 minutes, and then in the remaining 10 I only managed 6 rounds and 2 pull-ups. My main weakness in the workout at the time was push-ups. After the 12th round, I was pretty spent and failed several times during the sets of push-ups, which forced me to rest while the clock ticked.

After thinking about this for a while, I decided to retest myself and use some strategy. Rather than go balls-to-wall after the "3, 2, 1... go!" I used a little tact. I worked out that it takes me a little under 30 seconds to do each round when I don't fail on any movements. I figured that if I did 1 round, rested 30 seconds and went on the minute every minute, I would achieve 20 rounds. I managed to do this and even squeeze in an extra round at the end, giving me a score of 21 rounds. I made it through each set of everything unbroken, and the push-ups were really not a problem. This is a respectable score on this workout, especially when you take into account that I was actually resting for half the time!

Does having a strategy like this neglect the purpose of the workout? I don't think so. The goal is to complete as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes. We are trying to maximize our work output. As long as we are getting the work done quickly, it doesn't say anything about how you have to go about it. Maybe a little tactical planning can be your ally.

Courtesy of John Mc Evoy



How you get the work done is up to you: just get it done quickly.

You always have the option of forsaking the plan and sprinting to the finish line if you have a lot left in the tank.

This approach has one pitfall: you can get to the end of the workout with too much left in the tank. Another approach would be to think of the WOD as being four quarters of five minutes each. Say to yourself, "I'm going to do six rounds in each quarter and rest for the remainder of the five minutes." This would then give you 24 rounds total if you could maintain your pace. This is a very good score on this WOD and can be very achievable if you simply have a think about it beforehand.

And, of course, you always have the option of forsaking the plan and sprinting to the finish line if you have a lot left in the tank.

As another example, I recently put one of my classes through a workout that consisted of 100 thrusters for time (65/45 lb.). Every minute on the minute they had to do 5 box jumps.

The majority of people fell into the realm of 12-15 minutes. Watching them all suffer through this, I noticed that everyone went out hard in the beginning. Some achieved 20-plus thrusters in the first minute and were then completely gassed for each subsequent round, sometimes achieving no more than four in the minute. With a little strategy, you could say that you are going to do 10 thrusters, then rest for the remainder of the minute. Do your box jumps, then do another 10 thrusters and rest. Following this strategy might allow you to complete the workout in 10 minutes, which would be faster than the times that were commonly produced when athletes attacked from the word go.

A very similar example of this WOD appeared on the main site on May 22, 2010, with a video of Jason Khalipa doing 100 dumbbell squat-clean thrusters for time in a hotel gym. Every minute on the minute he had to do five burpees.

Hotel workout: [.wmv](#) | [.mov](#)

Khalipa's time was 10:53. The video shows him doing 20 dumbbell reps in the first minute, meaning it took him 9:53 to complete the remaining 80. Khalipa is an animal and crushes pretty much everything put in front of him, but could he have achieved a faster time if he had adopted the above example of hitting 10 reps then resting the remainder of the minute? It's debatable. The bottom line is who knows? All I'm saying is that these kinds of experiments are interesting and definitely worth some thought.

Use Your Body—And Your Brain

This kind of approach to WODs can add a whole new element to your training. I would not advocate that you approach all your WODs or even the majority of them in this fashion, but it is definitely something to think about. In order to increase your work capacity across broad times and modal domains, you simply need to work to your limits and go to that dark place you don't want to be in—and break through it. You will not become the fittest you possibly can be if you try and nitpick and strategize every little thing. Mental toughness plays a huge role in this sport, and the only way to get mentally tougher is to go to that place. Strategizing too much can certainly backfire. Having said that, implementing some strategy from time to time can be extremely helpful, especially when it comes to competition.

CrossFit is often described as “evidence-based fitness.” We record data, compare times and evaluate performances. If you are an athlete competing soon, look at your data and look at the WODs you will be competing in. How fast is your 400 meters? How many muscle-ups do you have? You should know all this information in your head so you know how to get the best performance out of yourself on competition day. If you are serious about competition, you need every little edge you can get.

But, as with everything, don't take my word for it. Test yourself. Go out and attack any given workout and analyze your performance. Film your workout and see where you break down. Then repeat the same WOD at another time and utilize some strategy.

An example could be a WOD consisting of five rounds of something. Get your coach or anyone else to time each round individually and see where you are losing/gaining time. How does your first round compare to the last? Did you go out too hard? Too slow? What work output are you able to sustain for the longest period?

The bottom line is you will never know if this style of training works for you unless you give it a shot. Having said that, this type of training may not suit you. Many people have reached the top simply going balls-to-wall on everything, and I'm sure many more will follow. This is just another element to think about and possibly include in your training schedule as you push to get more work done faster.

I'm sure that some of you are reading this thinking, “I do that already,” but for others, I'm certain this will be another one of those moments where you think to yourself, “It's so simple I can't believe I didn't think of it sooner.”



About the Author

John Mc Evoy is a Level 1 CrossFit trainer working out of [CrossFit Newton](#) in Massachusetts. He also owns his own strength and conditioning company, [Craic Conditioning](#). John moved to Boston in October 2009 after having lived in New Zealand for three years. He is originally from Ireland.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Coaching the Mental Side of CrossFit

Psychologists and doctors have offered perspective on the mental aspects of CrossFit, so original firebreather Greg Amundson delivers a CrossFit coach's guide to goal setting, self-talk and an indomitable spirit.

By Greg Amundson

July 2010



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Several years ago, CrossFit founder Coach Greg Glassman pulled me aside at a Level 1 Certification and said, "Greg, the greatest adaptation to CrossFit takes place between the ears."

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Greatly influenced by this remark, I set out to become a student of the mental aspects of CrossFit. Through observation, practice and research, I discovered something remarkable: the world's best CrossFit athletes had learned to control and optimize their self-talk. This potent mental skill resulted in their ability to formulate and achieve their goals—both inside the gym and out—with consistency and grace. The natural extensions of their positive self-talk were an optimistic energy, a mental toughness and an indomitable spirit evident in their physical accomplishments in the CrossFit workouts. I concluded that Coach Glassman was indeed correct: the mental adaptation to CrossFit was of critical importance to CrossFit athletes and coaches hoping to forge elite fitness. Now, nearly four years after the seed was first planted, I hope to share the key lessons learned as a result of the spark Coach Glassman set inside me.

For a coach at a CrossFit affiliate, understanding and ultimately shaping the way individual athletes talk to themselves and set personal goals are extremely important in the success of both the coach and athlete. Teaching the significance of positive self-talk and realistic goal setting is just as important as instilling a sense of virtuosity in the foundational movements of CrossFit. Although taught, practiced and learned inside the gym, these lessons have the potential to move outside the affiliate walls and continue doing what CrossFit does best: improving the quality of an athlete's life.

Setting a Goal

The first step in goal setting is to understand and define our terms in the context of athleticism and personal achievement. To better serve the purpose of this article, I have created a new definition of the word "goal."

Goal (noun) 1. A specifically desired end state, expressed in the positive tense, which provides motivation and direction on the path to achievement.

In addition to defining our terms, three points of performance in goal setting will expand upon our definition and ensure the success of the CrossFit coach and athlete.

NAME	GOAL	Date Achieved
1. Coryna Holcombe	11. Total - 452 (Acc. Handing for 03.16.09)	1.
2. Lauren Eggenberg	2. 25 Kipping pull-ups	2.
3. Parker Marshall	3. 800# @ Total	
4. MIKE VECCHIA	4. 1000# @ Total	
5. JP Bihathaw	5. 260kg Benchlifting Goal (11.15.09)	
6. Matt Leigh	6. 211 "Helen" 15 min pull-ups	11.19 "Helen" 21/109
7. JEREMY PARKS	7. Dunk A BASKETBALL	1st try pull-up: 9/16/09
8. MALLIE TORLINA	8. 20 Kipping pullups	
9. NATE DOG	9. 50 Double Unders	
10. MOE	10. 20 kipping pullups	Feb 2009
11. ADJH	11. FRONT/BACK LEVER	
12. Josh Holcombe	12. 900 lbs CF Total 420 FEET	
13. Matt Leigh	13. 11'30 "Helen"	
14. Anthony Burger	14. 10 Muscle Up & Run	27 Kip Pull-ups 9/17/09
15. TRISH	15. HSPU (maximal)	
16. Sonia	16. CFSD 3x a week	
17. ERIC M.	17. Muscle up	
18. Marlene	18. Muscle up	
19. Van	19. 40 p.u. / 3 HSPU	
20. Jason	20. 40 p.u. / muscle up	Kipping Pull-ups 4-20-09
21. Antonette	21. 1 Kipping PU / 1 Rope Climbs	
22. Lauren	22. Get to all the HSPU's	
23. DALE	23. PLACE WEIGHT TOP 20 OF CROSSFIT GYM FOR 2009	
24. MOISES	24. 5 BUTTERFLY PULL UPS	
25. Antoinette	25. 1 Dead Hang Pull-Up / 8:00 min/mile Run	
26. MARK R	26. MUSCLE UP!	
27. Jon	27. Muscle up	
29. Jon	29. Muscle 4 into HSPU	
30. MARIL R.	30. Body Weight Squat	
31. Lauren	31. Rope Climb x 2	4/15/09
32. Melissa	32. 1 dead hang pull up, Kipping pull up, rope climb, muscle up	Deadhang 4/28/09 Kipping 6/10/09 Rope climb: 6/15/09
33. Nathan	33. Hang on rim 90kg	
34. Brandon	34. Hang on rim	
35. Sage LIS	2 muscle-ups	7/11/09
36. Paul	Max APFT	
37. ERIC MONT.	900 CFT (5xBW) 250 C+	
38. CLAYTON T.	500 DBL UNDERS	
39. GEVRTS	Single set of 20 mu	
40. Josh		

Sharing your goals makes you accountable and is a great way to invite the community to support your efforts and motivate you.

The goal must be concise and specific. *"I want to complete 50 gymnastic kipping pull-ups in a single set."*

The goal must be expressed in the positive tense. *"I want to safely perform a backwards roll to support on the rings."* vs. *"I don't want to fall off the rings while upside down."*

The goal must include a time frame that is challenging yet realistic and achievable.

This CrossFit definition of a goal is unique to our community for several reasons. By looking closer at the definition and associated points of performance, we can explore several ways a coach can maximize his or her athlete's adaptation to CrossFit both physically and mentally.

First, a goal must be specific. Before a coach can lead an athlete on the path to achievement, the coach and athlete must understand and agree upon the desired end state. The more focused the definition, the more opportunity there is for precise planning, preparation and

training. In addition, by specifically defining a goal, the CrossFit coach and athlete can evaluate with precision when the goal has been met.

Second, a goal must be expressed by the coach and athlete in the positive tense. In order to maximize human athletic potential and harmonize the mind-body connection, coaches must teach their athletes the significance and power of positive expression. The conscious and subconscious brain will either promote or inhibit athletic performance. If I tell myself consciously, "I don't want to fall off the climbing rope," my subconscious brain in fact hears, "I want to fall off the climbing rope." This is because the subconscious does not hear the negative tense. By telling yourself what you don't want to manifest, you actually create a blueprint for exactly what you intend to avoid. The key lesson for coaches, therefore, is to keep their athletes in a constant state of positive affirmation of the goal's desired end state.



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

A good coach always uses positive language so athletes never let negative thoughts enter their minds during a workout.



Susannah Dyr/CrossFit Journal

Setting reasonable goals and then striving to accomplish them is a rewarding pursuit that keeps training intense and fun.

The final point is perhaps the most important but least understood: a goal must contain a time frame that is realistic and achievable while at the same time providing the athlete with a certain amount of challenge and motivation. A goal set too far in the future will lack the urgency and fail to create the internal fire needed for accomplishment. On the other hand, too short a time frame may lead to discouragement and despair.

A CrossFit affiliate coach has the responsibility of helping athletes set and achieve their goals.

When deciding upon the time frame for a goal, a certain degree of self-assessment on the part of the athlete must take place. For example, if an athlete tells me his goal is to perform a single set of 50 pull-ups in three months,

I will likely ask him how many consecutive pull-ups he can currently complete. How specifically the athlete can answer that question will help me in determining the best approach to supporting the achievement of the goal. If the athlete responds, "I'm not sure how many pull-ups I can do right now," we need to find out immediately! The approach we take to setting a time frame for completing 50 consecutive pull-ups will vary greatly if the athlete has five pull-ups as compared to 45 pull-ups.

In setting the time frame for a goal, a CrossFit coach must weigh the delicate balance between motivating and challenging an athlete while at the same time ensuring a high likelihood of success. A CrossFit coach has the responsibility of helping athletes set and *achieve* their goals. Notice the key word here is *achieve*. By helping an athlete define, move towards and ultimately arrive at a desired end state, the CrossFit coach sets in motion a pattern of behavior for the athlete that can be applied to anything. The frequency with which an athlete can set a goal for him- or herself and reach the desired end state will in large part define the individual's sense of ability and capacity. For the coach, this means happy, healthy and physically fit athletes who remain lifelong clients and provide a steady referral base to the gym.

When the lesson of goal setting is implemented by the CrossFit coach, an exciting and rewarding journey suddenly awaits the five-pull-up athlete whose goal is to achieve 50 pull-ups: he or she has an opportunity to set and reach several smaller and more immediate goals along the way! These mini-triumphs will reaffirm to the athletes their ability to succeed and provide them with motivation and confidence. Remember, well before athletes can reach 50 pull-ups, they must first reach 10, then 15 and then 20 pull-ups. Each of these seemingly small increments can in fact become a huge milestone and a chance for both the coach and athlete to say, "I can achieve that which I set my mind to."

The Power of Positive Self-Talk

If there is one consistent character trait I have observed in CrossFit athletes from around the world, it is a strong sense of optimism. The difficulty of the CrossFit workout naturally instills not only physical fitness but also mental fitness. Regardless of the time to completion or the amount of weight used, simply facing the daunting workout of the day (WOD) puts the other obstacles of life into proper perspective: they are all a lot easier. CrossFit coaches and athletes who understand that optimism and a positive mental attitude can yield tremendous results in the gym have one thing in common: success. The athletes are performing at the top of their game, and the coaches are surrounded by thriving clients.

