

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

May 2011

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 1	Beers
Nutrition as Focus Work	CrossFit Kids
The Gymnastics Solution	Hyland/Tucker
World Of WODs No. 4: Morrison, Colo.	Ford
CrossFit Kids for the Developmentally Delayed	MacDonald
What's Up, Buttercup?	Sweet Cheeks Headquarters
DIY Sandbags	Rice
Sport-Specific Training Using CrossFit Fundamentals	Cann
Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 2	Beers
CrossFit Four Corners	Patenaude
Heavy, Light and Medium	Starr
Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 3	Achauer
Talk Is Cheap	Warkentin
Meaty Meatball Men	Sweet Cheeks Headquarters
CrossFit Kids and Youth Resistance	Guarrata/Edelman
One Year Reflections	Chang/Estrada
CrossFit Angry Birds	CrossFit Kids

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 1

Emily Beers explains why human beings are more interesting than elite athletes.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

May 2011



CrossFit Vancouver

Dec. 7, 2010

I am sprawled on the floor holding my right leg.

1 of 7

"Are you OK? Is there anything we can do?" ask a handful of people who have suddenly crowded around me.

"Yes, can you Google 'Achilles ruptures' for me? Find out what the surgery is like and how long the rehab is," I say.

"Relax, Em. You don't know what you've done yet. It might not be anything serious," a friend says to me.

I hope he is right, but I know what I've done. The unmistakable pop. The squishy tendon. I know I have ruptured my Achilles. I know I am done for the season.

I feel like my world has just crumbled beneath me.

**I know I have ruptured
my Achilles. I know I am
done for the season.**

March 2011

One week. One workout. Nine rounds and 25 double-unders.

Those are the numbers that have just launched Langley, B.C., native Robert Perovich onto the CrossFit map. His score ranks him fifth in the world. But nobody has ever heard of him.

His name quickly becomes a buzzword in Canada West.

"Who the hell is this Robert Perovich dude?" people keep asking me.

"All I know is that he's really good-looking," says Dan Rogers, last year's Canadian Regional champion.

"I think he's a male model," says two-time individual Games competitor Andrew Swartz.

"He's new around here, and I don't know too much about him yet, but as far as I can tell he's the real deal," says Chris Harrison, owner of CrossFit Lions in North Vancouver, B.C.

If my own memory serves me correctly, Perovich is the guy who showed up at my Level 1 last December. He didn't yet know how to do a kipping pull-up, but he still managed to bust out a three-minute or so Fran with strict pull-ups.

As the media director of the Canada West region, I am urged to get on this dude ASAP. So I call him up. We chat a bit about the workout. I discover he is indeed a male model, one of the most highly paid ones, to be specific. And athletically, he is obviously the real deal.

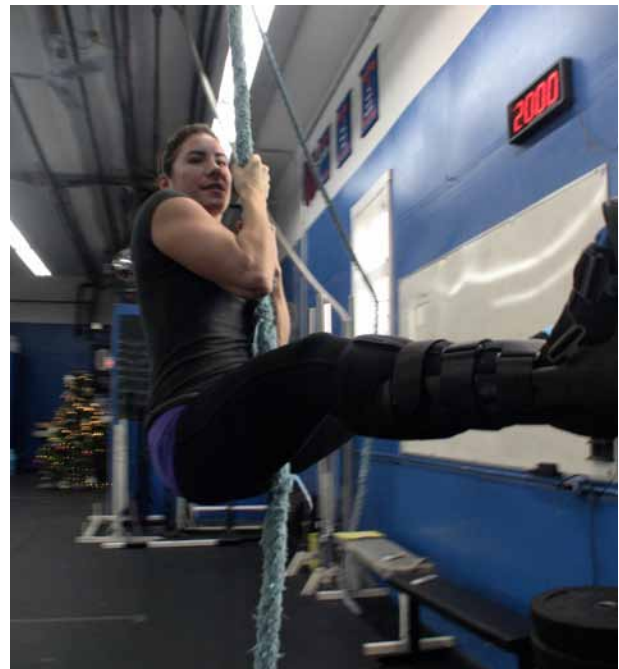
We talk a bit about the second workout. He sounds stoked.

I wish him good luck, and that's that. Overall, the conversation isn't particularly enthralling. I hang up and I still don't really know anything about him.

February 2010

I compete at the B.C. Sectional competition. I win two of the workouts. I come second in the other two. Being an ex-university rower, I'm thrilled that the last workout of the first day is a 2-kilometer row. I don't push myself very hard, just enough to win the event. My score is a good 20 seconds lower than my personal best from my rowing days.

I get off the erg unfazed. I learn absolutely nothing about myself. I don't grow as a person. In fact, I may have digressed after sectionals. CrossFit is about winning, and I take my goals up a notch. My new CrossFit goal is to win regionals and compete at the Games.



CrossFit Vancouver

***In December 2010, a ruptured Achilles tendon
forced Emily Beers to the sidelines (sort of).***



CrossFit Vancouver

Beers won the B.C. Sectional in 2010 but described her performance at the Canada Regional as a "meltdown."

May 2010

I am having a total meltdown at regionals. I'm out for dinner with my crew, stressing about the weekend. I spend more time scrolling the standings on my friend's iPhone than I do focusing on the workouts.

I screw up a couple of workouts and fail to qualify for the Games. I'm devastated.

I screw up a couple of workouts and fail to qualify for the Games. I'm devastated. I fly back to Vancouver. My endlessly helpful teammates put up with my erratic emotions. They know what I need: they get me drunk on the plane and take me to the ocean to scream at the top of my lungs.

I start thinking about next year's Games, what I have to do differently to make sure I get there in 2011. CrossFit is about getting to the fuckin' Games, damnit.

November 2010

I do my first 200-lb. squat clean and my first sub-10 minute Zoe. I am sure I am increasing my work capacity with every passing day and can't wait to compete this year. CrossFit is undoubtedly about making it to the Games.



Many CrossFitters dream of winning the Games, but at its most basic level, CrossFit is about making people fitter.

December 2010

As I lie in bed with my leg elevated, on painkillers, fresh out of surgery, unable to let my leg dangle vertically for even a second without a surge of pain, all I want is to successfully shuffle to the toilet without pain and to climb into the bathtub without slipping.

CrossFit is now about having a body that functions in life.

January 2011

I climb out of my wheelchair and attempt to demo a push jerk to my client. I stumble. I call another coach to demonstrate and resume my seat in the wheelchair.

CrossFit is about getting off my crutches. CrossFit is about being able to walk again so I can grocery shop and carry a coffee by myself.

Monday, April 4, 2011

I check my inbox.

There's another e-mail from Perovich.

"So, here it goes. I have bad news. Like you, I have ruptured my Achilles. Fuck! While doing the WOD, going on to my 11th round on the box jumps with 4:32 left, my second box jump felt like I landed on something, and a pain entered my heel of my foot. I thought it was my ankle, but so painful ...," he writes.

My heart immediately goes out to him. I can feel the devastation in his e-mail. I feel his pain.

We write back and forth a few times.

"Does the surgery hurt? What's it like?" he asks.

"No, it doesn't hurt. You'll be in and out super fast. Mine took less than 40 minutes. I woke up and felt great ... I woke up hungry, actually," I write.

I tell him he'll be on the mend in no time and send him a video of me doing a wheelchair workout to show him there is still lots he can do with this injury.

"Thanks for your kind words. You have helped me a lot, and seeing you in the wheelchair in that video will make me go and get one and head to the track to do some cardio," he writes.

April 5, 2011

I look through the e-mail thread between Perovich and me.

My e-mails with a pre-injured Perovich from just a week ago are dull and apathetically brief, more or less logistical e-mails about double-unders and deadlifts.

Who he was as a person, I had no clue.

Our e-mails since his injury are much different.

I now know that the 34-year-old Perovich, a father of two children, is a passionate, sincere, vulnerable, full-of-life human being.

I can picture him watching the video of his last box jump over and over, "100 times," says an emotional Perovich, his eyes welling with tears each time we watches.

I know that Perovich drove the 25 miles home with a torn Achilles, with a ball of muscle in his leg, replaying the box jump over and over in his mind. He was so upset that he didn't even notice the pain.

I know that Perovich drove the 25 miles home with a torn Achilles, with a ball of muscle in his leg, replaying the box jump over and over in his mind.

I know that he quit modelling, a career where he made easy money—but which forced him to leave his wife and kids for months at a time—to challenge himself physically every day as a CrossFitter.

I know that Perovich gives a shit, that he is planning on helping judge his teammates during the next four weeks of the Open.

He speaks highly of his friends in the CrossFit community.

“They’re real people, not some back-stabbing fashionista. Although some people in fashion are nice, 95 percent suck,” he adds.

I know that he is committed to the sport. He is already talking about his rehab, about getting back into the sport he loves.

“The competition is what keeps me going every day. It’s my drug,” he writes in an e-mail where he opens up in a way he hasn’t normally been able to.

“I needed to be careful (in the modeling industry) because all the shit that people would spread, so I learned not to talk and just to listen,” he continues.

“It feels good to be able to do this, so thanks It’s strange how outcomes in life invite new people into your life.”



Courtesy of Rob Perovich

Robert Perovich (left) traded high-fashion photographs for CrossFit photos used to check for form faults.



Courtesy of Rob Perovich

Perovich faces a period of rehab after his injury, but you can bet he'll be back.

"Oh and yes, I have a ball in my lower calf and it fuckin' hurts. I need some wine or something," he says.

One week ago, all I knew about Perovich was that he's a great athlete who happens to be marketable in a photogenic sense. Big fuckin' deal.

Today, there I was e-mailing back and forth with a friend in a hospital gown who was about to have surgery.

"I wasn't nervous until now," he wrote from his iPhone, just moments away from being taken into the operating room.

I'm not saying it's a good thing Perovich got injured. I wouldn't wish that on anyone. In fact, I prescribed that he feel sorry for himself for a bit and let out primal scream.

"Go to the beach, stand on the edge of the dock and scream as loud as you can," I said.

But these things have a way of bringing people together, and of teaching us things we wouldn't otherwise learn.

I'm not sure why Perovich got injured, but I know there has to be a reason.

There was for me.

April 6, 2011

Physically speaking, I'm about 25 percent worse than I was in November 2010.

I still can't run. I still can't jump, but I'm ecstatic to be able to work out and feel my daily high.

I look over and see my dad, whom I just got into CrossFit this month, doing a ring dip. Although he pretends he's not that into it yet, my mom tells me she caught him doing a pistol in the living room. I couldn't be happier when I see him, at the age of 58, ripping out pull-ups.

I used to do this because I happened to be good at it. Now, although I'm still a gimp doing one-legged burpees, I actually enjoy the freedom a workout gives me, a freedom I didn't know existed a year ago.

I'm not saying I still don't think about the Games. I would do anything to be a part of the competition season this year.

But it's no longer why I go to the gym.

I'm still planning on working my ass off in an attempt to get to the Games in 2012. But if I don't make it, you won't find me sitting on the ledge of the conveyer belt at the Vancouver airport after regionals, half-drunk, screaming a high-pitched screech that echoes deep into the baggage claim.

Editor's note: After keeping herself in the competition by completing at least one rep in each of the first three Open workouts, Emily managed 99 reps in Workout 11.4. It was the second-best score posted by any athlete in Canada West. The next week, she posted a top-five regional score in Workout 11.5.



As an athlete and CrossFitter, Beers started out as a gymnast, competing to the national level. After growing too tall for gymnastics, she played NCAA Division 1 basketball for the University of Idaho, then returned home and played for the University of British Columbia. After three years of playing basketball, she started rowing, competing at the varsity level at the University of Western Ontario for two years. While trying to make the National Rowing Team in 2009, she discovered CrossFit and became utterly addicted. Soon, CrossFit was meant to be a way to cross-train for rowing but became her greatest passion. She moved back to Vancouver in September 2009 and found CrossFit Vancouver, where she now both trains and works as an apprentice coach.

In her first season competing in CrossFit she won the B.C. Sectional competition in 2010. Regionals were less kind to her, but that's only made her more determined to get to the Games. She had her sights set on 2011 but ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010. Recovering from Achilles surgery has given her more time to pursue her passion for journalism. It has also allowed her to be a part of the 2011 CrossFit Games in a different capacity: she is the Canada West media director for CrossFit HQ.

About the Author



Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts [Bathroom Graffiti](#), a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Nutrition as Focus Work

CrossFit Kids serves up six ways to get your young athletes and their parents thinking about nutrition.

By CrossFit Kids

May 2011



CrossFit Kids classes are designed with five to eight minutes allowed for focus and skill work. The following is an example of what might be covered during a six-week period with three CrossFit Kids classes per week. Each numbered entry represents one short focus/skill portion of the class. You may find that you complete two weeks and then need one or two classes to go back and review before moving on.

Make sure parents are aware that you will be discussing nutrition.

Week No. 1: Definitions

1. Define and discuss macronutrients, protein, carbs and fat. Use good food choices as examples of each. For example, chicken, broccoli, avocado.
2. Ask kids if they know what types of foods are proteins, what types of foods are fats, etc. We are not looking for complex definitions but rather simple identification by category. The kids at Brand X first responded with lettuce and cotton candy as proteins. We had a lot of work to do.
3. Define poor food choices by category.

Week No. 2: Fat

One of the messages kids have gotten from the mainstream media loud and clear is that fat is bad and should be avoided.

1. Discuss the concept that fat can be good, like Omega 3 or Omega 6 fats. Provide parents with resources like *What If It's All Been a Big Fat Lie?* by Gary Taubes.
2. Define good fats. Bring in samples of avocado or macadamia nuts. Use flavored olive oil to sauté strips of pepper or turkey and provide samples. (Be sure to check your population for nut allergies before serving samples of any type of nut.)
3. Simplify why your body needs good fats:
 - Protective covering for communicating neurons in the brain.
 - Fat is needed to cushion organs and to absorb vitamins.

Week No. 3: Sugar

1. Discuss other names for the same thing: sugar in all its forms; i.e., cane sugar, honey, sucralose, aspartame, saccharine ...
2. Sugar is not good for your body. It does nothing positive and is a contributor in many serious health problems, especially obesity.
3. Suggest choices that contain low amounts of sugar or natural sugar (fructose).

Week No. 4: Labels and Packages

1. Draw a label on the board and discuss how to read it. Specifically check serving sizes.
2. Have a few students bring a favorite food with a label for discussion.
3. Find out what it is before you eat it. Kids look suspiciously at "new" foods. Discuss the importance of content, not just what it looks like. Avoid "processed" foods, boxed or canned foods. Fresh food is best because you can tell what it is.

Week No. 5: Portions

1. Discussion of quantity: how much you eat is important, too.
2. Draw and show relative portions of protein, carbs and good fat.
3. Ask the kids to draw a meal with the right amount of protein, carbs and fat on a paper plate. Display the best drawings.

Week No. 6: Grocery Store

1. Draw a grocery store and discuss where the good food choices are.
2. Invite a few supportive parents to accompany you on a field trip to the grocery store. (Limit trips to 10 or less kids to be effective.) Show them where you would go in the grocery store to find protein, good carbs and good fats. Show them the parts of the store and the products to avoid (boxed and processed foods, "empty carbs," items with high sugar).
3. Buy food at the grocery store with which to host a barbecue. Cook good food for the kids and their parents.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Gymnastics Solution

Dusty Hyland and Jeff Tucker offer some advice to CrossFitters aspiring to learn new gymnastics movements.

By Thomas (Dusty) Hyland with Jeff Tucker

May 2011



All images courtesy of Jeff Tucker

The CrossFit Journal will be presenting a series of articles where Jeff Tucker teaches several gymnastics movements and explains the strength prerequisites for those movements.

In this introduction, Dusty Hyland and Tucker talk about why it's important to build up slowly when learning new gymnastics movements that can place new stress on the body.

1 of 5



The V-sit will challenge your body in new ways, and a certain level of strength is required for proficiency.

Patience, Patience

I started a gymnastics-for-CrossFit class a year and a half ago at CrossFit Culver City, and now we host it Thursday nights at DogTown CrossFit in Culver City. I now also work with Coach Jeff Tucker in CrossFit Gymnastic Seminars.

What was and still is shocking is the lack of prerequisite strength in most everyone who comes to class. I just didn't realize how glaringly horrific that lack of upper-body strength was. For instance, I have "elite-level" Crossfitters who come to class for the first time and struggle with 5 ring dips. However, the people who have stuck with the classes and learned from the gymnastics courses have progressed very well.

Right now, the muscle-up is the benchmark in CrossFit land as to whether you are an elite athlete or not—more or less, and this is certainly debatable. Well, there are certain levels in life and in training that—if skipped—will come back to bite you in the ass. There is a reason why gymnasts are so good at body-weight-exercise workouts. It's the same reason wrestlers are amazing and have a leg up in the met-con arena and in general mental toughness: years of training.

Wait—did you hear me? I said years of elite, intense training.

