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More Than Scores

Mike Warkentin presents a few of the great stories of the 2011 CrossFit Games Canada West Regional.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

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All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

Angie Pye dominated the 2011 Canada West Regional, but my favorite memory of the CrossFit Taranis athlete wasn't her joyous embrace with training partner Alicia Connors after the pair finished one-two overall. No, my favourite memory was created at the event after-party hosted by Craig (Patty) Patterson and CrossFit Vancouver.

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With CrossFitters allowing themselves to cut loose after months of hard training, Nolan Crossman from CrossFit Regina decided to challenge Canada West's top female to a posedown he knew he would lose. Pye, who has almost no body fat to speak of, reluctantly agreed, and as a result you can find a pretty cool picture of Angie out-flexing Nolan if you know where to look online.

If you look harder, you'll find a pic of CrossFitting powerlifter Angela Desjarlais deadlifting Connors, who booked a return trip to the CrossFit Games.

The after-party was indeed one of the best parts of the weekend, with affiliates and athletes from four provinces coming together in a meeting of the tribes that put an exclamation point on a weekend of CrossFit, community and camaraderie.

What follows are a few other shining moments and back stories that might not make the front page but certainly made the competition a special event indeed.

Battling Dystonia

Athletes who overcome disabilities always provide some of the most moving stories, and while I had seen Leya Moore of CrossFit Regina compete at several Prairie competitions, I had no idea she was managing generalized dystonia the whole time. A neurological disorder that isn't completely understood, dystonia is characterized by muscle contractions that put the sufferer into twisted, abnormal positions. Sometimes the muscles actually lock up, holding the person hostage until the symptoms pass.

"With me, it affects every single voluntary muscle in my body," said Moore, a media-relations consultant whose condition at one point found her symptomatic about 75 percent of her waking hours.

Moore started working out and sleeping better, and she improved her diet, which once featured pizza 23 times in one month. Lo and behold, her condition improved. Eventually she saw the Nicole Carroll body-weight overhead-squat video on the Web and jumped into CrossFit. Oddly enough, her condition improved further with the intense activity.

"Any time I've done something to improve my physical self—like feeling better and more healthy—generally speaking I ended up with fewer days where I was symptomatic," she said.



Leya Moore deadlifts 205 lb. in the deadlift/box-jump workout in Vancouver.

Moore has had episodes during events in the past and has to work through them as best she can. She finished 21st in Canada West in the Open and joined CrossFit Regina's affiliate team for regionals. On Day 2 of the competition, after helping CFR to a third-place finish in the deadlift/box-jump workout, she was curled up in a ball the stands, her condition set off by the loud noises from a ring-the-bell strongman game in the vendor village.

She shook it off, and on Day 3 she was back on the competition floor, helping her team to a tie for fourth overall.

Handstand Push-Ups!

Kristin Farkas of Prairie CrossFit was one the individual competitors who saw the handstand push-ups in Event 1 and faced the prospect of elimination early in the competition. Undaunted, Farkas decided to compete anyway.

"I came here thinking I was running a 1,000-meter race and going home," she said. "People just kept telling me to stay positive."

Nevertheless, in training the Winnipeg athlete couldn't find her way to a single rep and felt defeated. After getting a few quick tips from Desjarlais from Regina, Farkas took her time on the run that opened the regional competition before flipping upside down to try a handstand push-up.

"I got it on my first attempt. I got my first one. I was so happy!" she said.

Later, Farkas tore her hands badly on the pull-ups in Event 3, but she didn't give up there either and kept going until time was called.

Event 1B

I realized there was a problem in Event 1 when I showed my girlfriend, who was competing in the individual competition, photos of the men's run course.

"Where did you get those photos?" Crystal Kirby-Peloquin asked?

"On the course," I said.

"We didn't run there," she replied.

It turns out the two women's heats ran different distances due to a lack of direction on the course, presenting an apples-to-oranges situation and making it difficult to rank competitors and slot them for Event 2. After the day had wrapped, the event directors huddled up the girls and tried to figure out what to do.

In the end, they settled on a short "additional event" in which the Heat 1 ladies would run the short course and the Heat 2 ladies would run the long course. Both heats would then do 10 handstand push-ups and row 350 meters. That time would be added to the time from Event 1 to provide some way to rank the athletes.

Ideal? No. But CrossFit athletes train for the unknown and the unknowable, and even if this was an extreme test of our training methodology, it was inspiring to watch the tired women brace themselves for a challenge they hadn't expected.

In the end, the women adapted, did what they had to do and moved on with few complaints.

Firebreathing Mom

Maren Chapman, 37, doesn't train at affiliate. She trains in her husband's workshop and is a part-time high-school math teacher. She spends the rest of her time raising

her two young daughters. Chapman posted videos of her workouts for the entire Open competition and finished 28th.

"We just did the Open for fun. We thought, 'Well, maybe we won't even enter ... but no, we'll do it because it allows us to be part of the community.'"

Chapman's family was out to support her in full force: her husband snapped pictures and called out instructions while her kids waved posters and shouted encouragement. She got her very first handstand push-up three days before the competition kicked off—and then she got another in Event 1.

"That was my CrossFit Games: doing the run and getting one handstand push-up. Anything after that I was fine with," she said.

All told, Chapman got 26 of them in Event 1, plus nine more in "Event 1B."

Chapman's kids, by the way, do workouts with her.



Maren Chapman had her very own cheering section during the regional competition.

Many Muscle-Ups

Karolina Pawlak was another competitor who broke down a major barrier by getting her first muscle-up.

"I didn't want to try any in the warm-up because I didn't want to have any negative energy going in," she said.

When the event started, Pawlak got her muscle-up, then added five more that made it look as if she'd been able to do them for months.

"I was very excited. I know all the movements now," she explained.



Karolina Pawlak got her first muscle-ups at regionals and completed six of them during Amanda.

Deadlift Record

Amy Adamson weighs about 115 lb., which helped her to a second-place finish in the run/handstand-push-up/row event. Her small stature worked against her in the deadlift/box-jump workout, where the 205-lb. bar represented PR weight. In warm-up, she couldn't budge 190.

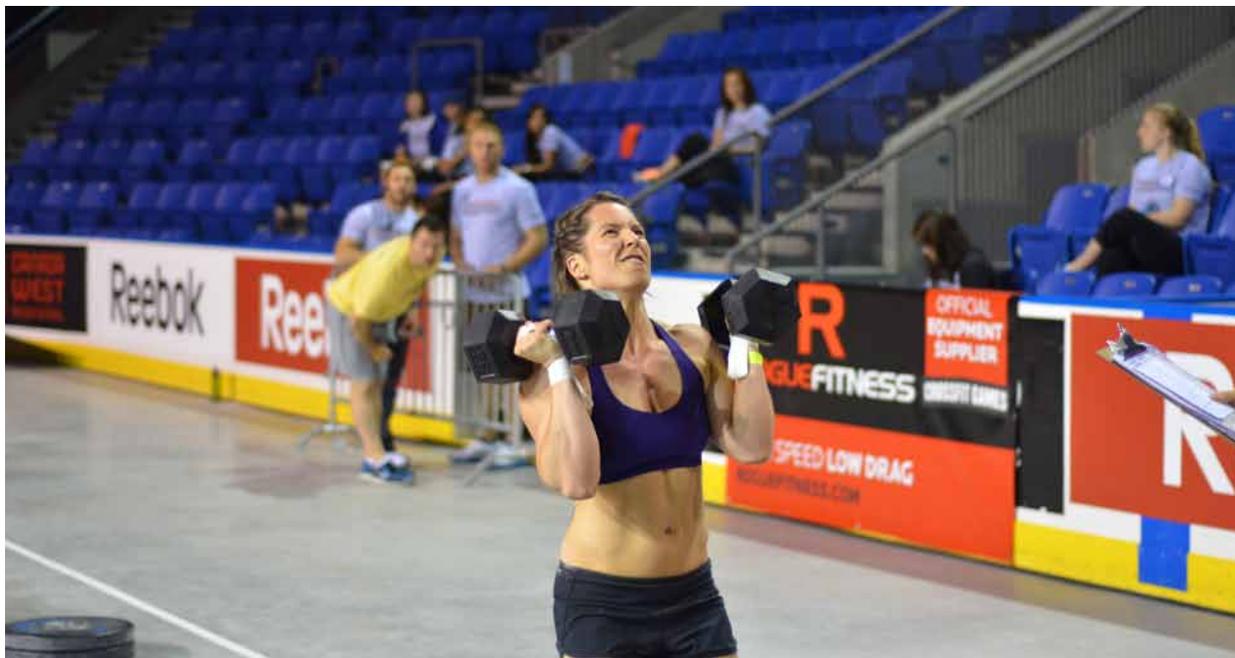
"I was kind of coming in here being like, 'Balls out for one lift. If I get a PR, I'm in the game. If I don't, I'm disqualified.'"

When asked what she was thinking about when she stepped up to her first attempts with a DNF looming, she said, "I can't fucking put the bar down. I had to take five and cry before I came out here, but I was like, 'If it moves an inch off the ground, I'm getting it up.'"

Adamson indeed hit a PR deadlift and added a second rep for good measure.



Amy Adamson hits a PR during Event 3.



Sara Stamm-Bergland worked through an injury to finish seventh overall.

Stick the Landing

Sara Stamm-Bergland made a mistake three weeks before the competition.

“Not really thinking ahead, I was like, ‘Oh hey, now’s a good time to learn a back tuck.’”

While Stamm-Bergland got her first tuck, she also got a nasty ankle sprain. She couldn’t put any weight on it and had a “cankle” (“It’s hot,” Sara said). She still wasn’t walking properly a week before the competition.

Of course, her training took a major hit, as did her confidence.

“I’ve never cried so hard in my entire life,” she confessed.

Forced to do mobility work and upper-body training, she decided to soldier on and compete anyway. In an interview after the thruster ladder on Day 1, Stamm-Bergland said she had failed several bars earlier than expected due to the injury and would be happy to crack to top 10.

When the dust settled on Sunday, Stamm-Bergland had overcome both the mental and physical challenges of the injury to finish seventh.

Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged

I noticed a judge with crutches and a walking cast early in the competition, and he looked familiar. Turns out he was Robert Perovich, the B.C. athlete who had finished fifth in the world in Open Workout 11.1 before tearing his Achilles tendon in 11.2.

Rather than sit at home, Perovich decided to volunteer as a judge so he could still be a part of the community and prepare for next year.

“I want to be a part of it in some form, but honestly it was to gain experience because I want to see the athletes up close. I want to see the way they talk to themselves, the way they breathe—everything. Just every little aspect of it ... so I can learn for next year.”

Still, it was hard for Perovich to count reps rather than complete them.

“When I came in the door and looked at the rack ... that’s when it hit me. It gave me flashbacks of my injury. I was just like, ‘Oh my God I want to be here so bad.’”

Perovich was actually the judge on Adamson’s PR lift, and he was there to receive a great big hug when she completed the rep.

With rehab ahead of him, Perovich says he'll be doing all the work he can to get himself ready for the next competition season. He'll take the boot off in another six weeks, and he hopes to be running again in six months.

Then he'll start training for 2012, when he hopes to be an athlete, not a judge.



Travis Takasaki finished 34th, while his brother Tyson was third overall.

Brothers With Arms

Travis Takasaki is 29 and had the pleasure of watching little brother Tyson, 23, give the regional's top competitors a run for their money.

"It's awesome. My whole family's here. My mom and dad are here. My wife's here. She brought the kids along. It's like a family thing. Now my parents are starting to think, 'Maybe I should do this,'" Travis said.

Tyson, who spent the last year winning CrossFit events in Winnipeg while playing receiver for the University of Manitoba football team, finished third overall and only missed qualifying for the Games by one point.

"I'm so proud of him," Travis said. "I'd be here if I wasn't competing, watching him and cheering him on because I see how hard he works. He's in there twice a day, ice baths, doing runs, jogging every morning. He deserves it. He works hard for it."

Tyson said, "We're so close. He kind of knows my struggle and when I'm having little freak-outs, so it's good to have someone to share this experience with. ... It's really good having that support."



About the Author

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