The difficulty of
the CrossFit workout
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In my experience as both a CrossFit athlete and coach, I have concluded that a positive mental attitude and positive self-talk are paramount in achieving the full potential of human work capacity. Simply stated, a CrossFit coach must learn how to talk to an athlete. To this extent, I have observed that an athlete is impressionable mentally and emotionally at three distinct times while at the CrossFit affiliate gym:

Five Coaching Tips for Goal Setting and Positive Self-Talk

Use a section of the whiteboard to record goals and their expected date of achievement. In addition, encourage athletes to write their goals in a personal journal. A powerful connection takes place between the athlete and his or her goal when it takes the form of the written word.

Encourage the use of public goal setting. When an athlete communicates goals to a coach and fellow athletes, a relationship is formed based upon trust and accountability. The athlete becomes accountable to the CrossFit affiliate gym to give 100 percent on the path to accomplishing the goal. In addition, the athlete puts a high amount of trust in the coach and community to keep him or her accountable to the stated goal.

Ask your athletes what they are working towards. If athletes are uncertain, encourage and teach them how to formulate a goal. Then help them achieve it!

Publicly acknowledge when an athlete achieves a new goal. Use the whiteboard, affiliate website or newsletter. Every goal met deserves congratulations and public recognition.

Listen carefully to the words athletes use when they talk about themselves in the affiliate gym. An athlete's spoken words are a reflection of inner self-talk. Politely correct athletes who speak negatively about themselves by encouraging them to change their words to a more positive dialogue.

— Greg Amundson



Athletes are very impressionable during workouts. Good trainers take advantage of that and help bring about outstanding performances.

- From half an hour before the workout up until the announcement of “3-2-1... Go!”
- During the workout (this is perhaps when the athlete is most receptive).
- Depending on their state of alertness and fatigue, following the workout as well.

With this in mind, it becomes extremely important for the CrossFit coach to engage in positive reinforcement before, during and after a workout. The reason for this is a coach’s reinforcement, either positive or unintentionally negative, will influence the individual athlete’s self-talk at the conscious and subconscious level.

An indomitable spirit will be forged by both the coach and athlete as they realize what the mind can believe the body can achieve.

The significance of this lesson was most apparent to me during my attempt at running 100 miles in 24 hours. At the halfway point, I was joined by a coach and pace-runner who immediately said to me, “Don’t think about it, but the next 50 miles will be the hardest yet.”

We are all students in the sport of life, and this coach had no way of knowing the emotional state I was in and had the best intentions with the comment. However, on the receiving end of this bit of advice, I was left emotionally and mentally devastated. My first self-talk thought was, “This is about to get a lot harder.”

Moments after the incident took place, I was joined by my wife Mallee, who, having overheard the previous comment, loudly exclaimed, “Baby, you’re gonna fly through these next few miles!” My mental and emotional state changed in an instant, and I felt a surge of strength that replaced the weakness of only a moment before. My subconscious mind heard “fly” and “few miles.” The result was positive self-talk that sounded like, “Just a few more miles. I’m gonna fly!”

During a CrossFit workout, which may range from under two minutes to well over 45 minutes, it is impossible for a coach to predict what one small word, statement or comment an athlete will hear, register and be affected by. Therefore, it is vital that a coach be aware and respectful of the amount of influence he or she has over an athlete while at the affiliate gym.

At CrossFit Level 1 Certifications, students are taught to cue athletes with specific and concise statements, such as, “Drive through the heels!” A CrossFit coach must learn to time and articulate positive reinforcement to an athlete with the same skill. When an athlete hears from a coach, “You’re doing great! You’re going to get a personal record!” the athlete internalizes these specific and tactful words and the meaning of the statement. The effect of the coach’s words on the athlete’s self-talk is this: “I am doing great! I am going to get a PR!” Those few words can motivate tired athletes and help strong performers work just a little bit harder.

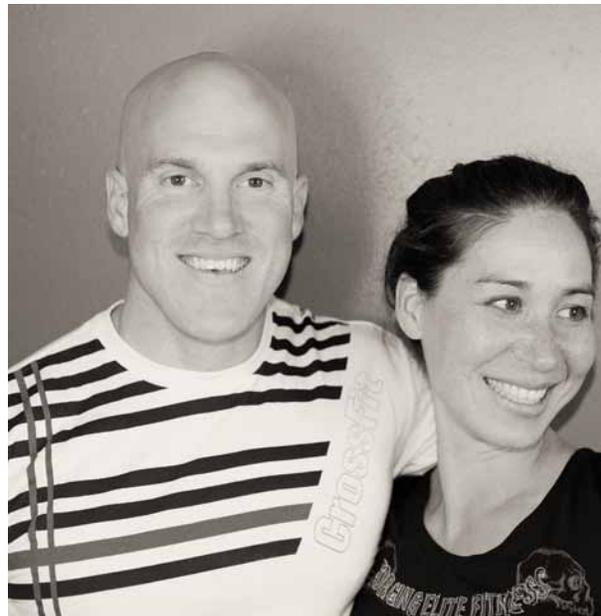
A CrossFit coach can utilize the same lessons of positive reinforcement to cue an athlete’s technique and range of motion. For example, rather than telling an athlete, “You’re rounding your back,” cue an athlete in the positive tense to reach the desired end state by saying, “Maintain your lumbar curve.” If an athlete misses the bottom of a squat, rather than saying, “You missed the

bottom," encourage by saying, "Drive two inches deeper into the squat." By choosing positive language, the coach begins to influence the athlete's own degree of positive self-talk.

Legendary fight trainer and CrossFit coach John Hackleman taught me the significance of essentially scripting athletes' self-talk for them. In his extensive coaching experience, John has had the awesome responsibility of providing advice, support and positive reinforcement to top mixed-martial-arts fighters such as former Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) light-heavyweight champion Chuck Liddell during the one-minute break between rounds of UFC bouts. John explained to me that no matter what had unfolded during the fight up until that point, he would tell the fighter such statements as, "You look strong. I am proud of you!" and "Your punching is powerful." The focus and word choice always remained in the positive tense. John said, "I would never say to my fighter, 'You're *not* tired!' or 'You *don't* feel tired' because that would almost guarantee my fighter would walk back into the cage thinking, 'I'm tired' instead of thinking something more productive and positive."

Forging an Indomitable Spirit.

Learning and applying the art of goal setting and positive self-talk will have an incredible influence upon the CrossFit affiliate coach and athlete. The result of practicing and teaching these skills with the same diligence as a CrossFit physical modality will increase the collective work capacity and positive attitude of a CrossFit affiliate. In addition, an indomitable spirit will be forged by both the coach and athlete as they realize what the mind can believe the body can achieve.



Susanmah Dy/CrossFit Journal

About the Author

Greg Amundson serves in both the U.S. military and federal law enforcement. Referred to by his peers as the original CrossFit firebreather, Greg has been training and coaching CrossFit for over nine years.

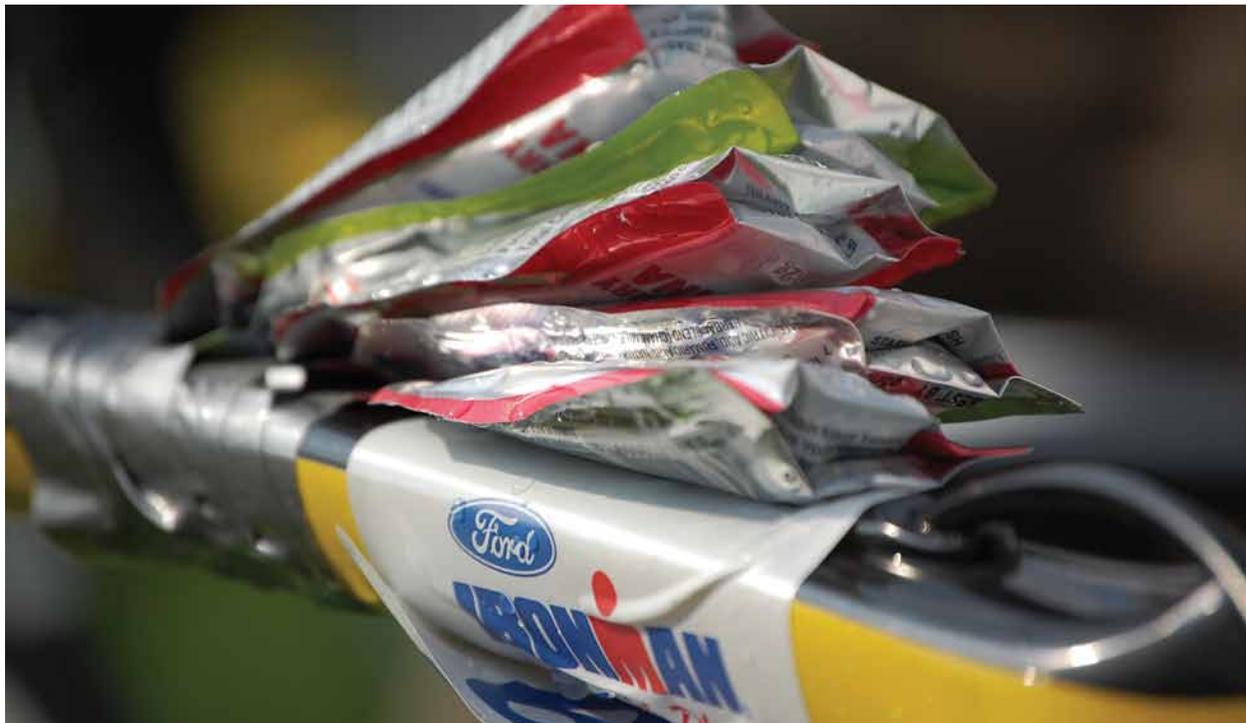
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Race-Day Fueling

Endurance athletes have always considered fueling for an event. CrossFit Endurance coach Max Wunderle explains what standard CrossFitters need to know as they prepare to compete.

By Max Wunderle

July 2010



Courtesy of Max Wunderle

The beauty of the CrossFit methodology lies in the constant sharing of ideas and the breaking down of sport-specific protocols, and these same principles can be applied in areas that have historically been celebrated in some fitness circles and ignored in others. Such an area is “in-competition” fueling.

While such a topic demands the attention of endurance athletes and can mean the difference between a podium finish and a DNF, it’s largely ignored in non-endurance activities.

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Nutrition Protocol

The concept of race-day nutrition is a cornerstone of the endurance community. First, there are three elements to competition fueling—nutrition, hydration and electrolyte management. Let's start with nutrition.

If, however, the CrossFit athlete will be engaging in multiple WODs over the course of one, two or three days, we will want to see a larger portion of carbohydrate consumed to top off our glycogen stores.

Sports drinks, gels, bars, Fig Newtons, bananas, sweet potatoes, peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches and even pizza have all been used as sources of nutrition for various endurance events lasting over four hours. At a minimum, we will want to clarify our needs from a caloric standpoint.

Muscles store carbohydrate as glycogen (long-term stored energy). This glycogen energy source is tapped

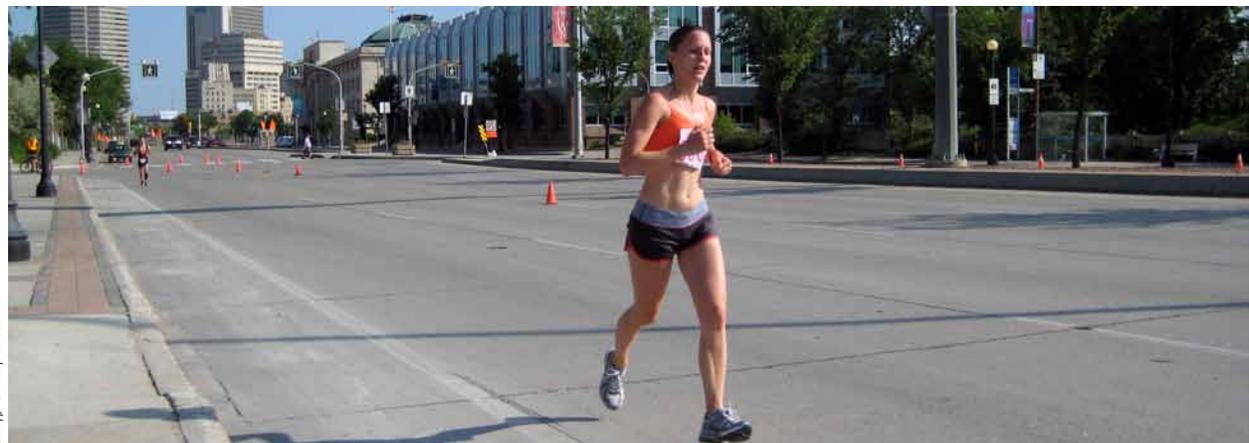
out at about 2,000 calories for a trained triathlete. Why is this important? Because this fuel source is only good for about 1.5-2 hours of high-intensity performance. So, for those of you with plans on racing events that will end in about 1.5 hours, race-day nutrition isn't as critical as for those competing in events lasting more than 2 hours. In a situation like the CrossFit Games, the replenishment of calories becomes the burden, not fueling during competition.

Pre-Competition Nutrition—CrossFitter

From an everyday perspective, fueling can remain as it is achieved in a Paleo or Zone protocol. If, however, the CrossFit athlete will be engaging in multiple WODs over the course of one, two or three days, we will want to see a larger portion of carbohydrate consumed to top off our glycogen stores. Sweet potatoes are a good choice for athletes following either a Zone or Paleo protocol. From a quantity standpoint, the athlete should look to eat approximately two additional blocks of carbohydrate during the breakfast and lunch before the first day of competition. Dinner is less relevant as complex carbohydrates will not process for about 18 hours. If a competition is multiple days, the lunch and breakfast protocols can be followed for dinner as well.

Pre-Competition Nutrition—CrossFit Endurance

Assuming an event will last three hours or more, the same protocol as shown above is appropriate. The goal is the same: consuming a measured ratio of macronutrients with a carbohydrate bias to top off one's glycogen stores.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

When preparing for a multi-WOD day, CrossFitters can borrow some fueling wisdom from endurance athletes.

In-Competition Nutrition—CrossFitter

As virtually all WODs are less than 1 hour, no additional nutrition consumption is needed.

