

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

June 2011

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
World of WODs No.5: Sacramento Calif.	Morrison
Grassroots Games	Goodson
Work or Work Out	Belger
Springtime Smoothie	Brown/Dazet
Rhabdomyolysis Revisted	Wright
"You Die Slower If U Work Out"	Jordan
My Reebok Opportunity	Everett
CrossFit Kids Ice-Cream Truck	Martin
"No Water, No Way Out"	South
More Than Scores	Warkentin
Shake Hands With the Fat Boys	Hersee
Lift-Off!	Brown/Dazet
The Westside Conjugate System	Simmons
A Brief Letter From a Representative of the Silent Masses	Carr

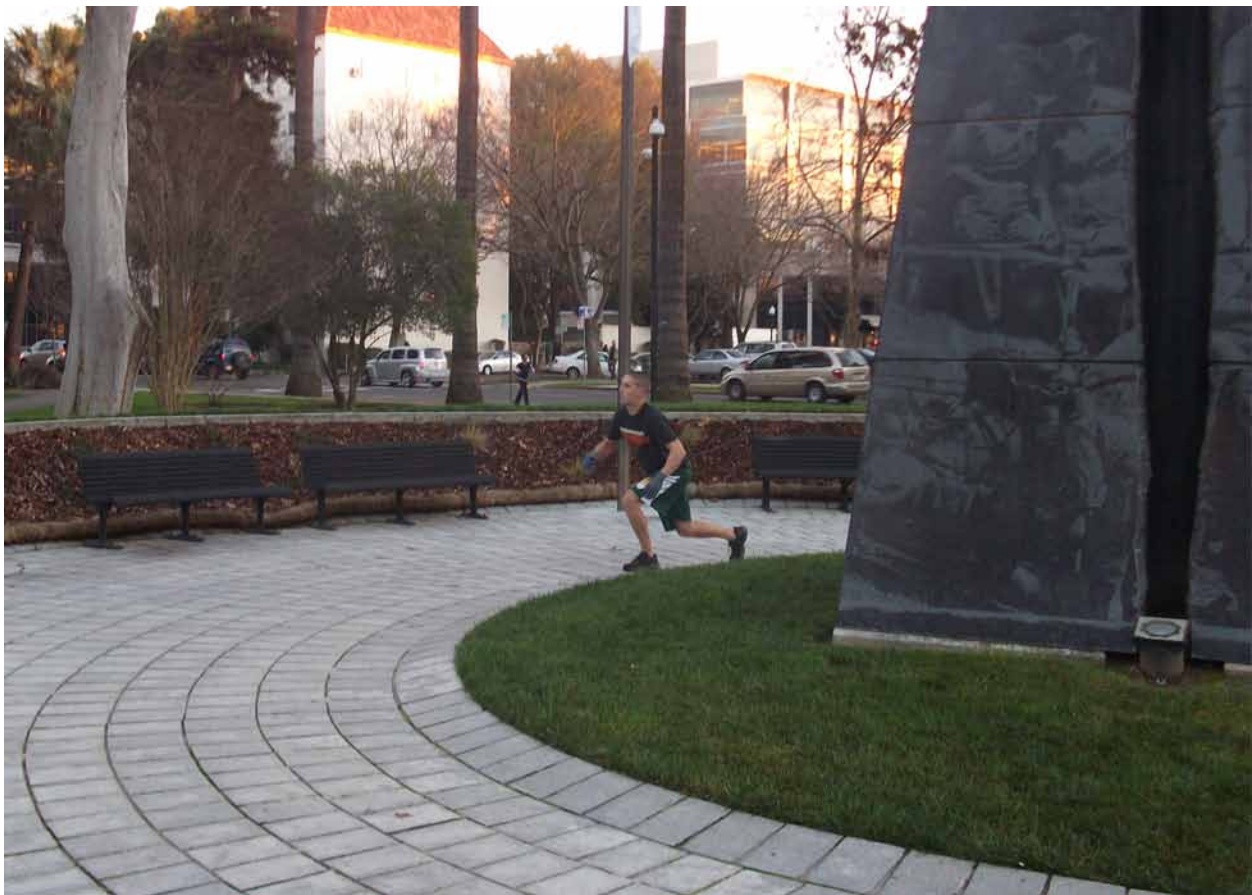
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

World of WODs No. 5: Sacramento, Calif.

Creative CrossFitters create new workouts every day. Blair Morrison continues the search for signature workouts from around the world.

By Blair Morrison CrossFit Anywhere

June 2011



All images courtesy of Blair Morrison/CrossFit Anywhere

"I could totally do a pull-up on that branch."

1 of 5

CrossFit changed the way we view the world. Tree branches became pull-up bars, picnic tables turned into plyo boxes and swing sets seemed like great places to hang a set of rings. And that rock over there? You should probably overhead squat it.

Indeed, all the world is a CrossFit gym with the right pair of eyes and a little creativity.

This article is the fifth in a series where we'll publish some of the best workouts from locales around the world, giving residents and travelers a chance to test their fitness outside the box. If you have a set of landmarks, natural features or outdoor "equipment" suited for a great WOD, please view the submission guidelines on the last page of this article—then send us your workout!

Location: California State Capitol, Sacramento, Calif.

Address: 10th Street and the Capitol Mall. For a map of the area, visit <http://mapq.st/hEHv9c>.

Brief: Not only is California the most populated state in the union, but it's also the third largest economy in the entire world. It's only fitting that a state carrying this much weight should have a capitol to match.

Covering 12 square city blocks, the capitol building and the park it sits on are magnificent examples of architecture and artistic landscaping. The sensation of power stirred by the white Romanesque pillars is offset by the peaceful shade of the neighboring magnolia trees. Likewise, the series of memorials to our state's veterans and servicemen offer a humbling reprieve from the political chaos a few hundred yards away. Rare is it to find such diametric opposition existing in harmony, yet here it is. Stretching from 9th Street to 15th Street in the heart of downtown, the capitol is an enduring reminder of the beauty and heroism that have become such an integral part of this state's identity.

When I was considering a contribution to the World of WODs project, no other place felt sufficiently capable of representing Sacramento, let alone California. The scene here is picturesque and classic, busy yet unbothered. There are long lanes of antique streetlamps lighting your way at dusk and wonderfully manicured rose gardens to guide you during the day. The park itself is a maze of pathways and grassy expanses that beckon the outdoor CrossFitter to simply play.

So, that's what we did.

We designed a "capitol chipper" anyone can do with no equipment and a single spotter. It keeps you moving from location to location, working your way around the backside of the park until you finish in the building's shadow. It will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete and will tax the entire body.

A word of warning: you may want to bring a pair of gloves.

New movements: Duck walk—Walking while remaining in a full squat.



The duck walk is similar to something Kelly Starrett once called "pigs on ice skates."

Bear crawl—Walking on all fours with even weight distribution.



Imagine Spider-Man climbing a wall. Now do that horizontally. This is the bear crawl.



The body prop works well in both parkour and Steven Segal movies.

Body prop—With limbs extended and pressing out, hold a horizontal position above the ground between two stationary objects.

Four-point traverse—Crawl from the top of one post to another while staying as low as possible.



The four-point traverse requires balance and a bit of guts.

Commando row—While hanging from a branch with feet on the ground, alternate pulling each shoulder up to the branch.

WOD: State Capitol Chipper

- Begin at the park entrance at 13th and N.
- Walking lunge around the Veteran's Obelisque.
- Run northwest to the Fireman's Memorial.
- Do 20 burpees.
- Handstand walk 20 feet through the garden path.
- Circle around the garden and run north across Capitol Lane.
- Do 20 commando rows on a low-hanging branch.
- Following the path, run north then east toward the Vietnam Memorial.
- Do 20 seconds of full-body suspension between the pillars (body prop).
- Exit through the International Peace Rose Garden and start west on Capitol Lane.
- Do 5 handstand push-ups at each lamp post.
- Bear crawl between posts 1-2 and 4-5.
- Duck walk between posts 2-3 and 3-4.

- After the fifth lamp post, run the remaining distance west to the parking pillars.
- Four-point traverse the pillars from north to south.
- Run west toward the Capitol and turn north through the trees onto the northeast lawn near 12th and L.
- Do 100 air squats to finish.

Total distance covered: about half a mile.

Notes: This is a fast-paced workout that should be done quickly until the handstand push-ups. At that point, be prepared to slow down and take your time. Once finished with the fifth set, speed up again through the four-point traverse and body-weight squats.

Scaling options: For the handstand walk, substitute inch-worm crawls (walk the hands out to a push-up position, then inch your feet forward to meet the hands again) or wheelbarrow walks (a spotter carries your feet while you move your hands). For the body prop, substitute planks on the elbows or a semi-piked position on the wall. For the handstand push-ups, substitute pike push-ups to the forehead or 20 regular push-ups.

For a video of the WOD, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53GsUXgM3bM>.

Editor's note: A two-time CrossFit Games competitor, Blair finished this workout in 15:20. Try and beat him!



About the Author

Blair Morrison is 28 years old. He was born and raised in Sacramento, Calif., where his family still lives. He received his undergraduate history degree from Princeton University and his master's degree at Universiteit Leiden, the Sorbonne and Oxford. Formerly a personal trainer from Balance Gym in Washington, D.C., Blair placed seventh in the 2009 CrossFit Games and 23rd in 2010. He now owns and operates [CrossFit Anywhere](#) out of Sacramento. He is dedicated to the pursuit of physical challenges and the mental fortitude that comes from the ability to overcome them.



Submission Guidelines

Workouts should be set in prominent locations, and they must be on public property that's easily accessible. Please use common sense and keep safety foremost in your mind. Avoid high-traffic locations or very crowded areas where collisions, injuries, police intervention and angry security guards are likely.

In terms of programming, make the WOD challenging but reasonable, and keep in mind the CrossFit tenet of scalability. We want these workouts to be as accessible as possible for as many as possible.

Use CrossFit movements. Creativity is encouraged, but keep in mind the principles of good CrossFit programming. For more information, read the [Level 1 Training Guide](#). Include brief descriptions of any new movements so others will understand how to do them safely and effectively.

Also keep in mind that many people will not have gear with them. You can certainly recommend someone bring a kettlebell to the park, but make sure you have an option for those who do not have access to any equipment. Also remember that the log or heavy rock that was there yesterday might not be there in a week.

If you want to include your time, "par" or the current record, please do so.

Each submission **must** contain the following:

1. A map or a web link to a map. Due to copyright issues, we cannot publish someone else's map. You must include a hyperlink to a map or your own very legible recreation. Precise directions to your location are essential. Include the exact address and any additional info someone will need to find the location. You cannot be too clear in giving directions.
2. Hi-res photographs of the location as JPEG attachments to your e-mail. Hi-res means above 1MB in size. Include at least 5 photographs or as many as you need to make sure no one gets lost or misunderstands your workout. Include the name of the photographer so we can give him or her credit.
3. A brief introduction to your workout: 400 words maximum. Feel free to note the historical significance of the location or any features of particular note.
4. Your workout. Use standard programming language. Write in Word and attach your document to the e-mail.
5. A three sentence about-the-author section and a hi-res photo of you.



You'll be grabbing a lot of concrete in this workout, so a pair of gloves might be a good idea.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Grassroots Games

Jack Goodson examines how the CrossFit Games Open has affected smaller boxes in Tennessee.

By Jack Goodson

June 2011



Courtesy of Jayson Keel

Unlike Memphis or, say, Knoxville—Big Orange Country, if you will—there is only one CrossFit affiliate in Jackson, Tenn. And, fittingly, there was only one CrossFit Games Open competitor.



Courtesy of Jayson Keel

Jayson Keel was CrossFit Jackson's only competitor in the CrossFit Games Open.

Jackson, just over an hour west of Memphis, is the home of CrossFit Jackson—simply named, family owned, with a family atmosphere. This box is family, in the very sense of the word.

CrossFit Jackson is currently home to 24 members. The ceiling for owners Jayson and Jennie Keel is 30. To many, that may seem unimpressive. Not to the Keels. The couple, along with their members, enjoys the intimate, family-centric setting. They intend for it to remain that way.

They don't, however, intend for next year's CrossFit Games Open to be an individual competition.

A New Era

CrossFit's showcase event, the Games, has, to lift a phrase synonymous with the "noughties," blown up almost overnight.

Somehow, in just over four years, the Games have shifted from cult status to cultural phenomenon, all without the aid of mainstream sponsorship or so-called "cross-over athletes" with global appeal.

The first round of qualification was a six-week competition open to anyone and everyone with a jones to see how they stacked up against the world's fittest athletes.



Courtesy of Jayson Keel

Athletes were able to compete in the Open anywhere, allowing worldwide participation.

How then to further the Games' reach? Well, CrossFit first teamed with Reebok in a partnership announced late last year. And now the Games have been given a major facelift. The sectional round is no more. Relaunched as the Reebok CrossFit Games Open, the first round of qualification was a six-week competition open to anyone and everyone with a jones to see how they stacked up against the world's fittest athletes.

The competition began March 15 around the globe, with one event announced each week. Those competing had until the following Sunday to complete the workout and record their times/scores. Athletes could either compete at a registered affiliate or perform the prescribed workout in a place of their choosing and upload their performance via video.

The cost? Just \$10 to register.

The result was by far the most successful round of participation in the history of the Games. Over 26,000 people grinded their way through the six-week marathon.

Jayson Keel was one of them.

Army of One

Keel admitted he questioned how the new format would unfold in the field. He wondered how it could be incorporated into the class schedule at CrossFit Jackson. Professionals comprise much of the Keel's clientele, and Keel and his wife hold full-time jobs themselves, Jayson an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior instructor pilot with the Department of Defense. CrossFit at the Jackson box is treated as a means to be better at life, not necessarily at CrossFit.

The initial apprehension with regard to the Open led to only Keel throwing his name into the proverbial hat. He now feels that was a mistake.

"We respect our clients' time outside the gym, so we try to make their time in the gym as efficient and effective as possible," he said. "I didn't want to add something that I felt might affect that. Hindsight being what it is, we could have easily plugged it in. We are already building it up for next year."

Keel's inclusion came to be when a friend, a member at CrossFit San Diego, laid down the gauntlet via text message. Not exactly formal, but this is America in the Information Age, not 11th-century medieval Europe.

Before they knew it, the two were competing to see who could send in their Open entry form first.

**"The evolution from 2007
to 2011 has been awesome
to watch."**

—Jayson Keel

As for the new format?

"It seems to divide people," Keel said, "but appears to offer more people an opportunity to compete, which is a good thing—particularly in our neck of the woods."

"I think the CrossFit Games' time has come," Keel added. "(The format) shows foresight on HQ's part in anticipating how to handle the surge in popularity. It's obvious that it has not gone as smooth as everyone would have liked, but overall I feel like the event has been a success. HQ now has the opportunity to learn from it and make it an even better event next year, just like I plan to do at my box."

"The evolution from 2007 to 2011 has been awesome to watch."

Evolution and Revolution

CrossFit Jackson began with Keel's introduction to the methodology via a *Men's Journal* article. This interest grew exponentially during a deployment to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in February 2006. On his return stateside, he and his wife affiliated before launching CrossFit Jackson in January 2008.

They first operated out of a close friend's dojo. Then, in mid-2009, the couple began teaching free classes at a local park. What followed surprised even them: some 30 regulars willing to brave 98-degree summer heat for their daily fix. Many of "the park faithful," as Keel refers to them, are still training at CrossFit Jackson.

Keel and his wife learned a lot during their pro bono years—about themselves and what kind of impact CrossFit could have in the Southeast.

"When I got home (from Afghanistan), I remember the odd looks and questions when I used to take my rings into the local gym to do my best attempt at the main site's daily dose," Keel said. "We've all been there."

"I noticed a shift around 2009. The looks were still odd and the questions still came, but the people asking them started coming back to work out as well. There was even the occasional person that walked up and said, 'Hey are ya'll CrossFitters?' I never knew how to take that."

And with this new understanding of CrossFit came rapid growth, both for the movement and its culminating event. Keel has noticed it firsthand.

"Last year was huge for the Games. The live stream made it a household name," he said. "I was sitting in my living room with the computer hooked up to the flat screen, watching the Games like the Super Bowl, and a friend of mine called me and was all excited talking about Rich Froning Jr."



Courtesy of Joyson Keel

People in Jackson have been doing CrossFit since Keel affiliated in 2008.

"He reminded me of meeting Rich at an adventure race we ran the previous year. We ran as Team CrossFit Jackson. After the race, Rich came up and we talked shop briefly and then went on our way. I laugh even now because the tone of (my friend's) voice was as if we had just scored backstage passes at a Hank Williams Jr. concert."

Froning placed second overall in the men's division at last year's CrossFit Games. He, like Keel, makes his home in the Volunteer State, as a trainer at CrossFit Mayhem in Cookeville.

Talk about Southern hospitality.

Melissa Sparks



At CrossFit Rutherford, 27 members participated in the Open after only five competed in sectionals last year.

A Telling Impact

Keel is not alone when he speaks about the impact of the Games in the Southeast.

CrossFit Rutherford in Murfreesboro as well as CrossFit K-Town (Knoxville) have experienced spikes in participation since last year's competition.

Of Rutherford's 100 members, 27 actively participated in the Open. Co-owner and trainer Chris Haynes competed. So, too, did nine females, among them Haynes' wife, Jessica, a co-owner and trainer, and his daughter, Katelyn.

Compare those numbers to a year ago, and the jump is somewhat staggering. Rutherford sent three males and two females to sectionals in 2010.

Haynes has enjoyed the new format. He agreed with Keel that the Open has allowed far more people a chance to go out and compete against the best on the planet—which, he says, is always a good thing.

**One female, in particular,
had never competed in
anything in her life—not
even a spelling bee. Yet there
she was, taking part in a
worldwide struggle for
fitness supremacy.**

"There is no doubt the Open has been great for CrossFit," Haynes said. "If they continue with this format, we will have to really plan out the events as a box. We have had probably 30 more members who, after kicking themselves for not doing it, have pledged to give it a go next year."

K-Town, meanwhile, one of four affiliates in the Knoxville area, sent just two athletes (both male) into the lion's den that was sectionals last year. It's safe to say they added to the club this time around. Twenty-one members partook in the six-week gauntlet. Of the 21, half had never been involved in anything resembling the Open before.

One female, in particular, had never competed in anything in her life—not even a spelling bee. Yet there she was, taking part in a worldwide struggle for fitness supremacy.

K-Town trainer Jessica Boaz, like Keel and Haynes, spoke glowingly of the Open. Not only that, though. She delved much deeper into exactly what the new configuration means in rural America.

"This is our chance to be connected to not only the rest of the United States but also with the world," Boaz said. "Being in a small city in the Southeast, where most people think we don't wear shoes to school (yes, I've had that legitimately asked to me on multiple occasions), it's nice to be looked at as the same as everyone else."

And that really is the appeal of CrossFit Games, isn't it? It's a fresh take on the American ideal: making something from nothing, going from unknown to known in the blink of an eye. No matter the background, no matter your age, class, education and wealth, you have the ability to excel, to prosper on the grand stage.

Not only that, either.

"I think it's the passion and perseverance put on display that draws people to the Games," Keel said. "Southern America has always respected hard work, determination and raw competition. We respect 'may the best man or woman win based on the merits of their performance' in a society that has embraced 'everybody is a winner.'"



Courtesy of Jack Goodson

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Work or Work Out?

It's easy to find time to work out if you own a gym—or is it? Dr. Allison Belger talks to affiliate owners about how they find balance in their busy lives.

By Dr. Allison Belger TJ's Gym

June 2011



Courtesy of Allison Belger

Imagine how clean your clothes would be if you owned a dry-cleaning business, or how fancy your meals would be if you ran a catering company. Maybe you would have perfect teeth if you were an orthodontist or immaculate window treatments if you were a decorator. Or, maybe if you were a CrossFit affiliate owner, you would be in awesome shape all the time, because, after all, you would own your gym.

Busy, Busy

The reality is it takes a lot of time and energy to run a successful CrossFit affiliate that attracts and retains members. As co-owner of TJ's Gym's three affiliates—with a fourth on the way—I know first-hand the demands facing affiliate owners.

Like me, many affiliate owners have other jobs and commitments that demand time and resources, making the venture more challenging. So what happens to the busy affiliate owners' efforts to walk the talk? Is it possible for them to work out with the consistency and intensity that's required? Might it be especially frustrating for the leaders of these large gym communities—who inspire hundreds of athletes every day to make choices that improve their quality of life—to realize they sometimes don't have time in their day or energy in their systems to make those same choices for themselves?

Intrigued by these questions, I sent an informal e-mail questionnaire to owners of some of CrossFit's largest gym communities:

- Andy Petranek of CrossFit LA
- C.J. Martin of CrossFit Invictus
- Kelly Starrett of San Francisco CrossFit
- TJ Belger, also known as my husband, of TJ's Gyms

These men share a passion for their work, a drive for excellence in coaching and customer service, and a commitment to their communities. Three of them are fathers, and together they have more than 25 years of CrossFit experience. Two have competed at the CrossFit Games, and all four have coached Games athletes.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Running an affiliate is a big job. Can you find time to work out when you're always running workouts?

Many affiliate owners have other jobs and commitments that demand time and resources, making the venture more challenging.

Petranek, Starrett and Martin all have an arm of their work that is separate from the gym. Petranek runs The Biz, an interactive business-training module for CrossFit affiliate owners. Starrett is a physical therapist with a private practice and also travels the world teaching CrossFit mobility and injury-prevention seminars, and Martin programs workouts for distance athletes online. Meanwhile, Belger solely focuses on his gyms.

These coaches vary as to how many hours of class coaching they do, with Belger doing the most at 20 hours per week and Martin doing the least at five to six. Belger also spends the most time on personal sessions and other semi-private sessions, while Martin spends the least amount of his time this way. Petranek meets with prospective clients three hours each week. Starrett logs approximately 25 hours per week at San Francisco CrossFit's canopy gym, splitting time between his physical-therapy practice and teaching classes. He travels twice each month to teach CrossFit Mobility Seminars.

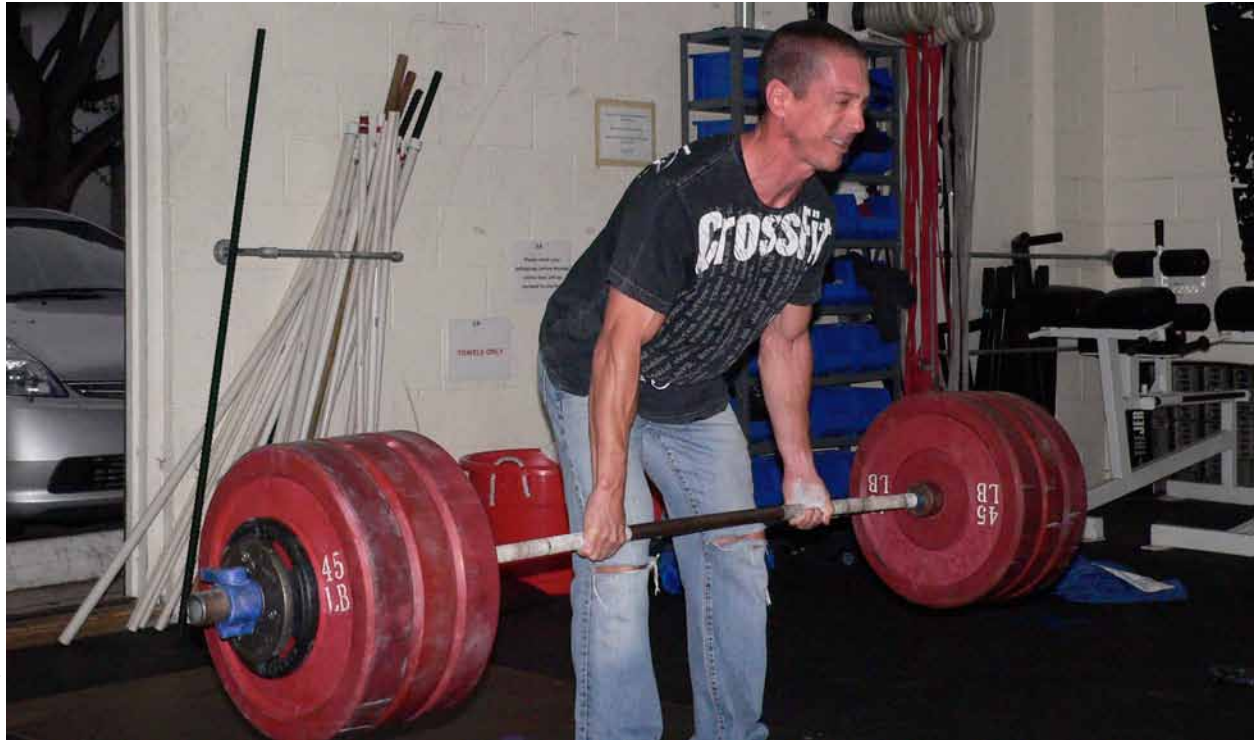
Belger is clearly on the gym floor the most and said he realizes this will need to change soon to manage the rate at which business is growing. While he said he's reluctant to give up time with clients, he looks forward to being able to focus more on developing and implementing various programs that will benefit athletes. Martin seems to already operate from this framework; he admits to spending 40-60 hours per week working on his computer. He tends to work on such things as financials for the gym, programming, blog content and all other aspects of running the business.



Courtesy of C.J. Rendic

Coaching is only one aspect of an affiliate owner's job.

Courtesy of Michael Stanwyck



Andy Petranek is a busy guy who needs to fit in a few deadlifts whenever he can.

"I cannot believe I am saying this and never thought I would, but I spend way more time on the computer as a gym owner than I ever did as an attorney," Martin said.

Coming in at a close second is Petranek, who spends 35 hours looking at his screen, running CFLA and The Biz. Belger spends the least amount of time as a "desk jockey" but still estimates he's there 8-10 hours weekly. He acknowledged he's able to spend less time on operations because I do most of the computer work for the gyms, and we have coaches programming for our adult, teen and children's programs. Starrett and his wife, Juliet, manage San Francisco CrossFit administration and operations for 40 hours per week on the computer.

WOD Time

While the time these owners and coaches spend on assorted tasks varies, their time spent working out is quite similar across the board. All four men aim for about five hours per week of workout time, including stretching and mobility work. But they have various levels of consistency within this framework and differ as to how protective they are of their workout time.

After serving as an officer in the U.S. Marines, Andy is, by far, the most regimented about his training. He strictly adheres to a schedule of three days on, one off followed by two on, one off. He works out only in classes and does not stray from the CFLA programming.

"One of the things I love about CrossFit is that I really don't have to think about it," he said. "When I do the programming or supervise the programming, I just think about what the ultimate CFLA CrossFitter would need to get in their training to make them the best CrossFit athlete they can be. And then I forget about it."

He added: "I really don't like thinking day in and day out about what my training is going to include or look like. I'd much rather show up for class and really not know what's going to happen."

Andy is so religious about his workout times that he said he will even make potential new members wait.

"I might motion to them or wave to them and say, 'Hey, I'm in the middle of this, and I'll be with you in a few minutes.'"

Less likely to work out through distractions are the other owners. Martin struggled so much for so long he decided to put his training in someone else's hands.

"I have outsourced all thought about my workouts and have handed the reins to James (OPT) FitzGerald," he said.

The two work together to create a program flexible enough to account for Martin's travel and other commitments. Although Martin does put his workouts in his schedule a week ahead of time, he said he doesn't always stick to his own itinerary.

"I'd be lying if I told you that I actually complete my workouts at the scheduled times all the time," he said. "I try really hard to do so, but I often get caught up when I walk into the gym with a bunch of questions from members and coaches, so my workout time is often delayed."

"I really don't like thinking day in and day out about what my training is going to include or look like. I'd much rather show up for class and really not know what's going to happen."

—Andy Petranek



Courtesy of Becca Borowski

Petranek might be running to the bank with the day's deposits, or he might be working out. Tough call.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

***Being a coach doesn't mean you have to give up on your own goals,
but you do need to focus much of your energy on your athletes.***

Belger is similar to Martin when it comes to his workouts.

While he does try to schedule workouts a week in advance, he's hardly protective of those times. They often become filled by operational needs, member questions or new-client intro requests. As the gatekeeper of his schedule, I'm guilty of rescheduling workouts to accommodate client needs. TJ's biggest constraint when it comes to working out is putting down the various balls he's juggling at any given moment long enough to fit in a workout. Ballet/soccer dad, gym owner, pro bono physical-education teacher, mentor—each role requires time and energy. There is simply not always enough time to devote to a workout. And when there is, the unexpected often arises.

"I have gotten extremely frustrated in the past with my 'training.' I put that in quotation marks because regularly it falls into the category of exercise. I would love to bring the intensity and capacity to my workouts that our higher-end competitors do, but it's just not possible right now," he said.

TJ would focus on "broad and general" goals, such as a 1-rep-max back squat or a better Fran time, he said, but something always came up.

"I would then start putting huge pressure on myself to get back to that goal, and typically I would end up hurting myself," he said. "I would get angry or bitter about the whole process and then just walk away from my own training. Obviously, this is a terrible situation, especially being an affiliate owner."

TJ said he's still in the process of figuring out how to be comfortable with his sub-optimal efforts and training results. His goal is to keep his workouts inside an hour on weekdays and to do mobility work whenever possible at home, he said. For now, he said he's OK with simply working out when he can.

"Shockingly," he joked, "I have found that functional movements performed at a high intensity improve my overall fitness. I still get the bumps in the road that all affiliate owners have, but I now know that it isn't the end of the world, training-wise."

Starrett, meanwhile, has two young daughters and knows about interrupted plans.

His attitude is that parenting forces you to be more flexible. And for him, this has translated into being comfortable with last-minute workouts or late-night WODs in his home gym. While he tries to train at his outdoor affiliate as often as possible, “the timing is always compressed and of poor quality,” he said.

“My training is brutalized by travel/job, etc. Yes, my workouts often get canned. I invented the 10x5: 10 thrusters, 10 pull-ups, 10 burpees for 10 minutes at 10 p.m. Try it. You won’t feel sorry for yourself for long,” he continued. “The bottom line is ‘suck it up.’ I’m living the dream surrounded by an amazing family, community, athletes, coaches, etc.”

If Kelly is working out at San Francisco CrossFit and is interrupted by a prospective client or member need, he said he’s usually all right with that.

“Shockingly, I have found that functional movements performed at a high intensity improve my overall fitness. I still get the bumps in the road that all affiliate owners have, but I now know that it isn’t the end of the world, training-wise.”

—TJ Belger



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Kelly Starrett is incredibly busy but still finds time to hit a WOD, even if it’s at 10 p.m. in his garage.

"It's only a workout. I'm training with a much bigger goal in mind," he said. "So if I'm tired and jet-lagged and have a terrible workout, it's OK because I'm coming back tomorrow."

Training for a Higher Purpose

All four men acknowledge they are motivated to train, at least in part, because they realize they are leaders for the athletes in their gyms.

Indeed, Martin cites his main motivations for working out as being "my own health and the ability to live up to my personal mission. One of my missions for Invictus and myself is to inspire and empower others to achieve their full potential. If I am not fulfilling mine, my ability to inspire others will be blunted."

Martin has been forced to reckon with this pressure over time and has only recently found ways to prioritize his own workouts. He tends to put the needs and wants of those around him before his own, he said, and he thus hit a burnout point a few months back.

Now, he said he's "more aware that if I don't take care of myself and prioritize my own workouts and fitness, I will not be able to help and inspire others as effectively."

He added: "They still take a back seat to certain events, and admittedly, when things get really busy, my workouts get trimmed. For things like regionals and (the) Games, my own training is out the window. I worked out up until two days before the 2010 Games but then took most of the next week off. I coached our team and two individuals, which meant I was running from one event to another all day. I didn't realize how exhausted I was until it was over. I could barely stay awake until mid-afternoon for the next couple of days, and it wasn't until a few days after that when I started feeling back to normal."

"I think your athletes need to see you suffer. ... Our athletes know we do the same kind of training they do, and we share our suffering."

—Kelly Starrett



C.J. Martin lists health as one of the main factors that sends him from the office to the squat rack.

Martin said he has also learned to lighten up and not put as much pressure on himself as he used to when working out.

"My workouts are not always too intense. I am not competing at anything, and I put a lot of pressure on myself in other aspects of my life. It's led to me overdoing it in the past and having to combat some nasty adrenal-fatigue issues. Working with James FitzGerald has helped me get back to a healthy place where I enjoy my workouts. I also do some Olympic-lifting technique work with Sage (Burgener) and a bunch of my friends and members. That's a very fun, relaxing time, where I can hang out with folks and get a little bit of skill work done."

Although he is grateful for his job, friends and rewards that come with helping others, Martin said there are things he can't experience in the same ways as his athletes.

"My coaches and I absolutely give 100 percent of ourselves. I do it because I love helping others," he said. "But there are certainly times where I am jealous of their progress and ability to focus on being an athlete."

Starrett notes that he doesn't need a coach because he has access to people like Adrian Bozman, Diane Fu, Angel Orozco and his wife.

"The only reason I can do a single thruster is this gang. They inspire me," he said.

The mobility expert said he's motivated to show his athletes what it's like to struggle with workouts, so he saves heavy lifting for times when he can be at the gym.

"I think your athletes need to see you suffer," he said. "I need to be fit for me. I train no matter what because it's just as hard for my traveling executive athletes to train. Our athletes know we do the same kind of training they do, and we share our suffering."

Petranek said he's aware he has purposefully crafted a lifestyle that enables him to do something extremely important to him: work out with regularity and intensity. He appears to be more driven in this regard than the others, and his self-direction is apparent.

"I'm not a person that needs a whole heck of a lot of assistance with motivation," he said.

For Petranek, gone are the days of working out for aesthetics or even competing with others. What drives him most days is maintaining the authenticity of his position as a coach, much as he once was driven to be a leader in the Marine Corps.

"As a Marine officer, I felt that I needed to be able to lead the way. And I would be inauthentic as an officer and as a leader if I wasn't able to physically do the things that my men could do," he said. "I have a hard time being a coach when I'm not actively engaged in what I'm doing."

While Belger also tries to lead by example, he gives himself more leeway when it comes to life interfering with workouts.

"I have come to realize that I am no different from many of the athletes who come to our program. I work long hours and have family demands just like they do. I have aches and pains as well as goals and aspirations," he said.



Courtesy of Jeremy Jones

Most affiliate owners will tell you it's important to work out with the members to build community.

“I have a hard time being a coach when I’m not actively engaged in what I’m doing.”

—Andy Petranek

When TJ does find time to work out, he said he enjoys it most when he can train with clients.

“I love the camaraderie and spirit. I goof around, throw in some false bravado, yelling at people in jest, challenging them to beat me at something that I know they can,” he said. “Plus, I love being coached. I have absolutely no ego about this stuff. I soak up the attention and always walk away from a class with something great to hold onto.”

To Train or Compete?

But what about the possibility of competing at a higher level? What about being vulnerable in front of the athletes who come to the gym expecting to be inspired by a fire-breathing gym owner? On the flip side, what about posting results when performances are strong and potentially off-putting to less skilled athletes? It seems that each man is comfortable with his status as an athlete within his community.

Andy used to work out to improve aesthetics, and he competed at the 2009 CrossFit Games as the oldest individual competitor. Now, he said, he trains to be in shape and finds the competitive drive internally.

“It’s really a competition within myself—a physical test of myself,” he said. “One of the things I love about CrossFit is that I’m constantly confronted by people who can do more than I can.”



Courtesy of Don Ricci

Working out in a group is great motivation for clients and owners alike.



Busy as he is, K-Starr can still find time for “short” workouts including the Quad Dipsea trail run.

TJ also posts his workout results.

“I have been told hundreds of times how great it is for our community to see someone who has 24-hour access to a gym struggle to get solid, consistent, training sessions done,” he said.

“One of the things I love about CrossFit is that I’m constantly confronted by people who can do more than I can.”

—Andy Petranek

Martin said he grapples with his desire for training on a consistent basis. Clearly rewarded by his work as a coach and teacher, he has a difficult time accessing internal inspiration for himself and his own training. He learned this while competing in the 2007 Games.

“I was there to have fun and see some of these monsters in person. It was phenomenal. By the time 2008 came around, I was doing a lot of coaching and realized I enjoyed and was much better at that,” he said.

Starrett is also familiar with putting athletes ahead of his own competition goals. Having coached his affiliate team for some time now, he is considering competing this year alongside his wife and friends. His attitude about training might seem a bit lax to some, but it seems to work for him.

“Training is training,” he said. “Getting overly psyched doesn’t work for me.”

As for holding onto the idea that he, as an affiliate owner, should be the top performer, Starrett said, “Maintaining some idea that you are the best in your gym is unrealistic. We attract monsters.”

Another Perspective

My own experience resonates with that of these four men.

Most days, I’m pressed for time at the gym and struggle to get enough sleep, be a good enough mother, give enough focus and attention to my work as a psychologist, and maintain my sanity.

Still, for me, working out is not something that ever gets put on the back burner. It’s like eating and sleeping: I need to do it to function. That said, maintaining the intensity of CrossFit training is often a challenge, especially as I hold onto the hope of competing. There are more and more days when I find myself in the middle of a workout wondering how I can expect to push myself to such limits when I’ve been working for hours on end answering e-mails, setting up memberships, developing new programs—the list goes on.

Yes, it’s a wonderful life and a job with incredible rewards and countless opportunities to change lives for the better. No, I wouldn’t trade it for the world, nor would any of the guys whose stories I’ve told. But it is, I think, important to monitor one’s training in light of the sometimes-excessive demands in this life, and that’s part of the equation which is often overlooked.

Martin is especially passionate about this topic. Here is what he had to say:

Owning an affiliate is not a hobby. This should be a professional career if you want to be successful as a coach and business owner. For folks that love working out and find themselves owning a CrossFit affiliate, the demands of business can be a rude awakening and it can rob them of the passion that led them into this field in the first place ... I found myself in a really bad place after coaching and helping to run CrossFit San Diego while still working as an attorney, and in the first year of opening Invictus and spending every waking hour at the gym. Three years of running non-stop and then tossing in some high-intensity exercise completely smashed me. I felt tired and my workouts were terrible. The more I tried to push through it, the worse I felt.

It wasn't until earlier this year that I realized the need to get better control of my schedule, health and fitness (thanks in large part to James FitzGerald). I am on the road back, but it is a long and frustrating road. It's frustrating to be building back up to fitness levels that you had achieved years ago. I sincerely hope that this article might be able to help some folks out there avoid what I went through, and what I have been helping some other affiliate owners get through. Or at the very least, I hope they are inspired to hook up with a coach, mentor or friend who can hold up a mirror and help them see that they're doing nobody any favors if they're not prioritizing their own health and fitness.



Courtesy of Dr. Allison Belger

About the Author

Allison Belger lives with her husband, TJ, and their two young daughters in Marin County, Calif. They own and operate [TJ's Gym](#), with three CrossFit affiliates: CrossFit San Rafael, CrossFit Corte Madera and CrossFit Novato. Allison is a clinical psychologist specializing in assessments of children, adolescents and young adults. She juggles management of the family business, her private psychology practice and her role as mom. Although Allison recently began fitness coaching after finding CrossFit in 2008, she has a long history of involvement in athletics, as both a player and a coach. Allison played soccer at the Division 1 level in college and has since coached a number of youth soccer teams in the Bay Area. Allison has a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College, a master's in learning disabilities from Northwestern University, and a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Wright Institute in Berkeley, Calif.

THE **CrossFit** *kitchen*

K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

SPRINGTIME SMOOTHIE

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet

[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Kids love smoothies, as do we, but we don't like all the sugar, dairy and junk in ones from the smoothie bars. If you are living the Paleo lifestyle and your kids are begging you for a smoothie, grab the blender and these few ingredients. The only sugars the smoothie contains are natural ones found in the fruit, and it's dairy-free. This smoothie will cool your kids down and put smiles on their faces.

Makes 1 smoothie.

blocks

3 carbohydrate blocks

0 protein blocks

3 fat blocks

ingredients

- 1 cup organic frozen mixed berries (or frozen fruit of choice)
- 1/3 cup light coconut milk (use full fat if your fat needs are higher)
- 1/3-2/3 cup water for thinning
- 1/2 pear or banana for sweetener

notes

You can substitute coconut water instead of water for added electrolytes. To balance the meal, add a lean source of protein like hardboiled eggs or sliced lunch meat.

directions:

1. In a blender, combine coconut milk, mixed berries and fruit.
2. Blend until smooth, and add water to create desired thickness.
3. Serve with your favorite fruit garnish.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Rhabdomyolysis Revisited

Dr. Will Wright explains “rhabdo” and what you can do to prevent it.

By Dr. Will Wright

June 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Rhabdo can be prevented when coaches and athletes gradually increase intensity and watch out for conditions that might increase the risk of rhabdo.

This review article was written to remind the CrossFit community that rhabdomyolysis is a real and dangerous medical condition which creates a need for introductory workouts that are appropriate and safe for new clients.

1 of 4

In recent months, there have been a few incidents of rhabdomyolysis in our affiliates, some of which could have clearly been avoided with more precaution and concern for our newest affiliate members.

What Happens?

Rhabdomyolysis is the sequela of skeletal muscle-tissue injury and breakdown, which can be initiated by a variety of causes, including severe trauma, burns, heatstroke, seizures, metabolic derangements, viral infections, alcohol, medications such as statins and amphetamines, genetic defects of lipid and carbohydrate metabolism (thought to be related to an impairment in ATP production), and, of particular concern in our community, intense exertion, hence the term “exertional rhabdomyolysis.”

Although there are many causes of rhabdomyolysis, muscle-cell destruction with the release of the cell's contents is the end result. Along with muscle injury, a lack of ATP, electrolyte imbalances and increased cellular calcium are central to the physiological cascade unleashed.

The skeletal-muscle breakdown that characterizes rhabdomyolysis impairs kidney function due to an inability of the kidneys to handle the increased myoglobin released into the bloodstream from the damaged muscle cells. This inability of the kidneys to “filter” the increased myoglobin, as well as the direct toxic effects of myoglobin metabolites, can lead to a condition called “acute tubular necrosis” and renal failure. In severe cases, dialysis (a mechanical “cleansing” of the blood) is required until kidney function improves.



A rhabdo patient undergoes dialysis.



In severe cases of rhabdo, a dialysis machine is used to cleanse the blood.

Rhabdomyolysis induces several physiologic changes in the body that include hyperkalemia, hyponatremia, hypocalcemia and hypovolemia. When muscle cells are injured, potassium is released into the bloodstream and produces a state of elevated potassium called “hyperkalemia.” Severe hyperkalemia can induce cardiac arrhythmias and cardiac arrest. The injured muscle also promotes an influx of sodium and calcium into the cells, with water following. This is a result of ATP depletion and impairment of the Na/K ATPase at the muscle-cell membrane.

This Na/K ATPase is responsible for maintaining an electrochemical gradient across the cell membrane and is vital for cell survival. As sodium moves into the injured cells, it yields a state of decreased sodium, known as “hyponatremia.” Severe hyponatremia can produce an alteration in mental status due to brain swelling. The increased fluid accumulation in the injured muscle cells results in muscle swelling and contributes to decreased intravascular blood volume

Dr. Will Wright

Dr. Will Wright

or hypovolemia. In severe cases of muscle swelling, the intracompartmental pressure in the muscle is greater than the capillary perfusion pressure and can result in a condition called “compartment syndrome.” This is a critical condition that requires immediate medical attention.

Eccentric movements are particularly stressful for muscles because the muscle cells are lengthening while trying to contract.

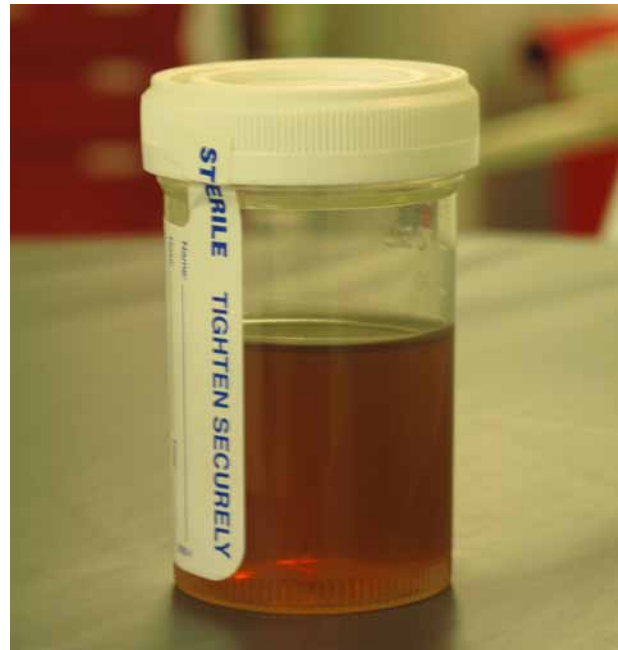
Hypovolemia and fluid shifts induced by rhabdomyolysis potentiate the kidney impairment. Other contents released by injured muscle cells include creatine kinase, phosphate, sulfate and urate. Some of these contribute to a state of metabolic acidosis. Disseminated intravascular coagulation is a rare complication of rhabdomyolysis.

It is known that eccentric or “negative” muscle contractions are more often associated with exertional rhabdomyolysis. Eccentric movements are particularly stressful for muscles because the muscle cells are lengthening while trying to contract. This “stretching” increases muscle tension and predisposes the muscle cell to injury. Eccentric contractions are a component of many movements, such as jumping pull-ups, the deceleration or lowering phase of lifts, push-ups and running downhill—to mention a few. In fact, after review of the known cases of rhabdomyolysis in the CrossFit community, these movements were often part of the workouts that preceded the condition.

Intense exercise should be of concern in hot and humid environments. Some of our classic WODs are tough enough in the California spring but quite a bit more challenging in the Texas summer. That is not to say rhabdomyolysis can be prevented in milder climates. Coach Glassman has seen a handful of cases, most of which occurred in mild and even cold climates, which he has referred to as “cold rhabdomyolysis”.

What Are the Symptoms—And How Do You Avoid Rhabdo?

The symptoms of rhabdomyolysis include muscle pain, stiffness and extreme weakness. Increased myoglobin in the urine is called “myoglobinuria” and will be evident as it produces a classic darkening of the urine similar to the color of tea or Coca-Cola. Altered mental status can also occur.



Dr. Will Wright

Urine samples from a rhabdo patient have a dark color similar to cola.

The diagnosis of rhabdomyolysis is supported with a five-times elevation of serum creatine kinase (CK) above normal values.

The treatment goal of rhabdomyolysis is preservation of kidney function. This requires intravenous fluids in an attempt to increase renal perfusion pressure and urine output, dilute toxic substances in the blood and urine, and treat metabolic derangements such as acidosis. Nephrology consultation is warranted.

In the rare case of compartment syndrome, surgical intervention is needed. The treatment of compartment syndrome is a fasciotomy, longitudinal incisions of the muscle's covering, the fascia, in an attempt to reduce the muscle compartment pressure with the goal of preserving muscle and nerve viability.

Following the acute phase of treatment, physical therapy often includes stretching, range-of-motion and flexibility exercises, and a slow reintroduction to resistance training and CrossFit WODs, often with scaling.

Remember, it is easier to prevent rhabdomyolysis than to confront and treat it.

Remember, it is easier to prevent rhabdomyolysis than to confront and treat it. It is paramount that our trainers understand the seriousness of rhabdomyolysis. Uncle Rhabdo is well known to the CrossFit community, but he is around to remind and warn us that what we do has the potential to be dangerous. Think of him as the equivalent of Smokey the Bear. Recall that Smokey is there to remind us about the potential dangers of fire and the importance of fire prevention.

Dr. Will Wright



Uncle Rhabdo is a warning to both athletes and trainers: be smart.

Coaches and trainers are the ambassadors of our clients' health and well-being. Given this unique position, there are predisposing conditions that trainers should be aware of; they include the types of exercises being performed, environmental conditions and the hydration status of the individual. In addition, and most importantly, the capabilities of the client and his or her known medical conditions need to be considered.

New or prospective affiliate members should be introduced to the CrossFit methodology gradually. We need to take extra time to determine the baseline and capacity of these individuals as we introduce them to the CrossFit prescription. This includes inquiring about fitness levels, medical conditions, physical limitations, recent illnesses and family history. An introductory workout should be tailored to the individual. "On-ramp classes" are often employed at many affiliates, and these too should be structured to slowly increase the work capacity of the client as the intensity and breadth of workouts is increased.

References

Sauret JM, Marinaides G, and Wang GK. Rhabdomyolysis. *Am Family Physician* 65(5): 907-912, 2002.

Brown, TP. Exertional Rhabdomyolysis. *The Physician and Sports Medicine* 32(4): 2004.

Line RI, and Rust GS. Acute Exertional Rhabdomyolysis. *Am Fam Physician* 52: 502-506, 1995.

Santos J Jr. Exertional Rhabdomyolysis: Potentially life-threatening consequence of intense exercise. *JAAPA* 12(7): 46-49, 53-55; 1999.

Wise JJ, and Fortin PT. Bilateral, exercise induced thigh compartment syndrome diagnosed as exertional rhabdomyolysis. A case report and review of the literature. *Am J Sports Med* 25: 126-129, 1997.

Muscal E. Pediatric rhabdomyolysis. Medscape reference: <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1007814-overview>

All Web links last accessed May 31, 2011.



Courtesy of Dr. Will Wright

About the Author

Will Wright, M.D., is a practicing physician and lives in Pismo Beach, Calif. Will partitions his time between the hospital and CrossFit HQ.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

“You Die Slower If U Work Out”

Peter Jordan examines why kids at Saratoga High are embracing CrossFit. Whatever the reason, fitness is becoming more important for many students.

By Peter Jordan CrossFit Sawmill

June 2011



All images courtesy of Tony Palma

There are a number of stereotypes associated with Saratoga High School. One is the relative importance placed by the community on academics (very high) as opposed to athletics (not so high). Marching band falls somewhere in the middle, if not in reality, certainly in the mythology.

Our rival school, the other one in a district of just two schools, beat us in the big football game 28 years in a row. But our API score (Academic Performance Index) is 932, and theirs is 873. As a nod to this—or maybe a playful dig—we don't name our WODs after girls; we name them after institutions of higher learning.

"University of Wisconsin" was a particularly dreadful workout. In retrospect, had we anticipated how tough it would be, we probably would have agreed to scale it back a little to mollify the innocent, trusting, generally willing and agreeable mostly freshman boys and girls who comprise our physical-education classes.

Too late. The clock had started: 50 wall-ball shots for time, with 4 burpees every minute on the minute. One of those workouts where there really isn't a forgiving strategy. You just have to gut it out. That is exactly what they were doing. The facial expressions were familiar. Pain, pride, resignation and determination were all there in various mixtures, while classmates counted reps and offered encouragement.

Later, when asked to describe their "least favorite WOD," many would recall this day. Ironically, several would rank this as "most favorite." Go figure.

Go faster? The wall-ball will wear you out. Go slower? The burpees will kill you. How about just quitting altogether? What's the worst that could happen? Depending on the teacher, maybe the deduction of a couple of "participation points," with negligible long-term effects. If accompanied by "this hurts my knee" or "I can't breathe" or "I think I'm gonna be sick," the result would just as likely be a little sympathy and encouragement to take it easy. Try not to miss the bucket.

What motivates teenagers to take on demanding physical challenges?

But nobody quit. We began to wonder why.

What motivates teenagers to take on demanding physical challenges? How hard are they actually working? What kind of results are they seeing, or hoping to see? These



A survey revealed most students at CrossFit Sawmill are putting high levels of effort into every workout.

are some of the questions we explored in a survey of 230 CrossFitting students in our P.E. classes at Saratoga High. In the July 2010 *CrossFit Journal* article [Facebook or Fitness?](#), we looked at the difficulty of adjustment for students being introduced to a new kind of P.E. based wholly on a CrossFit model. Now in the second year of implementation, CrossFit, for most students, is simply the way it's always been. We administered our second survey at the end of the fall semester (January 2011). Of the 230 respondents, about 55 percent were male, about 60 percent freshmen and 35 percent sophomores, and all were among the students of four instructors—each with multiple CrossFit certificates and all of whom work collaboratively on programming, lesson planning and methodology—who comprise the P.E. department at Saratoga High, also known as CrossFit Sawmill.

"Estimate your level of effort during demanding activities—like a WOD or mile test."

The most popular response (33.2 percent of respondents) was 90 out of 100. Just over 70 percent of students reported effort levels of 80, 90 or 100. Only 7 percent rated their level of effort at 50 or below. A few kids are dogging it—but darn few.

We attempted to anticipate some of the factors that might motivate students to work hard toward improved fitness (e.g., “if it helps me to sleep better,” “if it helps me to focus better in class,” “if I were competing against a friend”) and asked students to rate these factors on a scale from 1 to 10. Reinforcing a Saratoga stereotype, the highest percentage of students (66.7 percent) gave an 8, 9 or 10 rating to “if it improved my grade,” followed by “if it helped me to be stronger, faster or more fit” (57.1 percent) and “if I am competing as part of a team” (52.4 percent). Grades before bros.

Despite the lure of good grades, “if it helped me to focus better in class” was least likely to get a high ranking from the students. Evidently focus is not perceived as a useful strategy for grade improvement.

“Are you motivated to improve your physical fitness?”

When asked outright, 88.6 percent of the students responded “yes.” When asked to elaborate, a number of students indicated the effect that improved fitness would have on their sport:

- Helps me with tennis.
- In the future I might be able to run marathons.
- I can become a better lacrosse player.
- Increase my chances of playing pro baseball.
- Because I do tae kwon do.

Other practical applications were identified as well:

- I need to overcome a problem with asthma and to prove that someone with a sort of disability can still be as fit if not better than those without these problems.
- Because if there is a stalker guy chasing me, I want to be able to outrun him.

But the vast majority of responses addressed general benefits of improved fitness:

- Live a more healthy life.
- Maintain a healthy body.
- It helps me do things easier.
- To be strong.

- I want to get in better shape.
- So in the future I can have a longer, healthier life.

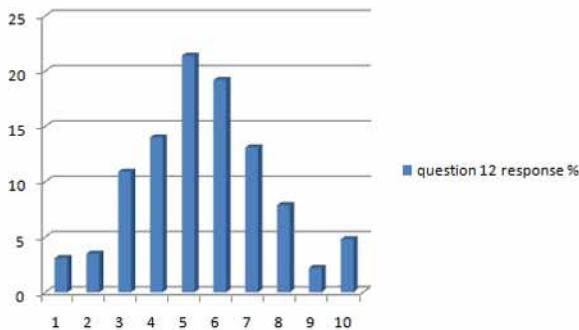
Or the responses addressed specific effects on physical appearance:

- I want to not be fat.
- To gain weight, look better, better legs.
- I want to get in shape and to make sure I also look like a stud.
- U don't wanna be a fatass.
- So I can lose some weight.
- I want to have ... a better look.
- Lose some weight.
- Look better.
- Look skinnier.
- I do not want to be fat.
- To look attractive.
- To look good and be attractive on the beach.
- Fear of gaining weight and looking fat. ☺
- More muscular.
- I want that bedroom bod.
- Because I want to get a six pack.
- I wanna be jacked.
- I think I will feel better about myself.

**“I want to get in shape and to
make sure I also look
like a stud.”**

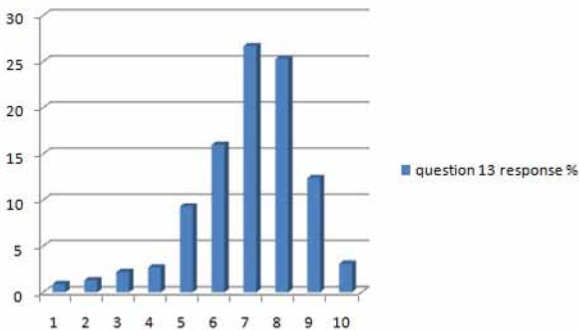
**—Anonymous response on
the benefits of fitness**

"How would you rate your level of physical fitness at the beginning of the semester?" (August 2010)



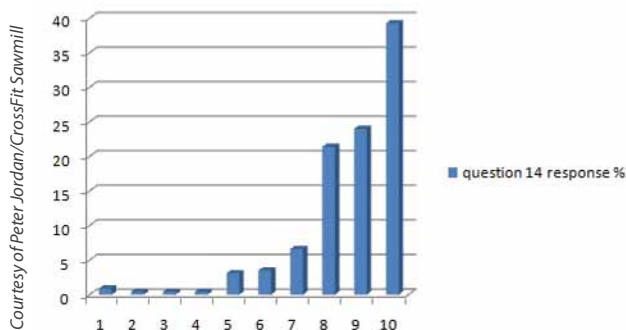
In August 2010, many students rated their fitness at a 5 or 6.

"How would you rate your current level of physical fitness?" (January 2011)



In January 2011, more students rated their fitness as a 7 or 8.

"What would be your ideal level of physical fitness?"



Interestingly, most students want a very high level of fitness.

Based on this data, it seems safe to conclude that students, after participating in a three-day-per-week CrossFit program, perceive significant improvement toward their ideal levels of physical fitness.

On the survey, we quoted several benefits of exercise as reported in the [Mayo Clinic website](#) and asked students to rate the motivating influence of these benefits. Here is an example:

"Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out. You'll also look better and feel better when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem. Regular physical activity can even help prevent depression."

Choices for a response were:

- This doesn't motivate me at all.
- This motivates me a little.
- This motivates me somewhat.
- This motivates me a lot.
- This totally motivates me.

These questions tended to elicit little bell-shaped curves centered around the response "this motivates me somewhat." The one exception was significantly skewed toward the high end of things:

"When you engage in physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn—and the easier it is to keep your weight under control."

Nearly half the respondents indicated that this "motivates me a lot" or "totally motivates me." On a related question, 39.2 percent reported that they are actively trying to lose weight. When responses are filtered by gender, it is revealed that 50 percent of our girls are actively trying to lose weight.

(This begs the obvious question, are our kids fat? A purely subjective assessment suggests obesity in this school population is probably less of a problem than in other parts of the state; the majority ethnicity is Asian, the level of affluence is high, and education level of parents is high—all factors associated with lower obesity rates. Ninth-grade students are assessed for BMI—among other things—as part of the required annual state mandated physical fitness test. Data is not yet available for this current group of survey respondents; the last group for which this data is

accessible on the state website is from the 2008-09 school year, where 91.8 percent of girls and 88.8 percent of boys at Saratoga High had BMIs in the "Healthy Fitness Zone.")

The group concern about weight loss and appearance was echoed when students were asked to identify other benefits of optimal physical fitness:

- You become fit and healthy and comfortable about your body.
- Better physique.
- Look better.
- Losing weight.
- Getting a six pack.
- Less fat, but you can eat more at the same time.
- Grow buff.
- You get hot girls.

However, a number of other practical benefits were identified:

- You sleep better.
- You live longer.
- You feel more refreshed after ... the exercise.
- Better concentration during the day.
- You are able to do more things without getting tired ...
- To handle day-to-day activities better ... like lifting boxes for Christmas decorations.
- Spiritual well-being.
- Feeling good about yourself.
- The ability to run away from a crazed gunman.

My favorite:

- You get into shape, which is good, and you will learn how to work out, which would come in handy after you turn 40 and your body turns for the worst.

And a close second:

- You die slower if u work out.

The experience of slow death during a CrossFit workout is something that many of us can relate to, especially after turning 40.

"Think about your favorite WOD so far this year. What did you like about it?"

- Favorite WOD?
- Ummm, I didn't really like any of them terribly much.
- I did not like any WOD.
- I can't say I like any of them.
- None.

These types of responses were surprisingly rare. Some students preferred workouts with a running emphasis, others liked weightlifting, and some mentioned a preference for WODs with rest intervals. Some liked "easier" or shorter WODs, and others liked more challenging ones. A few mentioned "University of Wisconsin" specifically.



According to Peter Jordan, some students at Saratoga High now see CrossFit simply as "P.E."



Did you ever work this hard in your P.E. classes?

But the overwhelming favorite was a WOD called Team Cindy (10 jumping pull-ups, 10 push-ups and 10 air squats, AMRAP for varied time intervals. The workout is performed in teams of three, and no one can move until each team member has completed his or her exercise):

- ... simply because we got to work as teams.
- Because you are able to work with your friends.
- When we work as a team and compete with others.
- Because you're competing, and that makes everyone work harder.
- Because you get a rest while you're waiting for the other people to finish.
- I liked the part that it's a team.
- Because the people you work with really push you along.
- The fact that we have a team ... really helps you do better in the WODs and helps you give it your best effort.
- I like exercising with and motivating my friends.
- I felt a part of a team and was obligated to do my job.
- I like working with my friends.

“Think about your least favorite WOD so far this year. What is it you didn't like?”

- Team Cindy; if you fail, your teammates fail.
- Team Cindy, hated it just because.
- Can't think of any I actually hated.
- One of the AMRAP in 10-15 min ones because they take freaking forever and you still suffer even if you work fast.
- I don't have a least favorite WOD so far ...
- I love all WODs!
- They make all of me hurt and they made me sore the next day. They required a lot of energy and made me tired, annoyed and pissed at the world.
- The one with the 200 m runs because running is horrible and outlandish and makes me feel like a caveman chasing a lion that is just going to eat you anyway.
- My least favorite WOD this year was the one where we had to do 50 wall-balls as fast as possible, doing burpees every minute as well until we finished. I liked it the least ... although it was worth it.
- The one that made everyone sore for the entire weekend. Guess what I don't like about it.
- It was painful to do, and you feel like a rock afterwards. A really sore rock.
- I wasn't self-fulfilled by it.

“Running is horrible and outlandish and makes me feel like a caveman chasing a lion that is just going to eat you anyway.”

**—Anonymous response
when asked about their least-
favorite WOD**

Our failure at universal self-fulfillment aside, we see a number of positive take-aways from the survey data. Our observation and the students' own reports suggest that they are working at a high level of effort.

1. Grades are a powerful motivator for our students.
2. Students report significant gains in physical fitness as a result of participating in our program.
3. Students are able to identify a number of benefits of improved physical fitness.
4. Students want to become more fit.
5. Students as a group are highly motivated to work hard by their desire to improve their appearance.
6. Students are likely to work harder if they are part of a team.

As teachers, we try to reinforce high levels of effort in a variety of ways. Names go on the whiteboards for exceptional individual and team performance, students can

earn T-shirts for exceeding minimum standards, high fives abound, and Otter Pops are distributed liberally for hard work. We asked students for other suggestions. Can you guess what they want?

- A "get out of P.E. free" card.
- Skip a workout of our choice.
- A pass to sit out of P.E.
- Have a day off.

"Getting out of P.E." is part of the Saratoga High stereotype. Extracurricular activities, including sports, are seen by some as a way to get out of P.E. Marching band, enormously popular at our school, gets you out of P.E. This attitude—that P.E. is an annoying graduation requirement, a hurdle that should be leaped with the least possible investment of time and effort—has been a part of the culture for many years, long before CrossFit. Now that students are expected to work hard in P.E., is the situation worse?



Some students now actually want to take P.E. classes, which is a new phenomenon at Saratoga High.



CrossFit Sawmill is hoping to produce well-rounded students who are smart and fit.

This year, when the fall sports season ended, a handful of students asked to enroll in our P.E. classes for the remainder of the semester. They didn't get any "credit" for this. There was no requirement for them to be there. They just wanted to get more fit. This had never happened before. Guidance counselors and their computers had no provision for this.

Another handful of students, including some from the marching band, asked if they could participate in our after-school strength and conditioning program. They now work out side-by-side with after-school athletes, teachers, alumni and others who share our vision of CrossFit Sawmill as a fitness hub for the community. At the start of the second semester, over 50 off-season athletes, as well as a number of students in active sports, asked to enroll in a P.E.

class so that they could continue to work on fitness improvement during the school day. This effectively makes P.E. an elective course at Saratoga High for the first time that anyone can remember.

At Saratoga High, the culture of fitness is evolving, stereotypes are changing and the notion of a "well rounded" student is beginning to embrace the physical as well as the intellectual and artistic. Even among athletes, the concept of generalized fitness is gaining credibility. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but for the first time in 29 years, our football team won the big game this year against our next-town rivals. And so did our lacrosse team, and our basketball team, and our soccer team. Twice. Coincidence or not, our identity as a school community is changing, rapidly and profoundly.

U of W

Fifty wall-ball shots, 4 burpees on the minute. Why didn't anybody quit?

Despite all the good-natured whining, the prejudices about P.E. and the difficulty of the task, they didn't quit *because they must be getting something out of it*. CrossFit has helped us to create a culture of fitness where for many students, meeting a challenge has become intrinsically rewarding:

- I love being able to work really hard but still get it done quickly.
- Every time I've done it, my results have been significantly better.
- It was very exciting and challenging.
- We got really into it and had fun.
- I liked how it pushed you to the limits.
- I liked it because it was challenging.
- I remember pushing myself a ton on that WOD. Therefore it was my favorite.
- I just thought that the more challenging WODs were better cuz I could tell that they were actually making me work harder.
- I like it because it targets all muscles and shows me where I am weak and strong every single time I perform it.

We wanted to be able to provide a protein/carb replacement drink so that our students could refuel after a workout and before forgetting to eat during orchestra practice or tutoring or SAT prep class or whatever. If we wanted a vending machine, our school has a contract that would limit us to Pepsi products. Pepsi makes Muscle Milk, and we decided we could live with that. Unfortunately, school food laws say Muscle Milk does not meet the lofty standards of the State of California as a beverage suitable for school-day consumption because it is not:

- Water with no added sweetener.
- 2 percent, 1 percent or non-fat milk, soy milk, rice milk and other similar non-dairy milk.
- Fruit- or vegetable-based drinks that are composed of at least 50 percent fruit or vegetable juice and have no added sweetener.

- Electrolyte-replacement beverages that have no more than 42 grams added sweetener per 20-oz. serving (42 grams of sugar, by the way, is about 10.5 teaspoons—just saying).

In the end, we were allowed to stock the vending machine but can only permit the sale of our illicit beverage 30 minutes before or after the school day.

This is not how we are going to motivate teens to take charge of their fitness; not by banning sodas from school campuses, not by legislating low-fat cookies over regular cookies or Gatorade over Muscle Milk, not even by requiring students to take P.E. classes. Our experience tells us that we can make a difference, however, if we give our students the chance to learn what better fitness feels like. We will have succeeded when we've taught our students this:

"Just to have the satisfaction that I achieved something higher than I did last time; so it will be easier next time."



About the Author

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

My Reebok Opportunity

Old-school CrossFit star Josh Everett talks about why he believes the CrossFit-Reebok partnership is a great thing for both parties—and fitness.

By Josh Everett

June 2011



All images courtesy of Reebok International Ltd.

Skeptical about the Reebok-CrossFit partnership? You're not alone.

1 of 5



Josh Everett has inspired many people to do CrossFit, and he plans to inspire many more as a sponsored athlete.

I travel the country working CrossFit's Level 1 and Olympic-lifting courses, and I hear and feel the uneasiness about a big multinational company buying its way into the CrossFit community. I also hear the whispers of "sell-out" in regards to CrossFit's role in the deal.

I answer questions and have conversations about this partnership weekly and thought the community might be interested in why I joined Reebok as an endorsed athlete—and why I'm thrilled with the partnership.

Last fall, I was approached about possibly joining the Reebok team as one of its athletes. At the time, I had already decided that I was not going to pursue competing in the CrossFit Games, but Reebok was still interested in having me as an "athlete," so I decided to take the trip out to the Boston area and Reebok World Headquarters to check them out. To make a long story short, I was impressed with the company's commitment and sincerity, and I signed a contract. In the following paragraphs, I'm going to describe exactly why I signed that contract.

To Grow CrossFit

Reebok has the ability to dramatically accelerate the growth of CrossFit, both nationally and internationally—especially internationally. CrossFit changes and enhances lives; you probably already know or have experienced that. It's why you have a *CrossFit Journal* subscription and are reading this. I want to be a part of spreading the positivity CrossFit has to offer.

**CrossFit is changing lives, and
Reebok will help spread that
message even faster.**



Many people saw Josh in classic CrossFit videos and said, "I want to do that!"

The program's benefits are not just limited to the physical. CrossFit develops character, discipline, commitment, work ethic, relationships and community. Best of all, in many cases, entire families begin to train together and adopt a lifestyle dedicated to health and fitness. CrossFit is changing lives, and Reebok will help spread that message even faster.

To Pave the Way for Future CrossFitters

I've really relished my role as a trailblazer of sorts in CrossFit, particularly on the competition side. I can't begin to describe the joy I feel when people tell me I inspired them to begin CrossFitting or to pursue competing in CrossFit. Some of the biggest names in the sport today tell me that they saw a video of me and said, "I want to do that" (actually they probably said, "I can beat that guy!"). Now I've been given the opportunity to be a trailblazer again as one of the first endorsed athletes.

Growing up, I dreamed of one day being a professional athlete. Fifteen years after giving up on the dream, the dream has been achieved.

The endorsement certainly isn't enough to be a full-time professional athlete, but it's a start. I'm getting paid for my athletic achievements. Growing up, I dreamed of one day being a professional athlete. Fifteen years after giving up on the dream, the dream has been achieved. More importantly, these initial contracts are paving the way (sooner rather than later) for future CrossFit athletes to be legitimate professional athletes who will make a sizable income and be able to train full time and live a lifestyle that allows them to maximize their training and talents.

I am so proud to be part of this process, and we won't create professional CrossFitters unless big business realizes the value and marketability of what we are doing.

To Help Reebok Stay True to CrossFit and the Community

This was much more of a goal of mine when I first signed my contract. Now I clearly see that the folks at Reebok need much less help in this area as they are 100 percent CrossFit.

The box on the Reebok HQ campus is busting at the seams, the cafeteria offerings have made a 180 and are now mostly Paleo options, and CrossFit has caught on like wildfire at Reebok. At the Arnold Classic in Columbus back in March, the Reebok staff was flying out back to Boston on Sunday morning. They got up early, went to the convention center, and got a WOD in at 6 a.m. before they had to catch their flight. Does that type of commitment and passion sound familiar?

While making sure Reebok stays true to the community won't be an issue, one thing I can do is serve as a bridge between "old-school CrossFit" and "new-school CrossFit" from the athlete side of things. I guess I'm old-school CrossFit, which is funny because I've only been doing CrossFit for about eight years. But I do feel it's important to preserve our values and connect back to the days when this was a much smaller endeavor.



Soon, Everett will be lifting in a pair of shoes he helped design.

What's also really cool is we (Reebok's athletes) get to help design the new line of Reebok-CrossFit gear. Reebok is going to make whatever we want it to. I can't wait for all of you to get a hold of Reebok's new O-lift shoe. Yep, I'm proud to say that was all me!

I pursued the strength-and-conditioning field because I wanted to help people. CrossFit has given me a much bigger platform for that than I ever dreamed I'd have.

To Expand My Platform as a Positive Role Model and Mentor

I pursued the strength-and-conditioning field because I wanted to help people. CrossFit has given me a much bigger platform for that than I ever dreamed I'd have, and my Reebok endorsement can expand that even further.

Many reading this will already be aware, but Mike Burgener is my Olympic-lifting coach and mentor. For decades, Coach B. had 12-20 athletes show up every Saturday morning for training in his two-car garage. I would say I was about average in that I drove about an hour to get to his house (some drove as much as three hours one way each Saturday).

Why did we all drive so far to train with Coach B. when most of us had our own garage gyms or facilities near our houses? Was it his stellar technical coaching? Well, yes—to a point. What kept us coming back week after week was

not the technical analysis that Coach gave us on our lifts; it was the life lessons he taught us and the genuine caring he showed us. It was the example of family and leadership he showed. He was there for me through relationship break-ups and my father's passing, and he was there to give me advice on job opportunities, buying a house and much more.

Coach B. modeled a life that I want to emulate, and I want to pay forward the life lessons he taught me to the next generation for whom I might be their "O." God has blessed me with athletic and coaching abilities to glorify Him with. I want to take full advantage of this opportunity to do so.

Great Things to Come

In closing, I hope you see why I jumped on board with the Reebok team. I'm excited about the future of CrossFit and now Reebok—CrossFit is going to make Reebok cool and help the company make great shoes! I'm sold on the people at Reebok for their commitment to CrossFit and the CrossFit community.



About the Author

One of the original CrossFit stars, Josh Everett has competed in three CrossFit Games, reaching the podium in both 2007 and 2008. Everett is a coach at Level 1 Seminars and CrossFit Olympic Lifting Seminars.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Kids Ice-Cream Truck

Mikki Lee Martin explains a CrossFit Kids workout young athletes will instantly understand.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

June 2011



Staff/CrossFit Kids

CrossFit Kids presents a scenario-based WOD and game.

Equipment

Chalk.

8 cones.

8 hurdles or small obstacles to hop over (no higher than 6").

Two bowls: one for distribution, filled with about 100-200 pennies and nickels, and one empty bowl for collection.

4 average-sized car tires and two sets of parallettes to create the ice-cream truck (see picture above).

Treats (one for each child), such as a small box of yogurt-covered raisins or whole-fruit, low-sugar juice popsicles.

An iPhone or iPod with ice-cream truck music downloaded and easily accessible (we used a 99-cent game from the iPhone app store that starts with music, surprisingly called *Ice Cream Man*).

Two trainers are required.

Field of Play

Create a 150-to-200-meter run distance or hill sprint with a turn at the midpoint. Station a trainer “mom” or “dad” at the midpoint with the bowl of pennies and nickels.

Create an obstacle agility run following the exit from the run consisting of cones and hurdles (cones and hurdles represent kids on bikes and people walking pets in the neighborhood). Use chalk to define the course with arrows and instructions like “touch cone,” “hurdle” or “hop over.” With chalk, define a clear exit from the course.

Station the ice-cream truck about 25 meters away from the agility course. Define a line near the truck “window” created by pallettes.

With chalk, define additional directives such as “3 tuck jumps here” or “tuck jump while waiting in line.” This will be dependent on the number of kids in the class. Station a trainer here—the “ice-cream man or woman”—with an empty bowl for penny and nickel collection and treats for the final round.

Play

Use a short whiteboard explanation followed by a walk-through with the kids.

Kids are directed to pace around until they hear the ice-cream truck’s music (like “3, 2, 1 ... Go!”) cued by a trainer. As soon as they hear the music, kids should sprint or run “home” to get money from mom or dad.

The kids will then run back through the agility course (avoiding pets and kids on bikes as directed) to get in line for ice cream. While in line, they’ll tuck jump while waiting or do 3 tuck jumps (jumping with excitement) if there is no wait.

When they ask the ice-cream man or woman for ice cream, he or she will look at the change and tell them just a little bit more is needed. The kid will return to the course (go home to get more money).

Repeat 3-5 times. On the second-to-last round, the trainer in the ice cream truck will tell the kids, “Just one more penny!” When they return, they’ll receive a healthy treat.



With change in hand, kids dodge obstacles to get a healthy treat.

Goal

To get “ice cream,” which is actually a healthier but still desirable substitute.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

“No Water, No Way Out”

After a violent tornado, Dawn South uses CrossFit training to aid stranded relatives.

By Dawn South Trinity CrossFit

June 2011



All images courtesy of Dawn and Mike South

On April 27, 2011, one of the nation's worst natural disasters struck Alabama. Over 38 tornadoes tore through my state, with a powerful EF4 going right through the city where my in-laws lived.

1 of 4



In April, a powerful tornado made Pleasant Grove, Ala., anything but pleasant for its residents.

We had no idea how bad it was until the next morning. On Facebook, my cousin was sending out messages:

"We are OK, but people are trapped here in Pleasant Grove."

"No rescue, no news, nobody knows we've been hit!"

"No water, no way out."

The Rescuers

My husband Mike and I were worried and desperate to get out there. His 90-year-old grandfather, we discovered, had lost his home, but thankfully he and the rest of our family were OK. Now it was time to get them out!

Finally, the news started giving reports that no one could enter or leave Pleasant Grove. Because of downed power lines, they were not allowing cars, four-wheelers or trucks into the town. Despite what the news was saying, we hit the road. We were getting into that city, damn it, and getting water to his family.

They stopped us at the city-limit sign, about 10 miles from granddaddy's house. We were stuck in a long line of cars trying to get in, thinking the whole time, "We have to get to granddaddy now!" I was on the phone with my father-in-law, explaining the situation, and he asked me, "What are you going to do—just walk to his house from there?"

I was a bit surprised, "Well, yeah! We're pulling over now."

He asked, "Are you carrying water in, too?"

"Of course!" I said.

It wasn't until later that it occurred to me that walking 10 miles with a cooler of water is not something a lot of people can do.

It wasn't until later that it occurred to me that walking 10 miles with a cooler of water is not something a lot of people can do. But my husband and I never thought twice. Thankfully, we didn't have to walk the 10 miles. Once inside city limits, one of the residents gave us and many others a ride and cut our walk in half. We were so ready to get there and help granddaddy.

Again, we could only ride in so far. Trees, power lines and house debris were everywhere. As we walked down granddaddy's street, I was honestly amazed to see people alive. It was absolute devastation. Walking over debris and climbing over downed trees, around live downed power lines, glass, destroyed cars, refrigerators ... it was chaos

As we walked up to granddaddy's house, my husband was convinced it was three more houses down. "No", I said, "there's your uncle and granddaddy right there." Mike had

been looking for the house next door to granddaddy's as a point of reference, but that house was completely gone—just a slab!

Robbie, Mike's uncle and granddaddy were just standing there among all the debris, still in shock. It was something I never want to see again. Only two walls, a hallway and a closet remained of his home (yes, the pictures were still hung in the hall!). If Robbie had not gotten granddaddy at the last minute before the tornado hit, he wouldn't be standing there in front of us.

After a lot of hugs and tears were shed, Mike and I started getting busy. We needed to help granddaddy salvage whatever was possible. We had just come with water—no gloves, no tools. Just our able bodies.



Her granddaddy's house was only barely standing when the author arrived.



The view from what used to be the back bedroom.

My immediate goal was to find granddaddy's medicine, but the cabinet that held the medicine and the wall it was connected to were lying face down on top of the kitchen counter. It took three of us, but we got that wall up. As I was standing on the countertops lifting that wall, it occurred to me, "This is like flipping a heavy tire!"

Here it is," I thought, "CrossFit translated into real life.

Over the next days, everything I had done at our box aided me in doing as much as possible to help. I was able to really see how CrossFit can prepare you for the unknown.

**As I was standing on the
countertops lifting that wall,
it occurred to me, "This is like
flipping a heavy tire!"**

Lowering a tree limb that had been cut down and holding onto the other end of the rope with Robbie, I thought, "This is like tug of war with a falling 500-lb. log on the other end, but if we lose, somebody could get hurt."

Hauling debris to the road, deadlifting and flipping huge tree stumps and rolling them out of the yard, picking up logs like Atlas stones and carrying them to the debris pile—having Mike's uncle say, "Dawn, you can lift ... wow!" This is why I'm a CrossFitter: so I can be ready for anything life throws at me.

I have always told my athletes the best thing about CrossFit is we perform movements that happen in real life, movements we use every day. Today, I am more grateful than ever for my training. Why work out five days a week if it doesn't help you when it is most important?



About the Author

Dawn South, 39, lives in Alabaster, Ala., and is a wife and mother to three CrossFitting boys: Taylor, 14; Brendan, 11; and Jordan, 7. Her oldest son has high-function autism, and CrossFit has been great for him. Dawn is a graphic designer and artist and earned her Level 1 Trainer Certificate a year ago. She trains at [Trinity CrossFit](#) in Pelham, Ala., a small box with about 40 members, all of whom Dawn considers extensions of her family.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

More Than Scores

Mike Warkentin presents a few of the great stories of the 2011 CrossFit Games Canada West Regional.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

June 2011



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

Angie Pye dominated the 2011 Canada West Regional, but my favorite memory of the CrossFit Taranis athlete wasn't her joyous embrace with training partner Alicia Connors after the pair finished one-two overall. No, my favourite memory was created at the event after-party hosted by Craig (Patty) Patterson and CrossFit Vancouver.

1 of 6

With CrossFitters allowing themselves to cut loose after months of hard training, Nolan Crossman from CrossFit Regina decided to challenge Canada West's top female to a posedown he knew he would lose. Pye, who has almost no body fat to speak of, reluctantly agreed, and as a result you can find a pretty cool picture of Angie out-flexing Nolan if you know where to look online.

If you look harder, you'll find a pic of CrossFitting powerlifter Angela Desjarlais deadlifting Connors, who booked a return trip to the CrossFit Games.

The after-party was indeed one of the best parts of the weekend, with affiliates and athletes from four provinces coming together in a meeting of the tribes that put an exclamation point on a weekend of CrossFit, community and camaraderie.

What follows are a few other shining moments and back stories that might not make the front page but certainly made the competition a special event indeed.

Battling Dystonia

Athletes who overcome disabilities always provide some of the most moving stories, and while I had seen Leya Moore of CrossFit Regina compete at several Prairie competitions, I had no idea she was managing generalized dystonia the whole time. A neurological disorder that isn't completely understood, dystonia is characterized by muscle contractions that put the sufferer into twisted, abnormal positions. Sometimes the muscles actually lock up, holding the person hostage until the symptoms pass.

"With me, it affects every single voluntary muscle in my body," said Moore, a media-relations consultant whose condition at one point found her symptomatic about 75 percent of her waking hours.

Moore started working out and sleeping better, and she improved her diet, which once featured pizza 23 times in one month. Lo and behold, her condition improved. Eventually she saw the Nicole Carroll body-weight overhead-squat video on the Web and jumped into CrossFit. Oddly enough, her condition improved further with the intense activity.

"Any time I've done something to improve my physical self—like feeling better and more healthy—generally speaking I ended up with fewer days where I was symptomatic," she said.



Leya Moore deadlifts 205 lb. in the deadlift/box-jump workout in Vancouver.

Moore has had episodes during events in the past and has to work through them as best she can. She finished 21st in Canada West in the Open and joined CrossFit Regina's affiliate team for regionals. On Day 2 of the competition, after helping CFR to a third-place finish in the deadlift/box-jump workout, she was curled up in a ball the stands, her condition set off by the loud noises from a ring-the-bell strongman game in the vendor village.

She shook it off, and on Day 3 she was back on the competition floor, helping her team to a tie for fourth overall.

Handstand Push-Ups!

Kristin Farkas of Prairie CrossFit was one the individual competitors who saw the handstand push-ups in Event 1 and faced the prospect of elimination early in the competition. Undaunted, Farkas decided to compete anyway.

"I came here thinking I was running a 1,000-meter race and going home," she said. "People just kept telling me to stay positive."

Nevertheless, in training the Winnipeg athlete couldn't find her way to a single rep and felt defeated. After getting a few quick tips from Desjarlais from Regina, Farkas took her time on the run that opened the regional competition before flipping upside down to try a handstand push-up.

"I got it on my first attempt. I got my first one. I was so happy!" she said.

Later, Farkas tore her hands badly on the pull-ups in Event 3, but she didn't give up there either and kept going until time was called.

Event 1B

I realized there was a problem in Event 1 when I showed my girlfriend, who was competing in the individual competition, photos of the men's run course.

"Where did you get those photos?" Crystal Kirby-Peloquin asked?

"On the course," I said.

"We didn't run there," she replied.

It turns out the two women's heats ran different distances due to a lack of direction on the course, presenting an apples-to-oranges situation and making it difficult to rank competitors and slot them for Event 2. After the day had wrapped, the event directors huddled up the girls and tried to figure out what to do.

In the end, they settled on a short "additional event" in which the Heat 1 ladies would run the short course and the Heat 2 ladies would run the long course. Both heats would then do 10 handstand push-ups and row 350 meters. That time would be added to the time from Event 1 to provide some way to rank the athletes.

Ideal? No. But CrossFit athletes train for the unknown and the unknowable, and even if this was an extreme test of our training methodology, it was inspiring to watch the tired women brace themselves for a challenge they hadn't expected.

In the end, the women adapted, did what they had to do and moved on with few complaints.

Firebreathing Mom

Maren Chapman, 37, doesn't train at affiliate. She trains in her husband's workshop and is a part-time high-school math teacher. She spends the rest of her time raising

her two young daughters. Chapman posted videos of her workouts for the entire Open competition and finished 28th.

"We just did the Open for fun. We thought, 'Well, maybe we won't even enter ... but no, we'll do it because it allows us to be part of the community.'"

Chapman's family was out to support her in full force: her husband snapped pictures and called out instructions while her kids waved posters and shouted encouragement. She got her very first handstand push-up three days before the competition kicked off—and then she got another in Event 1.

"That was my CrossFit Games: doing the run and getting one handstand push-up. Anything after that I was fine with," she said.

All told, Chapman got 26 of them in Event 1, plus nine more in "Event 1B."

Chapman's kids, by the way, do workouts with her.



Maren Chapman had her very own cheering section during the regional competition.

Many Muscle-Ups

Karolina Pawlak was another competitor who broke down a major barrier by getting her first muscle-up.

"I didn't want to try any in the warm-up because I didn't want to have any negative energy going in," she said.

When the event started, Pawlak got her muscle-up, then added five more that made it look as if she'd been able to do them for months.

"I was very excited. I know all the movements now," she explained.



Karolina Pawlak got her first muscle-ups at regionals and completed six of them during Amanda.

Deadlift Record

Amy Adamson weighs about 115 lb., which helped her to a second-place finish in the run/handstand-push-up/row event. Her small stature worked against her in the deadlift/box-jump workout, where the 205-lb. bar represented PR weight. In warm-up, she couldn't budge 190.

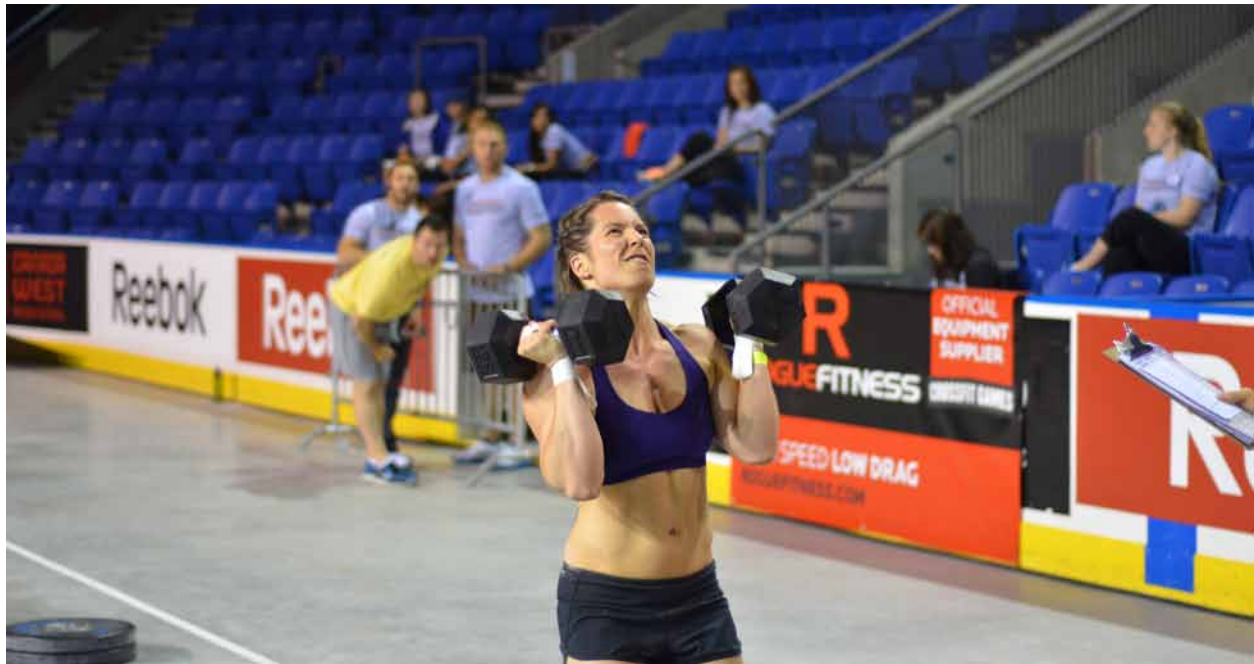
"I was kind of coming in here being like, 'Balls out for one lift. If I get a PR, I'm in the game. If I don't, I'm disqualified.'"

When asked what she was thinking about when she stepped up to her first attempts with a DNF looming, she said, "I can't fucking put the bar down. I had to take five and cry before I came out here, but I was like, 'If it moves an inch off the ground, I'm getting it up.'"

Adamson indeed hit a PR deadlift and added a second rep for good measure.



Amy Adamson hits a PR during Event 3.



Sara Stamm-Bergland worked through an injury to finish seventh overall.

Stick the Landing

Sara Stamm-Bergland made a mistake three weeks before the competition.

"Not really thinking ahead, I was like, 'Oh hey, now's a good time to learn a back tuck.'"

While Stamm-Bergland got her first tuck, she also got a nasty ankle sprain. She couldn't put any weight on it and had a "cankle" ("It's hot," Sara said). She still wasn't walking properly a week before the competition.

Of course, her training took a major hit, as did her confidence.

"I've never cried so hard in my entire life," she confessed.

Forced to do mobility work and upper-body training, she decided to soldier on and compete anyway. In an interview after the thruster ladder on Day 1, Stamm-Bergland said she had failed several bars earlier than expected due to the injury and would be happy to crack to top 10.

When the dust settled on Sunday, Stamm-Bergland had overcome both the mental and physical challenges of the injury to finish seventh.

Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged

I noticed a judge with crutches and a walking cast early in the competition, and he looked familiar. Turns out he was Robert Perovich, the B.C. athlete who had finished fifth in the world in Open Workout 11.1 before tearing his Achilles tendon in 11.2.

Rather than sit at home, Perovich decided to volunteer as a judge so he could still be a part of the community and prepare for next year.

"I want to be a part of it in some form, but honestly it was to gain experience because I want to see the athletes up close. I want to see the way they talk to themselves, the way they breathe—everything. Just every little aspect of it ... so I can learn for next year."

Still, it was hard for Perovich to count reps rather than complete them.

"When I came in the door and looked at the rack ... that's when it hit me. It gave me flashbacks of my injury. I was just like, 'Oh my God I want to be here so bad.'"

Perovich was actually the judge on Adamson's PR lift, and he was there to receive a great big hug when she completed the rep.

With rehab ahead of him, Perovich says he'll be doing all the work he can to get himself ready for the next competition season. He'll take the boot off in another six weeks, and he hopes to be running again in six months.

Then he'll start training for 2012, when he hopes to be an athlete, not a judge.



Travis Takasaki finished 34th, while his brother Tyson was third overall.

Brothers With Arms

Travis Takasaki is 29 and had the pleasure of watching little brother Tyson, 23, give the regional's top competitors a run for their money.

"It's awesome. My whole family's here. My mom and dad are here. My wife's here. She brought the kids along. It's like a family thing. Now my parents are starting to think, 'Maybe I should do this,'" Travis said.

Tyson, who spent the last year winning CrossFit events in Winnipeg while playing receiver for the University of Manitoba football team, finished third overall and only missed qualifying for the Games by one point.

"I'm so proud of him," Travis said. "I'd be here if I wasn't competing, watching him and cheering him on because I see how hard he works. He's in there twice a day, ice baths, doing runs, jogging every morning. He deserves it. He works hard for it."

Tyson said, "We're so close. He kind of knows my struggle and when I'm having little freak-outs, so it's good to have someone to share this experience with. ... It's really good having that support."



Sandra Benz

About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the *CrossFit Journal* and the founder of *CrossFit 204*.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Shake Hands With the Fat Boys

Professional and elite athletes include thick-bar training in their programming. Daniel Hersee says using equipment with an increased diameter can improve strength and reduce injuries.

By Daniel Hersee

June 2011



Rob Orlando/Hybrid Athletics

Old-time strongmen knew all about thick-bar training and used it to great effect, but it's been forgotten in modern times. Recently, there has been something of a rebirth of thick-bar training, with National Football League teams, Army Special Forces soldiers, Ultimate Fighting Championship fighters and powerlifters using thick bars to help make significant strength gains.

1 of 7



The thicker the bar, the harder you have to work to hold onto it.

Thick bars are simply barbells, dumbbells and pull-up bars with a thicker diameter. A standard barbell, dumbbell or pull-up bar typically has a handle with a diameter of about 1 inch. A thick bar will often have a diameter of more like 2.5 inches. Some look more like truck axles, and if you've ever picked one up you will know that it feels completely different. Thick-bar training simply means using a thick barbell, thick dumbbells and a thick chin-up bar in your usual training program.

Thick-Bar Training, Past and Present

Thick-bar training was born by accident. In the old days, there was no such thing as a standard barbell, and high-quality training equipment was hard to find. Strongmen had to have their equipment custom made or improvise and train using what they could find in, for example, scrap yards. This made for some interesting training tools and is the reason for the famous challenges strongmen performed with implements such as Apollon's Wheels and the Thomas Inch dumbbell.

Old-time strongmen—many were stronger than most modern champions—were well aware of the incredible effect of thick-bar work and used it extensively. Thick-bar work is thought to be one of the reasons they were able to develop levels of upper-body power that are almost difficult to believe.

Thick-bar training was born by accident. In the old days, there was no such thing as a standard barbell, and high-quality training equipment was hard to find.



Rob Orlando, a strongman and CrossFit competitor, has always had a love of fat-bar lifting.

Today, thick-bar training is relatively unknown in the mainstream fitness crowd but is widely used by members of the military and elite athletes.

The rediscovery of thick-bar training can be attributed in large part to its use by many of today's most highly respected strength coaches, including Joe DeFranco, who has worked with NFL teams; Mauro Di Pasquale, author of *The Anabolic Diet* and a world champion in powerlifting; *Dinosaur Training* author Brooks Kubik; Charles Poliquin, a Canadian strength and conditioning coach who has worked with hundreds of Olympic athletes; and competitive powerlifter Dave Tate.

How and Why Thick-Bar Training Works

Understandably, many people have trouble seeing how something as simple as switching to a thick bar can create major strength gains, not just in the hands and forearms but throughout the body. That skepticism might change the first time they use a thick-bar, as many trainees say their forearms and biceps are sore to the touch for days after their first thick-bar workout.

There are several reasons why thick bars work well:

1. Irradiation and Harder Muscle Contractions

Thicker handles stimulate far more muscle activation in the hands and forearms and in the upper arms and entire upper body. It works by the principle of irradiation.

When you contract a muscle hard, the muscles around it contract as well. Therefore, to get a maximal contraction in your biceps, for example, you need to get your forearms contracting maximally, too.

Try flexing your biceps as hard as possible without making a fist. Now try and flex your biceps as hard as possible while making as tight a fist as possible and squeezing. You should be able to contract your bicep much harder when making a tight fist. If you flex your forearms hard enough, you will begin to feel tension not just in your arms but in your shoulders, chest and back. This is called irradiation. The nerve impulses of surrounding muscles can amplify the effect of that muscle.

Because thick bars make your hands and forearms work harder, the contractions in other muscles that include the biceps and triceps, and even the muscles in the shoulders, back and chest, will contract much harder. That means more strength and more muscle.

Many trainees say their forearms and biceps are sore to the touch for days after their first thick-bar workout.

You can use a standard bar and squeeze it hard, but this doesn't work the way a thick bar does. If you grip a standard bar hard while doing something like bench presses, you will begin to feel the effects of irradiation. The problem is that gripping a regular bar is really easy, and its small diameter makes it very difficult to squeeze it hard.

In thick-bar training, you have no choice but to grip the bar hard because it's difficult to hold onto. If you use a weak grip, you won't be able to hold on. When you do pressing movements, you will be able to generate a better squeeze and more tension on the bar compared to a thin bar. This will allow you to use the irradiation principle to the max. You will be able to lift more in the military press, bench press, etc.

2. Weaklinks—and Neural Inhibition—Eliminated

Your body is highly sophisticated. It has protective mechanisms built in to minimize the risk of imbalance and injury. Therefore, it will hold back the strength and size of some muscles if it detects that other muscles around it are too weak. This is known as neural inhibition.

This is one reason successful powerlifters work hard to build huge, powerful back muscles—to improve their bench press. It sounds counterintuitive at first. But training your back “pulling” muscles gets you stronger on your front “pushing” muscles. They do this because they know their body needs that balance and stability to get stronger.

Thick bars make your hands, fingers and forearms so much stronger that your body can finally stop holding back the strength gains in your upper arms, back and chest.

This point cannot be emphasized enough. Your hands, wrists and forearms are almost certainly your weakest link, and once you strengthen them, your upper-body strength will go through the roof.



Rob Orlando/Hybrid Athletics

Pressing a fat bar has the potential to add pounds to your presses with a standard barbell.

3. Training at all Angles Automatically

Thick-bar training automatically trains your hands, fingers and forearms at all angles. If you are bench pressing, the thick bar will train your hands and forearms in a completely different way than if you are doing chin-ups on a thick bar. Other grip-training methods like grippers can be useful, too, but they are one-dimensional, training the hands and forearms in the same way over and over, which can potentially lead to imbalances and injury.

Thick bars also perfectly replicate the natural function of the human hand: lifting heavy, awkward objects. Humans have evolved to use their hands to climb trees and rock faces and carry logs and animals. Thick bars are a great way of replicating this.

Thick bars make your hands, fingers and forearms so much stronger that your body can finally stop holding back the strength gains in your upper arms, back and chest.

4. Grip Training No Longer an Afterthought

Training the grip, hands and forearms has often been relegated to an afterthought. Most trainees have thrown in a few wrist extensions or grip exercises after a training session. With thick bars, you are training your grip the whole time and don't need to do any extra exercises.

5. Concentration/Focus

Because thick bars are harder to handle, you need to concentrate a lot harder to lift the weight. Some credit this alone with making them significantly stronger.

Thick bars are more difficult to control. Compared to an Olympic barbell, a bar with a 2-inch or 3-inch diameter seems like a truck axle. Imagine bench pressing, military pressing and deadlifting a truck axle! That's what it feels like when you use a thick bar.



Rob Orlando/Hybrid Athletics

You're going to have to work a whole lot harder to deadlift 400 lb. with the bar in the bottom picture.



Once you've mastered the clean, try cleaning an axle. It's a whole new challenge.

6. Less Stress on Joints, Less Injuries, Less Imbalances

This is an interesting one. Many people use thick-bar training because of how fast it adds strength to their body compared to standard bars. It also is worth noting, though, how many lifters report that thick-bar training has actually cured—and presumably prevented—all types of injuries, including those to the wrist, elbow and shoulders.

It seems thick bars shift the stress off the joints and onto the muscles, which is exactly what we want.

This effect is thought to be because a thick bar spreads the weight over a larger area of the hand. That, in turn, means that weight is more evenly distributed throughout the entire arm. It's a bit like the difference between someone standing on you wearing sneakers and someone standing on you wearing high-heeled shoes. Neither is recommended, by the way. As a result, lifters who have long since given up various pressing movements like bench presses and overhead presses are often able to perform these exercises again pain-free—in some cases, instantly—the first time they use a thick bar.

It seems thick bars shift the stress off the joints and onto the muscles, which is exactly what we want.

The thick bar also changes the biomechanics of the lift enough so when you pick up a thick bar, the forearm extensors (the muscles on top of the forearm) and forearm flexors (the muscles on the bottom) work similar amounts. If you just pick up a thick-handled dumbbell, you will instantly feel that. With standard bars, the forearm flexors do almost all the work. That can cause imbalances, injuries, strength plateaus and tendonitis.

Fewer injuries mean more productive training because consistency is essential.

How to Use Thick Bars to Increase Results

This part is simple: use thick bars for everything.

Use thick barbells, dumbbells and pull-up bars for all exercises: bench presses, overhead presses, chin-ups, pull-ups, rows, deadlifts and pulls. It's common for lifters to have to reduce the weight at first—in some cases, significantly. That really shows the weakness they might not have realized they had; however, they soon bounce back and go well beyond their previous training maxes.

**Use thick barbells,
dumbbells and pull-up
bars for all exercises: bench
presses, overhead presses,
chin-ups, pull-ups, rows,
deadlifts and pulls.**



Courtesy of Daniel Hersee

About the Author

Daniel Hersee is a Poliquin International Certification Program strength coach, martial artist and competitive surf skier. He also works at [Fat Gripz](#).

A note of caution: Always use a properly set up power rack or competent spotters for thick-bar bench presses. Never do thick-bar benches without one or both of these. It's unlikely that you will ever drop the bar, but there is an increased risk, so don't take the chance. Take extra care when you begin to incorporate thick-bar work. Drop the poundage at first. You will not be able to handle your regular poundage when you first begin thick-bar movements. But don't worry: your hands and forearms will quickly catch up, and you will blow your old max lifts out of the water.

There is the only drawback with thick bars. They are rarely found in gyms because good ones are very expensive. A solution is a thick-bar adapter that converts standard barbells, dumbbells and pull-up bars into thick bars. They tend to be affordable and are thought to be as effective as thick bars.



THE **CrossFit***kitchen*

KIDS



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

LIFT-OFF!

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Dessert doesn't have to take your kiddies into a sugar-filled lift-off. Satisfy their sweet tooth with nature's natural sugars—guaranteed to keep them happy and grounded.

Makes about 5 cups.

blocks

1 fruit cup contains:
3 carbohydrate blocks
4 fat blocks

ingredients

crust:

1 cup raw almonds
1 cup pitted dates
Pinch of sea salt

filling:

1 apple, diced
1 banana, diced
½ cup strawberries, diced
½ lemon, squeezed
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

notes

Serve this for dessert after a protein-heavy dinner to make a balanced Zone meal.

directions:

1. In a medium bowl, mix together apple, banana, strawberries, lemon juice, cinnamon and vanilla extract. Set aside.
2. In a food processor, combine almonds, dates and sea salt. The crust will be sticky and chunky. Pulse until all pieces are of similar size (batches may be necessary depending on size of processor).
3. In an ungreased muffin pan, press 1 tablespoon of the crust mix into the bottom of a cup with your fingers. Press another 1 tablespoon around the sides of the muffin cup. The crust should make about 5 cups. Cut around the sides of the muffin cup with a butter knife to separate, then pop the date cup out of the tin and place on a plate.
4. Place a scoop of the fruit mixture into the cup. Serve and enjoy!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Westside Conjugate System

Legendary powerlifter Louie Simmons explains the methods that have brought success and records to Westside Barbell lifters.

By **Louie Simmons** Westside Barbell

June 2011



All images Staff/CrossFit Journal

Many have asked how and why Westside developed the conjugate system.



Louie Simmons has been powerlifting full time since 1969, and he's still going strong.

I started training full time in powerlifting in late 1969 after returning from the army. I had my first power meet in 1966. What an experience! I lifted along with four future world champions: Milt McKinney; George Crawford, who gave me countless tips on squatting; Larry Pacifico; and Vince Anello, who was the deadlifting machine.

I asked Vince what helped his deadlift. His reply: "Everything helps my deadlift." It sounded vague, but Vince was using the conjugate system, although it was unnamed.

**"Everything helps my
deadlift."**

—Vince Anello

George was the squat king. His training was a combination of regular squats, box squats, old Westside style (meaning Culver City, Calif., style), rack squats and good mornings, which contributed to his success. This is the conjugate system, a system of unidirectional loading that was designed to enable him to squat more.

Pacifico, who was a renowned powerlifter in the 1970s and early 1980s, was great at everything, but his bench was unreal. His bench training was a combination of heavy-duty bodybuilding and lots of triceps work. Larry told me that 75 percent of our bench success was from the triceps.

With their advice, which they gave me freely at meets, and by following the methodologies of the Culver City Westside group, I came up with the Westside conjugate system.

Bill (Peanuts) West was the founder of the Culver City Westside Barbell Club. George Frenn was a world record holder in powerlifting and in the 56-lb. weight throw. They had countless special exercises, such as rack pulls, box pulls, high pulls, good mornings, box squatting on boxes of at least three different heights, benching with rubber mats on the chest, floor pressing, rack lockouts, and so forth. Their rotation of exercises was space-age at the time, which was 1965 to the early 1970s. The system was the conjugate sequence system, although it was not named yet. The training I was doing at the time was influenced by everyone mentioned above.

The only true problem I had was the loading. There were no Soviet secrets being leaked to the United States at that time. The progressive gradual overload system was being used in the U.S. It was divided into different time periods, or blocks, designed to work on a specific element of training. I am amazed that lifters are still using it today. It's a dead-end street. The young lifters believe it's a new form of periodization. Maybe they think the push-button starters on some new cars are also new, but all cars had a starter button in the 1940s.

I was always stronger a week or two after a meet or a week or two before the meet, but very seldom on meet day. The Soviets had coaches, like Matveyev, who realized there was a much better method of planning. There has always been controversy over who came up with wave periodization. Dr. Yuri Verkhoshansky has been credited with the pendulum wave. This was in 1964. Even the renowned Bulgarian coach Abadjev had a similar plan for waving volume and intensities.

The progressive gradual overload system was being used in the U.S. It was divided into different time periods, or blocks, designed to work on a specific element of training. I am amazed that lifters are still using it today.



Specific assistance exercises are designed to eliminate weaknesses.

In 1972, the Dynamo Club had 70 highly qualified weightlifters do an experiment by rotating 25-45 special exercises, including the classical lifts. After the experiments were done, one lifter was satisfied and the rest wanted more. The system now had a name: the conjugate system.

I was training alone and used lots of special exercises for all three lifts to reduce staleness. When you use the same routine over and over, you fail to make progress. This is known as "accommodation." To avoid this, a rotation of exercises, small and large, must be cycled in and out of the plan. I followed this system without knowing it had a name for years—13 years to be exact.

It was in 1983 when I broke my lower back for the second time. I thought there had to be a better way. I started to buy books such as the *Soviet Sports Review*, translated by Dr. Yessis, and the Soviet training manuals that Bud Charniga Jr. had translated. Bud told me that they were textbooks. This is just what I was looking for. They opened my eyes. They are very math- and physics-oriented, with a basis on Newton's laws of motion. I was hooked.

If I wanted to continue to make progress, I had to get stronger, and I had to get smarter—much smarter.

I had totaled my first elite USPF total of 1655 in February 1973. I used no gear, not even wraps on my knees or elbows or even wrists—just an Olympic weight belt, not a power belt. If I wanted to continue to make progress, I had to get stronger, and I had to get smarter—much smarter. I started all over.

Understanding the System

First, I used the pendulum wave in three-week cycles, going from training a heavy and a light day to a max-effort day where I worked to a max single depending on my level

of preparedness. A severe workout can be done every 72 hours, and the second day is devoted to the development of special strengths. It could be explosive strength, commonly known as the dynamic method.

The Westside conjugate system is the best of two advanced training systems: the Soviet system, where several special exercises are used to advance the training of superior lifters and athletes, and the Bulgarian system, where near-max lifts are performed every workout. The Westside system is a combination of the two.

Science has proven that training at 90 percent or above for 3 weeks will cause physical and mental fatigue. With the Westside conjugate method, we switch a core barbell exercise each week to avoid accommodation. The wide variety of special exercises will perfect form. The similarities of the Westside conjugate system to the one devised by the Soviets at the Dynamo Club are obvious. The only difference is the exercises: one system for Olympic lifting and, of course, the other for powerlifting.



If you don't have the gear you need, you might as well build it. Here, Simmons demonstrates his patented Plyo Swing.



Simmons invented the reverse hyper, too.

What I took from the Soviets was the sequence of wave loading. A.S. Prilepin was instrumental in regulating the number of repetitions and sets at a particular intensity zone. This truly enlightened me about the importance of calculating volume at each intensity zone and why it is a waste of time to do too many reps at a given intensity zone. Men such as Verkhoshansky, Bondarchuk, Matveyev, Vorobyev and many more helped lead the way.

The Westside conjugate system is the best of two advanced training systems: the Soviet system ... and the Bulgarian system.

Westside pendulum-wave cycles last three weeks for speed and explosive strength and two weeks for strength-speed work and utilize several special bars with which to establish different maxes. But because the reps and sets should remain the same at a given percent, the bar speed at this percent will remain the same. The volume will be different each week due to the difference between bar maxes. Your front squat max will be different from your safety-squat-bar max, and of course both will be different from your max squat. This is to avoid accommodation, which in this case is the constant overuse of the same loading patterns.

The Soviets and Westside count only all-time records, which amount to roughly 600 lifts a year, similar to contest max lifts. The Bulgarian system mandated that the current training maxes were based on that particular day's strength, equaling about 4,000 lifts a year. They were not based on a certain percent. This was determined by Coach Abadjev's experiments. They used only six lifts: front squat, back squat, power clean, power snatch, clean and jerk, and snatch. One had to be well chosen for such a rigorous regimen of training.

Westside's system is to max out on this day according to your level of preparedness. This means that a Westside max effort is the most one is capable of that day. It may not be an all-time record, but it is the most you are capable of on that day, week after week. This is just like Bulgarian training, with the exception of the number of lifts. They would follow this system six days a week. Six maximum lifts were done in the morning. After a 30-minute rest, they would do six more maxes on pulling exercises plus six max squats, front or back. This was repeated in the afternoon and evening.

Westside uses two max-effort days a week, one for the squat and deadlift and one for benching. Seventy-two hours separate a speed workout and max-effort day for the same lift. Three lifts at 90 percent and above are advised. This is more practical for powerlifting on the basis of using this max-effort system for the last 26 years.

A lot of hours and work have gone into perfecting the Westside system. It has more variety, volume, reps and intensity zones, as well as exercises that literally number in the hundreds. It has been a 40-year odyssey of pain, work and experimentation. Look at our website and compare our lifts to those of other gyms:

- 89 elites
- 17 over 1,000 and 6 over 1,100
- 32 who bench over 700, 6 over 800, and 1 over 900
- 18 who deadlift over 800
- 13 who total over 2,500
- 6 who total over 2,600
- 3 who total over 2,700
- 2 who total over 2,800

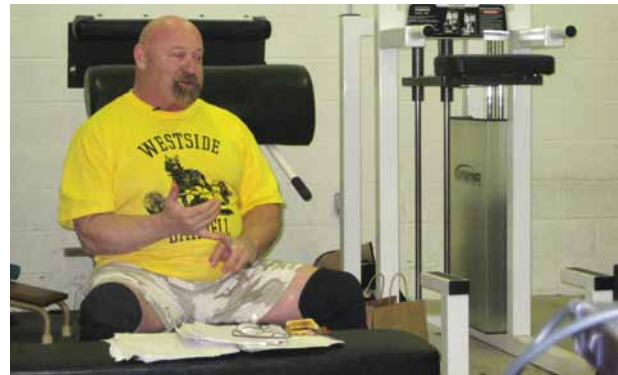
In addition, I have made a USPF elite total throughout the time period from February 1973 to December 2009, this last time at 62 years old.

I hope this explains how the Westside conjugate system was created. I found the right way to train by observing the smart and resourceful lifters who succeeded compared to those who set their own plan and failed and withdrew from Westside.



Louie Simmons' Required Reading List

- Bomph, Todor. *Theory and Methodology of Training* (1999).
- Komi, P.V. (ed.). *Strength and Power in Sports* (1996).
- Kurz, Thomas. *Science of Sports Training* (2001).
- Lapututin, Nikolai and Oleshko, Valentin. *Managing the Training of Weight Lifters*.
- Siff, Mel. *Supertraining* (2004).
- Starzynski, T. and Sozanski, H. *Explosive Power and Jumping Ability for all Sports* (1982).
- Viru, Atko. *Adaption in Sports Training* (1995).
- Yessis, M. and Taubo, R. *Secrets of Soviet Sports Fitness and Training* (1987).
- Zatsiorsky, V. M. *Science and Practice of Strength Training* (1995).
- Zawieja, Martin. *Periodization of Training for a Methodical Development of Performance in Olympic Lifting Bundesliga* (1988).



About the Author

Louie Simmons has been involved with powerlifting for over 40 years. Over that time, he's produced world and national powerlifting champions, and he's worked with Olympic gold medalists and professional athletes. Simmons himself is one of only a handful of lifters to ever total elite in five different weight classes. He has squatted 920 lb. and totaled 2,100 lb. over the age of 50. He's overcome two broken backs and a multitude of torn tendons and muscles, and he's patented several powerlifting machines. On Dec. 5, 2009, he competed at 220 lb. and achieved a 730 squat, 455 bench and 670 deadlift, which made him an elite again. For more info, visit the [Westside Barbell website](http://www.westsidebarbell.com).

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

A Brief Letter From a Representative of the Silent Masses

Backyard CrossFitter Aaron Carr sends a message to the affiliate community.

By Aaron Carr

June 2011



All images courtesy of Aaron Carr

Dear friends,

About three years ago, I decided I wanted to “get in better shape.” With previous fitness experience in competitive swimming, track-and-field decathlon, and some long-distance running, I was in good shape then, but I felt I could still improve my fitness level and maybe lose 10 lb.

1 of 5

As I was searching for exercise equipment online, I stumbled into the Crossfit Message Board. I was curious and started to read the articles in the *Journal* describing the CrossFit philosophy and methodology. Intrigued, I watched a few videos and was very interested but rather confounded. The workouts didn't look that hard, so I thought I would give CrossFit a shot.

The Family That Works Out Together ...

My first endeavor happened to be Michael. I didn't have any equipment, so I hooked my feet under the couch for a sit-up, and my wife sat on my legs so that I could do back extensions over the side of the couch. Needless to say, when I could barely move my midsection the next day, I went back to the site, read everything I could get my hands on and watched every video available (although I was somewhat cautious about watching Nasty Girls).

I acquired a door-jamb pull-up bar and a set of adjustable dumbbells and began as a CrossFit weekend warrior. A funny thing happened: I started to enjoy my workouts. I didn't feel bored out of my wits and didn't need my MP3 player to pass the time. This might be because I was struggling for oxygen and desperately trying to avoid meeting Pukie the Clown. I was dumbfounded as I started trying movements and exercises I had never previously considered. What kind of a sadistic person created weighted pull-ups? They're hard enough without adding weight!

**A funny thing happened:
I started to enjoy
my workouts.**

My "garage gym" grew as I continued to pick up equipment on Craigslist, including a used rower (\$150), 600 lb. of weight and an Olympic bar (\$200), a Roman chair (GHD substitute, \$40), "purse" rings from Seattle Marine (gymnastics-ring substitute, \$15), and a giant tire (free). I even built my own pull-up bar.

Energized by the results of my workouts, I started trying to get other people to join me. (My wife is fairly certain I am insane, and she may have some valid evidence.) I get really funny looks as I passionately express how my last workout destroyed me and how I was able to take 4 minutes off my Fran time. I talk about CrossFit with a fervor usually reserved for cults. I know of at least nine people in five different states who have gone to a CrossFit gym and at least 100 people who have looked at CrossFit.com on my encouragement.



Hooked on CrossFit, Aaron Carr outfitted his back yard with everything he'd need to get fitter.

When my 11 year-old son came home sad one day because some of the other kids in the neighborhood could climb the walls around the park and he couldn't, I invited him to work out with me. In six months, he increased his physical capacity from zero pull-ups and 5 push-ups to 2 pull-ups and 55 push-ups in a minute. Now he jumps up the wall much faster than any of the other kids, and he walks and talks with a confidence he never had before.

Even my three-year-old joins us, and he is my intensity gauge. Whenever I pause for a break in a WOD, he is right there to yell, "3, 2, 1, go! Dad, I said, '3, 2, 1, go!'"

My workouts have become a bonding experience with my boys as they push me on in my workout and I give them workouts from the CrossFit Kids site.

"Dad, are we work outing tonight?"

Between their workout and my workout, we are usually done in about 30-45 minutes. I used to take an hour for an average run, and the only way I could participate with a member of the family would be if my son rode his bike beside me. Now that I'm getting a better workout in half the time and I'm working out with my boys, I have more time with my family on a daily basis.

I am just getting to the point where I can do some of the WODs as prescribed. I've seen an amazing improvement in my physical ability. I went from having very minimal strength overhead and not knowing what a clean and jerk was to being able to clean and jerk 10 lb. over my body weight. I went from being able to do 10 pull-ups to being able to do 23 before my grip gives out. I went from never considering a weighted pull-up to doing a pull-up with a weight of 90 lb. I had never tried a deadlift and now I can



Family time at the Carr residence.

deadlift twice my body weight. I have lost 20 lb. of body weight and I can feel a shift in my body composition. Even now, improvements and new personal bests come almost every other week, and that continuous progress keeps me motivated and excited.

I remember in one of the affiliate conference videos Coach Glassman was invited to a gym where they had been following the CrossFit WODs and movements. He was less than impressed with their form and actually thought it was horrible, but their improvement in performance and capacity was surprising. I'm probably similar. I don't doubt that when I snatch it might be one of the ugliest things in existence and would probably give Coach Mike Burgener nightmares, but my capacity continues to increase even better than I could have expected.

Much of the CrossFit site and videos are geared around the elite CrossFit Games athletes, as well they should be. I love watching their performance and the amazing capacity they demonstrate. It inspires me to push myself harder to be faster and stronger each time. I am only a little embarrassed to admit that once when I saw a vertically challenged gentleman with a shaved head and big headphones—a la Chris Spealler in the 2009 Games—I got a little giddy that I might get to introduce myself. Fortunately, I realized it was a case of mistaken identity before I made too much of a fool of myself.

I am astounded to see the raw power demonstrated by Dave Lipson and Rob Orlando. I am amazed to view the athleticism and heart of Graham Holmberg, Pat Barber and Rich Froning Jr. I am dumbfounded by the capacity of Mikko Salo, and if I wasn't familiar with Finnish stoicism, I might be concerned he was a cyborg.

**CrossFit will likely add years
to my life from the health
and fitness perspective, but
in the here and now, CrossFit
is adding life to my years.**



***Just like you did, Carr found that a little gear
can go a long way.***

CrossFit is, from my understanding, at its essence open-source, evidence-based fitness. And while I can let individuals smarter than I am continue to refine, improve and study the metrics and methodology, I can enjoy the fruits of their passion. It is easy for me to see and appreciate the improvement in the numbers that represent my performance, but the most valuable benefits I've received from CrossFit have been qualitative differences.

I spend active time with my boys. I feel healthy, and I have the energy to do whatever I want without being sidelined. I can play in the turkey bowl and keep up with my brothers who are 13 years younger than me and high-school star athletes (their opinion is that CrossFit is helping me devolve back to a gorilla state). I can go waterskiing, snow skiing or compete with the scouts in their triathlon and enjoy it all without debilitating soreness the next day. Most of my soreness now comes from the WOD I did the day before, like when JT destroys my triceps.

CrossFit will likely add years to my life from the health and fitness perspective, but in the here and now, CrossFit is adding life to my years as I have the physical capacity to perform and compete to my heart's desire.

Pass the Kool-Aid

A huge percentage of the population lacks meaningful fitness. We hear in the news about the income gap and the wealth gap. But, I see a much larger gap in the health and fitness landscape. There may be a performance gap between firebreathers and your average CrossFit athlete, but from my perspective, that gap pales in comparison to the gap between a CrossFitter and the average couch potato. There are other fitness programs that have components of the constantly varied motion and high-intensity intervals, but they miss the broad time and modal domains aspect.

The affiliates and trainers do a visibly impressive job, as you can see in everything ranging from the performances of elite Games athletes to the testimonials of the cancer survivor on an affiliate website. But there is also a large population, like me, that will never get to work out next to a Games competitor or even be in the same room as a firebreather. I enjoy the five-step walk to my exercise area in my back yard and am far too attached to working out with my boys to likely attend an affiliate on a frequent basis. But the beauty of CrossFit's open-source fitness is that whether we work out in an elite gym or a makeshift backyard gym, we all progress and improve. You continue to build and improve the tsunami-like growth of forging elite fitness.

I am excited to have witnessed the growth in the Games and how far they have come and how quickly they are growing and expanding. I will continue to drink the Kool-Aid and share what I have with people I meet. In the meantime, until we get to meet in person, know that you inspire the silent masses and that some of the people showing up at your affiliate are sent from some of the silent backyard CrossFit addicts.

Sincerely,

Aaron Carr



About the Author

Aaron Carr is a financial planning manager with Phoenix Children's Hospital, with a master's in accounting from Brigham Young University. He volunteers as a Cubmaster and officially considers himself a CrossFit junkie.