

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

November 2011

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
Keeping Kids Corralled	Martin
The Kitchen WOD	Massie
"I WOD for Ted Hoyt"	Goodson
Climbing the Urban Jungle	Ford
Breakfast Pizza	Brown/Dazet
Bearing the Standards	Tucker/Hyland
New Jersey Gets Nasty	Achauer
In Service to Their Country	Wagner
Run, Baby, Run!	Achauer
Talking a Good Game	Edelman
CrossFit Burpee Stickball	Martin
Single?	Starr
Grow Your Mo	Achauer
Oly Optimization	Vaughn
Throwing Down the Gauntlet	Achauer
Grant Writing for Kids Programs	Poggi
Whine-Free Food	Brown/Dazet
The Best of the Best	Warkentin
All in the Same Room	Beers
Memorial Days	Pace
Chris Spealler: The Fire Inside	Greene
A Month of Pumpkins	Martin/Patenaude/Poggi-Bills
Motherhood and CrossFit	Mitchell/Scahill

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Keeping Kids Corralled

Mikki Lee Martin explains how to manage the little ones in your gym with a safe kids area full of entertainment.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

November 2011



Danell Marks

Many affiliates struggle with the concept of a kids area, a place for siblings of CrossFit Kids clients, kids waiting for CrossFit Kids classes or the children of parents who are CrossFitting. As your affiliate grows, so will the population of kids on site.

Be aware that you might fall under state or local daycare licensing laws if you provide “care and supervision” in your kids area. This might mean that having a babysitter or someone with the children creates the need for licensing in your state. Check with your legal counsel and review the local regulations to ensure that you follow the required steps for your arrangement. For example, simply having a designated kids area does not necessarily create the need for licensing in California; however, adding a “care provider” changes everything. This is perhaps the most cumbersome obstacle to negotiate.

Below are additional things to consider:

- Create a rule sheet for expected behavior in the kids area and post nearby.
- Ask that parents do not contribute toys or activities to the area without first filtering through the trainer staff or management at your box.
- Let the parents know that you expect them to keep the kids’ behavior within your guidelines, and make sure they understand that trainers will pull them from class to deal with any discipline issues.
- Avoid being asked to mediate disputes between kids; encourage the parents to speak to each other about any issues. This may be an excellent time to practice sprinting.
- Think through everything you place in this area. Look at it from a risk-management standpoint and assess all possible scenarios.
- When it comes to providing artistic diversions for the kids, we have found chalk to be the least permanent creative option.
- Noise-making toys and instruments will be a distraction to instruction, although the irony of clown toys laughing while clients attempt to PR Fran might be entertaining.
- Books are great, but do not expect them to withstand toddlers very long.
- Small toys—e.g., LEGO sets—become a clean-up headache. Opt for larger items.
- Frisbees and Nerf balls are fine if there is nothing nearby that can be broken (like framed certificates or articles).
- Bean-bag chairs seem like a good idea, but when piled on top of each other they can be used to “squish little Billy for time” or make “sister sandwiches.”
- Butterfly-style chairs are relatively light and can be thrown for distance; further, they offer poor support to climbers.
- Child-size wooden Adirondack chairs seem to work well, and the kids like the special size.
- Options for enclosures vary widely. We have seen enclosures using half-wall drywall, Plexiglas (CrossFit Ethos), three-foot iron fencing (Captain CF), and wire mesh fencing (CF Oahu). Whatever your choice, we highly recommend a see-through option.
- Keep nearby doors with outside access closed at all times.
- Try not to set up your kids area in front of a window.
- Put a bell on nearby doors.
- Keep workout equipment out of reach.