Can you learn the movement of a muscle-up? Can you understand the mechanics and make it repeatable? Absolutely. However, it's going to take a level of work and commitment that you may or may not have as of yet. No weekend seminar or course is going to prepare you for the rigors that befall the shoulder girdle, the wrists and the rest of the body in learning the muscle-up. Injuries and wear and tear might and will plague you. I'm not saying it's impossible; it's just really, really hard.

There is a reason why there are not a lot of adult elite-level gymnasts. They burn out, quit and learn to hate it, and most likely get hurt. What's awesome is that Crossfitters seem up to the task. As we move forward, I just want people to respect skill progression while developing the strength for any move they wish to set as a goal. I want them to slow down, think about what the next logical step is in their training and listen to their coaches and—more importantly—their bodies.

**“I just want people to respect
skill progression while
developing the strength
for any move they wish
to set as a goal.”**

—Dusty Hyland

Sounds simple right? Not so much all the time.

I am hearing about injuries all over the place due to folks seeing a movement and attempting to perform it without having the goods when it comes to hitting such strength moves. We are not in the business of hurting people. Tucker regularly states, “Learn the movement but have the pre-req strength for the movements attempted.”

As CrossFit explodes, let us as trainers and educators toe that technique line. Hey, folks, lets just try and keep the stupidity in check. Remember: just because it looks cool doesn't mean you should be up on the rings doing it quite yet until you understand the movement and the strength requirements. You don't just get up and do the movements; you work toward them and accomplish them with ever-persistent work in placement of limbs, core strength and spatial awareness.

I am excited at the possibilities CrossFit training has afforded the gymnastics community and ever-thankful I can be a part of a group that can help people rediscover fitness and stretch their limits within CrossFit. We have an opportunity to redefine health and fitness for a new generation and expose its members to gymnastics forms. However, let's not forget the thousand steps it takes to learn a new skill, let alone the steps needed to take a skill from a static plane to a dynamic one like the rings. To quote John Wooden, one of the greatest coaches of all time, “Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.”



Each movement has progressions that will ensure safety and success. Learn them to optimize your performance.



The L-sit becomes quite a bit harder when you move to the rings.



Learning from elite coaches and athletes is the best way to master challenging new movements.

Epilogue by Jeff Tucker

I appreciate and agree with every word Coach Dusty has written in this article and shared with you. We often discuss the importance of goal setting and planning to achieve those goals. My biggest issue in the community we have is when someone sees a new, shiny thing and instantly gravitates toward it with reckless abandon.

Let me make it simple for you all with an example of a video put out there recently. In the video, an athlete was used to show back tucks with a comparison to hang-power-clean strength. It's a good, fun video and a great way of extrapolating the power-clean move in comparison to the vertical jump and set used in a back tuck. But just because you have a big power clean does not mean you can do a back tuck in 13 minutes.

Yes, it is an awesome and fun video to watch, and yes, we enjoy seeing fun flips in the air, but what is the rush? Does coaching now need to be for time?

**“Does coaching now
need to be for time?”**

—Jeff Tucker

Let's be real here: spatial awareness is a huge factor in back tucks. So too is body awareness, as forms in tumbling can go awry very quickly. All the hang-power-clean strength in the world won't stop gravity if you decide to open your body too early, or if you panic and land on your neck, which can cause serious injury.

This is my biggest fear, and it played out when a young Aussie trainer recently looked at the video online and attempted the movement only to break two cervical vertebrae. He had no coaching, no training and certainly no game plan. He just thought life was all good because he could power clean more than the guy demoing the video. Not true, and shame on him. (He is healing nicely, by the way.)

My biggest hope for anyone wanting to learn a skill is that he or she understands that sometimes faster is not always better. Strength will serve you well when attempting, as will knowing how to use those strong CrossFit muscles as you teach them the muscle memory for the movements you set as goals. Most of what we perform and teach is disadvantaged leverage, and at times it's extremely hard on connective tissues. Take care to not overload them too soon. The biggest mistake I've seen in our community is overtraining a move after learning it.

"Overtraining is under-recovery," according to Mike Burgener, so try and use some common sense there as well.

Set some goals, get some training and learn these body movements.



About the Authors



Courtesy of Dusty Hyland

Dusty Hyland is the co-owner of DogTown CrossFit in Culver City, Calif. By the age of seven, he had started an active athletic regimen that has continued throughout his life. At 13, Dusty gave up a host of other sports to focus on gymnastics. He was a very successful gymnast, and after his father's job promotion and relocation to Northern California, he began to train at Stanford University under two-time

world champion Tong Fei. By 16, he competed at the Junior Olympic National Championships and trained with the U.S. Olympic Team. In college, he competed in NCAA Division 1 men's gymnastics and scored a NCAA record perfect 10 on the still rings. After one more year of competition, he retired due to injury. He then traveled the world starring in a Cirque du Soleil-type live show before settling in Los Angeles and doing some stunt work in films.

He has CrossFit Level 1, Gymnastics and Mobility certificates, and he is an NASM CPT and a USA Gymnastics Coach.

Jeff R. Tucker, or "Tucker" to those who know him, is the CEO and founder of Global Sports Xtreme (GSX) in Fort Worth, Texas, and he has a passion for teaching gymnastics. At CrossFit Gymnastics Seminars, he and his staff delve into basic and intermediate gymnastics forms in a lecture setting followed by practical application. Skills are repeated until the student has a satisfactory understanding of how to learn, spot and

teach such methods safely. Students are also taught how to scale the movements until they become second nature. Tucker's goal in this course is to aid CrossFitters in using gymnastics for strength development, core control and WOD progressions. Result: the CrossFit community will become more engaged in using one of the foundational blocks for CrossFit workouts—gymnastics.



Jeff Gill

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

World of WODs No. 4: Morrison, Colo.

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

By Ryan Ford AMG CrossFit

May 2011



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

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

1 of 6

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

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

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

Location: Red Rocks Amphitheater, Morrison, Colo.

Address: 18300 West Alameda Parkway

For a map of the area, visit <http://tinyurl.com/5rrwrwa>.

Brief: Only 15 miles away from downtown Denver, Red Rocks Amphitheater is a world-renowned concert venue nestled between two 300-foot-tall sandstone monoliths. Aside from the occasional concert, Red Rocks Amphitheater is open for the public to enjoy every day from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. Not only is Red Rocks a stunning place to enjoy the views, but it also provides a unique variety of stairs, benches, rails and walls perfect for fitness enthusiasts in search of creative, lung-blasting workouts.



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

Some people see concert seating. CrossFitters see a workout.

On a sunny weekend morning or afternoon, hundreds of people can be found here enjoying the views, running the stairs and training in a vast assortment of alternative ways. Recreational runners, high-school sports teams and even professional athletes sometimes work out here side by side.

As a dedicated practitioner of parkour, I aim not only to come up with creative and useful movement involving the obstacles around me, but also to turn these obstacles into exercise apparatuses. Red Rocks provides me with an

incredibly varied terrain with different types of obstacles, height changes and surfaces, making it the perfect place for me to practice parkour and get in a killer workout when I'm done with my skill training.

The workout in this article uses the rail and pull-up bar features of the stage area, the seating rows, and the steps and walls on the sides of the seating rows. Begin this workout between the main stage and the bottom of the amphitheater seating rows.



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

You can definitely find ways to make the push-ups in this workout more challenging.

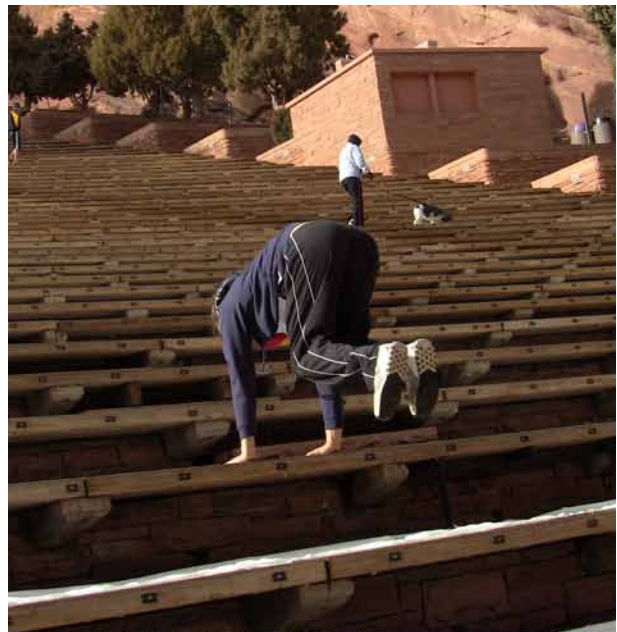
New movements:



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

Duck-unders will give you a chance to practice moving around and through real-world obstacles.

Duck-unders—Step or duck under the rail that separates the stage from the seating (see the pictures above for an example). Ducking under one way and back the other way equals 1 rep.



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

Plant plyos will challenge your upper and lower body at the same time.

Plant plyos—Place your hands on next row up, then push off with your hands and plant your feet where the hands were. Stay symmetrical. Video example: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ-BRQX9oHs>.



Courtesy of Ryan Ford

WOD: Red Rocks

For time:

50 push-ups

Sprint up the seating rows (not the steps)

Jog back down to the bottom

25 duck-unders

1 set of plant plyos up the seating rows

Jog back down to the bottom

25 pull-ups

1 set of broad jump up the seating rows

Jog back down to the bottom

Scaling suggestions: When going up the seating rows, try to take only 1 step/jump for each row. If you can't keep this up, take more than 1 step/jump per row.

Par: 12 minutes.

About the Author

Ryan Ford is the owner of AMG CrossFit and [Apex Movement](#), the largest parkour gym in the United States. Ryan is also internationally known for his online parkour training video series called [DemonDrills](#).



Submission Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Each submission **must** contain the following:

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

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit Kids for the Developmentally Delayed

Josh MacDonald offers tips for working with special-needs children.

By Josh MacDonald

May 2011



All images courtesy of Josh MacDonald

Nobody works with kids for the money or fame. Each of us began teaching kids how to CrossFit with the hopes of improving the general health and fitness of as many of them as possible. We want to have full classes, and we want the kids to have a ton of fun in the process.

1 of 6



Each child is different and requires individual treatment within a large group class.

Our programming is designed to teach proper movement skills and improve the general fitness level of all kids, but no two kids are alike. Each comes to his or her first class with different skills and abilities. Some are natural athletes, and others need help to understand some of the basic movements.

Every once in a while, you get a child who needs an extra level of care. Maybe he does not understand all of your cues and directions, and maybe he has poor body awareness and can't even begin to understand the mechanics of the movement. While it might seem that all our kids act like this at times, there are some who have a legitimate limitation called "developmental delay."

Identifying and Managing Challenges

Developmental delay is a very broad term that includes a wide range of limitations. From a clinical perspective, a developmental delay is any disruption in the normal progress of learning and growth. Most children with a developmental delay experience onset at a young age, typically 18 months or younger. The causes can vary from autism to Down syndrome or more complicated medical issues. Unfortunately, there are little to no unifying characteristics for members of this group other than their need for additional special help and attention.

When they enter your gym and ask to join your class, however, you have to make some quick decisions on how best to handle the situation and adapt your class.

There are too many different types of developmental delay to cover all the variables and ways to address them. What I can do is offer some general guidelines and principles that should help you in guiding these kids as much as possible while also maintaining the effectiveness of the class for the rest of your kids. In each case, you will have to make some decisions. Some are easy (how to modify a push-up), and others are very difficult ("Do I have to say 'no' to this family?"), but all these decisions should be made from an educated and informed position.

Step 1: Know the child

The first step in including the child is to identify his basic needs and try to fit those needs into your program. Most families will be very open with you about the issues of the child. If there is an obvious delay when you first meet the child, then feel free to ask questions of the family. As you gather information and suggestions from the parents, you will get a much better idea of the level of attention that the child will need.

Sometimes, however, you might not see any concerns until you are right in the middle of your warm-up. In that event, try to learn as much as you can by observing movement patterns and how the child responds to verbal cues and social dynamics.

Does the child have the ability to feel and move all parts of her body?

Are there any physician-imposed limitations to exercise?

Whether it's through questioning the parents or observing the child in class, you need to look for some specific elements. The most important information you can learn about the child is his ability to follow directions and keep with the flow of the class. Start with the following questions:

Social

Does the child notice/interact with the other kids?

Does the child get upset easily? If so, what sets her off?

Does the child understand age-appropriate social norms?

Will the child be able to attend to a variety of tasks, including both activity and instruction times?

Language

Will the child understand basic directions to stay on task and understand game play?

Will the child understand more complex directions to adjust and modify movements?

Does the child speak? And is there any delay in the child's ability to communicate basic needs (i.e., pain, thirst and bathroom needs)?

Physical

Does the child have the ability to feel and move all parts of her body?

Are there any physician-imposed limitations to exercise?

Does the child have the body awareness to copy movements after demonstration and instruction?

Does the child have the coordination to complete the fundamental movements?

Step 2: Know your class

Once you have an understanding of the needs of the child, the next step is trying to fit that child into your existing class. Before this can happen, you need to have an excellent understanding of the dynamics inherent in your space, your group and your programming. Your existing space and programming are what make your class unique. The challenge lies in maintaining the essence of your class as well as including as many kids as possible.

For example, if the kids in your class are all pre-teens and are pushing to do main-site workouts with high levels of intensity, then you may need to rethink the wisdom of adding in a child with Down syndrome. When trying to include a child with disabilities, realize that the other children may not all be warm and welcoming. Most kids will be just fine, but some do not understand disabilities and will treat the new child as "different." Unfortunately, kids can be pretty mean, and we want to minimize the damage that can come from less tolerant kids.



Are your young athlete able to understand complex directions during class?

You don't need to give a lecture on tolerance to your class. Instead, provide only as much explanation as is needed. You may not need to do anything more than introduce the new kid in class. Put a stop to anything inappropriate, but too much lecturing from you can be just as alienating for the child with disabilities. Let things develop on their own; you might be surprised how welcoming your group can be.

When considering your space and equipment, think about whether or not your facility is accessible to wheelchairs or other adaptive equipment. Do you have the right equipment? Do you need some lighter wall-balls or shorter boxes before the child can complete the workout?

The trainer-to-child ratio is also much more important when you consider adding in a child with a developmental delay. A child with attention deficit disorder (ADD) may require two or three times the supervision, directions and cues as your other kids. If you are a solo trainer and used to having only three to four kids, your class will become much more difficult with this new addition. We always have two trainers for our kids classes, and having a second person is always helpful, but even more so when you have a child with a developmental delay.

The trainer-to-child ratio is also much more important when you consider adding in a child with a developmental delay.

Your programming will need to allow for significant scaling. While you don't want to limit the growth of your other clients, you also need to be realistic about the ability, or inability, of these special-needs kids to do safe overhead squats and box jumps. It can be difficult, but when considering each of these aspects of your class, remember to see the big picture: don't change the core spirit or unique personality of your class.

Step 3: Know the Programming

If you do decide to take on the challenge (and I highly recommend it), keep some principles in mind. First, preserve the integrity of the movements. CrossFit is founded on nine functional movements. These are natural and inherent in our daily lives. They are just as inherent in the lives of these children. Every kid needs to deadlift toys off the floor, clean a backpack to the shoulders and press the groceries overhead to put them on the counter. As you modify workouts and activities, try to keep the core movements intact.

For example, if the WOD is Cindy but your child cannot count well and can only manage two movements at a time, his workout is squats and modified push-ups. He does reps of one movement until you tell him to switch movements (roughly every 5-8 reps). This way he still generates intensity and performs functional movements with only minimal extra cues. You can attend to the rest of the class and occasionally direct him to switch while watching for mechanical faults.



Classes at your affiliate should have a unique character that stays the same regardless of the participants.

Maybe you are doing a version of Kelly with running, box jumps and wall-balls. If your child lacks the core stability for safe wall-ball and cannot safely jump onto a box, she can work on a shortened run, air squats and lateral hops over a taped line on the ground. The core movement elements are present even though it appears to be a different WOD. Over time, possibly very slowly, you will notice improvements: the squats will get more solid, the plank position will get stronger and the coordination will improve.

Another factor to keep in mind when integrating children with disabilities is the concept of grading intensity. Particularly early on, these kids will not understand the concept of intensity. In line with the CrossFit Kids methodology, I leave the child in charge of how intensely she approaches each workout. If your child wants to sit and rest for a minute mid-WOD or needs a drink of water, let it happen. If she wants to push hard, let it happen—with caution. The child will know how hard she can push.

If you are going to make a mistake in this area, it is much better to err on the side of too little intensity than too much. Over time the child will learn to push harder; you don't need to rush this one. Your cues should be centered on correcting mechanics, directing the sequence of exercises and positive encouragement. As with any child, you shouldn't tell these kids to push harder or not to stop. If they need to rest, it's OK. They will enjoy the class much more and be more likely to return if they hear positive encouragement and have fun.

Step 4: Know Your Limits

After you gather information on the child's needs, compare that with your current class dynamics and consider modifying your programming and workouts, you might still be in over your head. Most people are not experienced in working with kids with developmental disabilities. It is normal to find this a bit overwhelming and intimidating. Some CrossFit Kids instructors are even new to working with kids, never mind special-needs kids.

If you cannot see a clear plan and good fit for this child in your class, you have some options. First, ask for help. This may come in the form of another trainer or assistant acting as an aid for just that one child. Maybe the parent is able to help to varying degrees. Parents are great at counting reps and rounds for the kids or keeping them on task. Parents

should not correct form or modify a workout, but they can be of great help in managing the behavioral needs of the child. Remember, they are the expert on their kids and they know best how to keep them motivated and on task.

**Parents should not correct
form or modify a workout,
but they can be of great help
in managing the behavioral
needs of the child.**

You can also look into local resources, including special-education teachers or occupational therapists at your local school, for suggestions on working with kids. The parents might even be willing to connect you with their child's own teacher for advice on working with this child.

All that being said, you still need to know that it is still OK to say "no" to a family. Maybe your group of kids is not a good fit for someone with a disability. Maybe the child's disability is too significant for this program. Maybe you just are not ready to work with this population yet. Regardless of the reason, if you have done due diligence in trying to make it work and you still do not think it is a good fit, you can tell the family that this is not the setting for them. The last thing you should do is take on something you feel is unsafe for the child or the rest of the group.

As a pediatric occupational therapist of 10 years I have worked with disabled children almost half of my life, and I have still had occasion to tell a family that the setting was not right for them. In one such case, the child was too physically unstable and unable to follow basic directions. It would have taken far too much attention to keep this child on task, and he was not ready for the foundational movements. He needed even more basic work to establish midline and hip stability before trying anything with intensity or significant numbers of reps. What I did do to help this family was connect them to some local special-needs sports classes.

If you need to tell a family “no,” try to direct them to some other sources. Ask if they are getting therapy. If not, occupational and physical therapy can help with this area. Also, many cities have special-needs programs for dance, gymnastics and martial arts. These can be great ways to get kids moving in small groups with professionals trained in working with special-needs children. Look into the options in your community ahead of time. It is always easier to decline a family if you have some alternative choices to present at the same time.

When trying to include a child with a developmental delay, there are countless variables to consider. Not only do you need to know as much information about the child as possible, but you also need to consider how this child can best fit into your current class structure. These kids can make amazing changes with the CrossFit methodology, but it can seem daunting when including them in your class. With some thorough information gathering and specific planning, you can be well prepared for the challenge. The rewards are immense when you see these kids do things their parents never thought possible.



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About the Author

Josh MacDonald received his master's degree in occupational therapy in 2001 and has 10 years of experience working with children with special needs in both outpatient and inpatient neuro-rehabilitation. He is the pediatric therapy manager at Arizona Orthopedic Physical Therapy—Kids Place in Goodyear, Ariz. Josh works out at [Crossfit Fury](#), where he also runs the CrossFit Kids program. Josh has Level 1, CrossFit Kids and Olympic Lifting certificates.



THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

WHAT'S UP, BUTTERCUP?

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

overview

Spring is in full swing! Birds are singing, temperatures are warming and flowers are blooming everywhere. Bring some spring into the kitchen and have your kid's breakfast blooming, too. This simple egg creation looks like flowers sprouted right out of the plate!

blocks

2 protein blocks

ingredients

- 1 egg
- 1 slice of deli ham

notes

Serve with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cooked oatmeal mixed with 1 teaspoon of peanut butter for a balanced Zone meal of 2 carbohydrate blocks and 2 fat blocks in addition to the 2 protein blocks from the buttercups.

directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Take a slice of ham and form it into a cup shape. Gently place into an ungreased muffin tin.
3. Crack an egg inside the ham cup. Sprinkle the top with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Bake in oven until the egg whites are just beginning to set but still appear shiny and wet. This will take 14 minutes if you like the inside of your egg runny and 18 minutes if you like your egg hard-boiled.
5. Remove from oven and cover the entire muffin tin tightly with aluminum foil for 5 minutes.
6. Serve and enjoy!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

DIY Sandbags

A sandbag is really just a bag of sand. Jeff Rice explains how to save a few bucks by making your own.

By Jeff Rice Flower City CrossFit

May 2011



All images courtesy of Jeff Rice

The benefits of using sandbags as part of your CrossFit training were well covered in Josh Henkin's *CrossFit Journal* article [It's in the Bag](#) (July 2009). Sandbags are large, irregular, heavy objects—like many things one might encounter in real life. And because the heavy things that fill the world don't always come with 28-millimeter-diameter steel bars attached to them, any functional training program would be well served by including lifting and moving irregular objects like sandbags.

Many sources exist for commercially produced sandbags. The problem I have had with these commercial products is that they have always seemed fairly expensive compared to their complexity. Spending over \$50 for what is essentially a duffle bag filled with sand has never sat well with a do-it-yourselfer like me. With that in mind, I set out to make my own sandbags using inexpensive and readily available materials.

Objectives

I had four primary goals in mind when I set out to make my own sandbags. The sandbags needed to be:

- **Simple to construct.**
- **Inexpensive (shooting for less than \$20 each).**
- **Durable.**
- **Adjustable in approximately 10-lb. increments.**

To create a sandbag that met all these requirements, my planning began around finding a sturdy canvas bag. Fortunately, there are an abundance of military-surplus and new canvas duffle bags available from either online retailers or from local military-surplus stores. The bags shown in this article are from Rothco and are 21 inches by 36 inches. These heavy canvas bags can be found online [here](#) for \$10-\$15 each.

The next step was finding a way to put sand into the bags in 10-lb. increments in some kind of a container that would withstand the abuse of being repeatedly dropped. I obviously wanted to avoid something that would break and leak sand all over the gym floor. For this I settled upon heavy-duty contractor bags that were 3 millimeters thick. Contractor bags are available at most hardware or home-improvement stores and will cost in the neighborhood of 50 cents per bag. While you're at the hardware store, pick up a roll or two of duct tape, as that is the final material needed to assemble these sandbags.



Training with sandbags will prepare you to deal with the world's many awkward objects.



Figure 1: Materials and tools.

Supplies

Here is the complete list of supplies (with approximate costs) and tools needed to assemble the sandbags. The materials in the list will make one sandbag that is adjustable up to 70 lb. (see Figure 1).

The Assembly Process

Begin assembling the bag by measuring out 10 lb. of sand into a bucket. It's helpful, once you've measured out 10 lb. of sand, to run some tape around your bucket at the level of the sand (Figure 2). This will make subsequent measurements go much faster.

Item	Cost
36" canvas duffle bag	\$12
70 lb. sand	\$5
Duct tape	\$3
7 contractor bags	\$4
Scissors	-
Scale	-
Small bucket	-
Total cost	\$24



Figure 2: Pouring and measuring the sand. The author put the tape line on the bucket so he could get approximately 10 lb. in without weighing.

Next, dump the sand into a contractor bag (Figure 3). Once the sand is in the bag, shake the sand to the bottom of the bag and spread it as evenly as possible across the bottom.



Figure 3: Dump sand into bag. Focus on midline stabilization, and keep the core tight.



By carefully constructing your sandbags, you can avoid a mess when an athlete drops one during a workout.



Figure 4: Roll up the bag.

Once you have the sand evenly spread across the bottom of the bag, carefully roll it up, keeping the bag as tightly rolled as possible (Figure 4).

Next, use duct tape to secure the rolled-up bag (Figure 5). Start by taping the ends of the bag, being sure to completely cover the ends of the bag with tape. When the sandbags are dropped, the most likely point of failure is the ends of the roll where the bag has not been rolled on top of itself.



Figure 5: Tape the bag, starting with the ends.

Next, tape the rolled-up bag in three or more segments along its length. Don't get overzealous and tape the entire bag! Leaving some gaps makes the roll more flexible and thus makes the completed sandbag more flexible and challenging to lift.



Figure 6: Tape the roll in about three places along the length between the ends. Note that the ends of the roll are totally taped over to prevent bursting there.



Figure 7: Fill 'er up!

Once you have several rolls completed, it's time to fill the duffel bag (Figure 7). Note that there will likely be some variation in the weight of each roll of sand. This is not an exact science. But then again, not everything you lift in the real world comes in perfect 10-lb. increments!

The canvas bag I chose was 36 inches long, which worked out well because it is the same length as the width of the contractor bags and thus the finished rolls of sand. The rolls fit just about perfectly from end to end, giving the completed bag a pretty good weight distribution.



With cheap do-it-yourself sandbags, any affiliate can introduce a little odd-object training to its members.



Figure 8: Time for some functional movements!

Conclusion

Workouts using the completed sandbags can be scaled simply by adding or removing individual rolls of sand. If a 70-lb. "sandbag Fran" is a bit much, pull out a couple of rolls.

The 36 x 21 canvas duffel bag I used can comfortably hold nine or more rolls of sand, though I have not stress-tested it with more than 70 lb. This combination of the Rothco duffel bag and 70 lb. of sand rolls holds up well to repeated drops and abuse. Your results will vary depending on the quality of the duffel bag you chose.

Sandbags can be a great tool for building coordination and strength that translate to the real world. This simple project will give you another great tool for building functional fitness without breaking the bank, so you can save your hard-earned cash for equipment you can't make at home.



About the Author

Jeff Rice is the owner and founder of [Flower City CrossFit](#) in Rochester, N.Y. In addition to being a CrossFit affiliate owner, he is an avid triathlete and dad, and he is always looking for excuses to build stuff for his gym.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Sport-Specific Training Using CrossFit Fundamentals

Kevin W. Cann experiments with adding sport-specific movements, agility work and lateral drills to the CrossFit program.

By Kevin W. Cann Jr.

May 2011



Photos courtesy of Kevin W. Cann Jr.

I have been personal training for five years and a fitness enthusiast my whole life. I played college soccer and am a competitive boxer and mixed martial artist. It seems I've attempted every workout known to mankind and seen the greatest gains since starting CrossFit two years ago. I've increased my capacity in all 10 fitness domains: accuracy, agility, balance, cardiovascular endurance, coordination, flexibility, power, speed, stamina and strength. And I did this while dropping body fat.

1 of 4

My love in training has always resided in working with athletes. CrossFit does a better job than any program at getting the average person ready for whatever life throws at him or her by making the athlete a generalist. With the results I had seen and my love for training athletes, I began to think CrossFit had a place in sport-specific training as well.

Many athletes, both amateur and professional, use CrossFit to increase performance, and the many variations of the program give athletes a lot of training options. CrossFit Endurance and CrossFit Football are but two variations, but athletes around the world are finding success uniting CrossFit fundamentals with sport-specific movements. I've been experimenting, too, and found I was able to get good results by adding in a few movements.

**CrossFit does a better job
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Side-to-Side and Single-Leg Movements

First, I added more single-leg movements. These include variations of the power lifts done on a single leg, various lunges, and various single-leg squats and skater hops. In sport, a lot of jumping is done off one leg.

Let's take a basketball player, for example: When running full speed and jumping up toward the rim, in most cases the athlete will take off from one foot. This requires single-leg power and stability to increase the height of the jump. Actions such as rebounding are done from two feet; the power clean, hang clean and snatch are great for this. Single-leg lifts also can help increase an athlete's acceleration and deceleration while sprinting.



Single-leg movements such as pistols and skater hops can be used in sport-specific unilateral training.

I've added more emphasis on lateral movement, too. Baseball and basketball put a huge emphasis on these movements. Acceleration and deceleration are important factors in all sports. Breaking runs into shuttles or placing more emphasis on shorter sprints can help improve these areas. No major sport requires athletes to run long distances. To accommodate all these movements, I've added in agility drills such as five-cone agilities, three-way shuttles, shuttles and various sprints in place of cardio exercises.

I've also added movements like continuous broad jumps and max-effort box jumps into workouts. I keep rep ranges for the jumps and power lifts around six or fewer to further emphasize power gains. I follow dynamic warm-ups with dynamic prep exercises that allow the glutes to be loaded in all three planes of motion. This is essential because to unload the glutes maximally, they need to be loaded in all three planes of motion. Dynamic prep exercises are centered on various lunges and squats that shift the center of gravity. The dynamic warm-up and dynamic prep include hurdles and agility-ladder drills.

Another sport-specific concept is reaction time. Being the first to react can help offset differences in speed and agility. A good example of this is NFL rookie Brandon Spikes. During his time at the University of Florida, he was the first player out of his stance on almost every snap. A slow 40-yard dash time shows he probably won't be a sideline-to-sideline tackler, but his reaction time will allow him to fend off blocks and make tackles in the middle of the field much more easily.



Reaction times also are important in boxing and mixed martial arts. To train this component, I add in chaos agility drills. This is usually done during the dynamic prep stage of the workout. Chaos agility drills force athletes to react to audible or visual commands. This can be done with 5-10-5 drills, box drills and even on a straight-away where the athlete is asked to change directions forward, backward, left and right.

What CrossFit Gives Sport

The CrossFit movements are all relevant to sport. The Olympic lifts and the power lifts are necessary to increase power and strength, respectively. Also, the gymnastic movements of CrossFit have a great effect on athletic ability. In sports, an individual is constantly pushing, pulling and jumping with his or her own body weight. Those movements will increase the athlete's ability to do all of them. Benchmark workouts such as Fran, Grace and Cindy are great to test our work capacity and our ability to perform these movements.

The CrossFit principle of constantly varying exercise is similarly great for sport. No movements in sport are ever repeated in the exact same way from game to game. This concept prepares the athlete realistically for sport. The National Strength and Conditioning Association breaks down periodization differently. It gives training protocols for every part of the season and off-season. In a perfect world, maybe this is the best way to train. However, this is not a perfect world. Realistically, the athlete will not train with you for an entire year. Even if he or she does, shouldn't the athlete try to improve upon all aspects of sport year



Rotational movements and balance drills can be used to challenge athletes who have to swing an implement in their sport.

round? With CrossFit keeping the intensity high, it allows the volume to stay low enough so the athlete is not overtraining. The amount of days the athlete trains can be scaled back if needed.

By tracking times of all the workouts, CrossFit has a method for monitoring work capacity. Increased work capacity should be a constant in a sport-specific training program.

By tracking times of all the workouts, CrossFit has a method for monitoring work capacity. Increased work capacity should be a constant in a sport-specific training program. From a physiological standpoint, the increase in work capacity shows the athlete's energy systems are being taxed and are adapting to a higher exercise demand. This will lead to increases in lactate threshold and maximal oxygen consumption, known as VO2 max. CrossFit, of course, is less interested in those metrics and focuses instead on increasing the amount of work that can be done in a set amount of time.

An increase in work capacity also will mean an increased capacity in the 10 fitness domains. The athlete will be stronger, more powerful, faster, more agile, and so on for longer. Outlasting your opponent is sometimes all it takes to win.

Still, I would argue there is an 11th fitness domain: mental toughness. CrossFit will push comfort levels like no other program and help athletes develop confidence and determination. Greg Glassman has said, "The greatest adaptation to CrossFit takes place between the ears," and numerous *CrossFit Journal* articles talk about how the program affects athletes mentally. This mental toughness, learned in a CrossFit workout, can help drive athletes through challenges on the court or the field.

CrossFit produces great generalists, but I believe the program can also produce elite athletes. CrossFit's fundamental principles apply to all sports, and by integrating some sport-specific movements, I'm confident the program is well suited to the average person and the top-level athlete.

For my part, I've seen my broad jump go from 7 feet 6 inches to 8 feet 4 inches, and I can average 10 feet on three consecutive broad jumps. My vertical jump increased 2 inches, and I was able to cut 0.1 seconds from my 40-yard dash. I've upped the weight on all my lifts, demonstrating an increase in strength and power. I am walking proof that CrossFit can work for sport-specific athletes.

Spread the word!



About the Author

Kevin Cann has a bachelor's degree in health and wellness, with an emphasis in nutrition. He has received a state-approved diploma for completing a 500-hour program in exercise science, nutrition and practical application from the National Personal Training Institute. He also received a nationally accredited advanced certification through the state. He is a CrossFit Level 1 trainer and a CrossFit Endurance trainer. Cann owns [CrossFit Genetic Freak Fitness](#) in Stow, Mass.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 2

Jesse French suffers a severe hand injury but still finds a way to stay competitive in the CrossFit Games Open.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

May 2011



All images courtesy of Titanium CrossFit/Jesse French

He has an uncharacteristic way of modifying workouts: he tapes one hand to the skipping rope during Annie. He tapes his left hand to the ring when he does muscle-ups. He lifts weights wearing a powerlifting glove with a piece of doweling slapped on the end of it.

You might, too, if you were missing four fingers.

1 of 5



Jesse French has decided his injury won't stand in the way of his training.

Twenty-three-year-old Jesse French may be short four fingers, but that didn't stop him from competing in the Reebok CrossFit Games Open. And not only did he compete, but he also finished in the top 60 in Canada West and earned a spot in the regional competition. Not bad considering a year ago at this time French couldn't work out. He couldn't even cut his own apple or tie his own shoes.

