

## May 2009

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## No Risk Retention Group, No Reward

Current insurance policies may leave affiliates and trainers vulnerable to devastating lawsuits.  
The CrossFit RRG is insurance *by* CrossFitters *for* CrossFitters.  
The RRG offers protection for the whole community.

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Mike Warkentin

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**It turns out light thrusters, burpees and air squats can cost you more than a little sweat. They can cost you \$300,000. And maybe the whole business you worked so hard to build. Your gym could end up empty.**

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On Dec. 11, 2005, Makimba Mimms participated in a CrossFit workout at Manassas World Gym/Ruthless Training Concepts in Manassas, Virginia. The workout consisted of fifteen-, ten- and five-rep rounds of a triplet including ten-pound dumbbell thrusters, burpees and air squats.

In the summer of 2008, Mimms filed a lawsuit against the gym, the training company and trainer Javier Lopez. He claimed he suffered permanent injuries from the workout, including rhabdomyolysis, which occurs when bits of muscle fiber enter the bloodstream and damage the kidneys.

In October of 2008 a jury found all three defendants liable and awarded Mimms \$300,000. CrossFit Inc. was not named as a defendant in the Mimms case but is nevertheless responding to the verdict.

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*"I'm a small part-time affiliate.  
I paid the first day and was very  
surprised to see that more didn't.  
It was a no-brainer for me."*

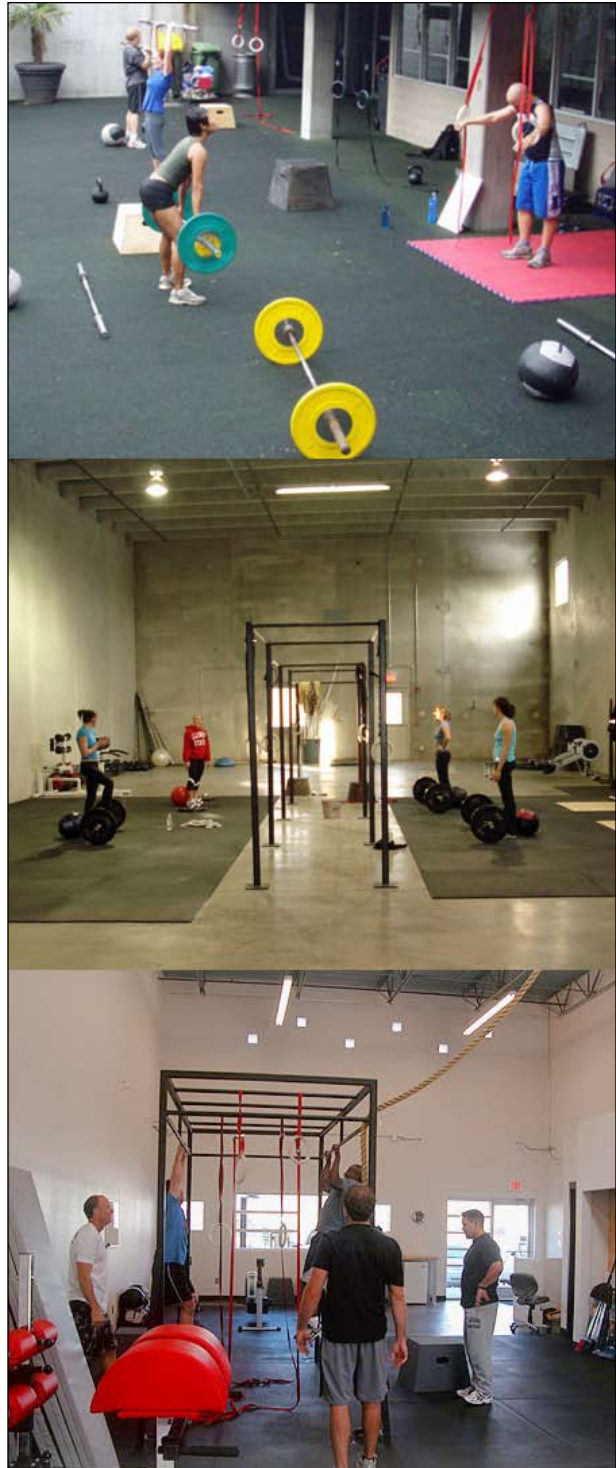
—Bethany Wadsworth, CrossFit Geneseo

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### Does Your Insurance Really Protect You?

"CrossFit Headquarters was involved in trying to help out the defendant in that case," CrossFit lawyer Dale Saran said on an [Apr. 28 episode of CrossFit Radio](#). "The insurance defense attorneys, we offered to help them out, and they didn't want any part of it. They didn't want our expertise on rhabdo."

Saran said insurance companies may not place the highest priority on CrossFit's interests when a case comes up. Insurance companies could decide the smart financial decision is to settle a claim instead of fighting it. That might make sense for the insurance company, but not for CrossFit. The entire CrossFit community could be badly damaged. And things could go downhill. Media coverage of the case could make CrossFit look like an inherently dangerous exercise program that injures its participants.



***These pictures would look strange to insurance company lawyers because they don't understand what goes on in CrossFit gyms. That's a big part of the problem.***



**CrossFit lawyer Dale Saran:  
a good guy to have on your side**

"It struck Coach Glassman that this is a thing that could really, really hurt," Saran said. "So he looked into it and looked at some people who have that kind of exposure, namely ER doctors and some other different people who self-insured, and he said, 'This is something we really need to look at.' And the next thing you know, we decided we needed to form this risk-retention group and take charge of our own defense."

CrossFit's risk-retention group was announced on CrossFit.com on Apr. 15, 2009, giving affiliates and trainers until May 15 to contribute the \$500,000 required to legally establish the RRG under American law. Trainers can buy into the program at a cost of \$200, and affiliates at \$1,000. As of Friday, May 1, 2009, the RRG has amassed \$158,800 of the \$500,000 required. If capitalization needs are met, the RRG will be owned by its members. Its only mission: ensuring CrossFit trainers and affiliates have coverage that fully protects them.

Saran explained that many conventional insurance policies cover accidents and damage to equipment. But if a client is injured after following the advice of a trainer, that may not be considered an accident. Many affiliates and trainers may not really have the coverage they think they do. They may be vulnerable to claims that have the potential to put them out of business. An example would be a client who gets rhabdo after doing a workout a trainer prescribes, even if it's a beginner's workout the trainer has taken care to scale down.

"Either it will be explicitly not covered by your insurance, it may be covered, or you may be in the situation where your insurance company is going to take a look at the language," Saran said. "And they're going to make their own decisions about whether they're going to cover that or not. You don't necessarily know if you're going to be left out in the cold."

The RRG is designed to prevent that from happening. It will select its own lawyers and ensure they always have a seat at the table. These lawyers will be CrossFit experts who vigorously defend claims. The RRG legal team will also do everything possible to prevent damage to the reputation of CrossFit as a whole. The aim is for CrossFit trainers and affiliates to become masters of their own legal destiny, no longer dependent on anyone else.

### **Sustaining the Community Through the RRG**

The RRG is welcome news to many in the community, including Jolie Gentry, a trainer at CrossFit One World and winner of the 2007 CrossFit Games.

"I would encourage people to join it because I've seen a switch in the insurance offerings going from encompassing CrossFit to slowly weeding them out," she said. "I think there's a chance eventually to not be covered, and if the big insurance companies aren't going to cover us, then we have to look out for ourselves."

"It's very important to have (a lawyer) who can speak to the safety of our program. Someone coming in from the outside may look at us as most people do: as some crazy, unsafe program for people who are able to perform superhuman feats of strength. That's not the case. We have a very safe program for everyone. We need someone who can speak to that."

Like many affiliate owners, Jason Khalipa (winner of the 2008 CrossFit Games) didn't take a close look at the RRG when it was unveiled. He already had insurance and didn't think he needed more. He recently changed his mind and will add CrossFit Santa Clara to the growing list of RRG members.

"Up until today, I hadn't put as much thought into it as I probably should have," he said. "I've seen the different things on the CrossFit website. I'd read about it a little bit. But I already had other insurance and hadn't had an incident so far, so I really never took the time to look into it in depth—but I should have."

"I would tell (other affiliate owners and trainers) to check their insurance policy to see exactly what's going on. They should become part of this program, because over time we're going to be able to have our own insurance company, which is going to be key for the community to sustain itself."

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*"I'm surprised this hasn't been funded fully already. There are some things in business that you must bite the bullet on and pay for. Insurance is one of them, and the RRG is a must for the future of CrossFit and for affiliates."*

—Steve Rakow, CrossFit Ocean City

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## Why Fitness Professionals Need Insurance

Robb Wolf has been involved with CrossFit since the very first affiliate—Seattle's CrossFit North—and opened the fourth affiliate, CrossFit NorCal, shortly after that. In March 2008, NorCal Strength and Conditioning was named one of the Top 30 gyms in the U.S. by *Men's Health*. Wolf has been dealing with fitness and liability insurance for years.

"Because I've been in this literally since the first affiliate and seen it move forward, it's always seemed obvious to me that at some point we would need some additional infrastructure and a lot of the characteristics that you would see in other large businesses," Wolf said of the RRG. "So it seemed like an inevitable and good evolution in the whole community."

Since 2005, Wolf has also been aware of the limitations of many insurance policies. To protect his livelihood, he's carefully added specific line items to his policies.

"We had an awareness very early on that simply having gymnastics rings and pommel horses in your gym could get you in trouble with the standard insurance company,

because they would say you were practising gymnastics," he said. "And then you're in a battle to prove what exactly you were doing. For a long time we've been going out and creating a comprehensive package for ourselves because we had awareness that CrossFit is so broad. What we do is so different from what anyone else does, no singular entity could meet all our needs."