Danell Marks



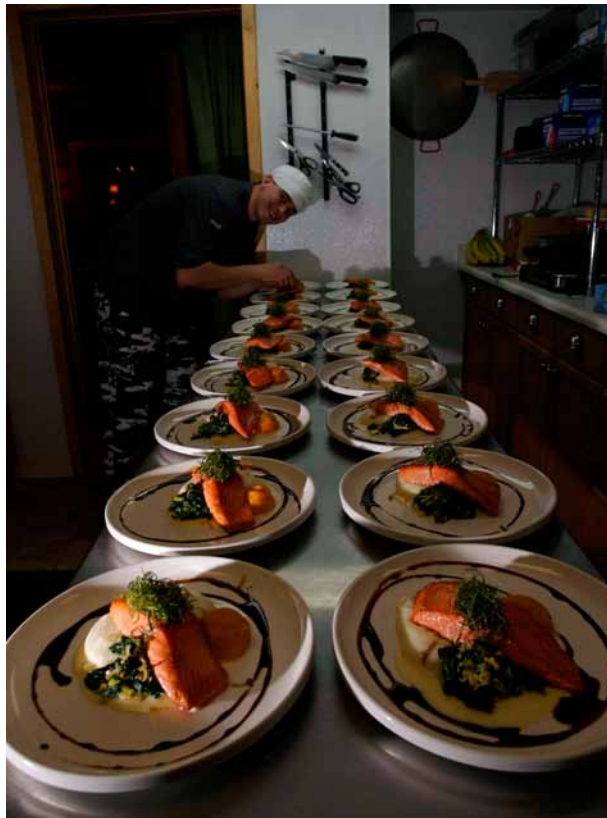
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Kitchen WOD

Mise en Place: CrossFitting chef Nick Massie on how to make cooking fast and enjoyable.

By Nick Massie

November 2011



Will Wissman

Food—we all eat it, and most of us enjoy it. Some look to it for comfort, while others see it strictly as fuel.

However you view food, there is one resounding truth: it can be a daunting task to learn to prepare it well. From planning a weekly menu to shopping, storing, cooking and cleaning up afterward, a lot goes into food preparation.

The following are some valuable lessons I've learned in the kitchen over the past 15 years. I hope that sharing them with you will provide a better understanding of how to approach cooking, and that you will learn to enjoy planning your weekly menu.

And maybe you'll see how similar cooking can be to CrossFit.

Mise en Place

"Mise en place" is the most basic lesson one can learn in the kitchen. It's like learning the squat.

Translated literally from French, it means "putting in place"; in culinary terms, it means "everything in its place." This is how you set up for a dinner service in a restaurant, and this is how to best set up for preparing a recipe. You go down your ingredient list and prep everything so it's ready when the cooking process begins.

**With CrossFit,
cooking and life,
efficiency is a good thing.**

Equate it to the Filthy Fifty. You can either set up all your bars, weights and stations before the clock starts or you can do it as you go. It just makes sense to have everything set up ahead of time. In the end, it will make you more efficient, and with CrossFit, cooking and life, efficiency is a good thing.

Clean as You Go

It's another seemingly easy task, but how many of you have set out to prepare a simple recipe and ended up with a train wreck of a kitchen and a sink full of dishes?

You've put all your energy into preparing the meal, you've just enjoyed eating it, and now you have to return to the kitchen to do all the dishes. What a drag! This would be like a box owner running different workouts all day at the gym but not requiring athletes to put away their equipment. Then, at the end of the day, the trainer alone takes on the task of putting away everyone's gear. It just doesn't make sense.

Make it your goal to start each cooking session with a sink full of hot, soapy water and to end each session in the same situation: all dishes cleaned, wiped dry and put away, with only hot soapy water to wipe the table after dinner and just enough room in the dishwasher for the plates, silver and glassware you just used.

One Step All

This is a concept I learned from one of my culinary-school teachers, Vern Wolfram. Think of it as multi-tasking with a Henry Ford-assembly-line twist.

To understand this concept, ask yourself questions like, "How many times am I going to open the fridge?" "How many trips am I going to make to the grocery store today or this week?" and "How many times am I going to peel and dice onions?"