The Accident and the Recovery

It was March of last year when his world was turned upside down. French was working in a mill. One of his colleagues was struggling with a pedal-driven saw, so French went over to lend a hand.

"Somehow a safety nut was disconnected," French said. "I tried to block it with my hand," he said. But as he tried to block the pivoting saw, the 40-inch blade whipped around and took his fingers with it.

French was quickly airlifted to the hospital and underwent 12 hours of surgery to reattach all five of his fingers on his left hand. But one by one the fingers died. His middle and index fingers were removed 15 days after their reattachment, "when they turned all black and nasty," said French. Then, in early August 2010, his pointer finger was finally removed.

"There was just too much damage," he said.

What remains of his left hand today are a thumb whose mobility is somewhat limited and a pinky finger that's no more than a stub.

French's coach, Marc Mazzocchi, owner of Titanium CrossFit, vividly remembers the day of the accident.

"I was coaching at the time, and I got this phone call saying there had been an accident at the mill and Jesse was hurt really badly," said the 34-year-old Mazzocchi, who was then informed that French's fingers had been cut off. "My heart stopped. It was absolutely heartbreaking. I immediately kicked everyone out of the gym and headed over to see Jesse.

"When I got there, I'll never forget it: there was Jesse helping the paramedics out, holding a baggy with his fingers in it. He wasn't even on painkillers yet, but he was just sitting there calmly," he continued.

In fact, French appeared more relaxed than the paramedics. A first-aid attendant started "freaking out" when she arrived at the scene.

"Jesse directed them. He told them, 'Go find my fingers and put them in a baggy with water and ice.' Jesse pretty much did first aid on himself that day," said Mazzocchi.

Since that day last March, the past year has been full of many challenging days for French.

"You don't realize how much you use your hand (until it's gone)," said French. "You lose your self-purpose," he continued. "It has been a real eye-opener. I used to take so much for granted ... simple things like being able to tie my shoe and like carrying a grocery bag in one hand while holding my girlfriend's hand in the other ... I can't do that anymore," he said.

The other thing French lost was his dream of becoming a firefighter.

"It's just too competitive. There are just too many firefighters out there with two hands," he said.

Although his life was totally turned upside down after the accident, bit by bit he's been piecing it back together.

"I have learned to make small progressions, to put things on a bigger spectrum, to get enjoyment out of small things," French said. "I basically couldn't go any further into the negative, so I had to think positively. My options were either to try or not to try."

French chose to try, and it has paid off. He currently works as a volunteer firefighter in Cumberland, B.C.

The other place he has seen massive progress is as a CrossFitter.

In the first couple of months after the accident, his wrist was totally fused, so he couldn't do much. And because his blood pressure was too low, it wasn't safe for him to exert himself physically. But soon he found himself back in the gym, learning new ways of training. He did things like tape his hand to the skipping rope, and then eventually he learned how to hold the rope with what's left of his pinky finger.

**French can clean 245 lb.
without any assistance gear,
and he can deadlift 450
with a lifting strap.**



***Competition has always been important for French,
and his injury didn't change that.***

He started doing one-armed jumping pull-ups and then tried ring rows. Soon he was doing pull-ups with a hook. Little by little, his strength came back. And before he knew it, he was stringing pull-ups together again, mostly using one hand.

"They would totally burn me out, but it was worth the effort," French said.

He can now do butterfly pull-ups again—"Without assistance," he said. "And, I got my bar muscle-up back."

French's lifts are a similar story. He started by working his way back up to the female RX'd weight. When he accomplished that, he kept going. He remembers the day he did a 165-lb. squat clean again. Today, French can clean 245 lb. without any assistance gear, and he can deadlift 450 with a lifting strap.

Progress aside, he admits it's been a tough year.

"It is frustrating at times. You know what you used to be able to do. You try to do it but you can't," he said. "And it's hard hearing what other people tell you. I was told I would never compete or be a firefighter again by rehab doctors," he said.

To get through it all, he has turned to CrossFit for hope.

"CrossFit was something I could do, something I could try to do. It has given me a sense of achievement I couldn't get elsewhere."

—Jesse French

"It's been an outlet. It keeps me sane. There was a lot of worry about depression, about giving up, but CrossFit was something I could do, something I could try to do. It has given me a sense of achievement I couldn't get elsewhere," he said.

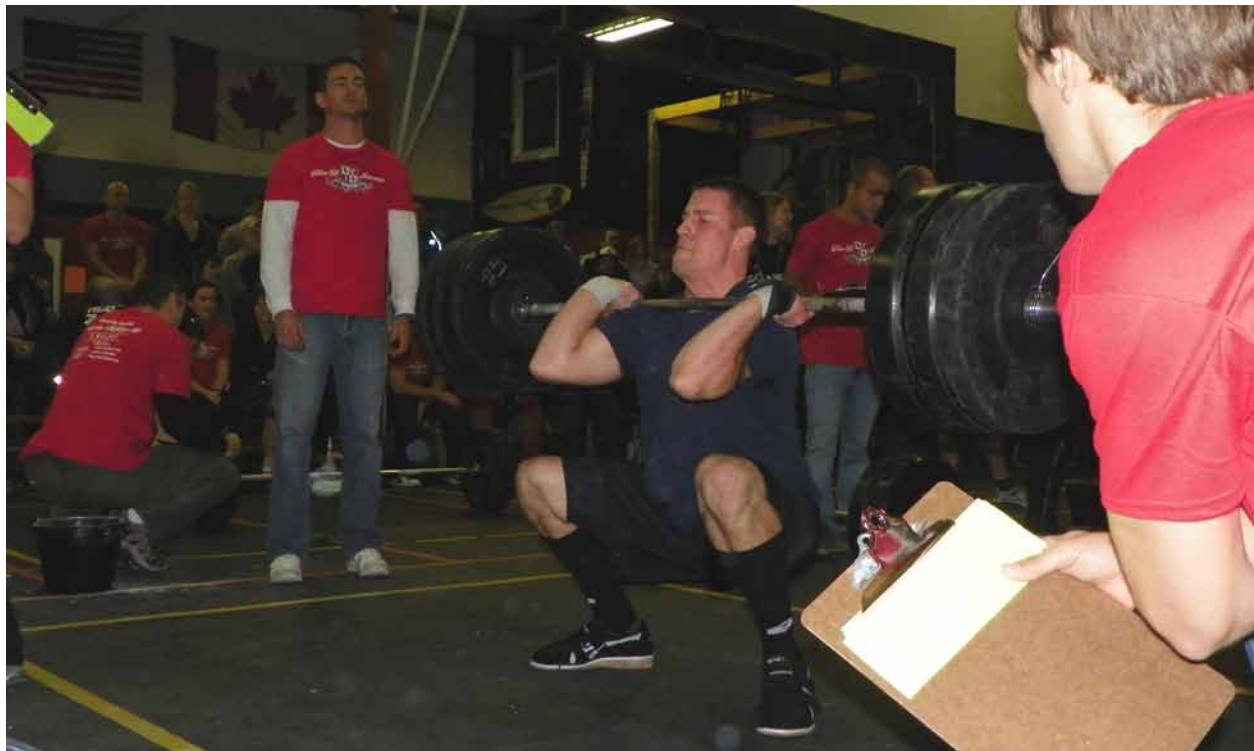
He continued: "I mean, a year ago, my girlfriend had to cut an apple for me."

According to French, the support of his girlfriend, Jennifer Rouleau, has been integral in helping him believe in himself again.

"My girlfriend, Marc and lots of guys at the firehall, they never lost faith in me," French said. "And my times have actually improved since before my accident. I have better technique and I work out a lot smarter."

Mazzocchi explains that it's been easy to believe in French.

"He's the most determined person I've ever met in my life. He finds something he wants to do, and he has a one-track mind. He'll kill himself trying to do it," said Mazzocchi.



After earning a spot in the Canada West Regional, French will have a chance to compete on home turf in B.C.

Nearly killing himself trying is exactly what French has done in the last year to get to where he is today.

"That lifting hook hurts like hell. He'll hang off the bar using this thing, and you just sit there watching his hand turn purple," Mazzocchi said about French's tireless efforts.

Tireless efforts aside, French still has goals he'd like to accomplish.

"I'd like to be able to do a handstand walk properly," he said in an interview during the Open. "And I hope to get to regionals."

Regardless of how French does at regionals, Mazzocchi is nothing short of amazed by the guy he thinks of as his little brother.

"I'm so proud of this guy. He has inspired so many people to keep going. One lady in our gym smacked her hand on the box doing box jumps the other day and broke her hand. But it didn't stop her. 'Jesse came in after he cut his fingers off,' people told her," said Mazzocchi.

He continued: "People in our gym, their mantra is, 'Well, Jesse did it.'"



About the Author

CrossFit Vancouver



Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts Bathroom Graffiti, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness.

As an athlete and CrossFitter, Beers started out as a gymnast, competing to the national level. After growing too tall for gymnastics, she played NCAA Division 1 basketball for the University of Idaho, then returned home and played for the University of British Columbia. After three years of playing basketball, she started rowing, competing at the varsity level at the University of Western Ontario for two years. While trying to make the National Rowing Team in 2009, she discovered CrossFit and became utterly addicted. Soon, CrossFit was meant to be a way to cross-train for rowing but became her greatest passion. She moved back to Vancouver in September 2009 and found CrossFit Vancouver, where she now both trains and works as an apprentice coach.

In her first season competing in CrossFit she won the B.C. Sectional competition in 2010. Regionals were less kind to her, but that's only made her more determined to get to the Games. She had her sights set on 2011 but ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010. Recovering from Achilles surgery has given her more time to pursue her passion for journalism. It has also allowed her to be a part of the 2011 CrossFit Games in a different capacity: she is the Canada West media director for CrossFit HQ.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Four Corners

Alison Patenaude shares a simple, fun game that will keep CrossFit Kids moving.

By Alison Patenaude CrossFit Kids

May 2011



Set-Up

In a square playing area, place one cone at each corner. Label them 1, 2, 3 and 4 (with numbered sleeves, index cards and a marker, etc.).

Objective

To be the last player standing.

How to Play

One person is the counter. He or she lies face down in the middle of the square. As the counter counts to 10, the remainder of players run (skip, broad jump, bunny hop, etc.—any movement of the trainer's choosing)

around the four cones. Once the counter gets to 10, the players go to the nearest cone and stop. Still with head down, the counter calls out a number between 1 and 4. The players standing at that numbered cone have to do 3 squats and then go into the middle of the square with the counter. Switch counters each round.

The game begins again, but as counter counts to 10, everyone who got “out” must hold a plank position (or do sit-ups, push-ups, tuck jumps—again, any movement the trainer chooses) until the counter is done counting. The game ends when only one kid is left.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Heavy, Light and Medium

Bill Starr explains a simple way to plan a week's worth of lifting for maximum gains.

By Bill Starr

May 2011



All images Staff/CrossFit Journal

Knowing how to utilize the heavy, light and medium system in your strength program is perhaps one of the most important things you can do to ensure ongoing success.



Getting stronger requires working the body's larger muscles, and the best way to do that is with compound movements.

This is certainly not a new idea. It has been around since the early '30s, when Mark Berry wrote about it in his book, *Physical Training Simplified*. Yet few people of my era had ever read his book, and the system was seldom mentioned in the few magazines that catered to weightlifters and bodybuilders.

Discovery by Accident

I began my quest to gain strength and size in the mid-'50s, right after I joined the Air Force when I was 17. At my first two duty stations, Great Lakes Naval Training Center and West Palm Beach A.F.B., I trained alone. I put together a program from what I remembered of the manual I bought mail order from George Jowett when I was in high school. With no one to guide me, I used common sense to select the exercises that would help me get bigger and stronger.

The equipment at those bases was meager to say the least: standard bar, an assortment of metal plates and two adjustable dumbbells. I realized that I needed to work

my larger muscles much harder than the smaller ones if I wanted to get stronger, so I did back squats by cleaning the weight, flipping it over to my back, squatting, then reversing the process. I did power cleans and presses and upright rows, then French presses, curls and lateral and frontal raises.

Typically, I did 3 sets of 10 because that's what I recalled from Jowett's instruction manual, and for the arm work I did 2 sets of 15. It wasn't much, but it proved to be sufficient. At the same time that I was embarking on my journey in physical culture, I was fortunate enough to have all the food I could possibly eat at my disposal. The food at the hospital mess was delicious and plentiful, and the combination of doing regular strength work—although my numbers were pitiful—and all the calories I could wolf down triggered a growth spurt. For one glorious month, I gained a pound a day, going from 130 to 180. That's heady stuff for a puny teenager to go through, so I was, naturally, hooked on weight training.

Like most beginners, I went just as heavy as I possibly could every time I trained. I thought that's how it should be, to constantly put my body to the test. I wasn't alone, as I found out later on. All the Olympic lifters I got to know after I started competing in that sport had a similar story.

As I mentioned, information just wasn't that available back then. In fact, I had trained for over two years before I saw my first muscle mag. Only a few magazine stands carried them, and you had to know where they might be if you wanted one. A far cry from how it is today. Currently, so much information is out there that it's simply confusing because there are so many conflicting opinions. If you wanted some advice on weightlifting in the '50s, there were two sources: *Strength and Health Magazine* (with Bob Hoffman at the helm) and Peary Rader's *Iron Man Magazine*.

Throughout my formative years of training and even after I started competing in Olympic lifting, I had never come across an article about the heavy, light and medium system. However, I was aware that changing how hard I worked at the three sessions a week was important to my making progress. I stumbled across it simply by accident. At West Palm Beach A.F.B., if I wanted to lift weights I had to do it from noon to one because the gym closed at 4 p.m. and I didn't get off duty till four. Absolutely nuts, but I vowed then and there that I was going to lift regardless of the obstacles, and I did just that. Giving up a delicious lunch was indeed a sacrifice.

One Monday, I was feeling extra good so I decided to try and lift the 25-lb. bar plus six 25-lb. plates—175 lb. I power-cleaned and jerked it and was quite proud of myself. It was my final exercise of that day so I left the loaded bar on the gym mat for everyone to see, although in truth I had never encountered another person as long as I had been training there.

I had stumbled into the heavy, light and medium system, yet I didn't know that at the time.



On some days, working with slightly lighter weights will help you beat your records on heavy days.

On Wednesday, I had just finished with my warm-ups: sit-ups and leg raises on the stall bars when a kid of about 13 rode his bike into the gym, which was basically a basketball court with the weight tucked under an alcove on one side. He stopped, pointed to the still-loaded barbell on the mat and asked, "Who lifted that?"

"I did," I said, feeling very full of myself.

He looked me over and said doubtfully, "Let me see you do it."

With confidence, I stripped the bar, did a warm-up set, then reloaded the bar to 175. I can't actually recall how many times I tried to clean and jerk that weight, but it was a lot. Finally, I was exhausted. The kid gave me a smirk and rode on out of the gym. I was so depressed that I grabbed my gym bag and left.

For the next two days I fumed, and when I showed up on Friday, I was determined that I would lift that weight again or die trying. Then, to my amazement, I clean and jerked it even easier than I had done on Monday. Now I was confused. Why was I strong on Monday and Friday yet weak as a cat on Wednesday? Throughout my workout, I studied on the matter and finally came to the conclusion that the difference was I did a shorter and less demanding session on Wednesday, so I had a lot of energy for the Friday workout. Mondays were always my best days because I had the entire weekend to recuperate.

I had stumbled into the heavy, light and medium system, yet I didn't know that at the time. In fact, I discounted the medium day altogether. What I began doing was not going as heavy on Wednesday as I did on Monday, and on the final session of the week I went heavy if the weights felt light and backed off if they were really taxing.

And as I learned from fellow competitors in the ensuing years, that's what they did as well. It was an intuitive process out of necessity. There were no coaches to tell us this, and no one was actively writing about it in the magazines.

That's how we learned just about everything about lifting heavy weights: trial and error, then sitting back and considering just what had been done, both pro and con.

This seldom happens currently. When a strength athlete hits a wall in his routine, he doesn't study the problem and come up with a viable solution. Rather, he seeks advice from the bounty of experts out there, via books, videos, clinics and DVDs. That's certainly much faster and easier, but at the same time it's less effective. Having to beat your head against a wall until you solve the riddle about your program is much more beneficial than having someone else come up with the answer.

The Details of Heavy, Light and Medium

I finally did learn the finer points of the heavy, light and medium system after I enrolled at S.M.U. and started training under the guidance of Sid Henry at the Downtown Dallas YMCA. When a lifter trained with Sid, he did exactly what he was told. Period. And as soon as the concept was explained to me, it made perfect sense. I've used it ever since, for my own routines and for the many athletes I have trained at collegiate and professional levels.



You can't go heavy all the time, but the heavy, light and medium system will help you balance heavy training with adequate recovery.

The system basically prevents overtraining. In the very beginning, it really isn't all that important. Whenever I start someone on a strength routine, I want him to go to limit at every session on the selected exercises. I need to find his strength levels on those movements, and from that I can teach him how to incorporate the heavy, light and medium system. It's not at all unusual for a beginner to make progress on all his lifts for the first month or six weeks because as his form gets tighter, the numbers go up.

But once the numbers on the primary lifts flatten out, I install the heavy, light and medium system into their programs. This is how it works for beginners. I start everyone on the Big Three: bench press, power clean and full squat. Others use different primary movements, such as the incline or overhead press for the shoulder girdle, and deadlifts for the back. That's fine. Just so the three major muscle groups—shoulder girdle or upper body, back, and hips and legs—all receive direct attention. I also use the incline and overhead press, but I like to start all athletes, male or female, off with the power clean. It teaches them the correct line of pull and is great for athletes of every sport because it makes them considerably stronger while enhancing several athletic attributes, such as coordination, timing, balance and quickness.

Three times a week is enough in the beginning. It's important to have those off days to allow the body to recuperate from this new form of stress. The same set and rep sequence is used at every session: 5 sets of 5. Monday is the heavy day, which means they go to limit on all three primary exercises. Wednesday is the light day, where they do less than what they did on Monday. And Friday they will handle a load somewhere in between what they lifted on Monday and Wednesday.

I never use the cookie-cutter approach. Utilize the heavy, light and medium system to make sure it fully applies to that athlete on an individual basis.



Deadlifts are a great exercise, but Bill Starr usually starts athletes on the bench press, power clean and squat.

The confusing part to many coaches and athletes is exactly how much less and where in between the light and medium days should be. Some coaches like to use very specific percentages for the three days: 100 percent for the heavy day, 70-80 percent for the light day, and 80-90 percent for the medium day.

This will work OK if the athlete is putting together a program for himself and he knows these numbers work best for him, but I don't like it for a large group of athletes. Individuals differ far too much to assume that they're all going to respond identically. I've had athletes who could handle twice the workload of teammates of the same size and experience. For them to only handle 80 percent of what they did on Monday for their light day would be a waste of time.

For instance, one beginner can use 300x5 in just a few short weeks of back squatting. If he sticks with the 80 percent idea, he will just use 240 for his light day. That's much too conservative. He needs to load the bar up to 265 or 275 at least.

I've had some experienced lifters who were able to recover from heavy loads rather easily. They used only a small percentage less than what they did on their heavy day for the other two days of the week. So when setting up a program, factor recovery ability into the equation. For some beginners, a very light day is in order, while others need to push the load much higher.

In this same vein of thought, keep in mind that every athlete has some area of his body that can handle a much higher load than the other two. It may be that he has to really pull back on Wednesday for his back or he will become overtrained in that muscle group, yet he seems to have no limit on what he can handle in the squat. That's why I never use the cookie-cutter approach. Utilize

the heavy, light and medium system to make sure it fully applies to that athlete on an individual basis.

If you happen to be working with a fairly large group of athletes, here is a simple way to incorporate the heavy, light and medium system into their programs without having to spend hours calculating the percentages. I have forms printed up with the three lifts for the three training days of the week. On Monday, they work up and do their 5 sets on these exercises and record them. Our sample lifter squatted 135, 185, 225, 255 and 275 for 5 reps. On his light day, he is only going to go up to what he did on his third set on Monday—225—so his progression would look like this: 135, 175, 195, 215 and 225, again for 5 reps.

While this may seem to be very light, and it is, it serves a purpose for beginners. These relatively light poundages allow them to concentrate all their energy on doing the movement perfectly. Learning correct form is just as important as moving the numbers up at this level, so it's OK to use light weights during this breaking-in period.



This would be heavy day.

For the medium day, the athlete will work up to what he handled on his fourth set on Monday—255—and he'll work up to that using these increments: 135, 185, 215, 235 and 255 for 5. By simplifying the process, the athletes can fill in the necessary numbers themselves, and that leaves the coach more free time to help them with their technique. Keep in mind that when the heavy day moves to a higher level, the other two days tag along.

This works really well for those just getting involved in a strength program, and the basic idea is also useful for those starting back into a routine after a layoff. Every year, nearly all of the football team took a month or more off from training after the end of the season. The exceptions were those who were also competing in Olympic lifting. But the majority were starting over, and they needed to be monitored or they would invariably try to get back to their former strength levels too fast. It's simply the nature of a competitive person to do so. And because they have already broken through the numbers barrier on many of the lifts—400 squat, 225 good morning, 325 bench, 275 incline and so on—their minds are ready to tackle those numbers again. However, their bodies aren't yet ready, and in every individual there's at least one muscle group that is always lagging behind. Care has to be taken to ensure that that susceptible group is strengthened slowly and brought up to par before rushing ahead to new personal records.

This problem usually occurs in the strongest athletes. Those who are hard gainers know their limitations and move back to their former best much more cautiously. So when you're starting back on a strength routine, when in doubt do less. There will be plenty of time to get back to your former best, and if you move up to your old numbers conservatively, you will have a much better chance of rolling right past them than you will if you attempt to rush the process.

When the athletes start back on an off-season routine, I instruct them to only do 3 sets of 5 for the three primary exercises and don't go to limit. Naturally, some of the more seasoned veterans do not believe this advice applies to them. After all, they squatted 500 at the end of last year's program. So they do 135, 225 and 315 first day back and discover later that night that they can't walk up stairs without severe pain in their legs. Whether just starting out or getting back in the groove, make haste slowly. There's plenty of time to break new ground, and rushing things will only give you problems.

Make haste slowly. There's plenty of time to break new ground, and rushing things will only give you problems.

Fine-Tuning the Program

Once a solid strength base is established and form is achieved, changes will be made in your routine. Instead of just doing three exercises for the large muscle groups, you'll start including more variety. When this occurs, many are confused as to where they belong in regards to the heavy, light and medium system.

The power shrug is the perfect example. More weight can be used on the shrug than any other back exercise, so does that mean it belongs on the heavy day? No, because it's a short-range movement and is actually one of the easier back exercises. Well, it obviously doesn't fit into the light day, so it belongs in the medium day. I like it there for yet another reason. When an athlete attacks the traps with very heavy, dynamic shrugs, his traps are going to be screaming the following day, and maybe even the day after that. That's why Fridays work best for them: it gives the athlete two full days to recover from the abuse.



Even awesome lifters like A.J. Roberts need a good warm-up before attacking a heavy day.

The exercises selected for the three days deal with three factors: degree of difficulty, amount of weight used and overall workload. The heavy day is fairly easy to figure out. Our athlete has moved from power cleans to full cleans, and he also does good mornings and shrugs for his back. Because full cleans are high-skill, they need to be given priority and are done on Mondays. These will be followed with good mornings, and shrugs will finish up the week.

If an athlete has deadlifts in his program, they belong on Mondays because the combination of form and how much weight is used is still greater than what is required of shrugs. Flip them, and the week's effort will not be as productive.

Exercises that use lesser amounts of weight can also be placed on the heavy day if the workload is high enough. For example, full snatches are never as heavy as full cleans, high pulls or deadlifts, and in some cases they are even less than what is used for power cleans. But if multiple sets are done with moderate reps—such as triples—then the overall volume qualifies them as the heavy pulling exercise for that week.

Selecting the exercises for the shoulder girdle is rather



Gaining strength is an art, but with some careful planning you can reach very high levels.

simple because it's easy to understand that the weights used for the flat bench will be higher than for the overhead press and incline. That's the proper order to do them during the week.

For the hips and legs, back squats need to be done twice a week, on the heavy and medium days; that is, unless you're an Olympic lifter. Then you need to front squat twice a week. If you back squat two times a week, then the light day will either be front squats or lunges, depending on what you're trying to accomplish. In the event the athlete wants to back squat at every session, I have him use 50 lbs. less on the light day than he handled on his heavy day for 5 reps. This most understand. What is confusing, however, is what to do on the back squat on the medium day.

Here's a program that I have used with my athletes, and it bears fruit over a long period of time. On Monday, our athlete works up and lifts 400 for 5 reps on his final set. If he's also back squatting on Wednesday, he will do 350 for 5 on his fifth set. On Friday, he will do this sequence: 135x5, 225x5, 315x5, 375x3 and finally 405 or 410x3. Then on the following Monday, he will do 5 reps with the same weight that he tripled on Friday. In this manner, he will steadily increase his squat strength, and I've had some athletes who were able to make gains every week for a three-month period.

You may be thinking, "Doesn't that throw off the heavy and medium deal because more weight is actually moved on Friday than it was on Monday?" No, it doesn't because the workload on Friday is going to be less than what was done on Monday even though the intensity is higher.

The exercises selected for the Friday, medium-day workout are most critical to the success of any strength program. It comes at the tail end of the week, which means the athletes are more tired, both physically and mentally, than they were at the first two sessions of the week. While I fully expect them to exert themselves on all the exercises for that day, I only include one really difficult one—the back squats. That's where I put the shrugs. Even when 500-plus lb. are used, they're still not as tough as heavy power cleans, full cleans, full snatches, high pulls or deadlifts. But because so much weight can be used in the shrug, the body needs more time to recover, and that's another reason why I put them on Friday.

It's important to understand that "heavy, light and medium" doesn't translate to "hard, easy and not-so-hard."

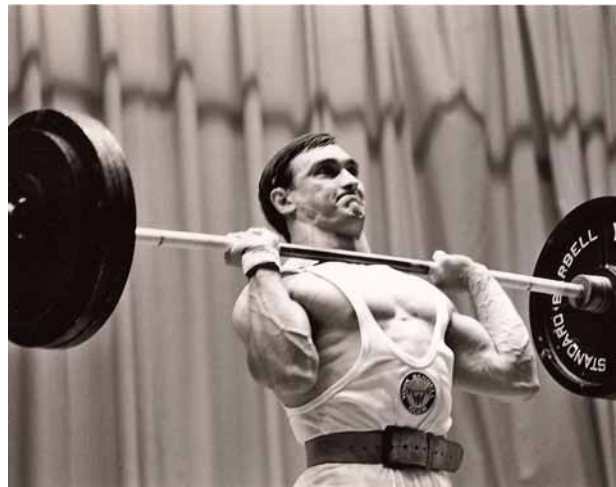
The exercise selected for the shoulder girdle on the medium day can either be inclines or flat benches. If inclines are done, they should be worked hard and to the limit. However, if the athlete is noticeably fatigued, I have him use a slightly lower poundage and knock out a few extra sets to keep his workload high without tapping into his upper-body strength for the following Monday. For those who want to bench press on Monday and Friday, I use this routine for the medium day: 4 sets of 8 followed by a heavy double. This is a way to increase their workload and intensity a bit without overtraining their attachments so that they're fully recovered for the heavy session on Monday. When an athlete becomes more advanced, I add in another heavy double to bump up his load even more.

It's important to understand that "heavy, light and medium" doesn't translate to "hard, easy and not-so-hard." Every workout, once you move out of the beginners' stage, has to be difficult. Otherwise, you're not going to make the gains you could. The light day is, in my opinion, the toughest workout of all because of good mornings. Plus, if you're front squatting, you're pushing to max, and the same thing applies for whichever shoulder-girdle exercise you select: overhead press or inclines. The simple rule of thumb is this: if you're not spent when you complete your workout, you didn't work hard enough.

Another factor in this regard, and especially for the light day, is the amount of time spent training. The heavy day should be the longest because more rest is needed between attempts. The medium is a bit shorter primarily because shrugs can be done quickly, and the light day should be the shortest of the entire week. This isn't a problem because good mornings are easier to do if you bomb-blitz through them. Sounds contradictory, but it isn't. Moving fast actually makes them hurt less. They'll still hurt, but not nearly as much as if you dilly-dally between sets.

Unless you're an advanced strength athlete, you should spend no more than an hour and a half training on your heavy day, an hour for your light day, and an hour and a quarter for your medium day. Stay within those guidelines and you'll be fine.

There is yet another variable to consider when determining the heavy, light and medium days, and that's overall workload. This, however, is a subject that requires quite a bit of explanation, so I'll cover that topic in a future article for the *CrossFit Journal*.



About the Author

*Bill Starr coached at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the 1970 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 TheAsgaardCompanyBookstore.com.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Beyond the CrossFit Games: Part 3

Hilary Achauer explains how Matt Lodin used the Reebok CrossFit Games Open as rehab.

By Hilary Achauer

May 2011



All images courtesy of Theodora Valovska

It happened in the middle of Nasty Girls, an infamous WOD that is 3 rounds for time of 50 squats, 7 muscle-ups and 10 135-lb. hang power cleans. Matt Lodin was at the end of the second round, coming out of a muscle-up. As he landed, he felt a sharp, eye-searing pain in his left knee and collapsed to the ground. He tried to get up and move on to the power cleans, but he couldn't straighten his leg.

1 of 5



Matt Lodin was a college lacrosse player and found CrossFit stoked dormant competitive fires.

Matt went to the doctor the next day and got the news. He had dislocated his patella and shredded the meniscus in his left knee. The only option was surgery—disappointing news only a month before the CrossFit Games Open competition. Although new to CrossFit—he had only been doing it for a year—Matt had quickly made a name for himself locally and was looking forward to finding out where he stood in his region and the world.

A Lifelong Athlete

Matt has always been an athlete. He started playing Pop Warner football at eight. At West Hills High School in San Diego, Calif., Matt played linebacker and was the captain of the varsity team. He also joined the wrestling team and ran track, throwing the shot put and discus. An exceptional

student as well as an outstanding athlete, Matt was accepted to the University of California, San Diego. UC San Diego does not have a football team, so Matt picked up lacrosse. He earned a starting position on the varsity team until he tore his ACL. It was the same knee he would later injure in 2011.

Matt graduated in 2009 with a degree in human development. He got a job teaching AP biology, biology, chemistry, anatomy and P.E. at Lutheran High School of San Diego. He also became the school's varsity football coach. Although Matt was busy with a full workload and adjusting to post-college life, he missed the challenge and competition of his high-school and college teams and looked around for a new sport.



After discovering CrossFit, Lodin soon became a trainer.

Matt remembers the exact day he first tried CrossFit.

"Feb. 15, 2010," he said with a smile.

Matt's friend, who was training to become a Navy SEAL, suggested that Matt join him in a workout.

"It kicked my butt," said Matt. "I was hooked."

Matt began working out at CrossFit East County, training with the owner, Paul Flores. After a few months, he switched to CrossFit Pacific Beach because it was closer to his home. He liked the gym's focus on strength and power, and soon after he joined he became a trainer, teaching classes as well as offering one-on-one training.

"I was going to get my surgery done when the Open started and use the six weeks of competition as my rehab."

—Matt Lodin

A month after Matt began CrossFit, he competed in the 2010 Southern California Sectional, held in Los Angeles, Calif., in mid-March. He finished 40th out of 80 competitors. In October 2010 Matt competed in and won the Coronado Games. He then went on to win the SoCal Series in December 2010. He took second place in the first event with a time of 15:00 for 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 reps of 135-lb. power cleans and 250-meter sprints. He finished first in the second event with a 200-lb. press.

"If there ever was a dark horse in the CrossFit Games, it's Matt Lodin," said Anders Varner, one of the owners of CrossFit Pacific Beach. "He is an elite athlete. This injury has held him back during the Open, but he's going to surprise a lot of people at regionals."

A Kid at Heart

After Matt injured his knee in February, he had a decision to make.

"When the doctor told me I needed surgery, I had to figure out if I was going to hold off and go through the Games without the ability to fully extend my knee or lose some conditioning and hope to be fully recovered by regionals," Matt said.

Once the CrossFit Games Open schedule was revealed as a six-week, worldwide competition, Matt made his decision:

"I was going to get my surgery done when the Open started and use the six weeks of competition as my rehab."

If something separates the dedicated athlete from the casual competitor, it is this attitude. Instead of taking a few months off or bowing out of the Games this year, Matt decided to forge ahead and rehab his knee while competing.



Lodin had surgery the same day he completed Workout 11.1 and didn't miss a single Open event during recovery.

"After discussing my options with the surgeon, we went with a meniscectomy to remove 70 percent of the meniscus," Matt said. "This way, I wouldn't have to wait for the repaired meniscus to heal, and I could start building up my strength right away."

Matt scheduled his surgery for the afternoon of Wednesday, March 16, the day after the first CrossFit Games Open workout was to be released. When the release of Workout 11.1 was delayed due to technical difficulties, Matt started to worry. Would the workout be released in time? Would he be able to get it in before his surgery?

The workout was released in the early morning hours of March 16 and featured as many rounds as possible in 10 minutes of 30 double-unders and 15 75-lb. power snatches. Matt showed up at the gym, picked up the jump rope and put up an impressive score of 7 rounds plus 17 double-unders. He went under the knife that afternoon.

The technical problems with the CrossFit Open website ended up working in Matt's favor. "The extra week to complete the first workout was huge for me. I think I might have had to attempt one-legged box jumps without that extension." Instead, Matt put up a score of 12 rounds for workout 11.2, a workout that included deadlifts, push-ups and box jumps.

Matt showed up at the gym, picked up the jump rope and put up an impressive score of 7 rounds plus 17 double-unders. He went under the knife that afternoon.

As the competition went on, Matt's scores improved. He finished 35th in his region for Workout 11.3, completing 31 rounds of the squat clean and jerk. In Week 5, he moved to 43rd, finishing the burpee/overhead-squat/muscle-up workout with a score of 1 round plus 27 burpees.

"I don't have confidence in my injured knee," said Matt. "I'm favoring the right knee. I definitely felt it in the box jumps (in Workout 11.2). I stopped when I (felt) a sharp pain, but other than that I've just kept going as best as I could."

Matt ended the competition 40th overall in the Southern California region after making it all the way through 18 thrusters and 18 chest-to-bar pull-ups in workout 11.6 and posting a score of 126.

When asked how he feels about the Open, he said he likes the structure and thinks it's a phenomenal way to hold a worldwide competition.

"I don't like the idea that you can redo the workouts, though," he said. "I think it should be one time and done, just like the competition."

Matt has not redone any of the workouts, partly because he doesn't want to put any additional stress on his knee, and partly because he has been putting up impressive scores every week—injured knee or not.

Not once in our conversation did Matt complain about his injury or talk about what he might have done if he hadn't hurt his knee. Before I left the gym, I asked him how he maintained such a positive attitude.

"I'm doing this for fun," he said. "When I tore my ACL in college, it was devastating. That was my first major injury, and it was awful to lose my starting position. For me, CrossFit is just a giant playground. I'm a kid at heart, so as long as I can come here and play, I'm happy."

"Whatever ever we throw at him, he demolishes," said Anders. "He doesn't stop. He has this almost superhuman ability to keep going. I can't wait to see what he does next."



About the Author

Courtesy of Hilary Achauer



Hilary Achauer is an award-winning freelance writer and editor with a background in marketing and communications. An amateur-boxer-turned-CrossFitter, Hilary specializes in health and wellness content, focusing on emerging fitness trends. Her writing has been featured in a leading online parenting magazine as well as a number of travel and

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Talk Is Cheap

Mike Warkentin asks what happens when hard-charging CrossFitters run into gym socialites looking for a conversation.

By Mike Warkentin

May 2011



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

CrossFit is changing gym culture—that's obvious.

1 of 5



"OMG! He was like, 'Totally!' and I was like, 'Whatever!'"

With new affiliates springing up everywhere, entire islands of CrossFit exist where people can fling chalk around like it's flour on the set of *Jackass* and hear not one trainer complain. These boxes are loud, rugged and Spartan—the antithesis of the modern fitness facility.

As garage beautiful as a fully outfitted box can be, many CrossFitters don't have access to one and are forced to pursue their version of fitness in traditional gyms where most of the equipment has a built-in chair. These athletes are a lot like covert operatives doing devious shit deep behind enemy lines, and the possibility of capture and punishment or expulsion is often very real.

Nevertheless, as people discover our program, fewer power cages are used for biceps curls and more and more facilities are filled with loud crashes instead of the sounds of plate stacks sliding on oiled rails.

And there's less talking—thankfully.

Get His Number, Girlfriend

You've seen it 1,000 times: people carrying on a conversation while they're lifting weights or spinning themselves dizzy on that god-awful torso-rotation machine.

"You gonna call him?"

"I dunno. I was really drunk. Was he hot?"

"Like that matters to you."

"Right. Whew—that was a good set."

"Feel the burn, woman."

Or how about the people chatting on the elliptical machine? They've bought property in the single digits of the Borg Scale, and they're usually more concerned with the picture on the machine's on-board TV than the intensity of the workout.

"Does this football field look too green to you? Jesus, who adjusted the color here? How am I supposed to watch this?"

In defense of these people, at least they're at the gym. Something is better than nothing, and I'd rather see Johnny Quads do a few sets of half squats than eat an entire bag of chips with no hands.

Still, if you can hold a conversation during a workout, you're probably not doing a whole hell of a lot, unless you're in cardiac rehab, which is an entirely different story. If you're a healthy human seeking fitness gains, I doubt you'll earn them while discussing the current political climate or the finer points of installing a satellite dish.

But this is traditional fitness culture, and the gym is often every bit the pick-up bar and coffee shop. Spandex bunnies flirt with muscle dudes, friends rehash the big game, and casual acquaintances strike up mundane conversations about the weather and those clowns in Congress.

Sometimes, these Chatty Cathys and Mouthy Martys run into focused CrossFitters—and things generally don't go well.

Shut Up and Lift

I had turned the pins around in the power rack so I could face the brick wall instead of the mirror and the outside world. The hat was pulled low. No eye contact. I stared only at the floor between sets. I had the Slayer cranked as high as it would go, hoping it was both audible and offensive to the other people in the gym. I sincerely believed I had defined "unapproachable" for all and sundry—at least until I finished my fight with the iron. When I'm done, I'm more than happy to talk about CrossFit, squats and deadlifts.

I was at the bottom of a deep front squat when I saw the shadow from the corner of my eye. It had biceps. I ignored it.



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

"How you doin'?"

Courtesy of Nadia Shatila / CrossFit Belltown



Nadia Shatila gives a one-fingered course in post-WOD communication.

On the next rep, the shadow got a bit larger and I heard a muffled voice underneath *God Hates Us All*. I ignored that too.

More muffled words, louder and closer now.

"Fuck off!" I screamed internally.

On the next rep, right at the deepest, most eye-watering part, the shadow got larger, and the voice got louder still. Someone was yelling at me from about a foot away. I could sense the heat of the flaming goth skulls on his shirt.

Furious, I viciously dumped the weight, ripped off the headphones and said, "What?"

"Dude, how many sets you got left?"

A Lift is Worth 1,000 Words

I used to think certain people in the gym were assholes. They didn't talk much, and they glared a lot. They had no time for anything and seemed completely self-centered. They walked past you without looking up or nodding on

their way to a bar in the corner. Eventually, after weeding out a few truly weird psychopaths and legitimate jackasses, I realized most of these people were quiet because they had an agenda: getting stronger or faster or bigger. That agenda did not include small talk with me.

They didn't chit-chat, they didn't smile, and they didn't mess around. They came in, killed it and left. Some of them turned out to be great people before and after the workout. During the workout it was best to leave them alone—or join them for an intense, quiet session where you'd probably crush a record like a paper cup.

Nowadays, more people are doing CrossFit, and the challenging workouts and the quest for PRs make them just as intense as the guy angrily squatting five plates per side ass-to-grass in combat boots, tattered camo shorts and a T-shirt that says "I don't give a rat's ass." Many of these people are incredibly friendly, but when it's time to work, it's time to work. This, however, does not mix with common gym culture.

Friendly, curious people are bound to engage you in the gym, especially when you're doing something "strange" like squatting below parallel or breathing hard. But being asked a question between thrusters 40 and 41 of Fran is not cool. Having someone slap hands with a buddy over the sleeve of your barbell before you snatch it is unbearable and dangerous. And anyone who taps you on the shoulder during the last 100 of a 2K row deserves to be shot with a ball of rotting garbage.

But these are not bad people. Most of them are not even stupid. It's cavalier in the CrossFit community to abuse Globo Gym patrons, but they're just unfamiliar with what we're doing, and you can't fault them for their ignorance, even if it drives you insane with rage. Many of us did quite a few biceps curls back in the day, and like I said, at least they're at the gym—and they might even want to join you.

"Yes, you can. Now stop talking while I finish this."

But gym culture is most certainly changing. For an increasing number of athletes, there's working time, and there's talking time. If you're talking, you aren't working. And vice versa. If you're catching up on the weekend, you aren't catching anyone on the whiteboard. And if someone else is working, you should hold onto your banter until he or she is done. Talk later. Focus now. These are rules worth remembering even in a CrossFit affiliate.

Simply put, it's hard to be nice in the middle of a workout that's treating you like a rented mule, and if you have the energy to chat, you're probably not working or focusing hard enough. Indeed, how do you find the time to compose yourself and politely explain that you're head-to-head with something that's going to take everything you have?

"Sir, I'll be happy to tell you about my weekend later. It's not personal. I'm about to tangle with the heaviest squat of my life, and I need a bit of focus. Feel free to watch and cheer me on. But don't expect much polite interaction right now. Mr. 400 Pounds is about all I can deal with at present. Thank you."

That speech would take far too much time and effort when both are in short supply, so sometimes questions go unanswered and poor relations ensue. Other times a glare or a raised middle finger takes the place of civility, and a firebreather just looks rude, elitist and obnoxious instead of focused. That, of course, can turn people off from a program that might actually turn them on to real fitness.

In the interests of maintaining both intensity of workouts and polite relations, perhaps it would be best—and so very CrossFit—to just print a T-shirt or two to take care of business for you in the short term:

"Talk to me after my workout."

"Cheer me on or shut up until I'm done."

"Get lost: I'm lifting."

"Less talk, more squats."

"I'll talk to you when I can breathe again."



Sandra Benz

About the Author

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

THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

MEATY MEATBALL MEN

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet

[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Everybody loves snowmen, but not everyone lives where it snows. These meaty men can be made right in your own kitchen with your kids' help. They're colorful, delicious and fun—what else do you need in a meaty man? Your kids and you can choose what kind of "grass" you want. We used arugula, but spinach or lettuce will work just great. Serve them on mashed cauliflower if you want them at the beach or on snow. Their heads are made of olives, and their arms are made of thinly sliced carrot sticks.

5 servings (2 meat men per serving)

blocks (per serving)

2 carbohydrate blocks
2 protein blocks
2 fat blocks

ingredients

1 lb. ground beef (15 percent fat)
½ medium onion
½ medium orange bell pepper
¼ cup fresh parsley
¼ cup fresh basil
1 egg
¼ cup ground almond meal
Salt to taste

body parts

25 pitted medium olives (heads)
1 ¼ cups small carrot sticks (arms)
10 cups arugula or greens for grass
2.5 cups marinara sauce for swimming
Toothpicks or skewers (chopped into thirds)

directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Finely chop onions and bell pepper.
3. In a pan with a little olive oil, sauté onions first until slightly tender, then add in bell pepper (you can use whatever color your kid wants, but remember yellow, red and orange are sweeter). Cook until tender.
4. While pepper and onion mix is cooking, chop parsley and basil.
5. Remove onions and peppers from stove. Let cool slightly.
6. Mix ingredients in a medium-size bowl. Add fresh herbs, cooked and slightly cooled pepper and onion mix, ground beef, egg, almond meal, and salt. Mix together with your hands and shape into small balls (about 20). This is where the kids can get their hands dirty.
7. Place meatballs in a 9x13 pan and bake for approximately 20 minutes.
8. Let your body parts cool slightly before assembly. Use toothpicks to be the spine/frame, and stack two balls, one on top of another. Place an olive on top for a head, and use your thinly sliced carrot sticks for his arms. Give him as many arms as he likes.
9. Serve two meatball men atop greens, with a side of marinara for dipping and extra carrots and olives.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

CrossFit Kids and Youth Resistance Training: An Italian Perspective

Resistance training and kids is a contentious issue. Maurizio Guarrata and Dan Edelman offer some perspective from athletic training in Europe.

By Maurizio Guarrata and Dan Edelman

May 2011



All images courtesy of Maurizio Guarrata

Youth resistance training has generated a lot of controversy over the years. Through the 1980s, the common wisdom held that youth resistance training was ineffective; i.e., children's trainability, or their response to a resistance-training stimulus, was deemed indemonstrable (6,19,32). In addition, a myth that weight training stunts children's growth, typically seen as stemming from Kato and Ishiko's study (18), persists even today. It is possible that methodological factors might have influenced the outcomes of these early studies, but their findings informed much of the common wisdom, not to mention many authoritative position statements, that held sway for many years.

However, over time, better-designed studies (10,27,31) indicated that, indeed, strength can be increased in children and that resistance programs were not only safe but integral to children's general fitness and sports performance. The wealth of empirical evidence specifying the positive impact of resistance training for kids has led many key authorities, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Orthopaedic Society of Sports Medicine, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (1,2,3,5,30), to come out in support of youth resistance training.

A myth that weight training stunts children's growth ... persists even today.

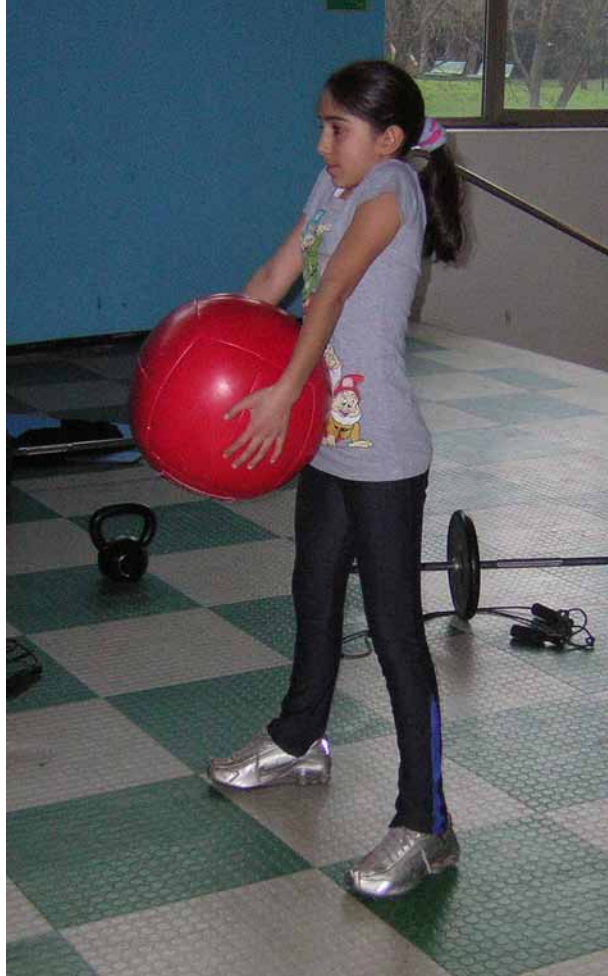
Safety is a critical dimension, no doubt, especially with respect to technique, but, again, practice and statistics show that when done with adequate supervision, resistance training with children and teens is relatively injury- and accident-free when compared to sports (11,16), while strength gains are genuine and help decrease the incidence of sports-related injuries. That said, workouts with unevenly applied intensity and that are arbitrary in terms of strategy, method and/or program—and especially devoid of passion, motivation and fun—will lack dimension and, more importantly, effectiveness. Without a careful, progressive increase in intensity and volume and due attention to appropriate recovery, which presupposes an appropriate understanding of developmental idiosyncrasies and expectations for this age group, effects are reduced and the risk of injury increased.

A successful youth program requires participants to master technique before adding load or increasing intensity; properly scales volume, load, and intensity thereafter; works key muscle groups; focuses on functional or compound movements; understands and accounts for developmental specificities of that age group; and pays particular attention to rest and recovery. These components are foundational to a smart propaedeutic approach and to providing an increased stimulus characterized by

incremental progress toward proficient performance initially beyond the athlete's capacity. These components are foundational to a CrossFit Kids program. After a more general discussion of resistance training with kids and teens, we will take a brief look at how Guarrata applies the basic CrossFit Kids methodology to the training of young figure skaters (ages eight to 17) competing nationally and internationally.



***Young athletes require close supervision and instruction
to create a foundation for strength training.***



Children develop at different rates and will require an individual approach for best results.

Developmental Considerations

Development does not progress at the same rate for all kids (7). Every phase of development has its own character and trajectory and requires that, within the broader program framework, the trainer tailor resistance-training protocols for the age group and individual. For example, in preadolescence, strength training can comprise jumping and throwing and accuracy and agility drills—with increasing intensity—focusing on muscular sensibility (kinaesthetic awareness). These drills can be varied by distance and targets of different difficulty. Adolescent strength training would include similar drills but could also integrate, among other things, barbell work with varying complexity (e.g., Olympic lifts) and intensity.

Although it is not possible to say unequivocally that muscular hypertrophy will not occur at all, it should not be the goal of any preadolescent resistance-training program. Rather, the key objective should be neuromuscular adaptation; e.g., improved motor-unit coordination and firing. During and after puberty, however, hypertrophic factors figure far more prominently in the expression of muscular strength (7).

Strength development parallels somatic growth, which plays a fundamental role in movement. Preadolescent and adolescent somatic development disrupts coordination, in a sense, rendering a child's body alien to him or her. What we find is that a young athlete who had been moving beautifully one week suddenly does not move so well. And even though it is his body that is changing, the young athlete is not necessarily aware of the impact this transformation has on his movement. Coaches need to bear in mind that the loss of coordination and kinaesthetic awareness concomitant with a growth spurt is temporary, and the athlete will usually return to moving more competently in a short time. However, it is also incumbent on the trainer to observe any retrograde movement consistent with a growth spurt—or any other reason for that matter—and fine-tune the programming for that individual to prevent injury.

In this spirit, CrossFit Kids stresses the importance of trainers' getting to know their preadolescent and adolescent clients as distinct individuals with differential and fluid needs. Thus, it is imperative to learn how to tweak the programming to accommodate the progress (and occasional regress) of each athlete—often on the fly.

Although it is not possible to say unequivocally that muscular hypertrophy will not occur at all, it should not be the goal of any preadolescent resistance-training program.

In a CrossFit Kids preschool class, the children, approximately ages three to five, do not learn movements under load. At the next age level, approximately ages six to 12, CrossFit Kids minimizes the use of external resistive loads, and children remain unloaded until they demonstrate proficiency in the movement, at which time only very light dumbbells, medicine balls and other objects are employed. At this level, barbells are introduced in the form of PVC pipe, with very light training bars reserved for the older or more technically accomplished children on the verge of matriculating into the teen/advanced class.

At the teen/advanced level, the CrossFit Kids methodology advocates the introduction of a focused, invite-only weight-training class centered on the back squat and deadlift (although other lifts are taught and performed) for the highly proficient, highly motivated athlete. The class structure comprises multiple tiers with beginning, typically younger, lifters learning technique under very light loads and rather tight supervision, while the advanced, usually older, teens pursue maximum effort sets within a [CrossFit strength bias](#) protocol. Again, supervision is intense as there are multiple platforms and multiple bars and loads in use; it is essential to have at least one trainer per platform, eyes on every rep and meticulous records kept. Further, your CrossFit Kids teen/advanced programming must consider the work being done in this special class to prevent overuse/overtraining.

Strength as a Dimension of Fitness

In terms of strength training's role in general fitness, one of its benefits is its capacity to increase bone density and strengthen ligaments. However, because bones, tendons, and ligaments adapt more slowly than muscles, care must be taken. An inadequately supervised program, where intensity outstrips adaptation, exposes the young athlete to risk of injury. Instead, a well-balanced and patient method that pursues progressive incremental increases in load, volume and intensity will help consolidate the positive, risk-ameliorating effects of strength training. Moreover, gains related to bone density and ligament strength show a remarkable capacity to sustain throughout life. Thus, youth resistance training may, for example, help provide a prophylactic effect against osteoporosis in women (20,22). To address bone density in particular, CrossFit Kids advocates programming in a lot of jumping movements, preferably on hard surfaces; e.g., box jumps and broad jumps for kids and teens.

As one of the 10 general physical skills, strength relates to other general skills. Let's look quickly at just two. A lack of strength can compromise endurance and has a deleterious impact on technique and long-endurance sport activities, while research evidences a positive impact of a properly administered strength-training regimen on endurance. Whereas strength assists endurance, it is often seen as mutually exclusive of flexibility. However, strength's expression relies on, among other things, flexibility. Flexibility is critical to coordination and, more to the point, efficient power production.

Mobility is often not an issue for children and adolescents. Take the squat, for instance. In adults, consistently squatting high and the butt wink are typically (though not always) consequences of inflexibility. In kids, these problems can more likely be attributed to a lack of kinaesthetic awareness or, in the case of the wink, a general relaxation at the bottom. That said, there are cases where, indeed, the young athlete does have some flexibility issues, and, in this light, CrossFit Kids recommends that trainers begin to address mobility as part of the teen/advanced program.



Once young athletes show proficiency with PVC, they can then lift light barbells under tight supervision.

CrossFit Kids and Youth Resistance Training: Elite Figure Skaters in Italy

Guarrata is the strength and conditioning coach for the Italian National Figure Skating Team, and, as of this writing, he is the first and only CrossFit Kids trainer in Italy. With partners, he operates CrossFit M1 in Milan, which includes a CrossFit Kids program.

At the outset of his collaboration with the Italian Figure Skating Federation, management, the ice director and the ice coaches all articulated a desire to see the skaters develop more midline stability, and hence better balance. They urged Guarrata to mimic the more conventional approaches of other coaches from around the world. Guarrata resisted this and argued for a return to the basics—that is, CrossFit—applied with precision, methodological rigor and an understanding of his athlete population. Time and perseverance—and results—proved Guarrata right.



Repeated drilling with PVC or wooden dowels will allow trainers to eliminate all form errors so young athletes can be loaded safely.

The figure-skating season runs from September to March, with events occurring almost every weekend. The young skaters attend skating technique, ballet and choreography classes five days a week in addition to their GPP work with Guarrata. Given the demanding schedule, Guarrata programs with utmost care to avoid overloading and overtraining the athletes, while attending to proper nutrition and pursuing maximum supercompensation.

Children (ages eight to 11, about 20 girls) meet with Guarrata on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour. Warm-up depends on the day's technical and skills/drills focus. The majority of the session is given over to improving basic CrossFit movement technique. Guarrata addresses midline stability in the form of games; fun is a must in every session for these young athletes. Fundamental mobility and recovery, based on Kelly Starrett's program, occupy the final portion of the session. Initially, Guarrata assumed the athletes would have an understanding of these movements, but he discovered early on that he had to start from scratch to teach proper technique.

Guarrata also trains 20 teens averaging 14-17 years old. This group comprises mostly girls, although it also includes a couple of boys ages 10 and 12. He provides private training to two pairs, a junior pair (girl age 13 and boy age 15) and a senior pair (girl age 15 and boy age 17), given the specific nature of their work on the ice. These teens meet with Guarrata three times per week and have been CrossFitting for about two years. They have developed a strong understanding of what CrossFit is all about and comprehend the role of their muscles in maintaining a tight midsection while skating, thanks to a variety of midline-stability exercises. The teens execute CrossFit's nine basic movements proficiently and perform benchmark WODs with high intensity, precision and accuracy.

In August 2010, Guarrata arrived in Oberstdorf, Germany, for the summer stage, a session devoted to technical and athletic preparation. He was quite curious to compare his athletes to others from around the world. No doubt about it, the athletes at the summer stage were amazing. But Guarrata saw lots of machines and sauna suits as part of the programming. He observed a distinct lack of GPP and training regimens conspicuously void of gymnastics, throwing, powerlifting and weightlifting—all key components occupying CrossFit's five-tier hierarchy of athletic development.

Watching plastic-wrapped athletes attempting to sweat off weight via low-intensity running and cycling, Guarrata was reminded of a deeply entrenched, and deeply disturbing, idea in the figure skating world: girls ... must be thin.

Watching plastic-wrapped athletes attempting to sweat off weight via low-intensity running and cycling, Guarrata was reminded of a deeply entrenched, and deeply disturbing, idea in the figure skating world: girls, if they are to be taken seriously as competitors, particularly in pairs, must be thin, and dangerously so in his opinion. Guarrata asserts that, within the federation, basic knowledge of sports nutrition is lacking, and the nutritionists tasked with

designing a diet for the skaters seem content providing a 1,000-1,200-calorie-a-day framework to ensure no weight gain. From the perspective of CrossFit's hierarchy, this would appear to compromise the very foundation of athleticism.

Thus, at the outset of his work with the young skaters, he found their diets deficient. They consumed mostly carbohydrates and bad fats. Guarrata has changed that. He dedicates the first five to 10 minutes of each session to nutrition, and his athletes are eager to share with him their daily food choices. During the summer stage, he took meals with his skaters and let them select the foods and proportions. Guarrata's thinking is in line with the CrossFit Kids philosophy.

For CrossFit Kids, nutrition is often a topic of discussion during the skill-work segment of a class. CrossFit Kids recognizes the sensitivity of the subject matter, and the goal is simply to present nutritional information to the children and teens—food for thought, if you will. Focus is on explaining macronutrients, shedding light on food labels and portions, and understanding food's role in a healthy body and athletic performance. CrossFit Kids trainers should not approach nutrition dogmatically; we are not pushing an agenda but disseminating information based on sound empirical science.



Maurizio Guarrata has found that the core strength created by functional movements translates well onto the ice during figure skating.



The CrossFit Kids program incorporates intensity, but only after sounds mechanics are consistently demonstrated.

It should by now come as no surprise that Guarrata consistently emphasizes better technique. One of his main goals is improved accuracy, coordination, agility and balance—the four general skills linked to the central nervous system and the ones requiring practice. Lots of practice. His athletes never fail to thank Guarrata for this, reminding their coach of the many times he yelled, “Tighten your belly! Tight, tight, tight!”

One thing Guarrata brought to his coaching was a fondness for gymnastics. He instilled that same enthusiasm within his skaters and marvels at how easily they picked up fundamental gymnastics skills, such as skin-the-cats and rope climbs. In whimsical moments, he sometimes ponders the idea of converting these athletes to gymnasts.

Guarrata’s passion for CrossFit is manifest in the performance of his athletes, as evidenced by some recent results from national and international competitions. Skating in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in February 2011, 10-year-old Adrien Bannister placed fourth in the novice boys category, and 16-year-old Jennifer Cucinella placed sixth in the junior

ladies in pursuit of the Dragon Trophy, while 12-year-olds Sonia Manfredi and Anna Costa placed first and third, respectively, in the Debs Girls category in Tivoli Cup action. In January 2011, the annual figure-skating competition in Merano, Italy, saw Manfredi and Niccolò Macii (ages 12 and 16) and Anna Chiara Laffranchi and Benjamin Naggjar (ages 13 and 16) place second and third, respectively, in the novice pairs category. At the GAM Nestle Nesquik Cup in Toruń, Poland, Cucinella and Victoria Manni (age 16) placed first and second, respectively, in the junior ladies, while Manfredi and Macii took 1st in the novice pairs.

Guarrata sometimes finds that the line blurs between coaching his kids and being involved in their everyday life, and he gets incredible satisfaction from helping them and watching them grow up. In return, he receives their gratitude and trust. He credits this continued success to not only properly training these athletes but also to learning from them as well. Above, we noted the importance of knowing your athletes from a programming perspective. Taking this to a broader level, Guarrata urges trainers to pay close attention to their athletes after a session. First of all, are they hanging around? Do they seem happy and excited? Are they discussing among themselves what they just accomplished, be it bragging, encouraging or commiserating?

If so, you as a CrossFit Kids trainer have performed well and should continue to strive for that. If, on the other hand, your athletes make themselves scarce after a workout, seem gloomy or discouraged, or are reticent, you must take a look at your program—and, really, yourself as a coach—in search of a reason why. Remember, the No. 1 objective of a CrossFit Kids program, be it for our “average, everyday” children or the elite athletes, is big fun!

Even today, the stigma of risky business still haunts strength training for children. However, much empirical research can be marshalled to demonstrate clearly its relative safety and positive impact on general physical preparedness and sports-specific performance for kids of all ages. Across the board, this research qualifies these assertions with the caveat that all resistance training be supervised by qualified trainers and follow a careful and disciplined progression. As a strength-and-conditioning program, CrossFit Kids offers exactly that supervision and incremental progression, tailored for a specific population—children and adolescents—demanding proper mechanics and consistency before increased intensity or load.

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About the Authors



Courtesy of Maurizio Guarrata

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

One-Year Reflection

During its first year in business, CrossFit Elysium faced many challenges. Co-owners Leon Chang and Paul Estrada share what they've learned.

By **Leon Chang and Paul Estrada** CrossFit Elysium

May 2011



An oft-repeated statement in the affiliate community is "focus on being a great trainer. If you provide superior training to your clients, the business results will come."

Sometimes this is summarized as “the cream will rise to the top,” referring to the implication or hope that being a great coach will inevitably yield success. These statements have increased in usage as the number of affiliates and concerns about the overall level of training and the effect on the CrossFit name have grown. Unfortunately, they might delude an owner/operator into thinking that all he or she has to focus on is training to make the affiliate or business successful. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As Coach Greg Glassman said when asked how to evaluate the quality of an affiliate, “How clean is your bathroom?” So much that goes into running a successful business and an affiliate has little or nothing to do with training. Life skills, people management, organization, good old-fashioned hard work and, to put it plainly, luck all play a decisive role in determining the fate of one’s business. The goal with this article is to give the reader some general insights discovered in the year CrossFit Elysium has been open. After the trials and tribulations we’ve been through, we hope to offer advice that hopefully any affiliate owner—but especially smaller affiliates—will find useful.

**So much that goes into
running a successful business
and an affiliate has little or
nothing to do with training.**

More Than Just Training

We make the implicit assumption that every trainer in your box is either already superior or is actively taking steps to become that way. Much has been written about maintaining or developing the skill set necessary to be a great trainer in the *CrossFit Journal*. Our goal is not to provide a “new” way to train but rather to mention some aspects that are often overlooked yet also play a role in making one a great trainer.

Trainers and owners should make every effort to get to know their clients, both as athletes and as people. Knowing what a person’s favorite hobby is can be just as important as knowing his or her 1RM back squat. When clients feel

the trainer genuinely cares about them and genuinely sees them as people—not just a source of income—that’s when a lasting relationship is forged. In this sense, all of us in CrossFit are lucky because we already belong to a group that by its very nature tends to form tight-knit communities.

To help foster and encourage this sense of community, we make a point of introducing every new member or walk-in to everyone else. We want everyone to feel welcome and at the same time let new athletes know they are part of the family from the beginning. We have held several intra-gym get-togethers and competitions that further serve to grow our community and keep our clients happy. When athletes see your box not just as a place where they work out, but also as a place where their friends are and as a significant social outlet, you create loyalty and infectious enthusiasm.

At this point, the community we’ve created is so strong that many of our athletes, never having known each other prior to coming to CrossFit Elysium, are routinely hanging out together outside of the gym, even spending Thanksgiving together!



You aren't building a gym. You're building a community.

When athletes see your box not just as a place where they work out, but also as a place where their friends are and as a significant social outlet, you create loyalty and infectious enthusiasm.

So these are the attributes Paul and I look for in ourselves and in any trainer we consider bringing on board. As of this writing, we have only hired one trainer, Stacie Beal, who now also serves as our marketing director. Before bringing



Teaching a front squat is only part of your job as a trainer.

her on board, we already knew she possessed the personality and attributes we considered prerequisites. Then, we put her through a rigorous internship where she would coach classes with one of us in the background. This went on for several months, during which time she received little to no salary by mutual agreement. Only when we felt Stacie was consistently demonstrating the high standards we wanted was she allowed to independently coach.

She has truly been a blessing for us. Because of her proactive nature, her desire to see our affiliate succeed, and her decision to not just “be a trainer,” several months ago we promoted her to marketing director. Stacie has advanced degrees in marketing and sales and previously owned and operated her own small business, so this was a natural fit. Our membership has increased substantially since, as has our overall level of organization and administration.

So, my advice when considering a new trainer would be to evaluate if he or she possesses the qualities outlined above as well as other attributes that might one day prove useful.

Strategy vs. Tactics

It might be obvious, but it bears mentioning: strategy is not the same thing as tactics, and clear delineation needs to be made between the two.

It's amazing how often people confuse the two things or employ strategic concepts when what they need are clearer tactics. We made the same mistake several times and still struggle with the concept.

Strategy is the broad strokes, the overall plan or goals you have for your affiliate. Tactics are the specific steps you undertake to make your strategies become reality.

“Increase revenue by getting more athletes” is a strategy. “Create three new ads and place them in X, Y and Z in a week” is a tactic. “Improve member morale to increase word of mouth” is a strategy. “Plan a get-together with the members to improve morale” is a tactic.

Too often, people have a bunch of strategic moves they'd like to see happen but fail to take or plan the necessary steps (tactics) to achieve them. On the flip side of the coin, don't fall into the trap of coming up with a whole bunch of tactics but no overall unifying plan (strategy) to make sense of them.

I brainstorm throughout the day, thinking of anything I can do to improve or grow my affiliate. My wife is integral in this process and often comes up with great ideas that I prioritize. That's strategy. Periodically Paul, Stacie and I will get together and plan out how we're going to make our strategies come to fruition. That's tactics. By breaking things down in this way, it makes it much easier to focus your efforts on what is really important and provides clear direction on what needs to be done.

**It doesn't do any good
to just have a general idea that
you "want more members."
What owner doesn't want that?**

It doesn't do any good to just have a general idea that you "want more members." What owner doesn't want that? The question is this: if that is a priority for you, what strategies will you employ to get you there, and what tactics will you use to implement your strategies?

Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses

This is obvious, but play to your strengths while working on your weaknesses. You have to be willing to be brutally honest with yourself in making these assessments, but it's worth it in the end analysis. This kind of thought process can be applied to anything about your affiliate, including the physical space, the equipment, the employees, the owner—you name it.

Using myself as an example, I know I hate working with tools and having to repair or build things. My wife is the "handyman" around the house. However, that didn't change the fact that when we opened we needed a pull-up rig built from scratch. Again, we were lucky because Paul's father and friend designed and built us a great rig basically for free (we paid for the materials and some beer). However, I would have paid someone to do this for me and knew from the get-go I would go this route rather than do it myself. Could I have done it myself? Probably, but I either would have messed it up or become so frustrated by the whole process that it would have affected other things in the gym or my life.

In the end analysis, it wasn't worth it to apply my efforts to something that is a weakness of mine. Rather, I focused my efforts on elements that would cater to my strengths. As an example, I am good with numbers and estimating costs, so very early on Paul and I came up with an itemized budget that would determine what our initial start-up costs would be. I am happy to say we ended up very near our original estimates, so something was probably done correctly.

