

## Swimming in the CrossFit Sea

San Diego Level 1 Cert

Henk C.M. Verschuur, Ph.D., MrSc.

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You can read a book about the sea. You can look at a video about the sea. But if you never take the real plunge you don't know what the sea is actually like! Well, I took the plunge in the CrossFit Sea at the Level 1 cert in San Diego, and this is my little story.

Let me first introduce myself. My name is Henk Verschuur; I am the president of the Dutch Martial Arts Federation (a member of the National Olympic Committee of the Netherlands). The Federation is, on behalf of the NOC, responsible for 12 different martial arts in my country, e.g., Wushu, Kyokushin Karate, Kempo, Kendo, Kyudo, Aikido, etc.

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We are always looking for ways to improve our athletes, and although we produce a large number of world and continental champions, events are getting less easy to win. In the field of strategic and technical capabilities, we are still ahead in most weight divisions, but our opponents are getting physically stronger every day. This causes more injuries as our athletes have to fight harder for their victory. Well, there is nothing wrong with working hard, but there is something wrong if opponents are winning because they are physically stronger instead of technically and strategically stronger.

In one of our meetings about a year ago, Michael de Scheemaker, the national coach of Sanda/Sanshou (Chinese Freefight, an official discipline in the Olympic parallel event 2008), pointed out that CrossFit might be the solution. Discussing the Hopper Model as a basic idea of what a Sanda athlete could face on the platform (Sanda is fought on a platform), we agreed that the physical fitness of our athletes was too limited and decided that we had to take action.

The biggest challenge was the heavyweight division of Sanda, which has been dominated since the beginning by Chinese athletes (there had never been a non-Chinese world champion in the heavyweight division). I had the brilliant idea of testing CrossFit as the physical basic training for our man in the heavyweight division. I assigned the national Sanda coach to handpick exercises from the CrossFit program and integrate them into the

3-split program we have for our athletes (three trainings a day: one fitness training in the morning and one strategical training and one technical training—the latter being sparring, etc.).

To make a long story short, the new heavyweight champion Sanda lives in, and originated from, the Netherlands, Europe. The Chinese even pulled out some athletes who were facing our other athletes in the preliminaries. After this world championship Wushu (Sanda and Taolu, the latter being forms) the conclusion was made easily. We needed to know more about CrossFit!

Normally the president of the organization sends his best man for the job. Not this time. Our best man was already heading for China to prepare, and there was nobody else to participate in the coming CrossFit Level 1 Certification.

Currently, I work with athletes on a daily basis because I believe that the president of a sports organization should stay connected with its roots. But teaching is not training, and I had left the path of training about six years ago after 32 intense years. Looking in the mirror in the morning showed the result: a fat old man who had gained more than 28 kilograms in six years, who was not even able to push-up more than 12 times, and who definitely was no longer able to run more than a mile and absolutely not able to do pull-ups (in my younger days I could easily do 50). This was me, the best of the



world in 1972, and now in the worst shape of my life. In a mental aberration, I decided that I should go myself to check out CrossFit, and so I signed up for the 9th of August in San Diego.

Actually, I didn't know what I signed up for; being busy I just asked my secretary to do the registration. I soon found out my mistake! My Sanda coach had dealt with the integration of CrossFit and I had actually not visited the website nor watched the workouts some weeks ago. When I visited the website and checked it out myself I immediately realized that I had to shape up for a task I had not realized before. I have already described my physical status, but I left out two things—my overweight condition had made me asthmatic again (which I had beaten in my youth when starting martial arts at the age of six), and after one week of training I had gotten a whiplash in my left calf muscle. So when I came to California, I had been training for just eight weeks.

#### **Conclusions after my dip in the CrossFit Sea**

1. I lost 12 kilograms in 8 weeks just by trying to get prepared, and my lung capacity is growing steadily.
2. I found out how important it is to be well-trained according to CrossFit's definition.
3. Seeing all the other participants performing taught me to be humble again. I am more than grateful for the patient and accepting attention the CrossFit trainers have given this old fat man.
4. I am grateful for the acceptance that other participants showed even though I was completely out of their league.
5. The San Diego CrossFit team made me feel at home amongst friends and family.
6. I will definitely integrate CrossFit in the programs of our athletes and ask for a budget to send over more of my national coaches.
7. Tomorrow I will leave for the Olympic Games and work on the parallel event; I will spread the word around amongst my friends of the 62 participating countries.
8. And for you who saw me performing in San Diego: I love my wife, but I have now started a long-term relationship with Fran.

**CrossFit rocks!**



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# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## Competitive Bodybuilder Becomes CrossFitter... and Wins

Josh Bunch



Eighteen hours. That's how much time I spent physically working out each week before finding CrossFit. No joke—I used a calculator. "Why?" you ask. Well, this was all I knew. I am a competitive bodybuilder. I show off muscles in front of a crowd and judges, and let them critique me, ridicule me, or applaud me. It depends on the day. I do this for no other reason than that I like being judged. I like doing things that others may not ever want to do, and I like a sport that is entirely mine—if I screw up, it's my fault; nobody else gets blamed, and I like that responsibility.

If you are not aware of how a bodybuilder prepares for a show, keep reading, if only out of sheer morbid curiosity. You can at least laugh at me. How I prepared may be different than how some others do, but generally it's similar. First, I began dieting about 16 weeks out from the show at

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a bodyweight of 220-230 lb., with 14-15% body fat. (Just as a reference, I'm 5' 8" tall.) I would perform lots of moderate pace, long duration cardio two or, sometimes, three times a day. These tedious sessions lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour. Toss in a daily weight-room workout lasting about an hour, and you have one pissed-off pre-contest bodybuilder who would step on your throat for a pizza. I used to think that was the price you had to pay to compete.

Diet was, and still is, the deciding factor. My caloric intake is meticulously logged and weighed. It may differ slightly from day to day, but is generally around 3900-4100 calories per day. Read it again: it for real says 4000+ calories. I can eat all that and still get to a caliper-measured body fat of 5%. The secret is activity. You can support this level of activity if the calories are there. You can't really over-train with this methodology—you just under-eat. I have trained with athletes consuming 8000+ calories per day, and they were super lean and ripped out of their minds. I will say it now, just so you know that I know: these athletes were all show and no go—including myself.

When I employed these techniques I was strong—well, kind of. I was what I thought was strong. I would do marathon workouts of each body part, attacking each and every muscle with 30-40 sets. I would also perform almost three hours of aerobic activity each day, but if I

did "Fran" I would stroke out. I would continue at this pace right up to the week before a show. At that point I would not do a lot of anything, due to inflammation and water retention from working out in general. I would begin to manipulate my water and sodium intake until I was super dry and ripped out. Then I would get onstage—and lose. It's irrelevant which place I got, because it wasn't number one. Who the hell gets up in the morning and says, "Damn, if I could just be second today I would be happy"? This went on and on until one day my best friend said, "You are going to love this new site I found."

"Is this really free?" That was my first thought when I started looking at the wealth of information just given away. Sure enough, CrossFit.com was free, and still is. My second thought was, "Why the hell you would give this away when there is money to be made?" Obviously, I was looking at it through the eyes of a guy who had been personal training out of a big box for the last six years. After being kind of pissed off that I hadn't found this earlier, I started studying everything I could about CrossFit and its philosophy. I wanted to know how I could benefit from this, and pass it on to my clients. I will save the entire story for another time. Suffice it to say that about two years later I opened my own personal training studio, which became a CrossFit Affiliate two months after opening. I was certified about a month before that.



Sounds great, I know. Sad thing is, I still didn't CrossFit. It was good enough for my clients, but not for me. After all, I'm a bodybuilder, and there is no way CrossFit builds big show muscles, right? I had lost show after show doing it my way, or at least the way people had been doing it for years. I loved watching my clients do their workouts and kick ass at them, but became jealous because I couldn't get in on the fun. I just kept doing the same thing, expecting different results.

Inevitably, I began to theorize. Why not modify CrossFit to fit a bodybuilder? Last April I began my first real attempt at CrossFit/bodybuilding. I soon gave in, and leaned almost entirely on CrossFit programming. The programming, however, was my own. For instance, if legs were on the bodybuilding agenda, I would program my morning workout as a met-con, with upper body dominant weightlifting movements. In the afternoon, I focused on bodybuilding movements for acute muscular hypertrophy in my legs.

I believe CrossFit is easily the best program ever manufactured, but I also believe it's foolish to ignore any knowledge you can glean from other camps out there, be it bodybuilder, swimmer, runner, whatever. Everybody's got something to say—might as well listen. I enlisted the help of CrossFit-style self-programmed workouts for their all-out hormonal response, fat burning effects, and incredible intensity that keeps everything fun. CrossFit workouts stimulate the necessary hormones to get big by moving large loads quickly over long distances, incomparable intensity, and constantly varied activity through every realm of fitness. But to get those bicep peaks, the teardrop of the vastus medialis, the lateral head of the deltoid, I incorporated purely aesthetic movements with no adherence to functionality.

After CrossFit workouts I would perform non-functional isolation movements. These workouts typically only lasted about ten minutes or so, and only involved one or two exercises, 6-12 reps for two sets, each as heavy as possible. My gym time was cut by more than 50%, I felt great, and I looked different, but a better kind of different.

While I overhauled my training, I remained on about the same diet I had been using for my previous shows. I continued my 4000+ calorie diet of fish, turkey, eggs, and oats, with about 200 grams of greens per meal. This calorie count is far more than the zone prescribes, and yet I was super lean. In fact I leaned out quicker than ever, and I was only doing half the activity. I normally remove all starches four weeks out from a show, but

with this new experiment I was able to keep starches in until five days prior to the show. So, not only did I get to do less work, I got to eat more food.

For myself, and others with similar goals, I believe we need to adhere to a bigger, cleaner calorie count than the zone provides. The food, all unprocessed, must of course be weighed and measured. Tons of greens, lots of super-lean protein, little starch and no sugar, not even fruit. It must be eaten by the clock, and divided into six or eight meals a day. The goal is maintaining proper insulin levels, adding (or at least retaining) muscle, and staying super functional.

On June 28, 2008, I won the Great Lakes Legacy Fitness and OCB Bodybuilding Regional Qualifier in Cincinnati, OH. (I qualified for an international competition in August, but was unable to attend as my best friend was having a baby. This was a way cooler experience than parading around on stage in your underwear.) I don't know how many athletes out there have tried this approach as methodically as I have, but I have to tell you it worked, and it worked well. I took my sport at the top of the pyramid, did mainly CrossFit workouts, and dominated my competition.





lifting program along with the .com workouts, because there isn't a whole lot that's cooler than snatching and cleaning correctly.

As for bodybuilding, I only target my upper chest and legs for purely aesthetic work. I believe any CrossFitting bodybuilder would do well to do the same. It may be entirely non-functional, but the extra work is necessary in those areas if you want to win shows or just want to have big muscles for their own sake.

Even if we view bodybuilding as non-functional, inefficient, or just useless, it doesn't mean everyone else does. Bodybuilders never claim to be functional. They just claim to look good. With proper education, I believe we can give them both: big muscles **and** functionality.



Now, you could argue it's not a sport because you get judged. Or, there is no time element so there is no consistent tool of measurement. Do whatever the hell you want with it after you put in 16 weeks of prep time to look cute for less than an hour on stage, and then tell me it's not a sport. Or better yet, don't drink any water for two straight days, then flex every muscle at once for minutes on end, but make sure you're smiling when you start cramping.

I believe the reason I won wasn't just being a little leaner than at previous shows. It was the musculature, which had a different look after CrossFit. At below 5% body fat you see a lot of stuff. I looked denser. I believe CrossFit not only makes you stronger, but it makes your body **look** stronger. This opinion was consistent with everyone who had seen me compete previously. Even nationally revered bodybuilding trainers, to whom I go for posing practice, all said the same thing: "The muscles just look better."

Since I won the show, I came to a final realization: CrossFit just isn't the same if you're choosing your own programming. You will inevitably do what you like, and that's what I was doing, all the while using bodybuilding as a crutch to get out of the stuff I didn't want to see come out of the hopper. Starting July 1<sup>st</sup> I began doing .com WODS entirely. Let's face it. There is no damn way I would ever run more than 400 meters if someone wasn't making me do a 5k. I also began doing an Olympic

Josh Bunch has been the owner of [Practice CrossFit](#), a CrossFit affiliate in Troy, Ohio for nearly a year. Prior to finding CrossFit, Josh worked for over eight years at a local big box gym in the area. Josh has been immersed in the fitness field for nearly 9 years, and only plans on getting bigger. Josh holds ACE, Parrilio Performance, and most importantly, CrossFit Level 1 certifications.

At 28, Josh has been a competitive bodybuilder for 5 years. His future plans include competing in as many competitions as possible, opening at least 1 more CrossFit affiliate, and finishing the fitness/motivational book he is writing.





## The Beginner's Ladder

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Judd Xavier and Tom Rankin

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**Mastering three bodyweight exercises—  
squats, push-ups, and pull-ups—can help prepare the non-fit  
for full-blown CrossFit, and even make a great WOD for anyone.**

CrossFit beginners have special needs. They need to learn how to correctly perform exercises and also to build the general and specific fitness to endure intense WODs (Workouts of the Day). One tool that CrossFit Silicon Valley has found useful to help create a strong foundation is what we call the “SV Beginner’s Ladder,” a relatively simple routine that ramps newbies up toward prescribed CrossFit benchmarks.

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The Beginner's Ladder focuses on three bodyweight exercises: the squat, push-up and pull-up. As a group, these exercises are hard to beat for a number of reasons, and are appropriate for CrossFit rookies and veterans alike. As equipment-free (save a pull-up bar) bodyweight exercises, the squat, push-up and pull-up are important because they each teach beginners how to coordinate their body parts in motion before attempting to control themselves with additional resistance. They hit the entire body head-to-toe, can be done at home, and get beginners used to CrossFit's common *triplet* format, which puts groups of exercises together for 10 to 20 minutes. And, of course, it's good to get used to these three, because they come up again and again in CrossFit. In fact, "Cindy" is specifically composed of these three exercises.



Of the three, the **squat** may be the most important beginner exercise. Every athlete knows that performance suffers greatly when the legs fatigue. Squatting will build the strength and endurance needed to improve future training. The squat fires nearly every muscle in the body in a practical, challenging, coordinated gross-movement pattern. In a video we often quote from, CrossFit boss Greg Glassman calls the squat, "A symphony of contractions," and encourages squatters to "hit every note in the sequence."

Despite its apparent complexity, however, the squat is a natural movement that your body understands. It's also great for posture; Coach Rippetoe, author of "Starting Strength," calls it his "posture alignment tool." And finally, the squat gets you used to hard work as it engages the largest muscles of the body and really gets the heart pumping. High-rep squatting will build the necessary cardiovascular fitness that is required for increasing workload when training.