Think of streamlining your work processes. Plan your meals and have an idea what you have on hand so you only have to go to the grocery store once per week or maybe twice to keep things fresh. If you are going to be preparing three recipes that all have onions, then figure out how many onions you are going to need, and knock them all out at once. This also works for unloading the dishwasher or putting away dishes. Instead of making a trip to the cupboard for each dish, take dishes out of the dishwasher and organize them on the counter, then bring all plates to the plate cupboard at once, all silverware to the drawer at once and all glasses to the ... you get the idea.

How does it relate to CrossFit?



Hyon Sim

3-2-1 ... Cook!

When training and setting up a class for a barbell workout, I found it useful to break the classes up into groups to retrieve barbells, bumpers and collars. We would do it for time and it was always more efficient.

Think of streamlining your work processes. Plan your meals and have an idea what you have on hand so you only have to go to the grocery store once per week.

Cheap Is Expensive

This is more of a life lesson, but has to do with anything where equipment is involved. I will relate it foremost to a good knife.

Sure, some of you will not be able to afford a good knife, but I truly believe it is only because you limit yourself. Maybe a good knife isn't on the top of the list for uses of your discretionary income, but once it becomes important, then you'll find a way to make it happen. Until then, just get by with what you have or find something cheap at the local thrift store.

I recommend spending between \$100 and \$250 for a quality chef's knife and sharpening stone. It will be a one-time purchase that will last a lifetime. You don't need a pretty block full of knives on your counter; it will just take up valuable counter space. You really only need one good knife. I recommend the eight-inch or 10-inch Japanese variety available at www.korin.com. If you want to get another knife, I recommend a paring knife or an off-set petty.

The cheap-is-expensive motto goes for blenders, food processors, cookware, etc. It is always better to save up and make a quality purchase than it is to buy something cheap over and over.



Hyun Sim

Cooking is more efficient and enjoyable when you have high-quality tools.

In CrossFit, this relates to barbells and bumpers. How many of you have seen low-quality equipment break or fall apart? I have seen it countless times. It is best to find stuff made in America; we make our stuff with pride.

It is always better to save up and make a quality purchase than it is to buy something cheap over and over.

Sense of Urgency

This is the lesson a CrossFitter will relate to best.

At my first job in a kitchen, I was a dishwasher. My boss was a former army sergeant who frequently asked me questions such as, "How fast do you think you can wash those 15 sauté pans over there?" and "What are the next five things you're going to do?"

This kept me on my toes, always thinking of what was next. It gave me a sense of urgency. This might be a tough correlation to the home kitchen for some of you, but put yourself on the clock once in a while and see how you do peeling carrots, dicing an onion or cooking an entire meal.

For most of us, time is extremely valuable, and if you can do something in 15 minutes that used to take you an hour, you just gained 45 minutes of life. When you are in the kitchen, think of honing your technique and being more efficient. There are no hard and fast rules to a lot of cooking, so if you find something that works and it's faster, then do it.

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extremely valuable, and if
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Have Fun!

If you plan your week and set Sunday as your main prep day with a little leg work on Wednesday, you'll soon find cooking only takes two shifts per week. From there, you are simply reheating.

Don't forget that even Remy, the rat in *Ratatouille*, learned to cook from a book titled *Anyone Can Cook* and that there is a cookbook titled *The Joy of Cooking*. So if you'd rather run your knuckles up a cheese grater than spend time in the kitchen, take some of the above advice, check out [my videos](#), follow the recipes, use the Internet as a resource and chime in on the *CrossFit Journal* with any questions or comments about anything cooking-related.

Remember, making cooking fun and simple is best. Follow the above lessons and you'll be chefin' it up in no time.



Courtesy of Nick Massie

About the Author

Nick Massie has earned his living as a cook for the past 15 years. He started CrossFit in October 2008 and immediately saw the correlation between food and fitness. Since then, he has been an owner of Roaring Fork CrossFit and Aspen CrossFit, and he most recently worked as a consultant to help develop D-Town CrossFit. Nick is passionate about cooking and CrossFit and looks to use his training as a chef to serve the CrossFit community. Nick holds a CrossFit Level 1 Certificate, with CrossFit certificates in Basic Barbell, Gymnastics, