

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES



The Names and Numbers Behind the Games

Things you didn't know about the CrossFit Games regional qualifiers and the athletes they produced.

Mike Warkentin



Elite CrossFit athletes from around the world are now gathering in Aromas, California, site of this weekend's CrossFit Games. As the excitement mounts, let's take a look back at the regional qualifiers.

The results are all online—every rep, every second, every pound. In the end, 61 WODs at 19 regional qualifiers produced 137 athletes, plus 11 who qualified on their past performances. The vital stats and PRs of these athletes can be found online on the [2009 CrossFit Games](http://2009.crossfit.com) website.

But names and numbers don't always tell the whole story....

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More Than Meets the Eye

Of the 76 male competitors, 18 weigh 200 lb. or more. Most regions produced at least one heavy competitor, but the Northwest Qualifier produced more than its share. All four male representatives—**Moe Kelsey**, **Jerome Perryman**, **Jason Neago** and **Jordan Holland**—tip the scales above two bills. The lightest 1RM deadlift in the group is the 485 belonging to Kelsey. Perryman, on the other hand, can pull 606—more than any other Games competitor.

The Northwest Qualifier featured max press and deadlift events, which usually favour heavier athletes. The final WOD was a triplet that included five rounds of three muscle-ups, 30 wall-ball shots (20 lb.) and six sumo deadlift high pulls (60 kg). In an interesting twist, **Tommy Hackenbruck** finished sixth and out of qualification at the Northwest event despite winning the sole met-con workout by over 50 seconds. He then finished second in the Last Chance Qualifier. At the Games, he'll no doubt attempt to validate the importance of letting everyone try to qualify online.

Chris Spealler's 96 pull-ups were already 31 more than the 65-rep PRs recorded by **Josh Everett** and **Pat Barber**. In between training for the Games, Speal recently found time to knock out 106 before his grip failed. It was butterfly kips all the way, except for the last six. The Utah resident says it takes him about 70 reps before he has any idea how much gas is in the tank. He set the new record after three days of preparation, where he avoided workouts that would affect his pulling power. "I figured I'd give it another shot. I knew it was in there somewhere," Spealler says.



Sarah Spealler

Chris Spealler did a grand total of 60 pull-ups at the Great Basin Qualifier—and then did 106 in a row a few months later.

You'll find a host of big-time deadlifts in the bios of the Games competitors. Fifteen men can break 500 lb. off the ground, and three are over 600.

Only two qualifiers featured handstand push-ups (Great Basin and Europe), and three challenged athletes with double-unders (Iceland, Dirty South, Mid Atlantic). Muscle-ups showed up three times (Canada East, NorCal, Northwest). Ring dips showed up twice (Australasia, Europe). The Hopper Deck was used once (Hell's Half Acre), though the hopper method also figured in the third WOD in Central and South America.

Pat Barber finished fourth in last year's Games and didn't have to compete in a qualifier. After taking a look at all the regional events, Barber decided he would

have enjoyed tackling the NorCal WODs, especially the brutal Catch-22 workout on The Hill at the Games site. "I would have loved to compete in the NorCal Qualifiers. That would have been so much fun. The last workout was in the rain and it was on the Games hill. It looked like a really fun qualifier." Barber also noted that the Great Basin Qualifier looked like a good time, while he thought the SoCal event looked like a savage ass-kicker that produced stellar athletes. The only qualifier Barber wouldn't have wanted to tangle with was in the Northwest, where max presses and deadlifts made raw strength key to qualifying. As for his own training, Barber just does CrossFit workouts but alters his focus to spend more effort on weaknesses, such as running or rowing, during slightly longer met-cons. "I'm doing nothing crazy workout-wise: a wide variety of the same CrossFit workouts," he says. "Not the main site per se because of my schedule, but essentially the same flavor."

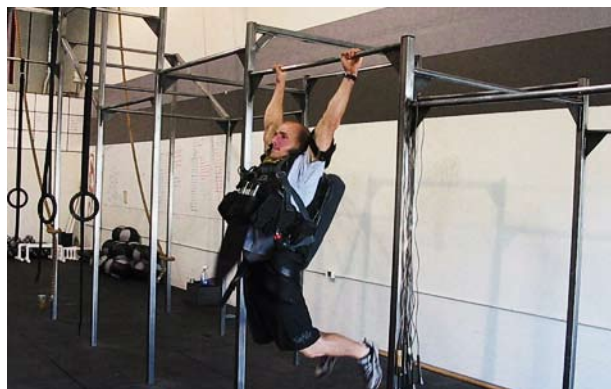
You'll find a host of big-time deadlifts in the bios of the Games competitors. Fifteen men can break 500 lb. off the ground, and three are over 600. The lightest competitor to crack the 500 lb. mark is Finland's **Mikko Salo**, who is only 176 lb. Perhaps the most impressive numbers are those of Josh Everett, **Lance Mosely** and **Rob Orlando**, all of whom can lift three times their body weight. Orlando and Mosely can also press 254 lb. and 240 lb., respectively. Everett, of course, rules the Olympic lifts by a large margin, with a 270 lb. snatch and a 347 lb. clean and jerk.

Of the 72 female competitors, almost a third did not submit PRs for the snatch. Of the ones who did, **Caity Matter**, **Tamara Holmes** and **Dawn Hutchinson** can all get 145 lb. overhead. Most women submitted clean and jerk PRs, and the 2008 CrossFit Games champ, Matter, leads the pack with a 190 lb. PR.

Sarah Spealler



Pat Barber (right) says he would have enjoyed competing in the Great Basin Qualifier, where he would have gone head to head with eventual winner Chris Spealler (left).



Peter Eyged finished 11th at the Great Basin regional but won the Last Chance Qualifier with a total time 52 seconds faster than second-place finisher Tommy Hackenbruck.



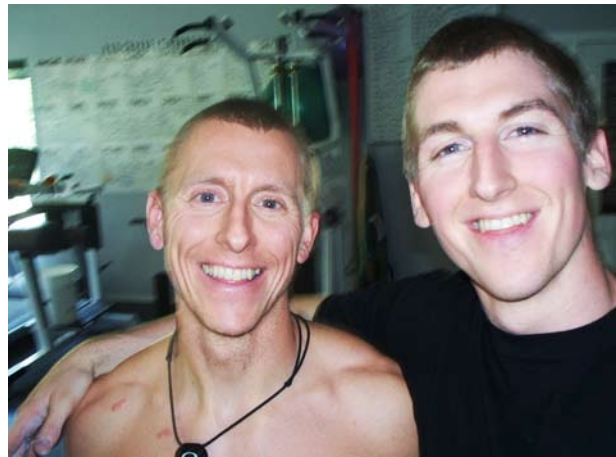
Caity Matter, winner of the 2008 Games, boasts a 330 lb. deadlift—second only to Cyndi Frieling's 365.

The average age of the female competitors is 29. The oldest competitor is **Nicole Verbrugghe** at 46, while **Kallista Pappas** is once again the youngest, at 15. Canadian **Katy Josephs** is only 16, while Icelander **Annie Mist Thorisdottir** (19) is the only other teenage competitor. For the men, the average age is 28, with **Andy Petranek** (42) and **Ben Smith** (18) taking up spots on opposite ends of the spectrum. Smith is the only teenage male competitor but still boasts a 30-round Cindy and a 2:04 Grace. Petranek, on the other hand, can rip off 31 rounds of Cindy and does Fran in 3:28.

The highest deadlift number on the women's side goes to **Cyndi Frieling**. Her 365 would put her above several male competitors. Frieling's closest female competition is Caity Matter. Last year's winner can pull 330 off the ground. A former university basketball player, Frieling was only deadlifting 65 lb. two years ago while she focused on running marathons. Then she started getting serious about lifting. "My goal was always to be above 300, and once I got that, then above 350," she says. Frieling prefers heavy WODs and workouts that include running, listing Eva as one of her favourites. And could she add a few more pounds to that already massive deadlift? "Yeah," she laughs. "Yes, I could."

Husband and wife **Sean** and **Mariah Provost** will both be competing in the Games—and Sean probably has Mariah to thank. When she introduced him to CrossFit, he didn't drink the Kool-Aid right away, so she threw down a challenge. "The day FGB was posted, I challenged him that if I beat him he would have to come three times a week for a month," Mariah says. "I beat him. I almost died, but I beat him. He held up his side of the bargain, and after that month he was hooked." Interestingly enough, the couple share an identical Fran time: 4:19 (chest to bar). "I would have beaten him but somebody said how many reps I had left out loud, so he stopped resting to try and catch me," Mariah explains. "He's a sandbagger!"

Forty-one-year-old **Linda Leipper** missed qualifying for the CrossFit Games by only one spot at the Southern California Qualifier. Undeterred, she entered the Last Chance Qualifier, where she encountered yet more adversity. During her first WOD, a 10-one descender of power cleans (105 lb.), pull-ups and kettlebell swings (16 kg), the camera stopped at 12:29 with Linda only three reps from completing the WOD. "I believe of the three cameras we had, two batteries died and one ran



Courtesy of Optimum Performance Training

Michael FitzGerald (right) and older brother James (OPT) FitzGerald will bring their sibling rivalry to the 2009 CrossFit Games.



Alissa Baliodano

Linda Leipper finished seventh at the SoCal regional but redeemed herself online by winning the Last Chance Qualifier.

out of disk space," Leipper recalls. The technical difficulties were explained at the beginning of her second WOD video, when it was revealed that she had notched an impressive 12:45. "Believe it or not, I didn't feel any dismay or frustration over this," Leipper says. "There were so many people that were there for me that day, and I couldn't have been happier for all the support and encouragement they gave me.... I in no way was going to do that WOD again. In fact, I don't think I could have done that WOD again if I wanted to or needed to." It turned out she didn't need to. CrossFit HQ accepted her performance, and Leipper will be competing in Aromas.

Peter Egyed had his heart broken at the Great Basin Qualifier, finishing 11th. He decided to enter the Last Chance Qualifier but didn't clear his schedule to do so. Egyed simply fit the workouts in when he could. "The first was Jackie, which I did at about 8:30 a.m.," Egyed explains. "From there I rested about two-and-a-half hours, ran the Saturday classes at the gym, then completed the deadlift/double-under WOD at about 11:15 a.m. From there we headed home, tried to eat two meals, did some shopping and some BS around the house, and we met back at the gym at 6. I probably started the WOD at 6:30 p.m." Egyed finished first in the Last Chance Qualifier but had no idea where he stood after completing the WODs. "The next day I began to search YouTube and Vimeo much more for other times and again began to get a little excited," he says. "It wasn't until Dave (Castro) e-mailed me with the congratulations that it all really set in."

*You might have noticed two
FitzGeralds competing in the
2009 CrossFit Games—and yes,
they are brothers.*

You might have noticed two FitzGeralds competing in the 2009 CrossFit Games—and yes, they are brothers. **James (OPT) FitzGerald** was personally invited to the Games by **Coach Greg Glassman** and **Games Director Dave Castro** after OPT declined to compete in a qualifier



**With a 145 lb. snatch and 175 lb. clean and jerk,
Tamara Holmes is one of the top female Olympic lifters
at this year's Games.**

in order to run the Canada West regional event. At that competition, his younger brother **Michael** finished third and will join the 2007 champion at The Ranch. OPT says he can still take the 22-year-old Michael in most events but cautions that the "new breed of young CrossFitters" will be a force at this year's Games. Because the Calgary resident wasn't planning to compete this year, he had to put himself on a crash course to prepare. OPT promises to reveal his secret training program to the *CrossFit Journal* after the Games.

Some of the international competitors travelling to Aromas are actually coming back to their home turf. **Geoffrey Tudisco** (first, Central and South America), **Rob Gerdes** (first, Asia), **Vicky Zimmerman** (first, Asia), **Brian Bowen** (second, Europe) are all Americans who are now living abroad. They'll be joined by international competitors native to Iceland, South Africa, Finland, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ecuador and Canada.

Chris Spealler confirms that he will be bringing his signature headphones back to the Games this year. While many competitors are fuelled by loud and angry tunes, Spealler's selections are often softer. Artists such as Jeremy Camp and Jars of Clay are favourites. "It depends on my mood and my attitude," he says. "If I get a little bit nervous, I try to listen to some other stuff..."

where it's a little bit more mellow." In fact, Spealler selected *God Will Lift up Your Head* by Jars of Clay to get him through the challenging clean and jerk WOD at the 2008 Games. "I needed to be in the right spot. I knew it wasn't going to be any easy workout. I gave it everything I had, but I knew the chances of me being the first one done were probably pretty slim." When Spealler is feeling like ripping into a workout, he'll select the likes of 50 Cent and Nelly Furtado—anything with a good beat. He plans to add a little AC/DC to the mix for the upcoming Games.

More Stories to Come...

The final countdown has begun. The CrossFit Games are now just hours away. With 148 of the world's fittest athletes converging on The Ranch in Aromas for an epic competition, who knows what stories will be told when the final bumper bounces?



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the staff writer for the CrossFit Journal. He'll be covering the CrossFit Games live from The Ranch along with a team of video crews and still photographers. Visit the [2009 CrossFit Games](#) website for continually updated multimedia coverage from July 10 to 12.