In-Competition Nutrition—CrossFit Endurance

Now that you are aware of how much energy your body can store (approximately 2,000 calories), we need to identify how many calories are being burnt and how to replace those calories to perform between three and 17 hours. Caloric burn rates can vary anywhere between 400-750 calories per hour depending on the specific individual and effort being given.

The second part of our equation is identifying how many calories our bodies can process and turn into energy in that same time period. This again can vary between 300-550 calories per hour. Confirming this number is very personal and should be established during training rides or runs. Success begins by starting with about 300 calories per hour (for a 140-170 lb. male) and monitoring your energy levels both during and after exercise. The following information can be reviewed to see how the body demands more protein and fat as the time of an event increases (we will review hydration and electrolyte protocols later in this piece):

90 Minutes-4 Hours

Glycogen is depleted.

Fueling transitions to glucose/carbohydrate.

Isotonics or gel/water should be the source of calories.

Target should be 300 calories per hour/20 oz. of water.

Electrolytes begin to have larger role.

4-12 Hours

Intensity trends lower.

Fueling moves from glucose to fat.

Carbohydrate loading must continue to fuel fat burning.

Electrolytes must be replaced at 500-2,000 milligrams per hour.

12-18 Hours

Carbohydrate contributes 50 percent of energy vs. 80 percent at lower levels.

Protein is now needed to provide approximately 10 percent of calories.

Fat now bears a 20-35 percent burden of total calories.



Courtesy of Max Wunderle

The body can only store so much energy. For lengthy events, you're going to need to find a source of fuel to keep your body moving.

Electrolyte and water prescription remains the same as in the 4-12 hour period.

Total consumption is 300-600 calories per hour and breakdown is 60-70 percent carbohydrates, 20-30 percent fat, 10-15 percent protein.

Potassium should be replaced once every 3-4 hrs (via electrolytes or bananas).

(Source: *The Paleo Diet for Athletes* by Dr. Loren Cordain—2005)

Post-Competition Nutrition—CrossFitter

In this recovery scenario, a blend of carbohydrate and protein to the tune of 3:1 or 4:1 is ideal. This ratio ensures a quick channeling of carbohydrate to the muscles to replenish glycogen and includes much-needed protein for muscle repair. From a Paleo Diet perspective, many athletes will explore sweet potatoes and bananas for carbohydrate sources, then go “off the reservation” with a scoop of whey protein. These items can be mixed with coconut water to taste. The other end of the 3:1 spectrum is chocolate milk. Further fueling past the recovery period will feature a return to a normal Paleo or Zone protocol with appropriate quantities of all three macronutrients—protein, carbohydrate and fat.

From a Paleo Diet perspective,
many athletes will explore
sweet potatoes and bananas
for carbohydrate sources
then go “off the reservation”
with a scoop of whey protein.

Post-Competition Nutrition—CrossFit Endurance

The post-competition protocol for a CrossFit Endurance athlete is identical to that of the CrossFitter.



**Use caution when fueling during events.
Mistakes can be costly.**

Caution

Finally, here are a couple of “watch outs” and thoughts around deviating from this program. For those of you thinking you can simply down all your calories at the beginning of each hour, think again. If you flood your digestive tract with too many calories, you will force your heart to pump a disproportionate amount of blood to your stomach. This takes vital blood away from the muscles you need to compete. At the other end of the spectrum, training at 90-95 percent max of your maximum heart rate (or rate of perceived exertion) will disallow proper digestion as your body will flow a disproportionate amount of blood to your muscles and away from your stomach. This is the cause of so many “reversals” (or vomiting), which cause so many longer-distance athletes to lose vital nutrition and consequently DNF.

For those procrastinators trying to catch up in your race by loading up on nutrition missed at previous occasions, you will likely meet the same end as those trying to “forward buy” their nutrition.

So, measured, methodical introduction of calories and measured, methodical use of those calories (60-80 percent of max heart rate or RPE) will ensure your fuel is processed and used as economically and efficiently as possible.

Hydration Protocol

Pre-Competition Hydration—CrossFitter

Everyday and pre-competition water protocols are very easy to prescribe. Simply take your weight in pounds, divide by two and drink that number of ounces of water each day. So, a 150-lb. athlete should target consuming 75 oz. of water per day. Should that athlete then train for an hour, that target number would rise by about 16 oz. per hour of training.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

In-competition hydration needs can be calculated with a formula, but heat and humidity can change that equation significantly.

Pre-Competition Hydration—CrossFit Endurance

The pre-competition hydration protocol for an endurance athlete is identical to the CrossFitter's.

In-Competition Hydration—CrossFitter

Much like the scenario with nutrition, most CrossFit activities are less than 60 minutes. Therefore, no hydration is needed outside of drinking for comfort.

In-Competition Hydration—CrossFit Endurance

From an endurance-hydration perspective, minimum target consumption of water should be about 16 oz.

Electrolytes are vital to optimal body function. If optimal levels of electrolytes are not maintained, athletes can fall into a state called “hyponatremia.”

per hour. This number, however, can sway wildly in more aggressive conditions. For example, if a 170-lb. male is competing/training in a relatively low-humidity environment at 73-76 degrees, the 16-20 oz. per hour target is quite sufficient to ensure optimal hydration levels. Conversely, as the temperature goes up, say 85 degrees with increased levels of humidity, the target consumption levels of water can be as high as 32 oz. per hour. To experiment with various activities and temperature environments, please visit the [Gatorade hydration calculator](#). This is a very good tool for targeting water consumption, not Gatorade consumption.

Post-Competition Hydration—CrossFitter

No significant protocol changes are necessary. Returning to the half-body-weight-in-ounces prescription will successfully rehydrate the athlete.

Post-Competition Hydration—CrossFit Endurance

Identical to the CrossFitter.

Electrolyte	Role	Target Dose Per 8 oz. of Water	Daily Performance Target
Sodium	Muscle contraction Nerve transmission	150-250 mg	1,500-4,500 mg
Chloride	Peak muscle function	45-75 mg	45-75 mg
Potassium	Muscle contraction Nerve transmission Glycogen formation	50-80 mg	2,500-4,000 mg
Magnesium	Muscle relaxation ATP production	20-30 mg	400-800 mg
Calcium	Bone health Nerve transmission Muscle contraction	10-15 mg	1,200-1,600 mg

Table 1: Electrolytes and Recommended Intake Levels

Electrolyte Management

This segment will seek to break down and simplify the third category of performance fueling. On race day (and in any efforts lasting longer than 1.5-2 hours) and in the days leading up to a competition, attention to electrolyte levels can be vital.

In essence, electrolytes are vital to optimal body function. If optimal levels of electrolytes are not maintained, athletes can fall into a state called “hyponatremia,” a condition that is defined by low sodium levels in the blood. Symptoms of this state are weakness, cramping, nausea, fatigue and vomiting. Ultimately, this condition can even cause death, as it has in several marathons over the past three years. In each case of death (Chicago and Boston marathons), the athletes in question consumed gluttonous amounts of water that effectively diluted their electrolyte levels and brought on hyponatremia.

Conversely, and just as deadly, is hypernatremia, a condition caused by an elevated level of sodium in the blood. While over-consumption of electrolytes can be a driver of this condition, it is more commonly associated with dehydration, as the increased level of sodium is more often caused by a lack of water ingestion.

The biggest challenge for those who follow a diet with very low levels of sodium is understanding how to ingest electrolytes or define the appropriate amounts to ingest. The chart above and guidelines below should help one define his or her own protocol.

Pre-Competition Electrolytes—CrossFitter

At a minimum, the ingestion of incremental salt in the day before competition is mandatory. This can be done via soup at lunch and dinner the day before competition or through consumption of electrolyte supplements like Saltstick (see next page). Such a protocol can be very personal (note the target ranges in the chart above) and should be practiced in training before race day. An experiment with several bowls of soup prior to a 45-minute aerobic WOD should help define personal success.

Pre-Competition Electrolytes—CrossFit Endurance

The same pre-competition protocol can be followed by a CrossFit Endurance athlete.

In-Competition Electrolytes—CrossFitter

Much like the scenario with nutrition and hydration, most CrossFit activities are less than 60 minutes. Therefore no in-competition electrolyte consumption is needed.

In-Competition Electrolytes—CrossFit Endurance

To best identify your needs around electrolytes, we simply need to understand the amount of fluid being lost in any given hour of exercise. To do this, weigh yourself (without workout clothes on) before your session, then do the same afterwards. If you consumed fluids during the session, simply subtract that weight (roughly 16 oz. of fluid per pound) from your post-workout result. Once you know the amount of fluid you are shedding per hour,

Electrolyte	Average Sweat (per 11 oz./315 ml)	SaltStick Caps (per capsule)
Sodium (mg)	220	215
Potassium (mg)	63	63
Magnesium (mg)	8	11
Calcium (mg)	16	22

Table 2: Comparison of Electrolyte Loss in Sweat and Electrolyte Content of SaltStick Supplement

Source: Maughan, Shirreffs. *Fluid and electrolyte loss and replacement in exercise.* **Oxford Textbook of Sports Medicine.** 2nd Edition. Harris, Williams, Stanish, Micheli, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. pp. 97-113.

you can then estimate losses of various electrolytes as below. I've also included an electrolyte breakdown of the leading electrolyte supplement, [Saltstick](#).

Now that you know your sweat rate, you can plan your training and racing activities appropriately. As an example, if you are sweating about 22 oz. per hour, you now know that you need to replace about 440 milligrams of sodium every hour to retain optimal performance. Before jumping into an electrolyte-/sodium-replacement supplement, you must back out the electrolytes present in your calorie source (gels, bars, etc.). So, if you are using GU Energy gels, each pouch contains about 55 milligrams of sodium. Based on consuming three gels per hour, your nutrition source will be doubling as a sodium replacement source as well but will come up short by about 275 milligrams. Therefore, the use of an electrolyte-replacement capsule like Saltstick (one to two capsules per hour) will be needed.

Post-Competition Electrolytes—CrossFitter

If there is no immediate sense of urgency in the athlete's condition (no dizziness, cramping, vomiting, nausea, headaches, etc.), no incremental attention to electrolyte ingestion is needed past your normal post-competition protocol (recovery drink/nutrition). If, however, there are signs of the maladies listed, immediate medical attention should be sourced, with the athlete potentially in need of a saline IV drip to quickly administer needed electrolytes and water.



Julian Mason/Creative Commons

By calculating the electrolytes lost through sweat, you can decide how you will replace them with tablets, gels or beverages during a long competition.

Post-Competition Hydration—CrossFit Endurance

The same protocol can be followed.

The Complete Approach

In summary, we believe there are three major areas in performance fitness: training, recovery and nutrition. It goes without saying that all three must be respected appropriately. This “three-legged stool” will not provide a firm foundation if only one or two of its legs are given requisite attention. Ensure your athletes are educated and executing the proper protocols to make sure their race-day fueling strategies are as committed as their training and recovery protocols.



About the Author

Max Wunderle is a CrossFit Endurance head coach and a former elite marathon swimmer and world-class Ironman Triathlon athlete. His resume includes becoming the second-youngest person to ever swim around Manhattan Island (28.5 miles at the age of 17), as well as ending 2008 as the No. 2-ranked Ironman triathlete in the United States (35-39 age group). Max is the founder of [TriMax Fitness](#) and co-founder of [Ironworks Athletics](#).



Courtesy of Max Wunderle

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Facebook or Fitness?

Saratoga High School replaced standard P.E. with CrossFit, and while all kids might not like putting in the effort, most report that they're seeing great results.

By Peter Jordan CrossFit Sawmill

July 2010



"Be not afraid of fitness: some are born fit, some achieve fitness and some have CrossFit thrust upon them."

—William Shakespeare (more or less)

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Saratoga High School in Saratoga, Calif., is the home of CrossFit Sawmill. We are, as far as we know, the only comprehensive public high school that not only offers CrossFit classes to our students but also offers no alternative. All our physical fitness (formerly physical education) classes are based on CrossFit principles and are taught by certified CrossFit instructors. We have 10 sections of Beginning Physical Fitness throughout the school day, and our facility is used extensively by athletes in our after-school sports programs, as well as by groups of teachers and school staff—all under the supervision of our instructors.

One thing that makes our affiliate unique is our clients do not pay to be here; they are compelled to be here. Students must earn 20 units of physical education credit (the equivalent of four semesters) to graduate. You can earn credits if you are a member of the marching band, and you can earn credits for playing sports after school. But if you are not a musician or an athlete, as of this year you are a CrossFitter.

So what does the average 15-year-old think about that?

“Another year of PE would kill me. Next year I’m taking track.”

“I hate this physical education class because it takes away time from my awesome life. One example is facebook and other shit.”



At Saratoga High School, you don't go to P.E. You go to CrossFit.



While some kids would prefer a game of dodgeball, others are seeing the benefits of a more intense approach to fitness.

Survey Says ...

In March, midway through our second semester of implementation, we surveyed 227 freshmen and sophomore students about fitness in general, CrossFit in particular, and how the "new P.E." compares to the "old P.E."

"The new P.E. class is extremely unenjoyable. P.E. to most students is a class where students should have fun playing games, such as Capture the Flag and Dodgeball. It would be much better for students to have the previous, relaxing, and more fun P.E. curriculum."

On the other hand:

"This class is a refreshing break from the classes I have taken in the past, where the focus is not particularly on strength, but on skills in different sports. I really enjoyed this class and would love to take it again."

"This class is new to me. I can at least do something rather than nothing like the old P.E."

"It's a lot better than the old program even if we do a lot of groaning."

Most students agree on some things. Fully 86 percent of respondents agree that the new class is challenging, and over 90 percent agree that it is tiring:

"The workouts are tiring"

"Very tiring."

"Horribly tiring."

"UGHHHHH SO TIRING."

Despite this, or because of it, 86.2 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "I am stronger."

"It is very effective. I have really noticed improvements in terms of flexibility and muscle."

"It is really fun and I like going to PE, and at the end of the period I am in fact tired and I am improving day by day."

"It's really annoying and hard but it's good and makes you stronger"



If you had taken CrossFit in school, where would your fitness level be today?

In addition to being stronger, many students also reported being faster (62.1 percent), more flexible (38.9 percent), more agile (35 percent) and more knowledgeable (33 percent). Many report that they think more about what they eat (32 percent), and a significant number report sleeping better (24.6 percent) and improved ability to focus in school (24.1 percent).

**“It is very effective.
I have really noticed
improvements in terms of
flexibility and muscle.”**

Students were asked to rate the effectiveness of various elements of our daily routine. The WOD received the highest rating (48.7 percent said it was very effective; 32.6 percent said it was somewhat effective), followed by games. The element that was rated least effective was the reflection. At the end of every class we take a few minutes to have students record the times, loads, reps, etc. and to write a few words about how they feel, how they are progressing or anything else related to fitness.

“I don’t see the point in the reflections we do at the end of class ... I think it is a waste of time because we are not going to need to know what we did on a certain day and I don’t think it benefits us at all.”

“Reflections are stupid.”

“The reflections are useless and a waste of time.”

For the teacher, the reflections are enlightening and reassuring:

"I did a pull-up today! I was so happy!"

"Yesterday when I had to pick up my hairbrush, instead of bending with my back, I did the gorilla squat. I liked how we were working out, but it was still fun—not painfully boring."

"I ran with (my friend) in the beginning but towards the second lap, she walked and I kept running. I was not as sore/weak as usual. I was quite proud of myself."

"OMG! One of the first ones to finish the workout ... pretty impressive, I'm glad (my friend) pushed me to work harder otherwise I'd probably have walked the whole time feeling negative. Backpack cleans in the quad were interesting, I'm glad I always keep my bag light."

"I'm noticing changes in my calves. They are becoming stronger. I slept a lot more last night."

"I like this workout. I feel healthy yet not tired. That's weird I guess."

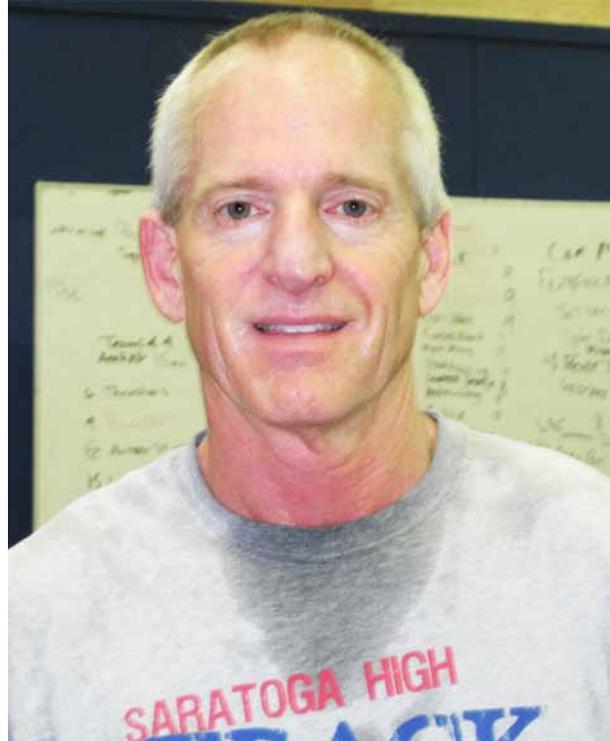
Meet the generation for whom feeling healthy is "weird":

"Okay, so I get how this is supposed to get us fit or whatever but really being physically fit is a choice not a requirement. This class is stupid, for several hours a week I could have been studying for my SATs because Stanford is going to choose me for that and not for my physical fitness. This class is a complete waste of my time, I don't need a knowitall teacher telling me what to do in order to take care of my body. If I want to be physically fit I'll do it on my own time, maybe when I'm older. Right now I need to focus on my future, not on my body. Thanks."

"I hate this physical education class because it takes away time from my awesome life. One example is facebook and other shit."

Clearly, the jury is still out on the new P.E. Of the sophomores who took the old class last year and the new one this year, 63.5 percent would prefer that we go back to rolling out the balls. Of 80 free-response comments, about half of them were negative. The good news is about half of them were not. And almost all our students are getting tired on a regular basis, almost all of them are feeling stronger, and many are feeling a weird sensation called "fitness." We are confident that we would not be able to accomplish this with the "previous, relaxing, and more fun P.E. curriculum."

To see the complete survey results, go to the Teacher Resource page at CrossFitSawmill.com.



About the Author

Peter Jordan is the Saratoga High School athletic director and physical-education department chair, and part owner and operator of CrossFit Sawmill, along with fellow P.E. teachers Rick Ellis, Tim Lugo and Yuko Aoki.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Go West, CrossFitter!

Journeying to the Home Depot Center this weekend? Kevin Daigle offers his travel tips for the discreet CrossFitter embarking on a savage fitness adventure.

By Kevin Daigle CrossFit New England

July 2010



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

When it comes to traveling I've always been a nervous packer. Think of a squirrel jamming acorns into a suitcase on Nov. 30. Therefore, I do *not* pack light. With this tendency, though, comes a very CrossFit concept: being prepared for the unknown and the unknowable.

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Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

Kevin Daigle uses an overhead squat to ensure his carry-on does not exceed airline weight restrictions.

I've almost never run into a situation where I had to say, "Oh, shit! I forgot to bring" My luggage is heavy, but it's efficient. In a carry-on-size rolling suitcase and small backpack I can pack enough clothing and equipment for a 12-day trek through Dante's Inferno, Purgatorio, and not have to do laundry until Paradiso. Screw ... checking ... bags. Screw it with a 28-volt Milwaukee cordless screw gun.

Being only days away from the big show in Carson, it's high time I got my stuff together and packed up for the trip to the left coast. So, let's talk a little about what we need for a trip across the greatest country ever to cornhole King George as we travel to see the greatest spectacle in sport.

The Carry-On: Essentials Only

Lube, leather pants, fuzzy handcuffs Shit. That was Vegas.

This particular trip will be a little different than last year's Games, as the dust level will be much lower (thank god).

However, the same basic equipment is required for full enjoyment of the 2010 CrossFit Games. Because the thought of forgetting some inane item that I probably don't even need strikes paranoia into my heart as if I were J. Edgar Hoover making out with Joseph McCarthy, the list will be thorough and exhausting.

In order to effectively support your trip, you first need to identify what it is you'll be doing and what you'll need to facilitate those activities. You need to know what must be purchased and what must be packed. It doesn't get any more hunter/gatherer than that, folks. This is CrossFit at work. All trips are not created equal. Going to Amsterdam? Then you might want to visit your local smoke shop for "tobacco use only" products, and perhaps the family-planning aisle at CVS. Going to the 2010 CrossFit Games? Well, that will probably include trips to Whole Foods and Lululemon Athletica.

**You'll need to load
your carry-on with items
that will help you survive
imprisonment aboard the
aluminum tube of death
that is an airliner.**

Start with the main components of the trip. First, you'll likely have an airport/flight leg of the voyage. In this scenario, you'll need to load your carry-on with items that will help you survive imprisonment aboard the aluminum tube of death that is an airliner for six hours (if you're coming from Boston, as I am). I'm recommending carry-on baggage only unless you're a masochistic dipshit who wants to find out what it's like to have *nothing* when you reach your destination and your bags reach theirs somewhere else.

In the carry-on, snacks are key, but we need to stay Paleo, people. Just because you're traveling doesn't mean it's time to eat like shit. Save that for the celebration on Sunday. A nice selection of nuts, seeds, Larabars (a.k.a. "crackbars," especially the coconut cr me pie), and some life-saving Paleo Kits from Steve's Club is essential. This

will keep your blood sugar even and your psyche firmly planted on the ground, even though you're 30,000 feet above it in a realm where humans were never meant to tread.

Then, of course, there are other human beings (and I use that term loosely) who will be accompanying (or accosting) you. You need to survive their bullshit as well, which is far more difficult than eating right. There will definitely be some meatstick who wants talk to you about bodybuilding, circuit training, P90X or marathons—all things I care about as deeply as humane treatment for Osama bin Laden and face-eating monkeys from Connecticut. Also, you can count on at least three babies being located strategically around your non-aisle, non-window seat, and they'll unleash a maelstrom of auditory punishment that rivals anything the Furies themselves could muster.

A simple and effective solution can be found: earphones and an MP3 player. If you don't have an MP3 player, bring your Discman (if it isn't already a fossil in a drawer somewhere). It doesn't matter. Get an animal-crackers

box and write "Walkman" on it. Do anything to make it less inviting for the hellions around to engage you about the weather or the state of the economy. Preventing those sounds from tormenting you for the next six hours is paramount.

These items go in the backpack, which stores neatly under the seat.

Clothes and Accessories

An arduous six hours later, the fun finally begins when you arrive at LAX or some other airport of your choosing. We'll find ourselves in the L.A. area in mid-July. This will be my first trip to the region, but I've heard it's hotter than the ball-bag of Beelzebub himself during Murph. Therefore, we'll want to pack weather-appropriate clothing.

Being CrossFitters, we're in luck here: we probably don't have to go buy anything. Most of us (including myself) own enough CrossFit T-shirts and Under Armor to need some sort of closet filing system. Bring them all. You never know which you'll need at what time.



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

The essentials for a trip. Note Costanza-sized wallet packed with old receipts, coupons and supermarket frequent-buyer cards.

Of course, this could be a place to save space and weight. Many of you (whom I quietly despise) just eat Paleo and lean out like an anorexic marathoner on ma huang, so you'll be shirtless all weekend. So bring your Infidel shirt and a tank top and call it a day. But you gotta cover your junk up. They simply won't put up with that business at the Home Depot Centre, so don't forget your board shorts and cargo shorts.

Oakleys, Ray-Bans, etc. are mandatory equipment. They also make it easier to "scope out the scenery" without getting in trouble with your significant other. And there will indeed be scenery.

We need to look cool and protect our ocular orbs, so Oakleys, Ray-Bans (my personal favorites), etc. are mandatory equipment. They also make it easier to "scope out the scenery" without getting in trouble with your significant other. And there will indeed be scenery.

We're not going to be far from Tinseltown, so it'd be a good idea to bring some Skechers, pants, and perhaps a collared shirt if you plan on going out at night to engage in some well-deserved revelry. I'm packing a bib, because In-N-Out Burger is definitely on the Daigle Itinerary for the weekend. All this clothing is clearly going to take up the lion's share of space in your luggage—unless your name is Lauren Plumey. All of her outfits for the weekend, competition and otherwise, will fit in the side pocket of her laptop bag.

Lets be real here: we're all CrossFitters and a WOD could break out at any time. Very few of us are going to be able to watch this thing go down and not be tempted to hit a WOD at a local affiliate or frighten gentle society by doing so at the hotel. Jump ropes, compression shorts (necessary for rowing if you're a dude), DeFeet socks, Inov8s and Vibram Five Fingers don't take up much room,

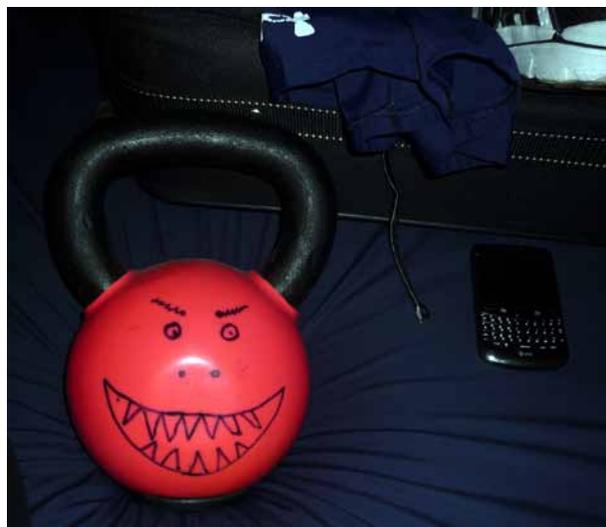


Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

Board shorts: part of the uniform.

so squish that shit in your suitcase like it's a freshman going in a locker. You already have your MP3 player and headphones, so you're good on that one.

And don't bring a Kettlebell. The TSA doesn't appreciate their effectiveness for training on the road at all. The TSA will be especially unhappy with you if it looks like the one featured below.



Do not bring your evil kettlebell with you. Don't worry: that brutal bastard will still be waiting for you when you get home.



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

Good to go.

Final Tips

Only a few more ancillary items are absolutely essential. It goes without saying that we'll need all our toiletries: toothbrush, tongue cleaner, deodorant, toothpaste and your trusty callus file (you never know when someone will challenge you to Cindy). If you're a dude, remember your electric shaver. If you're a woman ... please, keep that to yourself.

I suggest purchasing sunscreen and mouthwash upon arrival, unless you want to either be questioned needlessly at the security checkpoint or forced to throw them out. At the very least, put them in a clear plastic bag for easy TSA inspection.

Pro Tip No. 1: Pack your electric toothbrush in an easy-to-reach pocket so that when it turns on and is mistaken for a battery-powered wiener it can be quickly identified and disarmed.

On that note, here's Pro Tip No. 2: Prophylactic devices fit into the personal-care category and common sense dictates they go in the same luggage pockets. But if you think you'll be requiring them—and let us recall the immortal words of Tupac Shakur in *California Love*:

"Pack a vest for ya' jimmy in the city of sex"—stow them elsewhere lest they fall out all over the conveyor when the TSA lady checks your bag for the vibrating toothbrush. Ignore this advice and risk the disappointed-grandma gaze. Such a spectacle would be entertainment enough to get the rest of us all the way to Carson in good spirits, and if it happens to you, I will point at you and laugh.

Karma sucks, and now it's probably my turn.

To tie things up you'll need a few more small items.

A BlackBerry, iPhone, Droid or smart phone of your choice is essential to keep up with live scoring updates on the 2010 Games site. This was *endless* fun at sectionals and regionals. Not to mention, everyone loves being the person with the answers to "who's in XYZ place on 123 WOD?"

You'll also need a wallet, even if you've had it since you were 12 years old and rebuilt it out of black duct tape. If it has a chain, grow up. Pack it with Black, Gold or Silver Amex, or some other high-end plastic to support your spending at Whole Foods, Trader Joe's or whatever other quality food purveyor you'll be frequenting.

Don't even pretend you can resist buying the "If CrossFit was easy, it'd be your mom" T from West Santa Cruz.