**Push-ups** are essential because they develop pushing, core, and stabilizing strength that keeps the midline strong. The strength and endurance gained from push-ups will help beginners master other pushing exercises such as dips, push press, and muscle-ups. Being able to hold the hollow-back and straight plank posture, with gut and butt tight, is also great for posture alignment and is easy to test. Example: If hips and chest touch the ground at the same time, you're doing it right.



Behind squats, **pull-ups** are arguably the second greatest developer of fitness. Pulling strength and endurance may be the most overlooked aspect of general fitness training. The egotistical lure of front-body, mirror-centric exercises can make you forget about the pull-up. And those who do remember it often like to forget it, because the pull-up is hard—harder than simpler, anchored pulling exercises like lat pull-downs and rows. The latter don't require pull-ups' full coordination of the abs, hips, and lower extremities to generate the force and momentum that increases power output and work capacity, which is the name of the game. The poetic Glassman calls it, "an undulating wave of contractions."

Many people who think they are fit struggle to do one or two pull-ups. Many people don't see them as necessary, barely remembering the monkey bars they swung on as kids. But by losing the ability to do a pull-up, we're losing a key athletic function: the ability to climb, to pull ourselves up a pole or over a wall. A quick look at the WODs makes you realize the great importance CrossFit places on pull-ups and pulling variations. Fact: A person is not fit unless able to pull their weight up repetitively.

### **Learning the Ladder's proper technique: One perfect step at a time**

In the very beginning, how you do an exercise is the most important aspect of exercising. Proper form gives you more power and helps avoid injuries. That's why we closely monitor a beginner's technique in the gym and stress self-monitoring while at home. In fact, when our clients first begin the Ladder, we like to say that they technically do not "work out;" rather, they practice "learning and mastering" the three exercises. This philosophy will set the tone for the full-blown CrossFit exercises to follow

CrossFit SV uses the concept of "perfect practice" to help newcomers learn proper technique. It's simple: To do things perfectly, you always practice them perfectly. Developing sloppy exercise habits leads to sloppy performance.

If a person is unable to do the standard exercise correctly, due to weakness or imbalance, we will modify it to their current ability level. A totally de-conditioned beginner will need to scale the exercises as necessary.

When using the ladder, a raw beginner's first goal is to master doing three correct squats, two push-ups and one pull-up. Only then can they move on to the next rung on the ladder. Keep in mind that each repetition must be in good form in order to progress to the next rung. If the beginner's form breaks down, they go back to the first rung and start to work up the ladder again.

### **Learning Aids**

*Make the exercise easy to learn.* It is very difficult to learn how to properly execute a pull-up, for instance, when you are barely able to do one. By using a rubber stretch-band (see accompanying photos) that de-weights their bodies, newbies are better able to focus on the mechanics, rather than just struggling to do it.

*Rest periods are very important in learning.* Learning a new movement, even without weight, is a strain on the nervous system. Finding your way to the proper form is fatiguing even if the exercise is not physically demanding. Allowing for rest time will help the nervous system process and organize information, helping a beginner learn faster.

### **Use the Ladder to Improve Conditioning— and as a WOD**

Once the beginner has mastered the proper technique of the squat, push-up and pull-up, the ladder (see sidebar, below) may be used to improve conditioning. The goal is to start at the bottom of the ladder and work up the rungs. Once there is the slightest breakdown in form (remember perfect practice), the student returns to the bottom of the ladder (three squats) and begins to work up the ladder again. Most beginners are able to start at 10 minutes and work up to 20 minutes. Very de-conditioned people can rest more between the exercises. The ladder is effective because the relatively easier workload of the lower rungs helps the beginner complete a higher volume of training for longer periods of time. CrossFit SV beginners have made startling increases in total volume from each consecutive workout.

We prescribe the ladder as a phenomenal metabolic WOD if the athlete can complete all steps with decent form. Through assessment and qualification (the athlete must demonstrate refined movement), the athlete may move all the way up the ladder for time.

Again, the coach must qualify the movement to determine whether the exercise is appropriate relative to the ability of the athletes.



## The BEGINNER'S LADDER

The system: Initially do the three-exercise routine outlined in each Rung for 10 minutes, increasing to 20 minutes as fitness develops. Don't skip a step. Move up to Rung 2 only once you can complete Rung 1, and so on. Stop and celebrate when you do a 20-minute workout on Rung 5; this is practically "Cindy" (Max rounds in 20 minutes of 5 pull-ups, 10 push-ups, 15 squats). The record for Cindy in our gym is 36 rounds, by Steve Ruel. He'll give Jason Khalipa a run for his money at next summer's CrossFit Games. A good number for most people to shoot for is 15 rounds.

**Warning:** Don't start doing it for time until you can do every rung on the ladder comfortably for a 20 minute time period.

Progression	Squats	Push-ups	Pull-ups
Rung 10	30	20	10
Rung 9	27	18	9
Rung 8	24	16	8
Rung 7	21	14	7
Rung 6	18	12	6
Rung 5	15	10	5
Rung 4	12	8	4
Rung 3	9	6	3
Rung 2	6	4	2
Rung 1	3	2	1

**START**

### Change the Mix

For variety, change the three exercises. Instead of squats, push-ups, and pull-ups, coaches may prescribe basic movements or more advanced movements with varying weights, i.e., start with a broomstick or PVC pipe.

Here are a few triplets for more advanced ladders:

Squat / Shoulder Press / Deadlift

Front Squat / Push Press / Sumo Deadlift High Pull

Overhead Squat / Push Jerk / Medicine Ball Cleans

Kettlebell Swings / Pull-ups / Burpees

### Conditioning Tips: Keep it easy and simple

*Do not train to failure.* Tell a beginner to stop one rep short of failure. Encourage beginners to work at a sustainable pace. The goal for beginners is not how hard they may push themselves but how much they are able to do in a given amount of time. You cannot increase your volume when you are puking into a bucket.

*Perfect practice.* Make sure every rep is performed properly.

*Take it easy.* Err on making the first few workouts too easy instead of too hard.

*Exercise in the moment.* Completely focus on what they are doing now.

*Keep it simple.* Sometimes focusing on doing a few things extremely well provides the greatest results.



Judd Xavier is the owner of [CrossFit Silicon Valley](#) and Tom Rankin is one of the gym's principal trainers.



## How to Speak Martone

Turkish Get Ups and the Auditory Artistry of a Kettlebell Master

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Larry Gallagher

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So you wanna learn to speak Martone, to speak Martone. You find a subject, you know. And you dance around it, dance around your subject, say it once, say it twice. Then, Boom, you add another word, naam sayin? Boom, an adjective, adverb, whatever, you know, it's all good. You don't stop talking, no good will come of that. Keep on sending words out there until you got your predicate dialed in. Dude, pretty soon you got, like, a whole sentence and you're ready for the next. Youguyswitme on that?

Of course, it takes a lifetime to truly master the dialect, but if you attend one of Jeff Martone's Kettlebell Certs you will learn enough to be able to teach the basics to all your friends and associates. Martone, the language, borrows heavily from East Coast Sicilian-American, but even amateur linguists can recognize it as a specific





*Jeff Martone does a "Wifey" Get Up. Jeff suggests you start with young offspring before attempting a spouse.*

sub-dialect, with its own unique grammar and syntax. As it's lone native speaker, Martone, the man, acknowledges the challenge that his "non-regional accent" presents to Anglophones, even bringing along a translator to help get his message across. Oh, yes, and while you are absorbing the language, he will show you how to use those familiar blobs of cast iron to build strength, stamina, and flexibility all at once, develop stabilizing muscles you didn't even know existed, and even repair your aging and banged-up body.

Jeff Martone himself is a walking testimony to the healing power of the kettlebell. Before he began the workshop, in the gym of the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy, he called us into a huddle, three civilians and twenty-five law officers, to hear his tale of woe and redemption. It started in high school back in the 80s, where years of abuse on the football fields and the wrestling mats left him with shoulders that popped out of their sockets like a tortured GI Joe, a condition that two shoulder operations didn't fix. "The 90s were a bad decade for knees and elbows," he continues, dryly. By the time the 21st century rolled around, Martone, who was at the time working to train the tactical teams that escorted nuclear convoys, was looking down the barrel of a third shoulder operation, seriously thinking about finding a second career that would not put his body on the line.

Ironically enough, the second career with which he was experimenting was blacksmithing, which provided him the tools and the skills to fashion his own crude kettlebells out of steel rods, lead weights, and a couple of old bowling balls. This was long before the days when you could walk into any Target and walk out with a shopping cart full of them. Working under the guidance

of Russian Kettlebell godfather Pavel Tsatsouline, Martone began to incorporate more and more of the strength and conditioning exercises into his routines. Fast forward seven years and here he was, shoulders in sockets, repaired ACL intact, juggling 50 pound hunks of cast iron all day long for a living.

Hearing Martone's story and watching him demonstrating made it easier to plunge into the two-day program. For all that it physically prepares you for, CrossFit training does not prepare you mentally to do two straight days of anything. "My favorite part of working with kettlebells," quipped one prominent CrossFit wit, who shall remain unnamed, "is the part where you put them down and pick up the barbell." This had not been my experience. I had always found the motion physically compelling, the subtle dance of timing and balance required to keep from being pulled around like a midget chained to a Newfoundland. Still, my time with kettlebells had been confined to swinging them two-handed as part of a larger CrossFit routine.

But this American swing, as it is called, is just the entrée into the world of kettlebells, much as a muscle-up is just the first baby step on the rings. Over the next two days Martone took us through the range of foundational kettlebell repertoire, the cleans, the snatches, the presses, all of the moves sharing basic ergometrics with the corresponding moves on the barbell or dumbbell, but all offering slightly different challenges in terms of balance and coordination. As to what it was about a kettlebell workout that made it possible to both strengthen and repair damaged body parts, Martone believes it is the element of stretching that the movement requires.

The king of all kettlebell maneuvers is the Turkish Get Up. Joining a long list of anomalously named phenomena—French Toast, Canadian Bacon and the Utah Jazz—it is a chain of moves that allow you to raise yourself off the ground with a weight in one hand, all the while keeping that weight elevated above your body. On the surface, the TGU strikes one as a fantastically practical skill to have in one's arsenal. (Although the more I thought about it, the more trouble I had imagining a situation in which you would need to raise yourself up and keep a hand above your head. Standing up in a flooded basement with a baby in your hand? Lifting a serving tray of Champagne glasses from a prone position? Getting up off the ground while waving a white flag?) But there is no denying that mastering this combination of strength, coordination, and balance contributes immensely to one's overall ability to navigate the three-dimensional world. According to old-school weightlifting lore, before they would let you touch a barbell you had to perform the Get Up with 100 pounds in hand. Martone capped off this section of the cert with a move that he helped make famous, enlisting the services of smallest person in the room to act as a human kettlebell, demonstrating that, if an emergency required it, he could stand up with a 95-lb. female law enforcement officer attached to his left hand.

Throughout the training Martone made sure to emphasize the practicality of kettlebell training for all the officers around me, how good it was for building strong, quick hands, and how useful that was for dealing with perps in close quarters. So I was surprised when he showed us a simple trick—letting go of the weight in mid-air—and admitted that the main benefit that it offered was to keep your routine from getting boring. This turns out to be a crucial point. I would

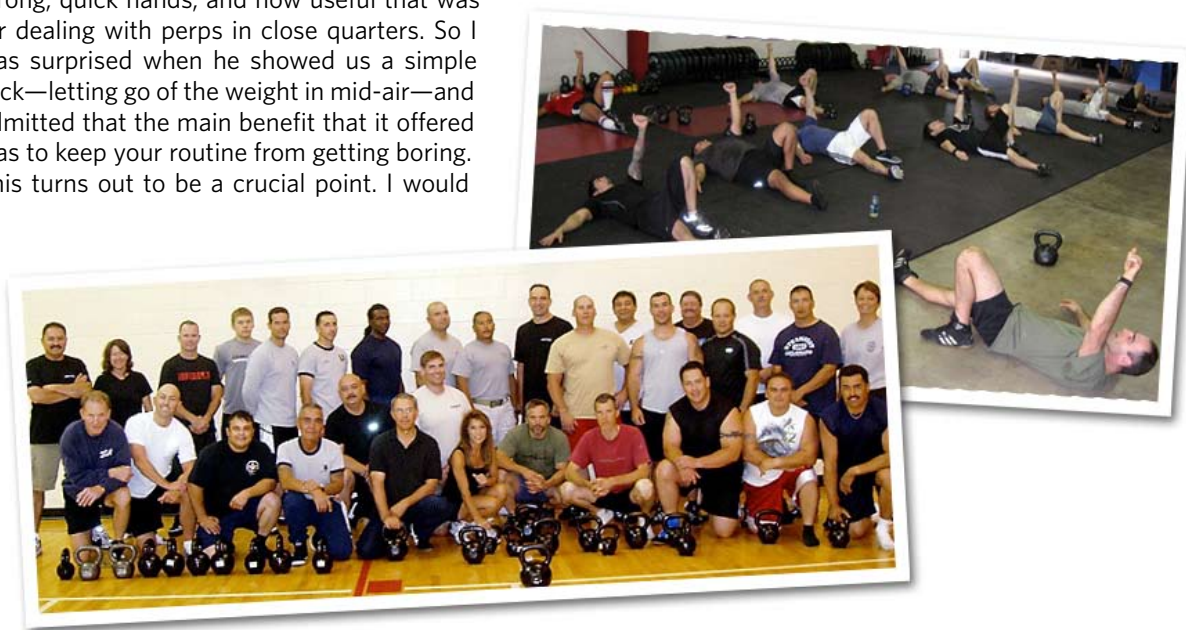
be lying if I said that swinging these hunks around for two days was unmitigated joy from beginning to end. Because, after all, if there's no fun in it, if it's just another tedious grind that you have to do because somebody says it's good for you, then it's only a matter of time before you see them out there in the garage next to the Nordic Trak and the Abdominizer, or used as a doorstop for the back door of your gym.

At the end of the training, the class was able to cajole the modest Martone into doing a bit of showing off. For a few short minutes he executed a perfect series of flips and juggles, between the legs, behind the back, eyes closed, tricks you could never do with a barbell or any other weight, a kind of poetry in cast-iron that made the case for kettlebells better any words could.

I thought to myself "Now you're speaking my language."



Larry Gallagher (pictured below, red t-shirt) practices his kettlebell cleans and his Martone at [San Francisco CrossFit](#).



## Milking Fact from Intolerance

Loaded with protein and a balance of macronutrients, moo juice is an optimal recovery drink — even if you're lactose intolerant.

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Lon Kilgore, PhD

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Every semester, every coaching seminar, and, seemingly every day, I get at least one question about milk for exercising populations. Some questions are quite good, some are just slightly off base, and some border on a level of silliness. "Isn't it true that if you drink milk it will take oxygen away?" Really?! And that question came from the coach of a junior soccer team.

***Listen up: Any idea that milk should not be consumed by adults is wrong. In fact, the opposite is true. Milk offers a lot of good things for athletes.***

Milk is a great source of protein. It's easily assimilated by the intestines and its breakdown products are easily transported to anywhere in the body that protein building blocks are needed. Mammals have always depended upon the nutritional value of milk for survival and growth. It is a natural and recommended component of the human diet, contributing to overall health and well-being. With respect to exercise, milk is an excellent recovery drink and, in general, an excellent protein source in support of muscle growth. In both cases, the protein in milk is broken down into useful protein building blocks in the gut and delivered to the muscle for uptake, where it aids in recovery from training or in supporting maintenance or addition of muscle mass. I am not talking about the gallon a day anabolic quantities proposed in some very familiar and successful training programs, I'm referring to volumes as low as a single eight-ounce serving and as moderate as the American Dietetic Association's recommendations.

Recovery and growth require an energy source. Milk provides this, as it contains both milk sugar (lactose) and milk fats. In fact, there is just about

the right amount of carbohydrate and lipid in milk to be optimal for post-exercise recovery—a good balance of the three macronutrients: protein, fat, and carbohydrate. It has been suggested by some research that chocolate milk is even better.

### **Overblown Fear of Allergies and Lactose Intolerance**

Despite milk's clear benefits, its use is limited among athletes due to a common belief that adults are "allergic" to it or "lactose intolerant." The two are very different things; the former is rare and potentially dangerous, while the latter is more common and literally more of a pain in the ass. Chances are, if you do have a problem with milk, it is due to lactose intolerance.

First, let's get milk allergies out of the way. Very rare in the population, they affect just 0.4% of first graders and a fraction of that figure among adults, who gain immunity with exposure over time. Milk allergies can be dangerous or even lethal if untreated, as they induce anaphylaxis, which features an acute drop in blood pressure





and difficulty breathing. **Tip:** If you can eat cheese, yogurt, or any other dairy-derived product, you don't have a milk allergy.

Lactose intolerance, on the other hand, isn't necessarily dangerous, but can, at the very least, wreck your mood. A lessened ability to produce the enzyme that breaks down the milk sugar lactose as rapidly as you did as a child, it will hit you with a parade of elements grouped under the heading of "gastric distress:" painful intestinal gas, voluminous farting, burping, and nasty diarrhea, potentially including the messy projectile variety.

While it isn't true that all adults become intolerant to milk over time, it is true that a majority of adults lose some ability to produce lactase, so they cannot break down lactose as rapidly as they once could. This coincides with the shift in dependence from milk as the major foodstuff in the very young to an omnivorous diet for the rest of the lifespan. The frequency of decreased lactase activity ranges from nearly 5% in northern Europe (where colder weather and cow cultivation has made milk part of the culture for several millennium) to more than 90% in some Asian and African countries and among American Indians.

But regardless of race or nationality, no one loses all their ability to produce this enzyme. At most a 90% loss in lactase production is experienced. So even though the adult stomach and intestines cannot digest and process milk as quickly as during infancy, they can still process milk products quite effectively in support of a normal healthy diet. In fact, the current medical recommendations suggest retaining as much dairy in the diet as can be. Nearly 100% of all patients with lactose intolerance can consume the American Dietetic Association's recommendations of dairy products without inducing symptoms. It has been further noted that a 12-ounce milk serving generally does not induce symptoms in the lactose intolerant. Other research suggests that in true intolerance it generally takes over one liter of cow's milk to induce symptoms.

The bottom line is that milk is not a villain for adults and it need not be avoided. And an exercising individual can still exploit it as a perfectly healthy and useful protein supplement to augment muscle recovery and growth. For those without diagnosed pathology, to not drink it is either a personal preference or a blind acceptance of unsubstantiated convention.



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## Good Housekeeping Matters

Spending a few minutes on Set-up, Counting, and Active Rest can yield free gains in a CrossFit workout's effectiveness and speed

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Greg Amundson

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Excuse me if I seem a little obsessed with my CrossFit workspace set-up and pre-training planning, which often take me longer to do than the workout itself. You see, I'm a federal agent in an organization that I'm not legally allowed to name. And when your job involves catching bad guys who can put your life in jeopardy at a moment's notice, you better have all your i's dotted and t's crossed at all times. That means before I turn the ignition key on my vehicle in the morning, I've already spent several minutes methodically loading my weapon and setting it at same place on my belt, angled just so; I put the gun's magazines in exactly the same spot every time, so I can reach them blindfolded if need be; and I secure my rifle in the back seat exactly where it has to be. Because when a situation goes down, it's 3, 2, 1, bam: you're suddenly on auto pilot, focused on the task at hand, operating on pure muscle memory. And if there's a split-second delay while you have to feel for a slightly misplaced weapon, you not only lose efficiency, you could get shot and killed.

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Okay — so you don't normally have that kind of risk in CrossFit. But if you want to get the most out of your training, you do have an identical need for good housekeeping, standardized organization, and a well-thought-out workout strategy. After all, CrossFit is all about intensity, and to maximize intensity, you have to pay attention to technique and smooth workflow between various exercises. Disrupt those for a few seconds here and there by, say, forgetting where the chalk is, searching for your water bottle, or being mispositioned for the next exercise, and your time, training, and fitness will suffer.

That's why, as a long-time CrossFit competitor and coach, I took a page from my law enforcement training and refined three simple concepts I would like to describe in detail here: proper set-up of your workout space, positive counting, and active rest. Do all three, which are outlined here in the context of the classic "Jackie" workout, and I guarantee you will make significant improvement fast.

### 1. Workout Space Set-Up

In early 2003, after Josh Everett and I faced off in "Fran" during a Level One Certification, Greg Glassman noted that we'd taken more time and thought to prep our work spaces than to do Fran itself, and that this was typical during advanced stages of CrossFit training. When he said what I'd already had drilled into me by my job, it inspired me to give even more thought to the way I prepared my environment and surrounding space.

For instance, I noticed in my training that I preferred to move in a linear line from one station to the next. Mentally, I was able to keep my focus and attention moving straight ahead towards my goal of finishing the workout. As Dave

Leys and I used to battle it out during the early morning "Team Six" workouts, I noticed that properly setting up the workout space could save precious seconds that in the end would make the difference between first and second place.

Let's look at how I would set up "Jackie" for myself or a client I was coaching. The first step is to put everything together as tightly as possible. I don't want to have to walk from the rower to my barbell or from my barbell to the pull-up bar. Secondly, from the moment I sit down on the rower, I want to be able to see my final station. Mentally, this allows me to always be thinking one step ahead and preparing myself for what's to come. I also like to pre-chalk the pull-up bar so I don't have to divert between stations to prep my hands. To accomplish this, I will put a thick layer of chalk on my hands and then grip the pull-up bar to exchange the chalk into the exact place I will grip during the workout.

Although 45lbs. is not a lot of weight, I still prefer to use a rack to prepare the weight in the position I want to first take it. At advanced levels of CrossFit performance, a PR (Personal Record) can come in increments of one second at a time. Taking the bar off of the rack as opposed to picking it up off the ground could easily make the difference in setting a new record. On my final repetition, I have found it is much faster and more fun to drop the weight rather than returning it to the rack.

### 2. Count Down

After setting up the work space, the next concept is to manage how you count repetitions. "Jackie" is a great workout to explore this concept because of the high



number of repetitions required at each station. Let's start with the 1K row. I know from previous training that it takes me 9 strong pulls on the Concept Two rower with the damper level set at 7 to row one hundred meters. In my mind when I start rowing, I count down the number of pull strokes from 9 to 1 approximately 9 times to finish the 1K. Counting down from 9 is over before it even starts, and mentally it allows me to accomplish a small goal several times in a row at one station. The same concept is repeated when I start my thrusters and pull-ups. My goal on the thrusters is to complete all 50 repetitions in a single set. However, I don't want to count from 1 to 50 during the thruster station. Instead, I might do the entire set in my mind in increments of 10. Although someone watching might be thinking, "Gee, that's a lot of reps to do all in a row" in my mind it's pretty easy because the highest number I went to might have only been ten.

I also like to count down instead of up. I have found that no matter how exhausted I might be, I can always do at least three more of an exercise. Therefore, I might count in my mind from 1 up to 7 and then for the last three repetitions, count down in my mind, "three, two, one." Clients enjoy the mind-trick as well and have been amazed to find renewed strength when I say, "You've only got three more to go!"

### 3. Active Rest

The 50 thrusters is a great opportunity to put another key strategic concept into practice. When going head-to-head with a training partner on a workout like "Jackie," the key to victory is to never stop to break up a set. Nothing is worse than having to put the barbell down while your partner continues to bang out repetitions. I have found that even slowing the pace and achieving what I call "Active Rest" is better than stopping completely. My definition of Active Rest is to continue to perform an exercise at a sustainable pace to allow recovery to perform the same exercise at a blistering pace.

Here is how Active Rest might be put into practice during the thruster station: When I'm fresh, I know that I can perform approximately one thruster with a 45-pound barbell every 1.5 seconds. However, I am not able to sustain that pace for 50 repetitions. Coming off the rower, I will immediately start on the thrusters. I will need to perform them at a slower cadence until I am recovered enough from the row to increase my pace. The first 10 repetitions immediately following the row would be performed at a pace of one thruster every 3 seconds. Following the top position of the thruster, I might choose to hold the barbell overhead or racked in the front squat

position for an extra second while breathing deeply. As soon as I feel myself start to recover, I will immediately increase the cadence and sustain it as long as possible. This process is repeated over and over until the entire set is completed.

### Bottom line

The housekeeping and strategic concepts of Set-Up, Counting and Active Rest work independently and in harmony with each other. They work for elite and beginner CrossFitters alike. They keep you psychologically motivated and physically efficient as they speed you up and help maximize the benefits of your workout. If you implement them, don't be surprised to set new CrossFit PRs quickly. After all, everything being equal, efficiency wins.



Greg Amundson served seven years with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office as a SWAT operator and Sniper. He currently works in Federal Law Enforcement and is a 1LT in the US Army National Guard. Greg started his CrossFit training under Coach Glassman at CrossFit Santa Cruz in 2001 and has been coaching Crossfit since 2002.