This is not to say you shouldn't work on your weaknesses; rather, recognize them for what they are so if you choose to you can actively work on them, much like CrossFit. Continuing with the craftsmanship example, Paul and I built plyo boxes ourselves with plans courtesy of Andy Petrenak and CrossFit LA. Knowing that I ain't great with tools, I made doubly sure to be prepared when the time came to assemble the boxes. Every piece was laid out in an organized fashion, all our tools were identified beforehand, and we built the boxes like an assembly line. Simple stuff for some of you, no doubt, but as a moron when it comes to building stuff, I had to address my weaknesses before tackling the job.

We try and apply our strengths to every aspect of our box. As an M.D., I have a pretty good understanding of anatomy. When applicable, I try and address athletes' questions with a biomechanical component to my answer. Similarly, when teaching an Olympic lift, I will often spontaneously draw the relevant parts of the body on the whiteboard and then detail the how and why of the lift from an anatomic standpoint. Clearly, you have to tailor this to the appropriate client, but in general I think my approach is helpful and well received by our athletes.

**The possibilities are
endless, but the first step
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weaknesses are and being
honest with yourself.**

In addition, potential clients can see I bring expertise to the table that perhaps others do not. Paul is very personable and can find a natural way to talk about CrossFit with almost anyone, and he does. Several of our clients who joined solely after speaking with Paul are a testament to this strength.

Similar comments can be made about anything within your affiliate. Ceilings too low? Well, that's a weakness, but recognize it, do something about it (if possible) and move on (i.e., wall-balls outside vs. inside; no rope-climb WODs, etc.). Got a great park nearby? Use it to full advantage—hold more outdoor WODs and get-togethers. The possibilities are endless, but the first step has to be determining where your strengths and weaknesses are and being honest with yourself.

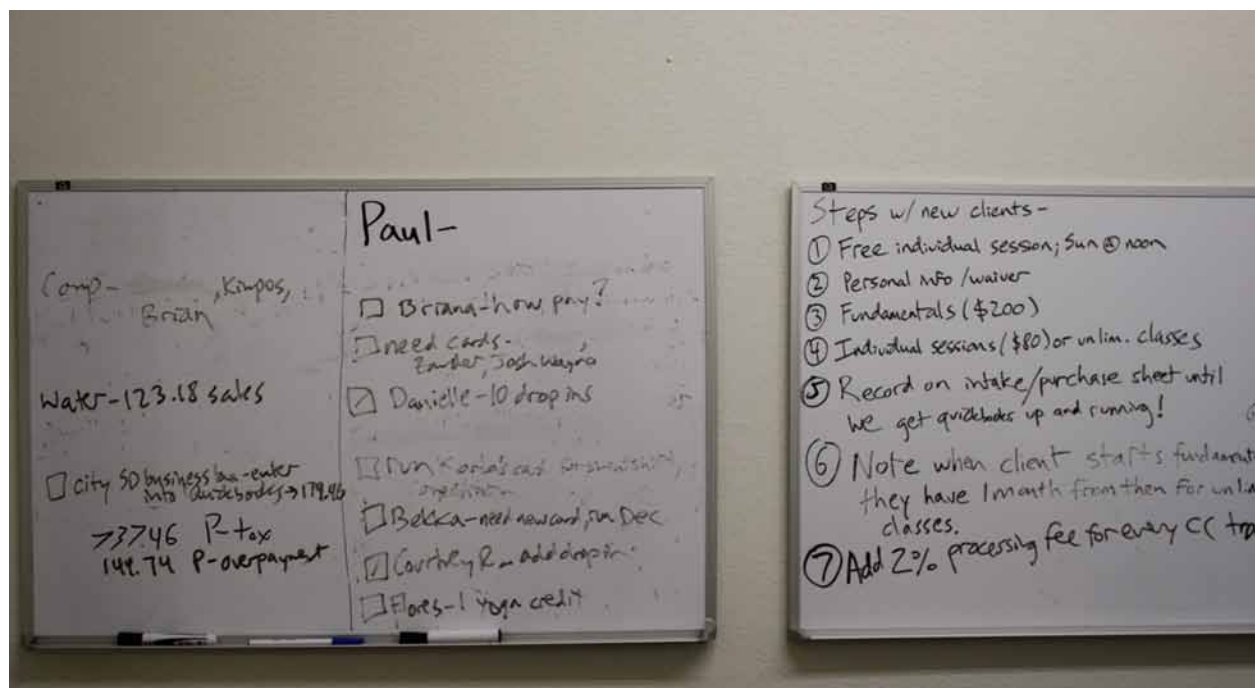
Organization and Delineation of Responsibility

This goes hand in hand with knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, every member of the organization should have a clear role and responsibilities suited to his or her strengths. This is akin to electing positions or creating titles for people, such as “operations manager” or “marketing director.” This is so important, and I regret not

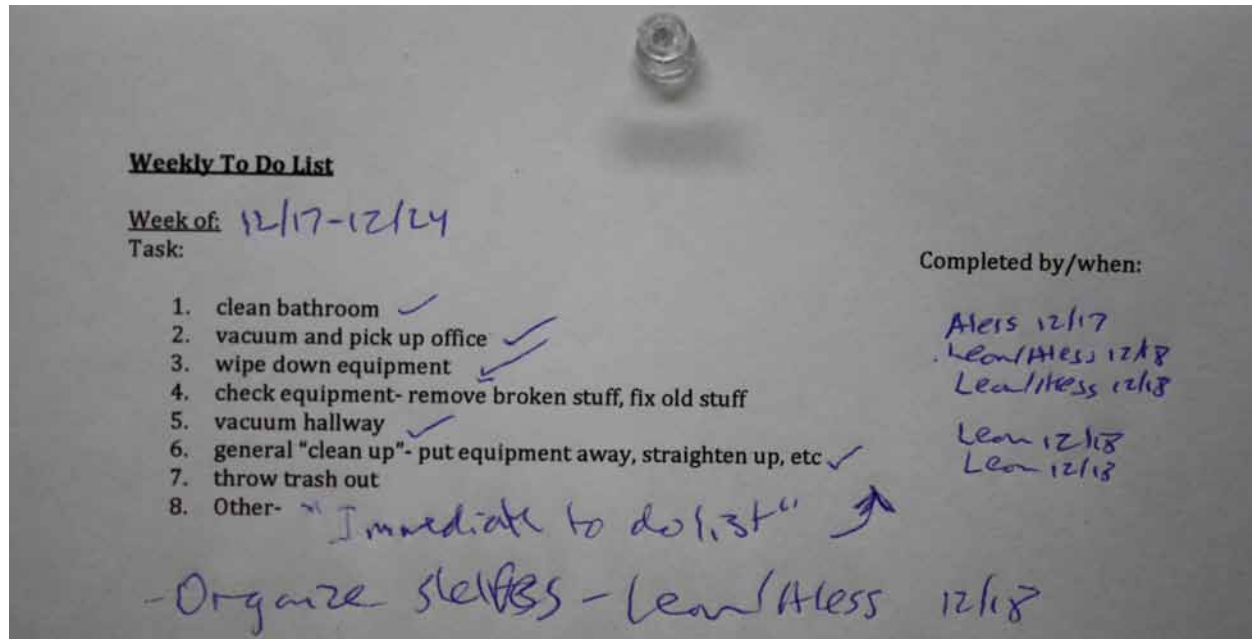
having done it first—before we even opened our doors. It is a process Paul and I have been working on since we started and have bungled a fair amount along the way, but we're on the right track now.

The primary purpose that is served is making it very clear exactly who is supposed to be doing what. No one person can do everything it takes to run an affiliate well. If you are a solo owner and operator, I highly encourage you to look into bringing some other people on board to help with your business. In just the short amount of time we've been open, I've come to the realization that running even the smallest affiliate is too much work for one person if you want to do everything well. A secondary purpose is accountability. When it's known to all who is responsible for something, then you can hold that person responsible for getting the job done.

As a practicing anesthesiologist, husband and parent, I have little extra time to devote to my business. Paul and I knew from the get-go that he would handle the lion's share of the training, while I would be responsible for the accounting, taxes, payroll, etc.—basically all the behind-the-scenes stuff required of every business, but the stuff



As an affiliate owner, you need a plan, and you have to follow it.



Assigning duties ensures accountability.

that can be done at any time, not just during normal business hours. This was a good general plan but was not organized or specific enough. Who would clean the bathrooms and office? Who keeps up the equipment? Whose turn is it to create a new ad? All of these questions and many more remained unanswered.

No one person can do everything it takes to run an affiliate well.

We plodded along for a while with no clear understanding of who would take care of these details. When one of us saw a need, we'd either just take care of it or perhaps discuss it with the other person in haphazard fashion. This is a really dangerous and suboptimal way to run a

business. For one, it is reactive to only do something when there is a perceived need with no plan. Secondly, this is a huge set-up for conflict and strained relationships. If it's not clear who is supposed to be taking care of something, then inevitably people will assume "the other guy" will deal with it and get annoyed when he doesn't.

Things started to turn when we realized this and decided to clearly specify what our roles would be. While both equal owners, Paul and I have very different amounts of time to physically be in our gym, and we have very different skill sets. We elected to make Paul our chief operations officer and me the CEO, for lack of a better title. As COO, Paul is tasked with the responsibilities that primarily affect day-to-day operations of the gym: making sure the doors are open, training, cleaning, equipment upkeep and so forth. We clearly spelled out these responsibilities. As CEO, I am responsible for the bills, the budget, taxes, payroll and general direction of the gym.

At the same time, there is a lot of overlap in our roles and an explicit understanding that we are interchangeable. If something has to get done, it is expected that both of us can and will take care of it as equal owners. Just this clarification has gone a long way toward the functioning of our affiliate.

Our third “office” is marketing director, which, as previously mentioned, is held by Stacie Beal. As any affiliate owner can tell you, marketing and growing a CrossFit gym presents a host of unique challenges. To begin, most of us operate on a limited budget. Many traditional advertising modalities have low or no yield. TV ads are one example. The general public is still largely unaware or misinformed about CrossFit, so an expensive TV commercial will likely be dismissed or ignored altogether. Most marketing we do has to be both an advertisement and an educational piece so the viewer knows what he’s dealing with.

Plus, there are all the normal hurdles to overcome when trying to get people to exercise or join a gym. Suffice it to say marketing is one of the most critical pieces in any affiliate’s success but one of the least understood and most time-consuming. Before we brought Stacie onboard, Paul and I made random efforts, with varying success. We ran an ad in a local newspaper early on, which yielded precisely one sign-up. However, this athlete remains one of our most dedicated, and she has brought in several new members herself, so from that standpoint alone the ad was worth it.

Most of what we did was well-intentioned but not particularly well thought out. For example, we hold free workouts every Sunday in our gym, and we would update our website to reflect that fact. However, we generally failed to inform the public at large, the very people we should have been trying to reach. We distributed flyers at random a few times in several months, but nothing in an organized fashion.

All of this changed when we brought Stacie on board. Besides having a wealth of ideas and experience of her own, she freed Paul and me from having to deal with the day-to-day execution (tactics) of our marketing strategy. Now, the three of us all will strategize together, but Stacie takes care of the vast majority of the execution. Our marketing efforts are much more clearly focused and have yielded great results.

In addition, I am much more motivated to think of new ways to attract clients because I can do so in the knowledge that I’m not “generating more work for myself.” As sad as it sounds, we all know we’re more apt to shoot down an idea preemptively if we are simultaneously picturing the amount of work it will take to make that idea happen. I am free to come up with ideas now, knowing Stacie will probably be the one taking care of it.



Having someone to help out with special projects like renovations is important.

As we are still a smaller affiliate, we don’t pay Stacie nearly what she is worth, but her salary structure is such that as the gym grows, so will her payment. She knows we appreciate her efforts and we’re lucky to have her. Because marketing and sales is such a critical component for any affiliate, it’s worth the effort to find someone to devote purely to this task.

A word on follow-through: Just as you need clear definitions of responsibility, you need a clear mechanism to ensure people—including owners—are doing the tasks assigned to them. We had major issues with follow-through in the beginning, with tasks that would be talked about but not done, things delegated but not dealt with. Paul and I were both guilty of this.

The problems here extend beyond the obvious. Not only do things not get done, but feelings also get hurt, partners get annoyed and eventually, when you go to do the original work that should have been done weeks ago, you find there’s 20 more things on top of it. We now employ a variety of techniques to improve follow-through, from

reminders on the whiteboard to daily and weekly checklists of tasks to address. We write down the people responsible for duties by name, making them take ownership of their task. We track exactly who, when and what is being done in written form. Everyone is encouraged to hold each other accountable if the work isn't getting done.

The Little Things

What they say is true: The little things really do matter.

This is true for any affiliate, but perhaps even more so for a smaller one like ours. If we lose an athlete, that may represent 2 percent of our total revenue, but for a larger box that percentage would be far lower. So what are the little things we overlooked that others may overlook, too?

General appearance: is the paint chipping off? Is there a hole in the wall that hasn't been repaired in months?

Do anything to boost morale or celebrate your members' accomplishments: a PR board, pictures, awards—you name it. All of it helps.

Do anything to make your box look like part of a community: T-shirts from other affiliates and member pictures are common examples.

Be different and unique in the right way.

Put something like a flyer where people who are just walking by can grab it without coming into the gym. If they want to come in, they will. A certain subset of the population won't come in and learn more but will take more information (and perhaps come in later) if they don't have to interact with anyone. Make it easy for them to learn about your place. We have pictures and general information along with flyers stationed outside our space that passers-by can grab without having to set foot in our space.



Patching a hole shows you care about your space, and little things make a big difference.

Be different and unique in the right way. We're all lucky because CrossFit tends to be different from most other training modalities. Do something else to set yourself apart in even greater ways. Have a running specialist as a coach? Capitalize on that strength. Got locker rooms and showers (most affiliates don't, I suspect)? Play up that fact. In a city full of affiliates that all run free workouts on Saturdays, we chose to run ours on Sunday. I suspect this has helped us a great deal.

Budget, budget, budget. This actually shouldn't be considered a small thing. Try and identify where all your costs are and where all your revenue will come from in as much detail as possible. It's a lot easier to buy new equipment when you're sure you can afford it. After you budget, plan for a rainy day and budget more for costs. They will be there—trust me.

Use your athletes! If you've built a good community, you'll find a ton of your clients will want to help you for free. We've borrowed members' trucks, gotten equipment, had help patching drywall and moving things The list goes on and on. This is also a good litmus test for the kind of relationships you're forging. If you're doing it right, they'll probably come to you offering things completely unbidden. We at CrossFit Elysium definitely owe our members a lot.

More Than Squatting

There's a lot that goes into running an affiliate beyond great training. We have learned a ton of lessons in a short year—some easy and some painful. By being organized and having clear plans and roles in your box that cater to your strengths and weaknesses, perhaps your growth can be made a little easier.



About the Authors

Leon Chang and Paul Estrada are Level I CrossFit trainers and co-owners of [CrossFit Elysium](#) in San Diego, Calif. Leon is a full-time anesthesiologist and associate clinical director at the University of California San Diego's department of anesthesiology, while Paul has been a fitness instructor and coach for almost a decade.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL K I D S

CrossFit Kids Angry Birds

Who says video games create sedentary kids?

By CrossFit Kids

May 2011



Staff/CrossFit Kids

Most of the kids in the six-to-12 age group knew about [Angry Birds](#). For those not familiar with the video game, we brought in an iPad and let them pass it around to see the game in action prior to class.

Set-Up

Using a small “Dynamini” 4-6-lb. med-ball and a physio band, wrap a bird (available on Amazon.com) to the med-ball.

Measure out 10-15 feet and place a cone at one end. Build a “pig hideout” structure at the other.

Build

Construct a relatively soft pig hideout with med-balls or martial-arts bags (it can be a med-ball pyramid).

Three tiers are optimal. Carefully insert three stuffed pigs or lay them on top in a pig pile.

Choose one team to begin as Birds and one to begin as Pigs.

Play

The Bird team begins play by throwing the med-ball from the chest to attempt to knock down the pig hideout. If the hideout is hit, the pig team must do 5 reps of a designated exercise. The pig team must do 10 reps if the hideout is knocked down completely.

The Bird team must do 10 reps of a designated exercise if the hideout is missed.

The Pig team has 30 seconds to rebuild the structure before a second throw is attempted. If the structure is not completely rebuilt in 30 seconds, the team must do 5 pig burpees (burp at the top of each burpee) and attempt to rebuild it again within a given timeline. If a team member cannot burp on command, other team members can make up burps. However, no extra burps are allowed. A team penalty of 5 reps will be added for excessive burping.

Keep a tally of the total reps performed by each team (per member).

Players rotate through the lineup until all players have thrown once, then switch the teams from Birds to Pigs and vice versa.

Scoring

After a given time or number of rounds (rotations), the team with the lowest number of reps wins.