You'll also want to be able to buy CrossFit T-shirts from every affiliate in attendance. Don't even pretend you can resist buying the "If CrossFit was easy, it'd be your mom" T-shirt from West Santa Cruz. CrossFitters buy affiliate T-shirts like a trophy wife buys bling with a blank check at Tiffany's. How you're going to fit all the schwag in your luggage for the return trip is a quandary I leave to you.

Lastly—and I shouldn't even have to say this, but we all know someone will be guilty—please do *not* fucking forget your goddamn cell-phone charger. There will be at least 100 people walking around the HDC trying to bum iPhone and BlackBerry chargers.

Don't be one of those people.



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

Pack your most bitchin' CrossFit T-shirts, but leave a bit of room so you can bring more home.



Courtesy of Kevin Daigle

About the Author

Kevin Daigle is a 29-year-old football player and coach turned CrossFitter from Dracut, Mass., who stumbled upon CrossFit while visiting a friend on Nantucket Island in the summer of 2008. After that first WOD he never looked back, seemingly finding the missing piece of athletics he'd lost after matriculating from football at Western New England College in Springfield, Mass. Within a year he met all the right people in the CrossFit community around Boston, began training at CrossFit New England under the tutelage of Ben Bergeron and Heather Keenan Bergeron, got his first taste of competition, and went to Aromas to see the 2009 CrossFit games firsthand. Kevin placed 23rd at the New England Sectional in Milford, Conn., and 29th at the Northeast Regional in Albany, N.Y. Kevin enjoys omelets, writing (see [Daigle Breathes Fire](#)), drag racing and all types of ill shit.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

No Rep?

Adrian Bozman and Chuck Carswell talk about the finer points of judging the CrossFit Games.

By Mike Warkentin

July 2010



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Competing in the CrossFit Games is hard, but judging the competition might be just as challenging.

Put yourself in a judge's shoes for a minute: It's the last event of the CrossFit Games, and it's anybody's race to win. The sun is beating down on you and some classic Metallica is pumping out of the speakers at 100 decibels. Cameras are everywhere. Thousands of fans are screaming. Dave Castro says, "Go!" and one of the world's fittest athletes is a blur in front of you.

Did you catch that last rep?

Enforcing the Standards

Judging isn't for everyone. You must have a keen eye for movement, and you must be able to make split-second decisions. Being able to count doesn't hurt, either.

Adrian Bozman and Chuck Carswell are two HQ trainers who served as judges in 2009 and will be reprising their roles in 2010. Both are expert trainers who can spot a muted hip from 100 yards on a hazy day, and it's their job to make the competition as fair as is humanly possible for the athletes.

And these athletes aren't run-of-the-WOD CrossFitters; they're the strongest and fastest athletes in the world. If you've only got a fraction of a second to judge squat depth at a weekend cert, that interval is almost non-existent when you're judging Jason Khalipa, Mikko Salo, Kristan Clever or Lindsey Smith.

"The movement just happens so freakin' fast, man," Carswell says. "You've got a split second to see it, and then a split second to figure out if it was what we are looking for as far as the standards go or if it was off. And then, beyond that, you've got to decide what you're going to do with all that information If I had to equate it to anything, it would probably be like that leap of going from high school to college and the leap of going from college to pro. Every level, it just dramatically changes."

Carswell, of course, made those leaps himself and ended up in the Miami Dolphins system as a defensive back in the early '90s.

Boz, a beast in his own right and a trainer at San Francisco CrossFit, agrees that speed is the greatest challenge for the judging team.

"Every year it seems we find something that presents its own challenge compared to the other movements," he says. "Every move has a set of pretty easily defined standards, but when the tempo picks up for a lot of movements, that's where it gets difficult For example, a push-up, really, the standard on a push-up is not that difficult to see, but when you start cranking up the speed as most people do on push-ups, it can be pretty hard judging-wise."



Susanah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Judges at the CrossFit Games have one ultimate goal: making sure the athletes meet the movement standards.

Judging isn't for everyone.
You must have a keen eye
for movement, and you must
be able to make split-second
decisions. Being able to count
doesn't hurt, either.



Chuck Carswell (left) judges Jason Khalipa during the triplet WOD at the 2009 CrossFit Games.

The Big Picture

Some movements, of course, are trickier than others. CrossFit is based on compound movements, so judges can't just focus on one body part. For instance, judging biceps curls would be pretty simple compared to a kettlebell swing.

"I think anything where you have a combination of something being overhead and where a hip is fully open, those types of movements are probably the toughest," Carswell explains. "Where the hip has to be open and something has to be overhead, you're talking about the thruster scenario, you're talking about the kettlebell, the snatch—all that stuff where you have to see a single straight line."

Both Boz and Chuck use a "big-picture" approach to evaluating compound movements. Rather than looking at the hip and then the upper body, they take a step back and look for clean lines in the overall movement.

Redoing reps is every competitor's nightmare, but it's part of the game at the elite level.

"The strategy is kind of a periphery look," Carswell explains. "You just have to see the whole picture. You can't get stuck focused on any one part. It's almost like you have to gloss it over and make sure he ends up in a straight line. In your mind's eye you have that perfectly straight plumb line that you're looking for that athlete to make. If they hit it, great, and if they don't, then we've got to redo it."



Boz briefs the crew of judges at the 2009 CrossFit Games.

Redoing reps is every competitor's nightmare, but it's part of the game at the elite level. Even eventual champion Mikko Salo had reps taken away on his way to the overall title. In fact, Boz remembers Salo losing between 30 and 50 reps on the snatch/wall-ball couplet that ended Day 1.

"Every time he got something taken away, it wasn't a big deal," Boz says. "He just looked at his judge, gave a thumbs up or a head nod and did another one. He just did what had to be done, so I think it's all about being clear with your movement, and if you're prepared, it's not a big deal."

While a few athletes always push the standards right to the limit in an attempt to shave seconds, most missed reps are due to physical failure. A competitor is simply too gassed to meet the standards.

"A lot of time it's like coaching," Boz says. "You can tell (a cue) to the athlete a number of times and there might not be any sort of change in the results, and I think that has less to do with you as a judge and more to do with them just being at that point where they're so fatigued that that's it."

Taking away a rep is a tough thing to do, but it has to be done. Judges are put in challenging situations, but they know exactly what they're getting into when they accept the job.

"I'd be lying to you if I told you I didn't feel it (when I deny a rep), but at the same time, my job is to make it fair for everybody regardless of who's standing in front of me," Carswell says. "We want the standards to be the same all across the board, and so when you're looking at a guy that's maybe not hitting the reps and you're trying to communicate No. 1 that he missed the rep and No. 2 what he needs to do to get it right, it can get pretty frustrating, but you've just got to make that call."

Neither judge feels the need to motivate competitors, either. While athletes at a box might need some encouragement from time to time, the world's fittest are usually far beyond driven when it's time to compete. The judges simply stand back and decide if the movements make the grade.

And for athletes preparing for the Games, Boz offers this advice:

"Just be as clear as possible and realize that the judge is there ultimately for their success. I think sometimes the judges are viewed as not necessarily the bad guy but (someone who's there) to hinder progress, which is not the case. It's the other way around. If you're clear with the judge, you'll get through that workout monster-quick."



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Learning Curve

CrossFit presents a host of new challenges to athletes who think they're "fit," but Melissa Saccoccia explains that the program both requires and rewards patience.

By Melissa Saccoccia

July 2010



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

CrossFit movements can be challenging to learn, but there's magic in them when they're done properly.

I'm always on the lookout for new workouts and workout ideas. So when something really catches my eye, when something really stands out, I jump on it.

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My friend Umar is probably the most fit person I know. And, like me, he's a total insomniac. We have very similar workout styles and tastes and, for the most part, live the same lifestyle—right down to 3 a.m. wake-up calls and 5 a.m. training sessions. So when he told me that he almost threw up after the first time he went to a CrossFit class at CrossFit Toronto, I was even more excited. I love putting myself through physical torture because I love the feeling of accomplishment that goes along with it. I live for that rush. The gym, rollerblading, running, swimming—it's an addiction, and I'll do anything to satisfy it.

CrossFit was very different than what I had expected. It wasn't the most intense hour of my life, and I didn't almost throw up after. If anything, I kind of regretted not staying back at my gym after my run so I could have done my own resistance training. At least there I can measure my progress. At least there I know how to push myself, how to improve from the day/week/month/set/rep that came before. At least there I know where my limits lie, so I know how to test and push them.

Now, I'm not saying the CrossFit workout was easy. Trust me: I am quite aware of how pathetic I looked compared to other, more experienced members. But it was frustrating. I'm usually pretty good at maintaining proper form, partly because I've always been active and partly because I'm a physical person. So it burned me when I couldn't get into a position that would allow me to really push myself. It burned me that I had to start at the bottom, that I had to walk while the others ran. It burned me that I couldn't give it my all, that I couldn't and wouldn't get that high.

Without even realizing it, I had worked muscles that even the most intense workout I do on my own can't touch.



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Compound movements challenge the entire body and therefore require more concentration and practice than traditional weightlifting movements seen in the Globo Gym.

I felt inadequate and incompetent—until the next day came, that is. As soon as I woke up, I could feel it. Or I couldn't feel it, I should say, because I couldn't move. Literally. My abs, my back, my biceps, my triceps, my chest were killed. Without even realizing it, I had worked muscles that even the most intense workout I do on my own can't touch. And I had worked them in a way that was completely foreign to them. I hadn't been that sore since ... since I don't even know when. Sure, I'm always completely exhausted when I leave the gym, but not like that.

Time to Learn About CrossFit

Sometimes it's easy to give up on new things before giving them a proper chance. People don't like feeling uncomfortable, out of their element, unsure, afraid, vulnerable or weak. No one likes the feeling you get when you're standing there and everyone is watching you, waiting, because you can't seem to grasp what they can so easily. No one likes the feeling you get when what you're doing goes against everything you've ever known, how you've been programmed, so much so that you cannot, for the life of you, figure out how to adapt to it, how to change, how to just let it wash over you as you go with it.

I'll let you in on what it's taken me a lifetime to learn, and what I still struggle with daily: it's not always about trying or forcing. Sometimes it's about allowing. You have to allow yourself that time to learn. You have to allow yourself the opportunity to make mistakes and the opportunity to work through them. You have to allow yourself to be patient. You have to allow yourself the chance to adapt. You have to allow yourself to be open. You have to allow yourself to be.

It's not about being able
to run the fastest or lift or
squat the most or stretch the
deepest. It's being a jack of all
trades and a master of none.



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

Determination and perseverance are essential in CrossFit. Those athletes with both qualities inevitably find success and fitness.

I went to the gym the next day, as usual. I ran. I cycled. I used the elliptical. But 10 minutes into my resistance training, I left. I was bored. It was easy. I didn't feel uncomfortable or unsure or out of my element or afraid or weak. But I also knew what it was to feel all those things, to push through them and to become stronger for it. I knew what it was like to wake up the next day and feel it—to really feel it. So I got in my car and drove downtown again. And I did better: I pushed myself a bit more and I improved.

On that first day, we did some exercises on the rings. When you watch someone else demonstrating, it looks easy enough. But then when you try yourself? Holding yourself upside down with nothing but your hands to support you, doing backward and forward flips essentially in mid-air? Not easy. But, like the owner of the studio explained to me, it's our fear that makes us hesitate. Nothing else. The rings aren't going anywhere. The rings will move with us, not against us. Worst case scenario: it's not that far to the floor. All we have to do is hold on. The rest will come naturally, if not at first, then soon enough. It's not that it's hard, per se. It's just new.

It's not about being an expert at one thing. It's not about being able to run the fastest or lift or squat the most or stretch the deepest. It's being a jack of all trades and a master of none. It's about being able to perform well at all tasks, not expertly at one. It's about learning to respond and react to everything that can be presented to us. It's not just about working out. It's about being fit.



Courtesy of Melissa Saccoccia

About the Author

Melissa Saccoccia is a teacher from Toronto, Ont., but is currently living and working in the U.K. She stays fit by running, weight training, swimming, rollerblading, cycling and doing anything else that gets and keeps her heart rate up. She attributes all of her fitness-related progress to her iPod.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Too Fat to Lift

Chris Moore reflects on a quest for strength that pushed his weight to 370 lb. Now he's on a path to strength *and* health.

By Chris Moore

July 2010



Courtesy of Chris Mason/AtLarge Nutrition

Powerlifter Ryan Celli recently posted a 625 squat, 530 bench and 685 deadlift for a raw record total of 1,840 at 198 lb.

I could not, for the life of me, take my eyes off the man.

The guy was like a train wreck, a cataclysm and a sunrise all rolled up into one big, disturbing—yet somehow beautiful—package.

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Courtesy of Darren Mehling/CrossFit Manitoba/Freak Fitness



Darren Mehling deadlifted 805 lb. at 338 lb., then dropped almost 100 lb. to win several amateur bodybuilding shows in Manitoba, Canada. At a current weight of about 260, Darren recently set the CrossFit Football bench-press record (225 lb. x 34). He can deadlift 655, and he can squat 500 and press 255 for triples. His Fran time is under four minutes, and he has 32 kipping pull-ups.

In hindsight, I should've been paying more attention. This was a national-level powerlifting meet, after all, and I was supposed to be assisting my buddy Mike, who was competing. Everything was proceeding as planned. Mike's squat warm-ups went very well. He looked strong, especially for a CrossFit guy who doesn't necessarily specialize in the lifts. Right as we were approaching the platform for opening attempts, I saw the object of my fascination.

I could almost hear him
thinking to himself,
“Imagine all the food I had to eat
to get this magnificent gut.”

Picture in your mind, dear reader, a walking, talking kielbasa sausage. Four hundred pounds of man shoved into a 350-lb. bag. He could not have gone unnoticed: the guy was wearing the brightest yellow shirt you ever saw.

He wasn't there to compete, but you could tell he was a lifter. Heavily muscled upper back. A corkscrew splattering of busted blood vessels along his neckline—a sure sign of more than a few max-effort attempts. Enlarged, coarsely calloused hands. He carried himself with an expected strut, a look that screamed, “I am a fucking big, strong guy, and I know it.”

What struck me, though, were all the features that seemingly did not belong on a trained athlete. That strut of his, while confident, was barely a snail's pace, and it was performed atop two strained, purple ankles. He wasn't really doing much of anything behind the scenes but somehow still needed that handy gym towel to mop up the ever-growing stream of sweat, now furiously pouring from every inch of his body. The belly was something to be envied. I could almost hear him thinking to himself, “Imagine all the food I had to eat to get this magnificent gut. What have you ever accomplished with your life, asshole?”