For him, having the protection of CrossFit experts and a comprehensive RRG designed to fill in gaps in current protection is extremely important. It's also just part of being a fitness professional.

"People are keen on dropping \$1,000 on gear, on a cert," he explained. "They're OK spending a couple of hundred bucks on a night on the town. This is insuring your livelihood. We bought a house and paid for our car and will send our kids through college with our gym. This is our thing."

"If you're a hobbyist at it, then I guess maybe the compelling reason to get in and do it may appear to be less, but the reality is that your liability is the same as mine is, whether you're a hobbyist or not. It behooves you to get involved and to support the movement. It's a part of being a professional."

For more information on the RRG, visit [CrossFitRRG.com](http://CrossFitRRG.com).



## About The Author

*Mike Warkentin is a Level 1 CrossFit trainer, freelance writer and member of the CrossFit Journal editorial team.*



## Muscling Through It

Affiliate owner Dr. Dave Whitty tackled the Level 2 Certification three times—and finally passed it. Now he wants to help you prepare.

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Dave Whitty, DC

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Passing the Level 2 Certification is a lot like learning a muscle-up—you've tried without success, but now you're determined to succeed.

When you were learning the muscle-up, you read, studied videos on [CrossFit.com](http://CrossFit.com), asked your trainer at the gym for tips, watched your fellow CrossFitters, and picked their brains. Then you practised and practised and practised. Your wrists were so raw that your spouse and co-workers were worried that you had a self-mutilation problem.

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**Level 2 class photos—like this one from June 28, 2008—are sparse for a reason: the certifications are hard as hell.**

Bit by bit, you thought you were getting closer, but it just didn't happen. Everyone told you that you were so close. You just needed to get up a little higher, kip a little harder, or bang your head through more aggressively.

So what did you do? You kept working on it, and eventually you knocked it out of the park.

What does that have to do with the Level 2 Certification? Well, everything!

Most folks have heard how hard the test is and how the pass rate is very low on the first attempt. So why and how do you prepare? Well, all I can tell you is that I looked at Level 2 just like I did muscle-ups: just keep working at it.

### **Two Certs in Two Months is Too Much**

After I returned home from my Level 1 Cert at CFHQ, I quickly began training a couple of guys and applied for affiliation. The application was quickly accepted and the business was rolling.

Incidentally, a business was not the original goal. I had actually planned only to learn how to do CrossFit properly and taste the Kool-Aid. As our numbers grew quickly, I felt the need to learn more. The Level 2 Certification seemed the logical next step, so I registered for a March 2008 cert in Virginia Beach, Virginia, not even two months after completing the Level 1 course.

Well, the Level 2 Cert was an eye-opener. Most of the participants were very experienced Level 2 and 3 trainers who were taking the new course and test that were

introduced in January 2008. A couple were instructor trainers for the Level 1 certifications.

The course went really well in Virginia Beach. I learned a ton from the great coaching crew about progressions, cues, my own form and fixing common problems. Everything was going well. But when I got my debriefing, the reality of my performance was revealed.

I went in with a lot of confidence, having never failed at anything. I thought I was prepared. As a chiropractor, I look at movement all the time. I understand biomechanics and have been accustomed to assessing movement through video analysis of running and golf swings. I'd been a personal trainer while in university, taught swimming and skiing, and lectured to large and small groups including trainers. I thought I knew my stuff.

Well, I was surprised again. My body felt just like it did after my first workout with a CrossFit trainer. I learned the hard way what it would take to get to the next level.

Teaching CrossFit is not like teaching patients how to activate their gluteus medius while lying on their sides. Instead, CF teaches complex movements that will be performed at high intensity with large loads. It teaches large groups quickly, effectively and safely, making sure they're having fun through it all.

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*They explained that I had done much better than expected with such limited experience. That was encouraging, but I was still pissed—not with the instructors but because they were right.*

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The Level 2 instructors were tough and fair during the debriefing. My demos needed work, they said. I needed to get better at managing the group, have more fun, and improve my use of the progressions. I needed to see a whole lot more.

When they asked how long I'd been training people and I said, "two months," they explained that I had done much better than expected with such limited experience.

That was encouraging, but I was still pissed—not with the instructors but because they were right. My push press and push jerk sucked, and I missed a lot of poor form faults. I don't accept failure sitting on my ass, so I took their recommendation to go home, keep training people and come back after I'd seen 100 or 150 people put a bar overhead.

Back home we started our fundamentals classes, where all new folks learned the nine movements. I kept reading the [CrossFit Journal](#), watching videos and training people.

### Level 2, Part 2—Get Some More

In September 2008, I went to One World in Union City, California, to retake the Level 2 Cert. Rather than just retaking the test, I chose to take the whole course again because I knew from the first attempt that I had learned a lot. I scared one or two folks during the intros when I explained it was my second time taking the course. But at least one other person said he was repeating, too.

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*Picky? You bet, but  
the instructors need to be.  
This is the bottleneck.  
This is the quality-control point.  
This is where they ensure you  
know how to coach CrossFit  
and that you do it well.*

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The course went really well, and on the practice day I did great. I knew the progressions, I was the 'big me' (as the instructors encourage you to be), and I kept the group moving. The test felt like it went well but was not as comfortable as the practice day. Apparently it showed. My score at the debriefing was one point short. I missed it by one damn point!



*If you're intimidated by people with clipboards, get over it before heading to a Level 2.*



Why? Well, I missed things. I didn't notice that a bar was not 100 percent overhead. I tried to fix one guy's knees during his squat, which threw off his lumbar curve, which I missed.

Picky? You bet, but the instructors need to be. This is the bottleneck. This is the quality-control point. This is where they ensure you know how to coach CrossFit and that you do it well.

So what was their suggestion? Watching experienced trainers and trying to see what they see, then observing how they fix those faults. The challenge for me was that there were no experienced trainers in my area, so they suggested that I go to a Level 1 Cert and watch the instructors. There was a Level 1 in Toronto, Ontario, the next month, so I went and watched, worked on my form and soaked up as much as I could.

### Never, Never Give Up

When HQ posted a new Level 2 Cert for Boston, Massachusetts, in December, there was no doubt about registering. I went in with confidence but also with trepidation. Even though I was training people six days a week, integrating the squat and deadlift into exercises

credit: Sheri Ostridge



**Dave Whitty (kneeling) found there's no substitute for experience. If you want to be a Level 2 trainer, get in the box and start working with athletes.**



**Nicole Carroll, CrossFit HQ co-director of training.**

### Level 2 Tips from HQ

About 50 percent of the candidates at Level 2 Certs don't make the grade, and some classes have seen failure rates as high as 80 percent.

The reason?

"The No. 1 contributor is lack of experience in training people in CrossFit and its nine foundational movements," says Nicole Carroll, CrossFit HQ co-director of training.

On paper it might seem easy to run a small group through the squat, front squat, overhead squat, press, push press, push jerk, deadlift, sumo deadlift high pull and medicine ball clean. In reality, it takes an experienced eye and precise communication skills.

"You need to have the depth of knowledge to be able to teach the movement," Carroll



***Form errors are not accepted at Level 2 certs, where demanding instructors put you under the microscope.***

for my patients, and really trying to be as ready as I could, I'd already failed twice. Our members were unbelievably supportive even after my second failure. They didn't care about a designation. They were just thrilled that they were getting a better trainer.

The practice day in Boston went well, with some very positive and constructive feedback from the Level 2 instructors. I was impressed by one clear improvement in this version of the cert: the instructors were critiqued by other instructors. Seeing the trainers accept constructive criticism and suggestions from their colleagues helped us more comfortably accept the critiques and suggestions we were soon to hear.

The day of the test I awoke at 4 a.m., five hours before test time. In my mind, I ran through the nine foundational movements and how I wanted to teach each one of them. When test time rolled around, I felt ready. There were quite a few volunteer test subjects for us to instruct, and they changed for each rotation. That really made you focus on each person even more because you weren't familiar with their movement patterns.

When the debriefing happened, I was told that I'd aced it! I was psyched. The hard work on this task was complete.

explains. "Then you need to see if people are doing it right or not and effectively commend or correct them. That's the technical aspect of the craft, but there are other elements that have everything to do with delivery.

"Do you talk loud enough? Do you clearly articulate what you want the athletes to do? Are they engaged? Do they feel respected and attended to? Are they having fun? These are intangible but very much a part of being a successful professional trainer. Then there are elements like managing a small group and demonstration. Demonstration is about having an awareness of your own movement and utilizing it as a tool to teach others."

If that sounds like a lot, it is.

"When you take all those elements and combine them, it's pretty rigorous. I think there's the potential to underestimate that," Carroll says.

According to Carroll, the best preparation tool available is the [Study Material](#). The document explains exactly how candidates will be evaluated and also outlines movement progressions and many of the faults you'll encounter when teaching the nine core movements.

But don't stop there.

"The best way to prepare is to train people," Carroll says. "It sounds so simple but isn't that easy. Don't underestimate the experience required to come into the test environment and do well. Run fundamentals classes and teach people the nine movements over and over again until you can do it in your sleep. Your confidence there will positively affect your delivery. Other resources are Level 1 Certs, [attending a Level 2 as a test subject](#), and training with other great trainers in your area."

— Mike Warkentin

### The Good Doctor's Advice

These days, I'm doing multiple muscle-ups without coming off the rings. I'm a grizzled veteran of three Level 2 certs. And I have a few ideas that echo and amplify Nicole's thoughts about the best way to prepare:

- Coach folks as much as you can—especially newbies.
- Focus on the nine foundational movements, coaching them on a daily basis.
- Work on a game plan for each class, even if it's just in your head and you only do it five minutes before class.
- Know the progressions cold. Understand how they help teach the whole movement, and use them to fix common faults.
- Watch other experienced trainers training people. Try to see what they're seeing and how they fix things.
- Be the “big you.” Don't sit back and let a class happen. Run it.
- Have fun at the cert. The instructors are there to make you a better trainer, pass or fail.
- If you aren't successful the first time, really listen to what they think you should work on and go do it.
- Volunteer to be a test subject at a Level 2 Cert.
- Go back to another Level 1 Cert and watch and learn.
- Above all else, believe in yourself. Then, like I did, just keep showing up until you get it.



### About The Author

*Dr. David Whitty is a chiropractor and Level 2 CrossFit Trainer. He's also CrossFit Running and Endurance certified. He has been in private practice in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, at [Bodyworks](#), a multi-disciplinary clinic he operates, and at the Souris Hospital. He is the founder and co-owner of [CrossFit PEI](#).*



credit: A.J. Valadka

***With dedication and perseverance, you can get your Level 2 Certification—and your first muscle-up.***



## The Secrets of Sticking With It

It started with a scientific experiment about “fitness adherence.”  
It ended as another CrossFit success story.

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Chris Cooper

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This is the story of how you get your clients off their butts.

Or, if you insist on more polite conversation, we can talk about a fitness adherence study I conducted to try to understand what makes people stay with an exercise program. Among the key factors identified were intensity, novelty, accountability and competition. Sound familiar?

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Let's back up. By 2006, I had already been in the fitness industry for a decade. It had been decade of constant study, research review, professional discussion and painstaking exercise prescription. I had coached, trained, sold fitness equipment and competed as a powerlifter. Thanks to a Canadian Forces research project, I had been able to take a chance on opening my own facility.

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### *The problem:*

*80 percent of my clients weren't doing their homework. I don't mean they weren't bringing any intensity to their workouts or skipping parts. I mean they weren't doing any of it.*

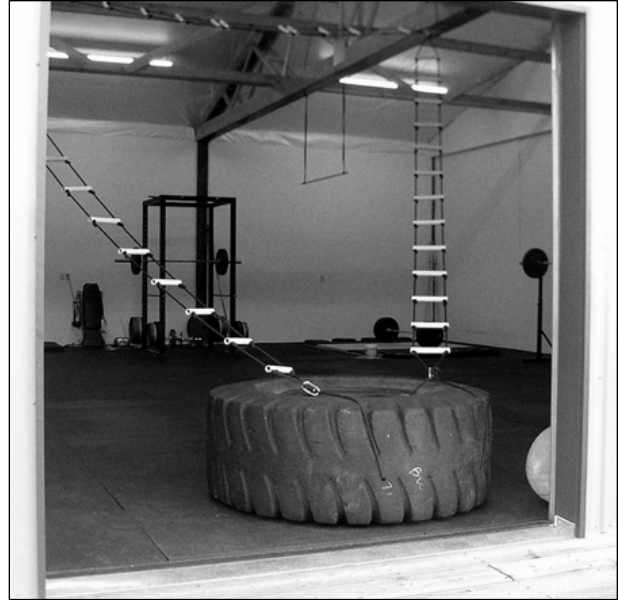
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By that point I was writing the best programs of my life. Or so I thought. I could talk about linear periodization and rate of force development and insulin sensitivity for hours. And I did. I was tough and creative. I gave clients crisp, point-by-point workout prescriptions other trainers wouldn't. I stayed up all night building food plans and tapering programs.

But there was a big problem: 80 percent of my clients weren't doing their homework. I don't mean they weren't bringing any intensity to their workouts or skipping parts. I mean they weren't doing any of it. The obvious exceptions were the hardcore athletes, who had something to lose if they didn't train. But how could anyone expect to make progress if he or she only spent an hour per week exercising?

### **Ditching Workouts: Finding the Why Behind the Whining**

We were a small personal-training facility called Catalyst. We didn't sell memberships. Our clients were to do their workouts at home or at other local gyms. We wrote programs that were easy to follow and could be done anywhere. But our clients still they weren't doing their workouts. My clients could generate plenty of intensity when I was with them. They were excellent at keeping appointments with me. So why couldn't they work out on their own? With our reputation on the line,



***The empty box:  
a product of laziness, fear, apathy and a lack of motivation.***

we decided we'd better figure out why. After all, no workout is more important than the next workout.

Step 1—try to determine average adherence rates for gym members and people working with personal trainers. We had to make sure it wasn't just us. That took three months.

Most of the data available was from physiotherapy, and the statistics weren't good. We expected a high adherence rate from people who used exercise to alleviate pain and get back to work. That wasn't the case. After two weeks of being left on their own, physiotherapy patients were less than 70 percent likely to do the prescribed exercises—even if they were only stretches. After 30 days, fewer than half were actually doing exercises that would help.

Trying to find more data was tougher. Gyms aren't keen to divulge membership numbers. Most don't track attendance rates. Or maybe they know the numbers but don't want to report them. We turned instead to government-sponsored exercise programs and non-profit organizations.

Government programs in Canada operate on a grants-based system. Unfortunately, with three levels of government and dozens of bureaucratic agencies funding these

projects, there's a lot of overlap and very little objective measurement. Take a look at the mission statement of any government-funded or non-profit program and you'll see something like this: "To increase participation in our community and encourage active living." Talk about non-specific, immeasurable goals! As a private business owner, these programs make me cringe.

It was time for us to do something.

### **Volunteers Needed: Must Be Able to Quit Working Out**

I put an article on a local news site asking for 12 volunteers who weren't currently Catalyst members. They were told we were studying the efficacy of a workout program, not the adherence rate. The volunteers were split into two groups.

Group 1 got a booklet with exercise descriptions and pictures. The booklet detailed a month's worth of workouts, written day by day. Group members were told to check off the workouts they started, even if they didn't complete them. Group 2 was given the same booklet without the workouts included. Instead, they were e-mailed the daily workout and asked to reply with times or weights they had used.

The groups came in and met with us. We ran through the dozen exercises with them, answered their questions and gave them instructions. They were told to do as many of the workouts as possible.

After a month, we asked for their tracking logs. Group 1 had completed about 30 percent of their workouts, which was average for us. Group 2 had completed over 50 percent of their e-mailed workouts, and they were posting their scores. At this point, we didn't reply to their postings. We just logged their scores when they did their workouts. At the end of the month, three out of the six requested to keep getting the e-mailed workouts!

Group 2's adherence rate of 50 per cent doesn't seem that great, but it's much better than the industry average. Our original plan was to end the study there and just start e-mailing people their workouts daily, but one of my partners thought the results were interesting enough to keep going.

We applied for government funding through one body and were redirected to another. In the end we were given a 50 percent reimbursement allowance. That meant for



Courtesy of Catalyst Fitness

**Tyler Belanger (jumping) was the first guinea pig in the CrossFit experiment at Catalyst Fitness.**

every dollar we spent on the research, we'd be given 50 cents back, provided we developed a product for sale and created jobs. That started a two-year research and development process. More importantly, it changed the way we approach fitness.

### **Get With the Program: Keeping the Slackers in the Gym**

Using a rickety platform we built called MorningCatalyst.com, we videotaped a few dozen exercises and started signing up trainees. We manipulated variables monthly in an attempt to increase adherence. Some of the results were startling.

First, we started reporting people's adherence rates on a weekly basis. We'd send an e-mail on Sunday saying,

"Bill, your weekly adherence rate is 60 percent. Good job." At first, we used the same comments for everyone automatically. Later, we'd change the feedback to a personal note from a Catalyst trainer. Letting practitioners know their adherence rate bumped their success up a bit, but the personal note had far more impact.

**Lesson learned:**

*People relate to a personality better than to a program.*

Next, we started providing a weekly and monthly ranking—anonymously, of course. The weekly Sunday e-mail would say something like, "Bill, your weekly adherence rate is 60 percent. That's better than last week! Sixty percent puts you in fifth place among men!" Adherence improved again.

**Lesson learned:**

*People compare themselves to other people, whether they admit it or not.*

Next step: increase the intensity of the workouts. We used the same workouts we'd used the first month and added weight or repetitions or inserted goal times to increase the challenge. This produced mixed results. But we had hypothesized that adherence would decrease, so we were surprised again.

**Lesson learned:**

*People want to be challenged. But how best to do it? We learned the answer later.*

The variable that produced the biggest result was novelty. We'd always taken great pride in never giving a client the same workout prescription twice. When we applied this tenet to our study, we found that not knowing what would come next improved adherence nearly 15 percent alone. We also mixed rest days so participants couldn't count on days off beyond knowing that they'd rest two days per week.

**Lesson learned:**

*People like variety and surprise.*

Next, we thought, "What if people have to pay for it? Will they be more likely to complete the workouts?" We added a \$30 monthly fee to continue with the program. Our subscriptions fell when we ended the free service. But those who stayed were more likely to do the prescribed workout, even if they dropped out at the end of the month.

**Lesson learned:**

*People try to get their money's worth.*



Courtesy of Catalyst Fitness

*Chris Cooper found the transition from powerlifting to Linda to be a struggle—but he made it.*





*The author discovered people want a challenging workout. CrossFit just might be able to help them find it.*

Even if they hate the workouts, people will do them if they perceive they'll waste money by not doing them. They may not come back the next month, though. The stick works, but the carrot is better.

