
THE CrossFit LIFE

Out of the Box

The owners of the newly opened CrossFit Ocean Beach take advantage of their surroundings and bring CrossFit to the streets.

Hilary Achauer reports.

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All images: CrossFit Ocean Beach

Ocean Beach is a coastal town in San Diego, Calif., known for its funky, hippy vibe. The main street, Newport Avenue, is full of antique stores, head shops, tattoo parlors, bars and surf shops. Most of the businesses are independent and locally owned.

The residents of Ocean Beach are so committed to locally owned businesses that when they got wind of a Starbucks opening in their neighborhood in 2001, they organized a grassroots protest to block the chain. They were unsuccessful, but the addition of the ubiquitous green logo has not altered the one-of-a-kind feel of the laid-back town.



Free your mind: it's just another kind of box jump.

When Chad Timm and Philip Kavanagh decided to open CrossFit Ocean Beach in October 2011, they knew they would need to embrace the local culture. Rather than setting up in an out-of-the-way warehouse, they found a place not far from Newport Avenue and just two blocks from the beach.

They opened their doors Oct. 1 and—not wasting any time—held their first outdoor WOD on the beach on Saturday, Oct. 5. Athletes sprinted in the soft sand and did lunges, bear crawls, broad-jump burpees and sand-hole jumps.

Next, Timm and Kavanagh reached out to local surfers and started offering a Surfer's Strength and Skills class. Held every second and fourth Saturday of the month, the class uses typical CrossFit movements like burpees, box jumps and pull-ups along with slackline work and practice on an Indo Board (a balance board placed on a roller to work balance and core strength).



The CrossFit Ocean Beach crew laughs at rubber mats.

"We put an emphasis on core strength and pulling strength," Timm said. "The idea is to increase surfers' strength, flexibility and speed so they can pop up quicker and not get fatigued as quickly."

Timm was looking for other ways to get his athletes outside and make a splash in the community when he remembered the monthly urban adventure race put on by a running and walking shoe store in his hometown of Portland, Ore. Many new business owners would not plan such an event a month after opening their doors, but Timm and Kavanagh hoped the race would attract attention and bring together the members they did have.

They settled on Saturday, Nov. 12, as the race date, with all proceeds benefitting a local woman's shelter. Timm and Kavanagh hit the pavement and got about a dozen businesses to support them with gift certificates, gear and the permission to do strange-looking exercises outside their stores.

"We got about 20 participants," Timm said. "It rained all day, but we were super lucky that it stopped right when the race started. Our good luck served to enhance the experience."

Participants paid \$25 to enter and competed in small groups. They were given a map and told which businesses to visit.



Functional fitness with a good dose of fun.

"They had a coach stationed at each business we visited," said Debbie Dugan, a participant in the race and a member of CrossFit Ocean Beach. "We'd get there and have to do 20 burpees or 20 air squats and get a raffle ticket after completing each exercise."

When they reached the beach, athletes ran out onto Ocean Beach Pier. At 1,971 feet, it's the longest concrete pier on the West Coast and home to a restaurant and a bait shop. Once at the end of the pier, the participants did box jumps onto benches. Each team had 60 minutes to visit as many locations as possible, with the goal being to acquire the maximum amount of raffle tickets.

Once the teams returned to CrossFit Ocean Beach, they had to do hill sprints on a nearby street with a 60-degree grade.

"My goal was to get through all of the stops," Dugan said. "I wasn't going to do the sprints."

She got caught up the competitive spirit, however, and ran up the hill, where she discovered that she had to do high knees and air squats before heading back down.

"It was fun! I have never done anything like that," Dugan said.

A nurse practitioner and healing touch therapist, Dugan joined CrossFit Ocean Beach the week it opened. Prior to joining, she hadn't worked out in a year.

"I love CrossFit," she said. "It kicks my butt."

The raffle drawing, which included prizes from local businesses as well as Life as Rx and Rx Jump Ropes, was held after the race finished. One of the participants won a gift certificate to CrossFit Ocean Beach's on-ramp program, and another woman won so many prizes she started giving them away to people around her.

As they grow their gym, Timm and Kavanagh continue to look around them for fitness inspiration. On a recent Saturday, they ran the class out the door and to a nearby playground where the WOD included a monkey-bar traverse, scaling a play structure, pull-ups and kettlebell squats in the sand.

Have you done a creative workout at your box? Post ideas to comments!