Mike was actually having a tremendous day. He had nailed a PR squat, lifting 405 lb. in the 181 class. No belt, no wraps. He followed that up with a nice performance on the bench press. After a brief celebration, I couldn't help but notice it must have been lunchtime. This deduction was made after once more noticing The Man himself, plus three newly acquired double cheeseburgers.

What the hell had this guy done to himself? Was it intentional? All in the name of maximal strength? I wanted to grab one of the burgers and throw it down the hallway as far as possible. I could imagine him bursting into pursuit, quickly losing his grip on consciousness as that body rapidly drained its limited energy supply. Then it hit me. There was a reason I was so fascinated. Only three years prior, I had been in that guy's shoes.

Big Ain't Strong. Strong Is Strong.

OK, so maybe I wasn't quite that bad. But still ...

I came to the sport of lifting after my football career had ended. Really, it was a rebellion. I had spent years and years grinding my bones on barren practice fields. Endless hours had been spent under the boot of various egomaniacal, blowhard coaches. Eventually my body and mind just couldn't take any more. I developed a degenerative condition of the spine. Every blow, every fall resulted in splintering pain running all over my body. Physically, I was done. No more.

**After you're done with football,
you figure the last thing you're
ever going to fucking do again is
run 110-yard sprints
in the late-August heat.
But you keep the same appetite.**

My mind was equally spent. The endless practices. The constant yelling. Were these guys supposed to be coaches and teachers, or was it all just a glorified dick-measuring contest, day in and day out, 11 months of the year? My lifting career began as a means of repair. The only intention was to get my strength back, to shed those old habits and start something new. To my surprise, those goals quickly changed.

I got something from powerlifting that no other sport had ever offered. It was raw and brutally honest. There's



Courtesy of Chris Mason/AtlasGrowth Nutrition

Vincent Dizenzo has been a Top 10 bench for a decade. He is one of only a few lifters to press 800 lb. equipped and 600 lb. raw in meets. He is over 300 lb. in the before picture and close to 260 in the after shot.

a bar; lift it. Hours in the gym, mostly alone, taught me to finally appreciate the process of training. No one else could do it for you. You either put in the work, or you didn't. You laid it all out on the platform, or you failed. There was nowhere to hide. That early goal of being pain-free changed to maybe squatting 400 lb. again someday, then 500, 600, 700 ... 800 lb. I once took pride in the fact that I could bench press 405. Suddenly, nothing short of 700 would do. Soon, I was a legit national-level lifter in my class. But the only thing keeping pace with my rising total was my body weight.

At my strongest, I tipped the scales at a 370 lb. It's insidious. A subtle pound-by-pound escalation. After you're done with football, you figure the last thing you're ever going to fucking do again is run 110-yard sprints in the late-August heat. But you keep the same appetite. Pretty soon you cannot help but tie your increased strength to the scale. The two are inexorably linked. No way around it. The more you eat, the stronger you get. The stronger you get, the stronger you want to be. My goal was to squat 1,000 lb. That was going to take a lot of double cheeseburgers.

I am not particularly proud of this story, but it is 100 percent true. One night I headed out to my friendly neighborhood Chili's with some friends. I recall it being a relatively special occasion, so I made sure to wear my finest mostly clean Westside Barbell T-shirt, Size 48 camouflage cargo shorts and signature old-school Crocs (the only "shoe" capable of masking my crippling



Courtesy of Chris Mason/ATLarge Nutrition

Strongman Tom Mutaffis competes at between 220 and 235 lb. and has 19 podium finishes in four years of competition. He has a 700-lb. deadlift, 500-lb. front squat and 375-lb. press, and he has loaded a 375-lb. atlas stone.

case of plantar fasciitis). I started with the usual: those scrumptious southwestern egg rolls. A crispy outer exterior with creamy, zesty filling. What the hell else could you expect from an appetizer? I followed this up with the always satisfying Cobb salad. And hey, it was a salad! This was a pretty healthy choice, no? This brought me to the most important decision of the night—what to have for dessert. After careful consideration, I had narrowed my choices down to two options. Would it be the cheesecake or the molten-chocolate brownie? Tough one. The decision would have to come down to fate. I consulted the waiter.

“Hey, man. Which one of these desserts has the most calories?”

“Excuse me?”

“The desserts. Which has the most calories?”

“I don’t understand, sir.”

“Just give me both.”

“Both?”

“Yeah, I want one of each.”

For those counting calories, this meal contained somewhere around 3,500—just outside of being Zone. It was not an uncommon event.

One Goal

Everything was planned around the pursuit of strength. Social functions could not fall the night before a max-effort squat session. I always needed to park close—too much walking might “interfere with my recovery.” On and on and on. At that time, I knew reaching your potential took sacrifice. Health and maximum strength were never going to exist in parallel. Work capacity was not something you could fully pursue alongside record one-rep maxes. In hindsight, I have come to understand that this was a delusion.

I am not, by any stretch, a big poetry fan. But I appreciate it greatly. How can you sum up love, death, sorrow, fear, hate, jealousy or joy in a paragraph or less? That takes genius, and perhaps a bit too much personal pain. Sylvia Plath is one of the few poets I am familiar with. By any measure, she would be considered a master. Yet, she was incredibly troubled. In just 30 years of life, she generated enough work to fill some 20 collections of poetry and novels. In her unabridged journal, she wrote, “... life is



The author during his super-heavyweight days and following generous prowler use and cheeseburger cessation.

long. And it is the long-run that balances the short flare of interest and passion." That quote sums everything up perfectly.

I cut corners. Instead of putting in the work—investing in my long-term strength and health—I simply ate my way to improved leverages.

When I look back on earlier times, I can see far too many instances where I lost sight of the long term. Missteps were fueled by the pursuit of temporary passions. As a young lifter, I confused my actions with some sort of nobility. I was part of an exclusive club—one made up of those willing to do whatever it takes to lift as much

as possible. That's bullshit. I took a big shortcut. I cut corners. Instead of putting in the work—investing in my long-term strength and health—I simply ate my way to improved leverages. I couldn't run the way I could when I played football. I couldn't bench press more reps with 300 lb. I couldn't even do a fucking pull-up! I was incredibly strong, but it was a magic trick, and one that anyone could learn.

On the last day of the meet, Dave Hoff of Westside Barbell locked out an 825-lb. deadlift to secure a 2,700-lb. total. He weighed in at only 262 lb. It is of course true that you do not have to be big to be strong. There were plenty of lifters in the audience dreaming of the day when they might lift that kind of weight. Most never will. They'll make every sacrifice, though. Food. Highly specialized technique. Reliance on supportive equipment. Drugs. All of the above. But life is long.

I was proud of Mike. He finished the meet with a 1,150-lb. raw total. Not bad for a CrossFitter. Later on, we talked about the sport and why we train and compete. For him, it was all about balance.

Courtesy of Chris Mason/AtLarge Nutrition



Lean bench-press legend George Halbert is a former world record holder in several weight classes and was once the greatest bencher ever by coefficient in the 220-lb. class.

"Because of CrossFit, I can train more," he said. "The more I can train for powerlifting, the stronger I will become."

As I took the time to answer this question for myself, I noticed just how far I have come. Although I am still a big guy—and damn proud of it—I have left my super-heavyweight days behind for good. It's still about being as strong as possible. Only now, I do it for myself. No one else. Each workout is a chance to enter the forge. To refine myself one rep at a time. I want to finish each month knowing that I am better than the one before.

When I compete, it's not for illusory glory. Being on the platform is a testimony. I might not be capable of lifting as much weight, but today, I am stronger.



About the author

Chris Moore is writer and powerlifting coach at [CrossFit Memphis](#). Prior to his lifting career, Chris played Division 1 football at the University of Memphis. During this time, he began his study of human performance, eventually obtaining a master's degree in exercise and sport science. In 2007, Chris joined Mike Bledsoe, Doug Larson and Rob Conner to found Memphis' first CrossFit gym. Today, CrossFit Memphis has grown to include powerlifters, weightlifters and mixed martial artists, all training and competing under the banner of Faction Strength & Conditioning. As a drug-free lifter, Chris' best competitive lifts include a 975-lb. squat, a 675-lb. bench press and 675-lb. deadlift. You can reach him at christo-phermoore57@gmail.com, or visit [FactionSC.com](#).



Courtesy of Chris Moore

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

12 Tips for Coaching O-Lifts in the CrossFit Box

Hall-of-fame Oly coach Bob Takano has nearly four decades of coaching experience. He offers some advice for CrossFitters who will be teaching the quick lifts to their athletes.

By Bob Takano

July 2010



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Having spent years in the sport of weightlifting, I've recently become involved in the CrossFit Oly experience by coaching Olympic lifting at Team CrossFit and by assisting with several Oly Certs with coaches Mike Burgener, Stephane Rochet and Josh Everett. These certs have been especially enjoyable because of the great attitude Crossfitters bring to them and because, as we do more and more of them, the participants appear to have done a good deal of the homework beforehand.

1 of 4

I've written this article to offer some guidelines and tips to CrossFitters who are now Oly certified and are returning to their home boxes to begin the task of teaching the Oly lifts to their clients. Some of these points may seem very general, but if you pursue them, I'm sure you will find that they will help you develop as a coach.

1. Practice the lifts yourself until they become a sequence of feelings you can describe to your clients.

Many of the students who leave a CrossFit Oly Cert are doing a good job of performing the movements, but if they don't work on them, they may forget the pattern or not cement it into their motor patterns in such a way that they can describe them to someone else. Even weightlifters who have been performing the lifts for years continue to discover new insights into feeling and describing these movements.

2. Develop some descriptions of the feelings.

You may not feel comfortable just parroting the cues that Coach B or the other coaches employ to teach the lifts. Go ahead and describe the feelings to yourself and then develop them into cues your athletes will understand. Remember: the shorter the cue, the better it will be assimilated. I still encounter relatively new coaches who have come up with novel and effective cues.

3. Your primary goal is to teach correct technique.

Within the Crossfit environment, your goal is to teach correct technique so your athletes will gain the greatest benefit from performing the movements without incurring unnecessary injuries. This may require a little different mindset from what many trainers are traditionally used to, but it needs to be done. You may want to watch some coaches teaching gymnastics or diving or some other technique-dependent activity to get some idea of the mindset required.

4. Group your athletes into small numbers by ability level.

The reason Coach B ensures there is one coach for every seven participants in a CrossFit Oly Cert is that it is too difficult to accurately observe and coach much more than seven people at a time. You might group them by raw beginner, intermediate and advanced. In this way, the members of a group will share common problems that need common solutions. A beginner group may actually need to just do standing presses, back squats, front squats and good mornings before they can even begin to learn the lifts. An intermediate group should be composed of athletes with reasonable motor-learning ability and no major range-of-motion problems. An advanced group should be made up of experienced athletes with good motor-learning ability and who need very little work to refine their technique.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Sound technique is critical to learning the Olympic lifts, and it's easier to learn correctly early on than to go back and correct bad habits later.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Great technique should be reinforced with constant practice and refinement.

5. It's easier to learn good technique from the start than to correct errors later on.

Try to stop bad habits from developing as soon as you encounter them. The correction of bad habits is almost another entire universe that can require case-by-case solutions. You're better off teaching your athletes correctly the first time through.

6. The nervous system fatigues quickly, especially for beginners.

Because of this, technical training should take place at the beginning of workouts and should stop as soon as coordination or timing errors appear to be increasing. Most beginners probably should not be working on technique for more than 20 minutes to a half hour.

7. Always be encouraging in your coaching cues.

Athletes learn much better if you give them advice as to what to do. Avoid telling them not to do things. "Extend your hips!" is a much better cue than, "Don't keep your hips bent!"

8. Technique is better learned with frequent reinforcement.

When I set out to coach an athlete to become a serious weightlifter, we spend most of the first few weeks working on technique on a daily basis, with the only strengthening exercises being those required to bring weak areas into balance with the stronger areas of the body. These athletes develop the very best technique, and this training/learning model is the basis for that technical development.

9. Solve one technical problem at a time.

An athlete with a number of technical errors during the first week can have many of them solved immediately. Take care of the easiest ones first, such as grip and foot spacing. You want to get your athlete to the point where he or she has no more than one or two problems—the one or two most difficult ones that you will spend the most effort upon. When you get to this point, you can then begin concerning yourself with increasing the strength and athleticism of the athlete.

10. Correct flexibility problems before attempting to coach the Olympic lifts.

Some individuals are not ready to begin Oly lifts due to a lack of range of motion at the shoulders, hips and ankles, or a lack of torso strength or leg strength. Standing presses, flat-footed squats with a straight back and straight-legged, wide-stance good mornings will best remediate these issues before technique training can begin.

11. One athletic skill should precede learning the Olympic lifts: jumping.

The most important skill an athlete should bring to training is the ability to perform a technically sound vertical jump, preferably out of a full squat.

12. Holding a rack position for the clean should be learned before attempting to perform the squat clean.

The improvement of a rack position for the clean depends on the specific impeding problem. Many people can't get their shoulders forward to rest the bar on the deltoids. Others take the wrong grip width. Both of these can be experimented with. Figuring out how to front-squat properly will do much to teach the proper rack position. There are a few people who cannot ever rack for a variety of reasons.

I hope these twelve tips are helpful for the aspiring coach.



Marta Takano

About the Author

*Bob Takano has developed and coached some of the best weightlifters in the U.S. for the past 39 years. A 2007 inductee into the U.S.A. Weightlifting Hall of Fame, he has coached four national champions, seven national record holders and 28 top 10 nationally ranked lifters. Fifteen of the volleyball players he's coached have earned Division 1 volleyball scholarships. His articles have been published by the NSCA and the International Olympic Committee and helped to establish standards for the coaching of the Olympic lifts. He is a former member of the editorial board of the **NSCA Journal**, and an instructor for the UCLA Extension program. He is currently the chairperson of the NSCA Weightlifting Special Interest Group. For the past year he has been coaching in the Crossfit Oly Cert program. Website: www.takanoathletics.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Fittest on Earth

Graham Holmberg and Kristan Clever claim victory at the CrossFit Games.