At this point, we were nearly a year in. We'd already learned things that seemed intuitive but ran counter to the instruction we'd received in university. Celebrate success? Hold people accountable? Be challenging and quick? In hindsight, it seems obvious: why is everyone else still doing three sets of eight on the ambiguous bi machine?

At the time, though, we were challenging the very foundations of our educations in the field. Think about this: after spending tens of thousands to learn what works, you're invested in the idea that your teachers were right. You know the list. Calorie-reduced diets plus cardio equals fat loss. Women don't want to lift weights. Thirty minutes of walking per day will get you somewhere.

Did we really want to be wrong? Hell, no. We fought it every step of the way.

A year in, we revisited the idea of bringing a group together to do the workouts at our gym. We wanted to

test the effect that group interaction and achievement would bring. We called it our Morning Catalyst Live Group. We met every night at 7 p.m. for a month.

The adherence rate was well over 80 percent for our eight enrollees. Score one for group interaction. There was a charge for participation. In hindsight, this may have limited enrolment and boosted attendance by people looking to get the most for their money. But the group setting allowed us to better coach more complex lifts.

**Lesson learned:**

*People enjoy group settings.*

Finally, after learning the lesson that complex tasks will help keep people coming back for more, we started to incorporate Olympic lifts and powerlifting movements. Unfortunately, adherence dropped. In subsequent feedback forums people admitted they were unlikely to do a movement they weren't comfortable performing. One participant booked private training to learn the lifts, and her adherence rate rebounded.

**Lesson learned:**

*People are motivated by live coaching.*

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*Even if they hate the workouts, people will do them if they perceive they'll waste money by not doing them. They may not come back the next month, though. The stick works, but the carrot is better.*

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**If It Looks Like CrossFit and Smells Like CrossFit...**

By this point, the link between our research and CrossFit's methodology and philosophies was becoming very obvious. Let's make this clear: we didn't set out to prove CrossFit works. Heck, we were originally sceptical of CrossFit. But we couldn't ignore the way our research was dovetailing with the CrossFit program. Every time we thought we'd found a weak spot, our own daily workout feedback pushed us toward CrossFit.



The time had come for me to stop thinking about lions and throw myself into the den. I was still fairly competitive in powerlifting. I worried about losing weight, so I offered the project up to our team.

In early 2008, more than two years after starting research into exercise adherence, one of my trainers, Tyler Belanger, volunteered to do CrossFit for a month. His first day was a 10 km run. Tyler is a football player. He gutted it out. Day 2 was more to his strengths. He completed Isabel's 30 snatches of 135 pounds in six minutes.

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*Let's make this clear: we didn't set out to prove CrossFit works. Heck, we were originally skeptical of CrossFit. But we couldn't ignore the way our research was dovetailing with the CrossFit program.*

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Tyler published a blog. Another trainer volunteered to go next. Tyler opted to continue. Clients reading the blog asked if they could be thrown into the mix. I opened up our one-on-one PT facility for an hour every day for "open CrossFit time." We didn't charge or coach. We just let people use the space. They had to come at 6 a.m., but they still came. In ten days, we had a waiting list for the next month. We were excited, to say the least.

I started in May. I was pretty intimidated. Both of our trainers were setting the bar very high.

My first workout was a dream come true: CrossFit Total. Coming out of a four-year stint in competitive powerlifting, I thought I'd dominate. I had good lifts, but unbelted my numbers suffered and I barely made 1,000 pounds. Linda, a.k.a. Three Bars of Death, was in there that first week. A ten-to-one triplet of deadlift (1.5 times bodyweight), bench press (body weight) and clean (three-quarters body weight), Linda had me collapsed on the floor after reaching eight deadlift reps. I wasn't sure I'd continue.

Luckily, May 2008 featured a lot of strength work, and my deadlift actually made a small increase. I was getting hooked. Our clients were asking for more group workouts. We started the affiliation process soon after and opened a second facility to accommodate our new CrossFit habit.

The latest update? We continue to grow, based largely on referrals. We now practice the "tricks of the trade" we learned from our research on encouraging adherence. It's working.



### About The Author

Chris Cooper is president of Catalyst Fitness in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, in Canada. Split between two facilities—a private personal training centre and a CrossFit box—Catalyst Fitness is engaged in research, athletic development and the pursuit of all things fitness. Chris has two small kids, a 14-hour workday, a 2:51 Diane and a 520-pound deadlift PR. He also has an incredible staff of trainers, therapists and coaches, as well as a probable case of mild ADD and a very patient wife.

Reach him via email at [catalystfitness@yahoo.ca](mailto:catalystfitness@yahoo.ca) or on the web at [www.catalystgym.com](http://www.catalystgym.com).

## Improvising, Adapting and Overcoming

In early 2008 a team from CrossFit HQ offered a Level 1 Certification to members of the Warrior Transition Battalion. Here's what trainer Maj. Andrew Thompson learned from some of CrossFit's most inspiring athletes.

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Maj. Andrew Thompson, USMC

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The video series was remarkable.

It showed wounded warriors back in action. They were seen competing against their buddies once again, this time in a CrossFit workout at a special Level 1 Cert.

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1 of 5

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**Never focus on what an athlete can't do.  
It's what they can do that matters.**

*"It gives me chills,"* one person commented on CrossFit.com.

*"I'm crying like a child with a skinned knee,"* said another.

A third commenter summed it all up with one simple phrase: *"Humbling and awe-inspiring."*

I agree with all of them. In February 2008 it was my privilege to serve as a member of the CrossFit HQ team that traveled to San Antonio, Texas, to work with members of the Warrior Transition Battalion from Brooke Army Medical Center. We learned important lessons about the human and technical aspects of working with athletes with catastrophic injuries.

Here are a few of the most important:

**Be quick to listen and slow to advise**

It will take time to establish trust and a rapport with each athlete. It's highly likely that each individual has seen multiple doctors, specialists, nurses and occupational therapists. They will be skeptical of additional "help." A trainer will have to earn a warrior's respect. Don't push athletes who aren't ready or willing to gain or re-establish real-world work capacity.

**Begin with a comprehensive assessment**

Good trainers do this as a matter of course, but combat-wounded populations warrant a unique pre-training assessment. It's practical for a trainer to determine time since injury, number of surgeries to date, surgeries to be performed in the future, burns, skin grafts, etc. Be mindful of other factors. These could include everything from the side effects from medication to residual guilt stemming from thoughts of fallen comrades.

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*It's highly likely that each individual has seen multiple doctors, specialists, nurses and occupational therapists.*

*They will be skeptical of additional "help." A trainer will have to earn a warrior's respect.*

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### Strive to achieve real-world work capacity

Once equipped with an understanding of each athlete's situation, you must keep the need for essential skills in mind. Create scenarios that facilitate getting in and out of a wheelchair or moving in and out of a vehicle. Target physical skills that enhance co-ordination, agility and balance. Foster confidence that will help people in staircases and crowds in both daylight and darkness. Drills in self-defense and rapid egress are potential focal points.

### Be creative, resourceful, and flexible with programming efforts

No one-size-fits-all workout formula exists. Each injury is unique in scope, scale and magnitude. Some athletes will have multiple injuries. In group settings, it's highly probable that a prescribed workout will have one or more modifications for each participant.

### Keep it simple

Start with a basic movement (air squat, press or deadlift, for example) and add a time domain. Be prepared for a longer adaptation timeframes. Set challenging but realistic training goals.



**Each injury presents a unique challenge, but a creative trainer can modify any WOD for any participant.**

## WODs For Warriors

Here are two examples of simple yet potent workouts used with the heroes from the Warrior Transition Battalion. Each was carefully designed using what we learned from working with injured athletes. Prior to each workout, participants had already been exposed to squat, press and deadlift fundamentals.

### WOD 1: The Jaw Breaker (courtesy of Kyle Maynard)

Move, Pull and Push: 5 rounds for time

#### Move (ambulatory athletes)

Move 50 meters as quickly as possible (walk, jog or sprint) through a door, down a curb, across a street and return.

#### Move (wheelchair athletes)

Roll 200 meters as quickly as possible. Obstacles may be placed in the route to increase the challenge.

#### Pull

Climb gymnastics rings 3 times from an angled supine position by grabbing one gymnastics ring and climbing the nylon webbing hand-over-hand to a standing position, then reverse the movement. One ascent plus one descent equals one "climb." Use legs to scale as required.

#### Push

Perform 10 perfect push ups. Work to achieve full depth with chin, chest and pelvis touching the ground. Work to achieve full extension with elbows locked out at the top.

*Modify weights and movements as needed.*

### WOD 2: Pull and Push

10 medicine ball deadlifts

10 medicine ball presses (any type of overhead press is acceptable)

*Perform as many rounds as possible in 7 minutes, modifying weights and movements as needed.*



### Attempt to work in small groups

Group settings facilitate accountability, competition and encouragement. Games and challenges provide a welcome respite from the realities of lengthy recovery periods. Bring an experienced trainer to assist you.

### Focus on what each athlete can do

Be aware of limitations but don't belabor them. Encourage each athlete personally to transcend the physical elements. Exploit opportunities for growth. In the words of army Lieut. Brian Ipock, "There's always something you *can* do."

### Approach the journey slowly, steadily and progressively

Be patient. With any athlete, mechanics, consistency and eventual intensity are signposts on the path to results. Be prepared to regress if athletes must return for additional surgical procedures or hospitalization.

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*"When these guys get injured, they don't cease to function. Instead, their functional movements may change.... Keep it up, guys. You're CrossFitters now, and we laugh in the face of adversity."*

*CrossFit.com comment on  
The Warrior Spirit video series*

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As a community, CrossFit emphasizes that the physical needs of athletes differ only in degree, not kind. Universal scalability of basic workouts and modified movements are acceptable parts of an athlete's journey. Working with combat-wounded populations is no different, although additional time, care and attention must be devoted to those with catastrophic injuries.

"This really exemplifies why CrossFit is so awesome," another person commented on the CrossFit website when the video series appeared. "Functional movement is functional movement. When these guys get injured, they don't cease to function. Instead, their functional movements may change... Keep it up, guys."



**Maj. Thompson (left) teaches the medicine ball clean at a special Level 1 Certification in February 2008 in San Antonio, Texas.**

## Video Links

[The Warrior Spirit, Part 1: Infinite Scalability](#)

[The Warrior Spirit, Part 2: Rehab With Revenge](#)

[The Warrior Spirit, Part 3: The Workout](#)

[The Warrior Spirit, Part 4: A Warrior's Advantage](#)

[Address to the Warrior Transition Battalion](#)

[The Jawbreaker \(with Kyle Maynard\)](#)

You're CrossFitters now, and we laugh in the face of adversity."

The last word has to go to army Sgt. Tim Norton, who distinguished himself during the special certification. His outstanding attitude, high level of personal motivation and desire to "rehabilitate with revenge" were infectious. I'll always remember what he said in the video:

"I'm not sitting on the sideline. You don't have to love it or like it. You just have to do it. You've just got to keep pushing yourself."



### About the author

*Maj. Andrew Thompson, USMC, lives in Virginia with his wife and two young children. He thanks the exceptional staff in San Antonio: Patrick Cummings, Kyle Maynard, Jolie Gentry, Kurtis Bowler, Chuck Carswell, Tony Budding, Jon Gilson, Rick Martinez, Lieut. Brian Ipock and Coach Greg Glassman. Most of all, he thanks the tremendous Americans assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion and the Center for the Intrepid.*

Courtesy of T.J. Cooper



## To Serve, Protect—and Sweat

Firefighters in Washington State discovered CrossFit made them better at saving lives.  
Now they're using CrossFit to give back to the community.

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Mike Morris and John Burrow

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We discovered CrossFit just over three years ago and quickly recognized the CrossFit prescription of fitness would increase our effectiveness as firefighters and improve our health. It would help decrease the likelihood of the cardiac events that afflict so many firefighters, and it would also improve our lives off-duty. Now over 50 percent of our 50-member department participates at work or through a local affiliate.

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The physical benefits we have received from CrossFit have been monumental. Our previous exercise regime at work consisted of about one hour of weight training (with TV on, of course) and sometimes 20 minutes on the elliptical trainer. These workouts helped, but most of us knew we needed something more. We arranged to meet Nick Nibbler at what was then CrossFit North in Seattle, where he proceeded to introduce us to CrossFit with a Fight Gone Bad style of workout. We all drove home gripping our steering wheels with the last ounce of strength we had, praying to meet this new master again if we lived to see another day.

A few of us began to dabble with CrossFit a few times a week and slowly felt the addiction begin to grow. About six months later, we gave Kurtis Bowler of Rainier CrossFit one Saturday to run us through the nine foundational movements of CrossFit as well as punish us with Running Fran. About 20 firefighters participated. A few of our guys had to reschedule their health and wellness physicals a few days after the event because they were too sore to participate in the fitness evaluation. This was clearly a seminal moment for many people who thought they were "fit."







As our fitness and awareness of CrossFit increased, we wanted to combine the charitable work of the [Northshore Fire Foundation](#) with our new passion. Last year we decided to merge our love of CrossFit with our desire to raise money for the Northwest Burn Foundation, raising awareness about CrossFit in the process. In August 2008, our Firefighter/Police CrossFit Challenge came to fruition. Over 50 people from the local area participated, with numerous others watching. With assistance from Nibbler, as well as Kurtis and Laurie Bowler of Rainier CrossFit, we staged four separate competitions.

The event was a big hit, and CrossFit has grown immensely because of the exposure. Neighboring fire departments have adopted CrossFit as their mode of training and are in the process of outfitting their stations with equipment. In October 2008, CrossFit Eastside hosted a Level 1 Certification for firefighters only and packed the house. The majority of the attendees were new CrossFit athletes from the local area.

Within two weeks of our inaugural competition, three of us began talking about opening an affiliate. Although numerous affiliates had popped up in the Pacific Northwest within the last few years, we felt our demographics would support another one. Within three months we had keys to an 1,800 square-foot box that became the home of [Kirkland CrossFit](#).

Our goal of raising the awareness of CrossFit and raising money for the NW Burn Foundation has significantly affected our community. Local area firefighters and police officers are visibly fitter, and we believe lives will be saved because of commitments made by civil servants to improve their lives through CrossFit. We've seen the results in action with our own colleagues.

People are already talking about Kirkland CrossFit's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Firefighter/Police CrossFit Challenge scheduled for Aug. 8, 2009. With assistance from many Washington State CrossFit Affiliates, including our gym, Kirkland CrossFit will be presenting the competition and co-sponsoring the event with the Northwest Burn Foundation and Northshore Fire Foundation. All proceeds will be benefiting the NW Burn Foundation. This is our way of saying "thank you" to everyone we serve.

### About The Authors

*John Burrow is the president of the Northshore Fire Foundation, and Mike Morris is its secretary. Together with Jeremiah Ingersoll, they are the principals at Kirkland CrossFit in Kirkland, Washington.*



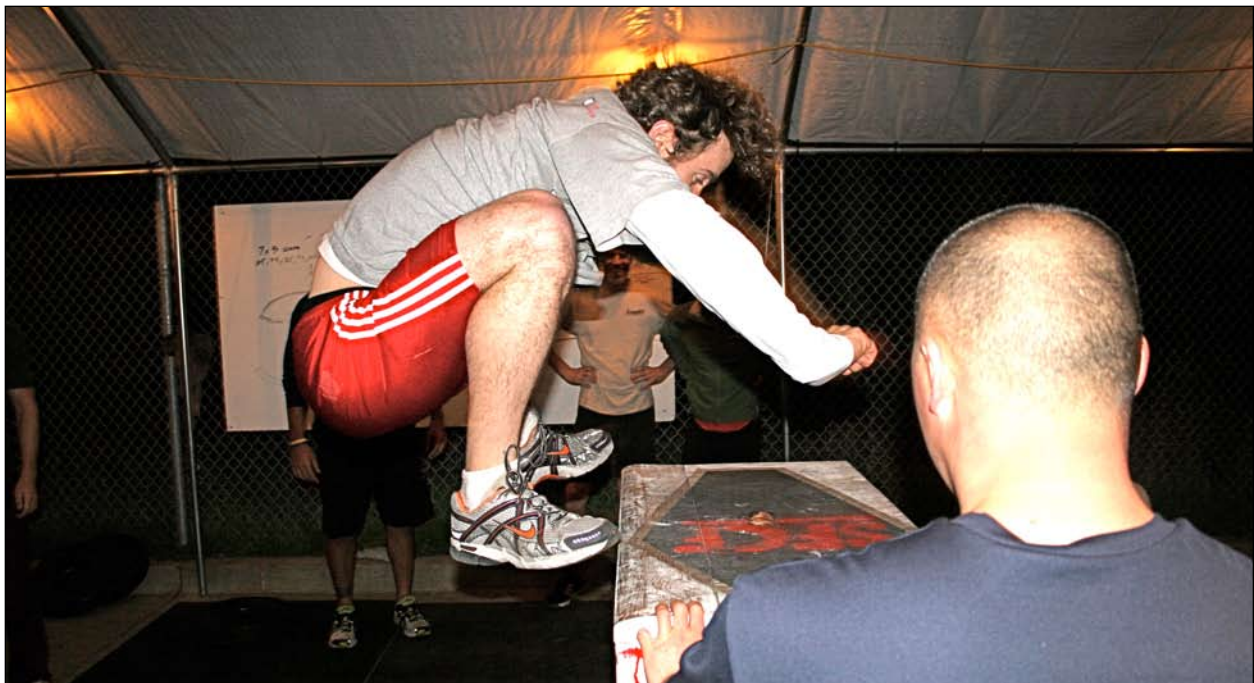
## Kelly's Koffin: Five Feet Over

Standard box jumps are dead at CrossFit San Francisco thanks to an adjustable 58-inch plyo box. Here's how to build your own version—bloodstains not included.

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Larry Gallagher

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Courtesy of San Francisco CrossFit

Sometime last fall after a workout at San Francisco CrossFit, I was pulled aside by Kelly Starrett, alias K-Star, well-known CrossFit extrovert and founder of said affiliate. He had a vision of creating the ultimate jumping box, a platform that would be stable and high—higher than anything anyone at SFCF had ever ascended.

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Kelly had looked online for professionally made versions, but the highest platform sold was only 42 inches. With shipping it totaled over \$400. Confident in my modest but solid woodworking skills, I accepted the challenge. When the high-jumping freaks at SFCF were previously looking to expand their vertical capacity, they would take one of the standard 25-inch boxes and pile bumper plates on top, creating a narrow platform of dubious stability and full of testicle-crushing possibilities.

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*Kelly's only other request was that the leading edge of the box be rounded to avoid some of the more hideous encounters between shin flesh and plywood that would be likely to occur on a box that high.*

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Kelly was looking for something higher and wider. Together we guesstimated that the width should be about 40 inches to allow jumpers to land in a wide squat atop the box as they pulled their legs up at the peak of their leap. As for height, Kelly figured 60 inches would be high enough to give him something to work up to, even if the distance seemed attainable only for a high jumper doing the Fosbury flop and absurd for anyone planning to land on two feet.

Kelly's only other request was that the leading edge of the box be rounded to avoid some of the more hideous encounters between shin flesh and plywood that would be likely to occur on a box that high.

### **If You Build It, They Will Jump**

After a few weeks of head-scratching and sketching followed by a day of cutting, gluing and screwing, I was able to present him with the prototype adjustable jumping box. In the long-standing American tradition of semi-literacy, we dubbed it "Kelly's Koffin." Ebullient under any circumstances, Kelly was positively irrepressible when it came to the virtues of extreme jumping on his new toy.

"It's the ultimate proletarian instrument," he said in an effort to impress with his command of obsolete Marxist terminology. "You can really develop a lot of interesting power output. You can generate explosiveness, and it's only jumping. It's not technical and it rarely requires a coach. In its simplicity, getting people to be more powerful in their jump is incredible."

The big box, Kelly explained, pushes the workout beyond the daily met-con grind.

"I think overall in CrossFit there's not enough good, quality jumping, and jumping on a 20-inch box doesn't do it," he said. "A lot of times a box jump ends up being just a more dynamic version of step aerobics. This will get me in trouble to say, but one of the things that I see a lot of time in new coaches is step aerobics with weights. There's definitely a hard metabolic piece to that, but what you've done is create a unit of work, not necessarily a stimulus to jump higher or squat more. I'm not sure that a workout like that necessarily gets you towards a bigger engine."

Jumping like this, Kelly said, is also a good diagnostic for hip flexibility.



**Size matters: smaller plyo boxes don't encourage the same maximum effort that the Koffin demands.**



"Ultimately, everyone's going to top out at relatively the same height, but your capacity to get your legs up and out of the way, clear from the hip capsule, is what gets you that extra foot on the jump," he explained.

Always on the lookout for a new trick or a new way to teach an old one, Kelly has found a number of different ways to work the Koffin into individual or group workouts. One way that people are building strength is by breaking the chain of eccentric and concentric loading. As an example of this, he has athletes sit atop a standard 20-inch box and jump directly onto the Koffin without loading.

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*"A lot of times a box jump ends up being just a more dynamic version of step aerobics.*

*This will get me in trouble to say, but one of the things that I see a lot of time in new coaches is step aerobics with weights."*

—Kelly Starrett

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In a typical eccentric-concentric chain, a certain amount of energy is stored in the eccentric phase via a countermovement like quickly bending the knees and flexing the hips before a jump. The stored energy is then explosively released during the contraction, in this case during the vertical leap.

"A lot of top athletes are finding that by breaking that chain and focusing on one half of it, they can significantly increase adaptation," Kelly said. "This is pure concentric loading, which is why it is so hard."

The Koffin is also well suited for investigating the connection between explosiveness and heavy lifting.

"Mel Siff demonstrated that if you do something heavy, you are facilitated to do something fast," Kelly said, pointing to Olympic champion Michael Johnson, who on more than one occasion set up a record-breaking sprint with heavy squats.



**Where's the challenge in hopping on a standard plyo box?  
With a Koffin you've got to risk something if  
you want the reward.**

Courtesy of San Francisco CrossFit

In this spirit, Kelly likes to follow a workout full of front squats with PR attempts on the Koffin. For those craving even more intensity, Kelly suggests doing the jumps with barbells.

Of course, the most popular group exercise by far is utilizing the Koffin in an elimination event in which the height is raised until the champ or champions are left standing.

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*"It breaks people out their thruster-pull-up mode, 'cause we're fucking good at row, thruster, pull-up, box jump. We can do that for months. That's practiced. Anytime that we can inject something in that people are less practiced at, that's good."*

—Kelly Starrett

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## A Koffin—Fun for the Whole Box

One of the touted virtues of a CrossFit workout is that it prepares an athlete for the various organic physical challenges the real world has a habit of hurling at us. The Koffin certainly fits with that mentality.

"Maybe one of the things I like about it is that there's consequence," Kelly said. "There's a consequence for if I don't make it. There's some accuracy required to do it when you're breathing hard that is different from just pulling on a pull-up bar. But when you're going from a burpee to the Koffin, there is something about it that's scary and legit."

As a physical therapist, Kelly sees a lot of athletes with problematic upper bodies and shoulders in need of replacement. These people will never be able to snatch or jerk, but the Koffin is a tool that will allow them to develop explosive hip extension without further damaging themselves.

Fancy rationalizations aside, Kelly admits the best reason for building a Koffin into a workout is that it's fun.

"It breaks people out their thruster-pull-up mode, 'cause we're fucking good at row, thruster, pull-up, box jump."



Courtesy of L. Gallagher

Author Larry Gallagher and his bloody box.

We can do that for months. That's practiced. Anytime that we can inject something in that people are less practiced at, that's good," he said.

The Koffin has quickly worked its way into the culture at SFCF, and the original wood tones were upgraded to the "dripping blood on white motif" at a painting party. Coach Adrian (Boz) Bozman has added a Koffin T-shirt to his line of homemade silkscreens and has also offered a challenge to all CrossFitters: mount the box at the highest setting (58 inches) and receive a free T. According to the rules, you can get a running start, but you can't use your hands. Thus far only two SFCF athletes have achieved this distinction.

Do you have what it takes? Planning a trip to the Bay Area soon? The Koffin beckons.

### **Prefer to stay at home?**

For the carpentry geeks among you, consider building your own koffin. A list of materials is (where else?) in the box at the right. The gory construction details follow on the next two pages.

So page down. If you dare.



## **KOFFIN KONSTRUCTION**

### **Materials**

- 3 sheets 4 x 8 x 3/4 in. CDX plywood
- 2 x 6 x 40 in. (minimum) kiln-dried Douglas fir
- 2 x 4 in. x 8 ft. Douglas fir framing stud (or a comparable amount of scrap pieces)
- 1 1/4 in. screws
- 2 in. screws
- 3 in. screws
- 2 small right-angle brackets with 3/4 in. screws
- Tube of PL Construction Adhesive or Liquid Nails
- Thompson's Water Seal or similar wood waterproofing agent

### **Tools**

- Cordless drill
- Electric drill
- Circular or table saw
- Power planer or belt sander
- 1 1/2 in. hole saw
- Drill bits
- Countersink
- Caulking gun



## Koffin Konstruktion

This contraption is basically just a box within a box. The inside dimensions of the top (the larger box) should be about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch larger than the smaller box so they can fit together snugly, but not so snugly that you'll get frustrated trying to lift the top. Our outer box measured  $41\frac{3}{4}$  inches long by  $19\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide by 30 inches high. The inner box was 40 inches high, 18 inches wide and 29 inches high.

The inner box follows basic common-sense construction. Along the left and right sides I drilled a series of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch holes into which the adjustment pegs fit (Figure 1). At the bottom I drilled the rows 6 inches apart. In the upper settings I halved the distance to allow for smaller incremental increases as the box got higher. You can probably drill the holes a bit closer than I did—just make sure to leave at least an inch of plywood between the holes.

The top of the outer box is more complicated. The "Shin-Savr" front edge of the Koffin features a curved piece of kiln-dried Douglas fir. I might have been able to get away with an ordinary crappy 2x6, but given the amount of abuse the front edge was likely to get, I thought a better piece of wood with a tighter grain would be less likely to splinter over time. Besides, Kelly's money means nothing to me. I achieved the curve along the front edge with a power planer. In the likely event that you don't have a power planer, you can probably produce the same results with a belt sander, but it will take longer and generate more dust. If you're feeling ambitious, you can install a curved edge on both sides of the top so two athletes can alternate jumping from either side.

The rest of the top is made of two layers of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood. As in Figure 2, I notched the back of the fir 2x6 on the table saw so it would mate with the staggered plywood pieces. This allowed me to join the two parts of the top to one another to avoid any sagging. I secured them together from the inside with a few  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch screws short enough that they wouldn't poke through the top of the Koffin and produce a flesh-ripping hazard.

I secured the lip to the sides of the top box with a handful of 3 inch screws. Be sure to drill pilot holes all the way down into the plywood to minimize splitting. There are no screws along the front edge of the lip for obvious reasons, so to join the two together I used two small right-angle brackets, being careful to use short screws that would not protrude through the top.



Courtesy of L. Gallagher

**Figure 1: A series of holes allow an outer box to reach a height of 58 inches—high enough to satisfy even the elite skyloids at your box.**



Courtesy of L. Gallagher

**Figure 2: Despite the Koffin's beveled front edge, some of this blood may be real.**



In the center of the top piece I cut an elliptical hole that serves two purposes: it gives you a way to grip the top and allows air to enter and exit when you're putting the two halves of the coffin together, minimizing suction.

On either side of the top piece I installed handles so two people could work together to adjust the height of the top box. As per Figure 3, I beveled the edge of the handle to make it easier to grip. I secured the handles by screwing them from the inside out, so the 2 inch screws would be anchored into the 2x4 handle and not the  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood.

For the adjustment pegs I mounted two 5 inch pieces of 1 inch dowel on a piece of 2x4 (Figure 4). I counter-sunk the holes with a 1 inch bit, glued the dowels into the holes, and also screwed through the back of the 2x4 for good measure.

If you aren't planning on moving your Koffin around too much, you might want to consider filling the interior box with all that heavy junk you have lying around—mangled bumper plates and broken-handled kettlebells. They will act as ballast and add to the stability of the base.

In the end, the total cost of materials came out to \$106. Between shopping for materials and construction, it took me approximately 6 hours to put the thing together. It was priceless labor traded for priceless CrossFit classes.



### About The Author

Larry Gallagher is carpenter in residence at San Francisco CrossFit. He feeds himself by working as a freelance writer and doing construction. If he has any money left over, he burns it writing and recording music. For more about this fascinating character, visit [larrygallagher.com](http://larrygallagher.com).

Ever the gentleman, Mr. Gallagher would be happy to answer construction questions.

Just email him at [larry@larrygallagher.com](mailto:larry@larrygallagher.com)



Courtesy of L. Gallagher

**Figure 3: The outer box has beveled handles for ease of lifting. God knows your hands are shredded from all those pull-ups.**



Courtesy of L. Gallagher

**Figure 4: Adjustment pegs run through the inner and outer box, making the Koffin a nice tool for encouraging constantly varied, high-intensity, functional movement.**

## The Holy Trinity of Strength Training

The back squat, press and power clean are huge parts of the CrossFit program. Legendary lifter and strength coach Bill Starr explains why they're so important for athletes.

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Bill Starr

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If you're looking to build brute strength, you need to avoid machines and biceps curls. Instead, focus your time in the weight room on a small number of core exercises that hit the main muscle groups.

It's no surprise to find heavy, low-rep workouts in CrossFit. They've been the core of strength training for years. It's called keeping it simple—and it works.

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1 of 7

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**Together with the power clean, the bench press and the back squat are your best bets for gaining a large amount of strength very quickly.**

### Less Is More in Strength Training

In the late '60s, when the interest in strength training for football was increasing exponentially, Tommy Suggs and I began traveling to high schools and conventions to give demonstrations and talk with the coaches. Our goal was to teach them how to correctly do the various weight-training lifts and put together a functional program with minimum equipment. We also wanted to find out just what they were doing.

What stood out in all their programs was that they were doing far too many exercises in a workout. The prevailing idea at that time was that every muscle group, big and small, needed to be given attention in a weight-training session in order to get a stronger body. We took a different route and came up with a simple but effective plan that could be done in a short period of time with minimum equipment.

We selected three exercises: bench press, back squat and power clean. We called them the Big Three.

The Big Three would hit the three major muscle groups: shoulder girdle (upper body), back, and hips and legs. All the lifts would be done for five sets of five. Research had shown the best set and rep formula was four-to-six sets of four-to-six reps, so we chose the median of five-by-five to make it easier for coaches setting up programs for large numbers of athletes.

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*The main reason the Big Three—or any other simplicity-based program—works well is that all the energy of an athlete is put into making the large muscles and corresponding attachments stronger.*

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Tommy and I were both active in Olympic lifting, so it might have seemed natural that we would use the overhead press for our shoulder-girdle exercise. While we believed the press was the best upper-body exercise



for athletes, it was getting a great deal of bad publicity at that time. Several newspapers and magazines carried articles by prominent sports medicine doctors who stated that heavy pressing was harmful to the lower back. Plus, word was out that the press was about to be eliminated from official competition for that same reason. Although neither of us believed the press to be harmful when done correctly, we didn't want to deal with that battle. We were already fighting one over full squats and their effect on the knees. The flat bench became our shoulder-girdle primary exercise.

The squat was a no-brainer. It's really the backbone of the program.

The power clean is the perfect lift for any athlete wanting to gain strength, and it has the added benefit of enhancing athletic attributes such as foot speed, co-ordination, timing and balance. The Big Three would be the basic program for athletes at any level. As they got stronger and the workload increased, other lifts would be added to the routine. Finally, we inserted the heavy-, light- and medium-day concept, which had been around since the '30s.

During the following year, we promoted this program wherever we went and wrote it up in the magazine we edited, *Strength & Health*. At conventions, we demonstrated the three lifts and passed out information on how to put together a program for a large number of athletes. Then we waited for the feedback, wondering what the biggest problems might be. As it turned out, there were none.

At the Kodak National Coaches Convention at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., that January, we didn't have to sell the program. The coaches sold it for us.

### **Strength Is About Moving Iron—Period**

The main reason the Big Three—or any other simplicity-based program—works well is that all the energy of an athlete is put into making the large muscles and corresponding attachments stronger. The main problem with routines that consist of numerous exercises is only so much energy is available. When it's spread out over a dozen or more movements, none receive much attention. Therefore, we do not get stronger. Oh, maybe a bit stronger, but not nearly enough to make significant gains that would improve sports performance.



*Don't even think about biceps curls on a machine. Build strength with an O-bar, some bumpers and a lot of determination.*





***How much equipment do you really need?  
Bill Starr says you just need a bar and some weight.***

The reason why this basic program has survived for so long is because it brings fast results. Of course, the 1976 publication of *The Strongest Shall Survive*, which is based on the Big Three, has helped too.

Nevertheless, this program and others like it often get abused by well-meaning coaches and athletes. More and more exercises get slipped into a strength program, and the primary movements do not get the bulk of attention. Training time gets considerably longer. The results are less notable. Or, in other instances, the basic exercises are replaced with those that aren't quite as demanding. Hang cleans are substituted for full power cleans, for instance, or free weights are replaced by machines in the current mindset.

Although I like some machines, especially the calf and adductor versions, most of the others do not have a place in a serious strength program. The athlete doesn't have to be concerned with balancing the weight when he or she works on a machine. The act of balancing a bar or dumbbell in motion forces the attachments, tendons and ligaments to get involved in the movement, and the strength of any body part is determined by the attachments much more so than the muscles. Therefore, machines need to be relegated to auxiliary status in a strength routine. Primary exercises need to be done with iron.

Speaking of auxiliary exercises, they should be ignored in the early stages of training. All the effort needs to be put into the three primary, or core, lifts. After two

months of building a solid strength base, extra work for the smaller muscle groups can be added to the routine—but not more than two exercises per session. More are often added, usually for the chest and biceps, and the result is an aspiring strength athlete who spends more time on smaller groups than core groups.

Another problem with including too many ancillary movements into a program—and I'm talking about a beginning routine now—is it extends the time spent in the weight room. This has a negative effect on recovery. Recovery is a key factor for anyone attempting to gain strength but is absolutely critical to someone just getting started on this quest. That's why I advise beginners to only train three days a week. Those off days are necessary for the body to recuperate from the new form of stress. It's not just the muscular system that needs rest but also the nervous system. Learning how to perform the various exercises and perfecting them is a mental process, and the day off is not a luxury but a necessity.

Many overeager beginners start slipping in an extra day of training in order to work their smaller groups. This ends up being a mistake. Even though the workload for that extra day is much less than that of the other sessions, it's still enough to be detrimental. It uses up energy which should be held in reserve for the more demanding workouts and prevents those groups involved from getting the rest they must have.

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In addition, when a beginner expands to training four days a week rather than just three, he typically finds himself in a quandary. Due to his hectic schedule, he has trouble getting into the weight room four times a

week. This leads to missing a workout every so often, which leads to less progress and discouragement. It's far better to keep things simple and train diligently three days a week and stay away from the weights on the other days. This doesn't mean you can't do anything physical on the non-lifting days. On the contrary, you should be active: running, swimming, practicing the skills of your chosen sport or participating in some other sport you enjoy.

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*What's key is replacing the power clean or bench press with an exercise of equal status and not one that's a great deal easier.*

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### **Vary Your Loads to Maximize Gains**

An explanation of the heavy, light and medium concept is needed in order to utilize it properly. The heavy day is self-explanatory. At that session, you handle more weight than in the other two workouts that week, which means you push to the limit on the three exercises in your routine. The goal on the heavy day is to improve the top-end numbers. What you do on the heavy day determines how much weight you will handle on the other two days. The light day always follows the heavy day, meaning the light day usually falls on a Wednesday. The same three exercises will be done in the beginning but less weight will be used. This serves two useful purposes. It allows you to pay closer attention to your technique on the three exercises, and because the workout is much less taxing, your muscles and attachments will recover faster.

Some like to use percentages to figure out the numbers for the light and medium days, which is fine if you happen to have the time to do it. If you're dealing with 40-plus athletes, the math for a workout can be very time consuming. Here's how I handle it: using the attempts done on the heavy day as your guide, simply make what you did on your third set your top weight for the light day and what you did on your fourth set your top weight for the medium day.

An example might help. Our athlete did the following sets on the back squat on his heavy day: 135, 175, 195, 215, and 225, all for five reps. The third set with 195 will be as heavy as you will go on the squat on your light day, so the sets would be: 135, 155, 175, 185, and 195, again for fives. On your medium day, 215 will be your final set, and the jumps might look like this: 135, 175, 195, 205, and 215 for fives.

You'll note that the last three sets are packed closer together. What this does is increase the total workload just a tad. However, it will work just as well should you choose to use 70 percent for the light day and 80 or 85 percent for the medium day. You're trying to make the light day less difficult than the heavy day by a good margin, and the medium day just a bit less difficult. In the beginning, the disparity need not be much, but one day must be lighter and one medium. Otherwise, progress will not come as quickly.

Also keep in mind what I said about using the light day to perfect technique. When you're able to put your full concentration on the various form points, especially in the power clean and squat, you can improve your technique rather quickly without having to worry about making the attempt.

### **Adding Some Variety to The Big Three**

After six weeks or two months, or when you are confident of your form on the Big Three and have established a firm base of strength, you're ready to make some changes to your routine—or not. Some prefer to stay with just those three basic movements for much longer. However, most like to build in variety, which can be achieved by changing the exercises. The exception is the back squat. It's key to establishing a sound strength base in the all-important hips and legs. I think it's best to stick with that primary strength builder for six months or more. Then, if you want, you can learn how to do front squats and perhaps lunges, which are excellent substitute for back squats.

At this stage, you do not want to add in other primary exercises. Rather, substitute exercises for the bench press and power clean. For instance, power cleans on your heavy day, good mornings on your light day, and high pulls or shrugs on the medium day.

You might be thinking, "Wouldn't I be using a lot more weight on the shrugs than the power cleans? Shouldn't



***Deadlifts can always be worked into a strength program. Triceps kickbacks, on the other hand, should remain absent.***

the shrugs be my heavy day?" No, and the reason is that power cleans are more taxing than shrugs, even though more weight is used on the latter lift. Power snatches could replace power cleans every other week as well.

For the shoulder girdle, begin substituting incline benches and overhead presses for flat benches during the week. Your routine might look like this: flat bench presses on Monday, overhead presses on Wednesday and incline bench presses on Friday.

What's key is replacing the power clean or bench press with an exercise of equal status and not one that's a great deal easier.

When this transition takes place, the question comes up of how to calculate the numbers for the light and medium days. You will no longer be concerned about percentages. The heavy, light and medium concept is now determined by exercise selection. The most weight that can be handled on a shoulder girdle movement is the flat bench. That belongs on the heavy day. The least amount of weight used is the overhead press, which relegates it to the light day. Inclines are somewhere in between the flat bench and overhead press, so they fit right into the medium day nicely.

Other exercises can be worked in as you progress, and it doesn't take a Rhodes Scholar to figure out where to place them in the weekly routine. Deadlifts: definitely the heavy day. Bent-over row I'd put on Friday. Weighted dips could be done on either Wednesday or Friday, depending what other upper-body exercises you want to do that week. If it's flat benches and inclines, dip on Wednesday. If it's the flat bench and overhead presses, dips belong on Friday. Keep in mind that you don't need the absolutely perfect sequence in terms of heavy, light and medium. If you stay with three primary exercises and work them as hard as you can, you're going to get stronger.

You can use this same method to bring in other auxiliary exercises. However, you do not want to exceed two per session. One for the heavy day is a smart idea. Auxiliary movements should be done for higher reps and only for a few sets. For everything except calf raises, two sets of 20 are plenty. For the calves, three sets of 30 is the ticket.

You'll also benefit by working expeditiously, not fast. But don't lollygag either. You need to get in the weight room, get your work done and get out. The heavy days should

be completed in an hour and 15 minutes tops, the light day in 45, and the medium workout in an hour. It's very doable when your program comprises just three core exercises and a couple of auxiliary movements.

### Strength Training Is Not Rocket Science

Finally, it's my observation that those in charge of putting together strength programs in high school, colleges and professional sports have reverted back to the same mistakes their predecessors made in the '60s. There are far too many exercises in nearly every program I'm asked to examine. Plus, there are a number of other physical activities attached to the weight workouts: jumping up on boxes, drills on grids for foot speed, pulling ropes, dragging sleds, a circuit with kettlebells, and, of course, some type of plyometrics. What's a workout without plyometrics?

Sounds great on paper, but in reality it doesn't work. In truth, the athletes who are using this multi-layered concept aren't getting that much stronger. They might get a little stronger, but not nearly as much as if they had applied all their energy to moving iron. Those various gimmicks are tiring. That's the rub. They use up energy that should be applied to primary weight movements.

The lack of strength is displaying itself in the large number of injuries in football, especially from the pro ranks on down to the high schools. The pros set the pace in this regard, and they're the most guilty of utilizing gimmicks in place of hard work in the weight room. The reason is simple: strength coaches are afraid that if one of their players gets hurt lifting weights, it may cost them their jobs. They're making a hefty salary, so they dare not take the risk, choosing instead to occupy their athletes with drills and games while keeping weight sessions on the moderate side.

What they seem to have forgotten is that the very best way to ensure the safety of an athlete in any sport is to make him or her as strong as possible. The athlete can take the hits on the playing field with no ill effects. If a strength coach really wants to do something to improve attributes such as foot speed, quickness, timing, co-ordination and balance, he should teach athletes how to snatch and clean and jerk. Mastering those three high-skill lifts will enhance every athletic quality with the added bonus of creating even greater overall functional strength.

Three is the operative number when designing a beginning strength program: three basic exercises for the three major muscle groups done three times a week. This program is equally useful to those starting back into a strength routine after a layoff, as well as those wanting to maintain a high level of strength fitness at any age.

Simplicity is the key to success in strength training—so keep it simple.



### About The Author

*Bill Starr coached at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the 1970 World Olympic Weightlifting World Championship in Columbus, Ohio, and the 1975 World Powerlifting Championships in Birmingham, England. He was selected as head coach of the 1969 team that competed in the Tournament of Americas in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, where the United States won the team title, making him the first active lifter to be head coach of an international Olympic weightlifting team. Starr is the author of the books **The Strongest Shall Survive: Strength Training for Football** and **Defying Gravity**, which can be found at [The Aasgaard Company Bookstore](http://TheAasgaardCompanyBookstore.com).*



## "GR8 Fran Time, BTW"

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

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Jessica Murphy

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

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

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

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1 of 7

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

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

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

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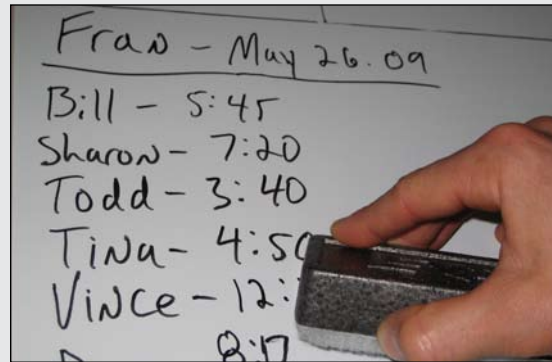
*LogstAll's most popular feature is its flexible ranking system—people just covet that top spot.*

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### **Digital Bragging Rights: You Know You Want Them**

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

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



### **The Dark Side of Ranking**

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

You're not alone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

Besides, the ranking system has fired up his clients' training. "It's the best shit ever," Chisholm says.

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

*"People go home with their heads held high. You can work out for a year and not notice the gains you're making. But you don't realize 20 weeks ago you were a lot weaker. A lot of questions are answered by LogsItAll. It's the best shit ever."*

—Malcolm Chisholm

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

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

He says the site's also gone a long way in solving one recurring issue: with weekly adherence rates made public, Kinnick's clients are suddenly more diligent about making their workouts. "We don't have a problem with people working hard in the gym," he explains. "The issue we see is them not showing up enough. (The site) brings a lot of accountability. I've seen a jump in consistency."

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

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

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

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

### Let Online Competition Drive You

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

Weir's application is As RX'd, an iPhone app that was launched April 6, 2009. It lets you add scores for benchmarks such as Fran and Fight Gone Bad, build your own WODs, and download the latest WOD from the main site or RSS feed. You can also publish your results to Twitter and WordPress blogs.

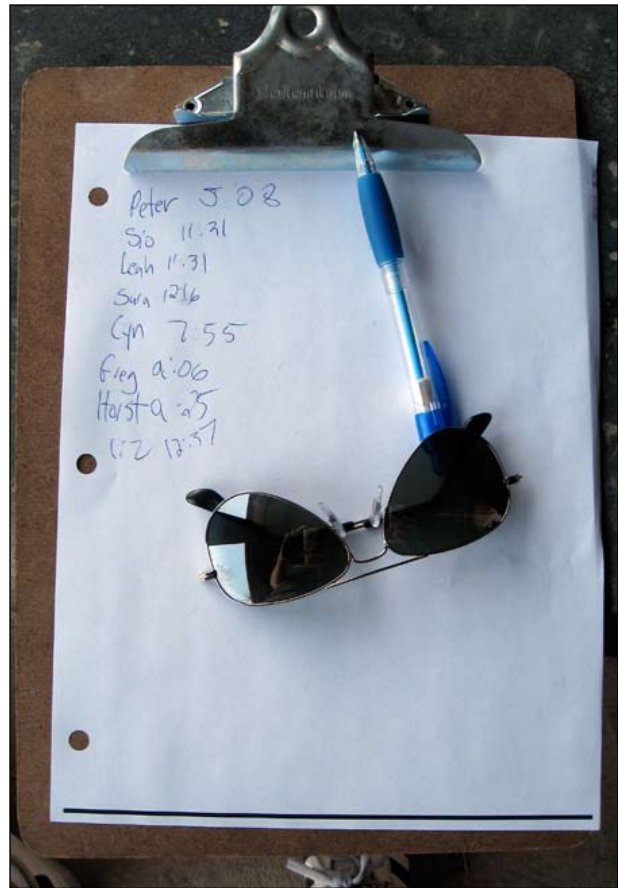
Weir says using As RX'd has made a difference in his own training. "One of the most important things in CrossFit

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

*—John Vivian*

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Courtesy of Greg Carver

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

is logging your workouts. I hit plateaus and I know it's time to adjust (various variables). Logging gives you an overall view of your progression. It hasn't changed my workouts, but the data is there. Just by looking at those numbers, it gives you context."

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

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

Courtesy of Luis Albuquerque



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

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

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

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

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

Shane Murphy says it is.

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

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

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

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

### **Skipping WODs? Prepare for Online Heckling**

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

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

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

"If you were to do one thing it would be to add individual feedback," Cooper says. "It's our nature to compare ourselves to others and to yourself. The feedback doesn't have to be that personal to have an effect. It's more important that you get regular feedback, that you know somebody's watching." Now, his clients log into the Catalyst software every



morning, where they find their WOD and can check their personal best. Cooper says it pushes his clients into working out, even on rainy Friday evenings.

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

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

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

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



#### About the Author

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



## The Apps, as of May 2009

### As RX'd

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

### Beyond the White Board

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

### CrossFit LeaderBoard

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

### LogsItAll

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