

---

# THE CrossFit LIFE

---

## New Jersey Gets Nasty

Hilary Achauer talks to Jessica Murden about the first annual Nasty Northeast Throwdown, an event designed to build a sense of community among New Jersey affiliates.

---

By Hilary Achauer

November 2011

---



All images: Lisa Yodice

There are more than 40 CrossFit boxes in New Jersey, and most of them have a neighboring box within a 10-minute drive. Despite this proximity, Jessica Murden, director of marketing and social affairs for CrossFit ACT in Saddle Brook, N.J., noticed the boxes never did anything together. They didn't have weekend competitions. The members didn't visit other boxes for a WOD. Murden had spent time in Southern California, and she remembered the tight-knit community she experienced among the SoCal boxes. She wanted to bring together the CrossFit community in New Jersey, but she wasn't sure how.



*The teams first had to fill their buckets with sand before carrying them down the beach.*



*Inchworm push-ups, an army crawl and forward rolls on the beach resulted in gritty teeth and sand-filled spandex.*

Right around this time, Bill Shockley, the owner of CrossFit ACT, mentioned to Murden that he wanted to do a throwdown. A light bulb went off, and they combined their goals and came up with the Nasty Northeast Throwdown. More than just a chance to compete against other CrossFitters, Murden and Shockley saw this as an opportunity to unite the New Jersey community during four competitions that would take place every other week for eight weeks, starting in September 2011. Each competition would be held at a different location, and the workouts would be announced at the event. Teams of four would show up, work out and hang out—a like-minded group united by their love of CrossFit.

Murden began promoting the Nasty in May, going around to different boxes, working out with fellow CrossFitters and getting them excited to participate in the event.

"In my travels, I met Skip Chapman, owner of JSA CrossFit, who became a crucial link in getting our Jersey Shore CrossFit boxes involved," Murden said. "By the first event, we had 18 teams from nine boxes around New Jersey: CrossFit ACT, Brazen Athletics, JSA CrossFit, Maxability CrossFit, CrossFit 908, CrossFit Belmar, CrossFit Skylands, CrossFit KOA and CrossFit Shrewbury," she said.

The first event was held on Sept. 11 as a 9/11 memorial. It took place on the beach in Manasquan, N.J., and the workout lasted about 40 minutes, with no equipment other than a bucket.

"Watching 72 athletes crawl, sprint, inchworm and forward roll down a beach was an epic sight," Murden said. "The best part of it was that when teams were finished, they went back and helped the other teams who were still in the middle of the workout. It was kind of like 'no man left behind.'"

The second event, held at Brazen Athletics, included a mix of rope climbs, rowing, sandbag runs, box jumps and kettlebell swings. For the last two events, held at CrossFit ACT, Shockley moved away from longer met-cons and programmed specific skill sets, forcing the teams to use strategy in addition to strength and endurance.



*Bright-colored shorts definitely help you run faster.*



*The first event started with a 9/11 memorial.*

At the third event a team from CrossFit Skylands arrived with only three team members. They were on the verge of forfeiting when a spectator, a member of CrossFit ACT, came to their rescue. He offered to compete on their team, working alongside people he had never met. The event was a punishing mix of strength and skill that included max clean and jerks, L-sits, wall-balls, wall walks and muscle-ups and finished up with “Running Cindy” (AMRAP in 20 minutes of a 200-meter run, 5 pull-ups, 10 push-ups and 15 squats) for the whole team. Since that event, the substitute member from CrossFit ACT forged a friendship with CrossFit Skylands and frequently works out at their box.

In the last event, the entire team worked on four skill sets. One team member had to complete a 1RM deadlift in 7 minutes, but before the athlete could perform a lift, the other three members had to complete 25 hand-release push-ups, 25 double-unders and 25 kettlebell swings. One of the competitors was waiting for his teammates to finish the movements so he could make his final lift—a deadlift PR. The time ran out before his teammates finished, but he stepped up to the bar anyway and lifted the weight while the spectators cheered, setting a PR.

It’s not easy to get people to commit to four events over eight weeks. Work, family, and the details of life can get in the way. But once the competitors saw the kind of relationships they were building, and how much fun they were having, nobody wanted it to end.

“By the end of Week 2, everyone was on a first-name basis with each other,” Murden said. “By Week 3 we had athletes traveling to other boxes during the week to do a WOD. This blew my mind. The actual intent of the Nasty—to unite the community—was unfolding.”

The connection between the boxes in the area has grown tremendously. “We all visit each other for WODs,” Murden said.

“When we don’t visit, people ask, ‘Where have you been?’”

Murden says that round two is already in the works for next year. New Jersey: get ready to get Nasty.