By Mike Warkentin

July 2010



D. Re/CrossFit

With fans cheering in the California sunshine, an exhausted Graham Holmberg and Kristan Clever were crowned the champions of the 2010 CrossFit Games on July 19 at the Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif.

For Clever, it was a dominant performance and an improvement on a fourth-place finish in 2009. Holmberg, who finished 19th in 2009, used a steady performance and two big event wins to bring the Fittest Man on Earth title back to the United States.

Crane Kicks and Rope Climbs

Three weeks before the Games, Holmberg gave an off-the-cuff Games-site interview in which he was asked about his resemblance to Johnny Lawrence, Daniel-san's nemesis in the original *Karate Kid*.

Holmberg has been compared to Johnny for years and has even convinced some people he was in the movie. Graham's a good sport, so he played along.

CrossFit Journal: "If you had to fight Ralph Macchio right now, who would win? And yes, you're allowed to sweep the leg."

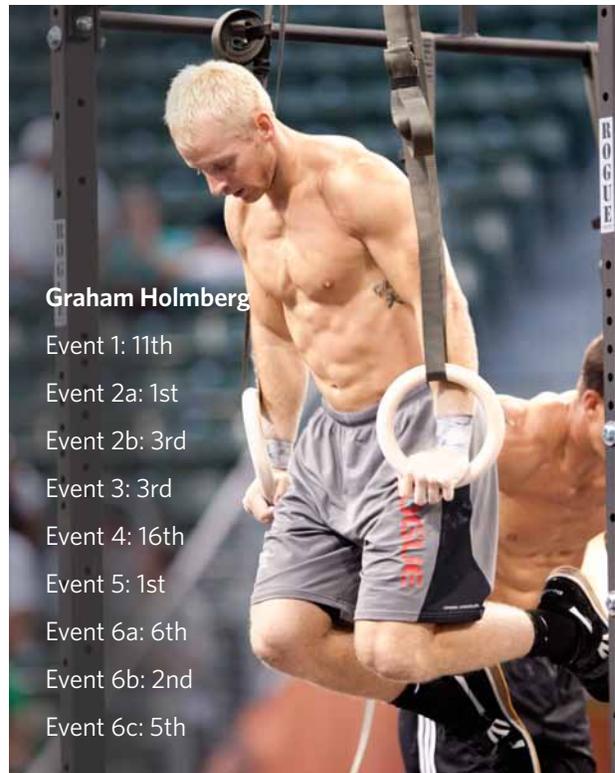
Holmberg: "Don't bet on Ralph this time around. My training partner wants to make a T-shirt for me to wear at the Games that reads, 'In this movie, Johnny wins.' But I won't wear it though."

In this movie, Johnny *did* win.

Holmberg was solid across the board through eight workouts, setting himself up for a shot at the title in the final event. Rich Froning Jr. was the overall leader at that point and looked poised for the title when Holmberg was much slower in the first part of the three-workout challenge. In fact, he finished last in a heat that was won by Froning Jr., who was the only person of either sex to complete the entire workout.

"It was so sucky going into that first WOD and climbing over the wall, and I was in last place, at least out of our heat," Holmberg said. "Just in my mind I kept telling myself, 'Two more WODs. Just keep chipping away. Just keep getting as many reps as you can. There's two more WODs.' I knew those rope climbs were going to get nasty at the end. It was so weird how fatigued I felt on that very first workout. It was unreal. And I'm like, 'This is going to be a dogfight.'"

Gritting his teeth for a battle, Holmberg made up the points on the next two events.



Graham Holmberg

Event 1: 11th
Event 2a: 1st
Event 2b: 3rd
Event 3: 3rd
Event 4: 16th
Event 5: 1st
Event 6a: 6th
Event 6b: 2nd
Event 6c: 5th

D. Re/CrossFit



Kristan Clever

Event 1: 1st
Event 2a: 2nd
Event 2b: 1st
Event 3: 2nd
Event 4: 20th
Event 5: 1st
Event 6a: 1st
Event 6b: 1st
Event 6c: 2nd

S. Dyl/CrossFit

“And then I kinda started creeping ahead on the toes-to-bar and ground to overhead, so that was nice. That final workout, man, I should have paid attention more to that parkour video that came on the main site a long time ago, because it taxes you so much. Climbing over a wall is tough.”

Holmberg had no idea what he would face when he left the isolation room the athletes had to wait in before they discovered and attacked the final movements, but he felt pretty good about the ropes that were hanging above the flooring at the HDC. He stuck to the plan of chipping away at Froning Jr.’s lead and actually finished second in the second part before taking fifth in Part 3.

As the numbers were being crunched, Holmberg had no idea he had won until his rival saw the name on the winner’s check.

“We were standing there, and they had some checks, and Rich and I were standing there talking, and they moved a check or something and he was like, ‘There it is man, you won it.’ And that was crazy.

“I knew going into it that I was a few points behind him. And I knew it was a little bit of a longer gap from me to the next guy, and he was even talking in the locker room before. He was like, ‘I haven’t done really rope climbs.’ ... That’s amazing that he got two without his legs at all, because I don’t even know how I finished that because of how gassed I was using my legs too.”

When Holmberg did find out he had won, the drained athlete from New Albany, Ohio, was amazed.

“Every workout that kept popping up, I was like, ‘All right, I’ve been working on this stuff.’”

—Graham Holmberg



S. Dy/CrossFit

By the time he got to the burpee wall-climbs of the final event, Holmberg was exhausted, but he had put himself in position to pass Rich Froning Jr. and win the CrossFit Games.



S. Dy/CrossFit

Rich Froning Jr. and Holmberg go head to head in event 6b, in which Holmberg made up a lot of ground with a second-place finish.

"It's just been a heck of a weekend There's just so many good guys out here, and it just showed in how tight a race it was," he said. "And I was talking about it with my dad last night, and if you just look at the top 10 guys and how much it just kept shuffling back and forth, it was anybody's race.

"Every scoring system is crazy, and going onto it I was like, 'I've just got to stay in the top 10 in everything, and I had a couple of big wins with first-place points, and that's so huge to get one or two of those. The weekend itself has been surreal. I just feel like my training led up to it just right, and it was just crazy. Every workout that kept popping up, I was like, 'All right, I've been working on this stuff.'"

As for the check

"I have no idea right now," he smiled. "I recently got engaged, so that's that new theory where my money is our money. I mean, I've got some school loans. I don't know what I really plan on doing with it. I definitely want to help repay, I mean my parents were huge supporters out here Hopefully maybe get a few new cool things for our gym. I feel like money burns holes in my pockets, so who knows?"

Clever Dominant

Clever was nearly unbeatable in the first events, amassing only six points and a sizable lead before Event 4. Then disaster struck and she lost control of her wheelbarrow in the sandbag event, putting her in danger of being overtaken. Undeterred, the cheerful athlete from Valley CrossFit bounced back to win Event 5 and set herself up for a big win in the overall standings.

And she didn't stumble again, taking first, first and second in the last three events to beat Annie Thorisdottir by 12 points.

"It's amazing," Clever said shortly after receiving a medal and a check. "It feels awesome. I don't think it's quite set in yet."

That's probably because she was still recovering from a grueling final event that had her racing Thorisdottir in continuation of a theme seen in almost every event throughout the Games.

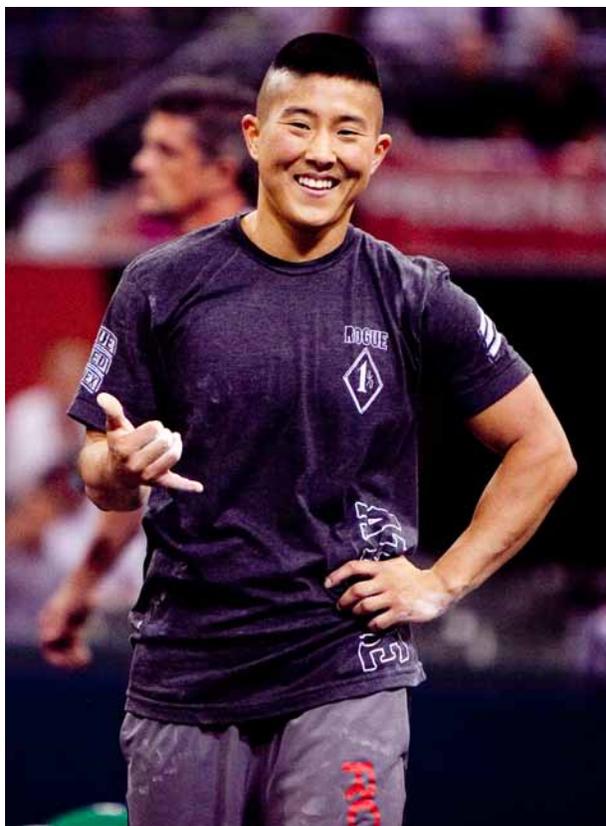
"I had no idea what was going on," she said. "I was trying to not die on that last thing over there, and I knew that Annie had already finished, and I was like, 'Good for her. She blasted that one out. That was great.' And I was just trying not to die on the last rope climb, and after I was done I was trying to make sure everybody else didn't die."

"My plan is always to keep training as hard as ever, and next year, well, I don't know. We'll see."



R. Lucas/CrossFit

Finishing lower than second in only the wheelbarrow workout, Clever proved she has no weaknesses in her skill set.



A. Anthony/CrossFit

The Champions

Clever's win comes a year after she just missed the podium in Aromas due to a tiebreaker with Carey Kepler. This year, the veteran athlete didn't seem stressed or worried at any point—even after the wheelbarrow disaster.

"Shit like that happens all the time," she said with her signature bright grin.

Indeed, she was the picture of relaxation the entire weekend and did it all with a smile.

Holmberg, for his part, did it without sweeping the leg.



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal.

When asked about the hardest part of the finals, Clever laughed: "Just trying to keep going, just wanting to stop the whole time, like 'I'm so tired, and my grip is not listening to me and my arms ... I can't press or open my hand either,' but I had everybody yelling at me."

Just like Holmberg, Clever isn't sure what she'll do with the cash but might gift a little to her parents.

"Yeah ... I don't know. No idea," she said. "I might pay my parents back some money. That would be nice. They've done a lot for me and they've been really supportive through all this stuff, so maybe give them back some cash."

The powerful SoCal athlete will not slow down, either. She'll recover from the Games, but then she'll start working out again.

"I don't have much of a plan right now, but the plan is always to keep training," she said. "I don't know about next year, so yes, my plan is always to keep training as hard as ever, and next year, well, I don't know. We'll see."

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

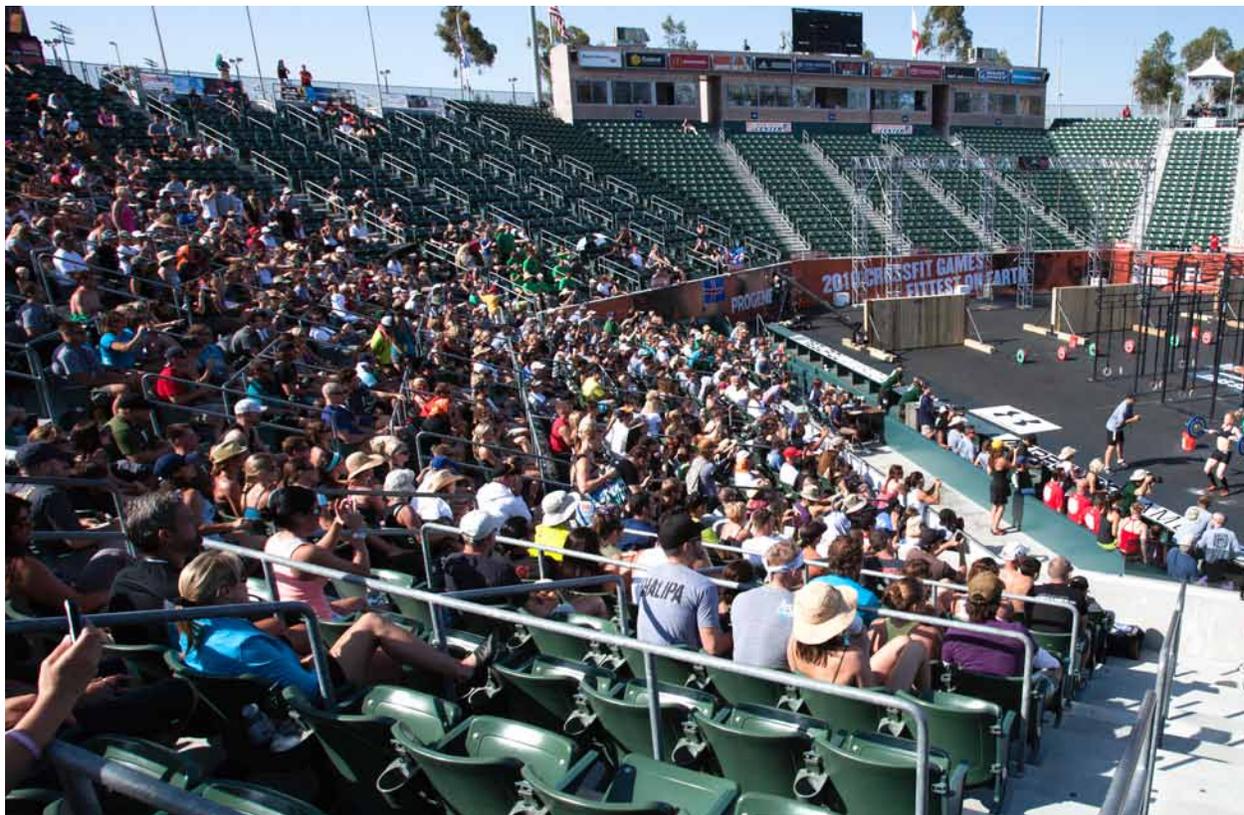
Sights of the Games

Mike Warkentin shares some of the best moments of the 2010 CrossFit Games.



By Mike Warkentin

July 2010



S. Dyer/CrossFit

An all-access pass is a special thing at a CrossFit event. I was lucky enough to be able to hang out with all the athletes as we covered the event for the CrossFit Games website, and I got to see a lot of special moments throughout the competition. Here is a collection of the very best of the 2010 CrossFit Games.

1 of 6

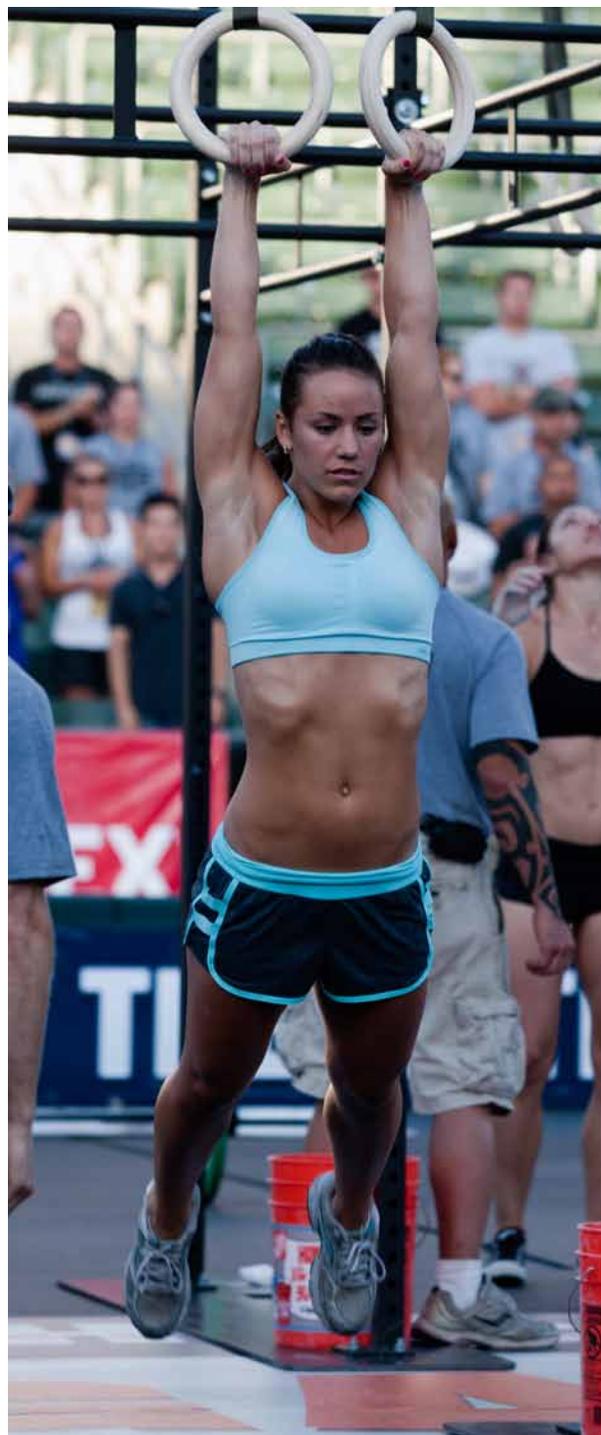
The Best of the Games

Chris Spealler is without a doubt one of the nicest guys in CrossFit, and he's also a fierce competitor. While waiting for the athletes to exit the arena after Event 1, which Spealler won, I spotted his wife Sarah holding their newborn baby and waiting for her husband. When Speal emerged from behind the curtain, he was greeted by a kiss from his wife and a family hug. It was a special moment, and only one of several involving the legendary athlete from Utah. Perhaps the best of them all came when Spealler was given a standing ovation when he received the Spirit of the Games award for exemplifying the qualities of a true CrossFitter.

Canadian **Camille Leblanc-Bazinet** was virtually unknown coming to the Games after finishing fourth in her regional. In the first heat of the first event, Camille became an instant hit as the dynamic athlete from Quebec ripped out nine unbroken muscle-ups with a powerful gymnastic kip. Indeed, it turned out that Camille is a former gymnast who has trained muscle-ups with a 20-lb. vest. That strength came in handy when pull-ups, knees-to-elbows, pistols and handstand push-ups turned up. I caught up with Camille on Day 3, and she told me she had been dared to try CrossFit after a few drinks at a party. She showed up at a CrossFit box a short time later and beat everyone there, but coach Alexandre Bureau wasn't ready to let it go to her head. "I think my coach, when I come back, will finally say I'm good," she said with a smile. Leblanc-Bazinet has a twin and a mother who can do 18 pull-ups, but "no one in my family wants to challenge me."

Pat Burke is a straight shooter if ever there was one. Pat is an outstanding 400-meter runner and set the early pace in the Hell-In workout before falling off toward the end of the lengthy event. I asked him afterward what his strategy had been in the first minutes when he jumped to the front of the pack. "Get out front and make them chase me. Fuck with their heads," he said bluntly.

In that same event, **D.J. Wickham** struggled badly with the run and was almost lapped by some of the other competitors. He was still working when the time cap came and was given 90 seconds to get some weight overhead. D.J. went over to the racks at the other end of the track, and after successful first attempts decided to go for a big win. His lift of 325 lb. was above anyone else and drew a huge roar from the crowd.



D. Rey/CrossFit

Camille Leblanc-Bazinet has trained muscle-ups with a 20-lb. vest, so the unweighted movement was not a problem at the Home Depot Center.

Tommy Hackenbruck, a former construction worker, proved in 2010 that he's dominant in any WOD involving an implement from Home Depot. Hackenbruck won the row/sledge/row event in 2009 by burying his stake almost instantly, and he was 17 seconds faster than any other competitor on the sandbag move event that had athletes trucking stacks of sandbags from one side of the stadium to the other. "Why is Tommy good at all the weird shit?" one competitor was heard to say on the steps after the sandbag event. I asked Tommy that exact question the next day, and he said it wasn't weird shit but work, and he's really good at working. He was also prepared for the wheelbarrow part of the event and knew that he needed to lift it slowly and then build up some momentum before pushing the pace. Other competitors tried to go too quickly and were slowed up when their wheelbarrows tipped.

Heather Bergeron is just a whole lot of fun. She never seems to stop smiling and is always having a good time, even when she's nearly crippled after a hard workout. While recovering on the stairs after the sandbag event, she was given a curtain call by her CrossFit New England brethren, so she didn't disappoint and offered them a huge smile and a double-biceps pose that might have made California's governor smile.

Lauren Plumey and **Libby Dibiasi** are famous for short shorts, and Plumey joked about auctioning off last year's minimal attire to help her pay for a trip to California. On Day 3, I spotted Plumey in a yellow pair of shorts that were short by society's standards but almost frumpy by Plumey's. I asked her about the change in style and she explained that her husband **Dave** had suggested a change after hearing people in the crowd cheering for



S. Dy/CrossFit

If you need some work done, call Tommy Hackenbruck. If he isn't running a class at Ute CrossFit, he might be able to help you build that deck or pave that driveway in no time.



S. Dy/CrossFit

Lauren Plumeley decided to “cover up” a bit on the last day of the Games, to the disappointment of her fans.

“the chick in the tiny purple shorts.” When commentator **Marty Cej** announced that over the live webcast, Plumeley’s husband immediately received text messages from Lauren’s fans. The outgoing athlete said she likes to party as much as she like to work out and planned to celebrate the end of the Games with lots of beer and a bag of chips on a San Diego Beach.

Earlier in the year, I worked with **Peter Egyed** to produce a *CrossFit Journal* article detailing how his arrest and substance abuse eventually led him to turn his life around with CrossFit. In the article, Egyed explained that he had been arrested after failing to scale a wall with police in hot pursuit. When I saw him on the massage table on Day 3, I asked him about the sandbag event, in which he had to scale a wall. Peter told me that wall was almost the same height as the one that tripped him up in October 2004, and he actually thought about how his life had changed just as he easily hopped over the concrete barrier at the Home Depot Center.

Competitors didn’t know how many events there would be, but by Day 3 **Rich Froning Jr.** and **Graham Holmberg** had emerged as the potential favorites based on the lead they had established over the pack. Because the

top athletes were always in the same heats, Froning and Holmberg had a chance to get to know each other. Late in Day 3, the two were found sitting near the video display in the warm-up area, just chatting and hanging out. I got to join the conversation, and Froning explained that he hadn’t used chalk in workouts until a month ago but had instead used baby powder at times, assuming it had the same effect. Holmberg said that his goal for this year was simply to do better than last year, when he placed 19th and missed the top 16 cut by only a few points. Holmberg, from Ohio, and Froning (Tennessee) swapped places atop the leaderboard shortly after the conversation ended, and their friendly rivalry was a great extension of the heated competitions that occur in every CrossFit gym in the world.

Chad Mackay of Australia was one of the top international competitors, and he was a bit of a dark horse after **Chris Hogan** dominated the Australian Regional. Mackay was rolling his hamstrings when I got a chance to ask him a few questions. He explained that he felt he had done Australia proud by making it to the top 16 and was now hoping to represent himself well in the final events. He did. Mackay finished 12th.



D. Smith/CrossFit

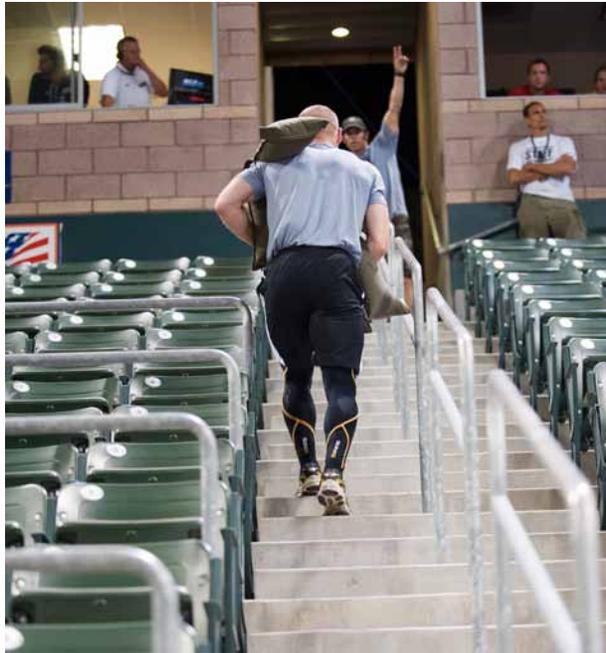
Jerome Perryman: one of the largest and nicest CrossFitters you're likely to meet.

Jerome Perryman is listed as 6'3", 225 lb., but that seems like it might be bullshit. The guy is massive, and he's simply a huge presence in any group of CrossFitters. Perryman looks intimidating but is actually an incredibly polite, personable and well-spoken member of the CrossFit community. You might be scared to approach him, but you should. The big man from CrossFit H.E.L. is always good to talk to.

Kristan Clever and **Annie Thorisdottir** are strikingly different. Clever is shorter and darker, while Iceland Annie is taller and fairer. One has short black hair, the other long red locks. The two were first and second for almost the entire weekend, meaning they were stationed right next to each other on just about every event. On many occasions they went rep for rep, and their battles made for striking photographs. The CrossFit.com shot on July 17 is an absolute classic, and a host of others show the two athletes engaged in an epic battle that was eventually won by Clever.

Thorisdottir is known for her glowing smile, and that grin often shows up in workouts in spite of the difficulty of her tasks. During the sandbag event, Annie was carting a 370-lb. load across the stadium with abs rippling and traps twitching. Nevertheless, she still managed to give one of the brightest smiles of the weekend to her fans, and our photographers were lucky enough to get a shot that defines one of the greatest athletes in the sport.

If Clever ever felt stressed during the competition she didn't show it. Despite giving up a large lead due to a spilled wheelbarrow on Day 2, she was in great spirits in the warm-up area. "Darn that wheelbarrow!" she said, shaking a fist at the sky. "Shit like that happens all that time. That guy's wheelbarrow broke, and you just have to keep going." That guy was **Brandon Phillips**, who indeed needed a second wheelbarrow after his first one gave out on him in the middle of the arena. He grabbed another and kept fighting to finish, with Froning Jr. jumping out of his rest to shout encouragement to Phillips.



S. Dy/CrossFit

Salo will be back.

By Day 3, a host of athletes had badly torn hands after doing a ton of muscle-ups, pull-ups, kettlebell swings, snatches and deadlifts. Some of the worst went to Spealler and **Elyse Umeda**, who at times sported so much tape that they looked like they were going into a boxing match. **Austin Malleolo** played catch-up in the final event and left the stadium with savagely blistered hands that had been burned by a series of rope climbs. Austin, a former hockey player, was in great spirits nevertheless after giving a great performance to finish sixth overall.

I saw a disappointed **Mikko Salo** standing off to the side after the awards ceremony that featured Graham Holmberg atop a podium that was last year occupied by Salo. Mikko explained that he knew now that he had to improve his skills and was planning to do so immediately. "Yeeeah," Salo said when asked if he was satisfied with fifth. "The goal was to of course win the Games, but it's the right place for me this year. The right guys were ahead of me." Salo trains like a workhorse, and when asked if he could train with even more intensity, he said he could. "I'll come back next year and I'll be better. (I can train) harder, and I have to concentrate on my skills because this year I had a lack of skills." Many competitors refer to the Finn as a cyborg, and I asked him if he will return to the Games in 2011. Rest assured, Salo will be back.

Leaving the stadium I walked past a man resting on the grass and using a giant check as a shade from the blazing sun. It turned out he was Graham Holmberg's dad, who recognized me from an interview I had done with the champ about an hour before. **Elbert Holmberg** jumped up and shook my hand with a huge grin that was the very definition of the term "proud father."



Author's Note

*I'd like to thank a few people whose work often goes unnoticed. Photographers **Susannah Dy, Thomas Campitelli, Dave Re, Darryl Smith** and **Alicia Anthony** worked for three days straight under a blazing sun, and I'll be proud to publish their outstanding images over the next months. **Ryan Lucas** added shots as well, coordinated the photo team and made the competition area look like a pro-sports venue. **Pete O'Connor** did a great job sweating it out in the trenches to Tweet the Games to the world. **Chris Worden** was a great resource in updating the Games site with words and pictures. Tech wizards **Ron Wilhelm** and **Bill McGair** do not get anywhere near the credit they deserve for creating the scoring system, managing the technical aspects of the Games, getting the live stream to the CrossFit community, and basically figuring out the shit that mystifies everyone else. It was a privilege to work with all of these professionals.*

About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal.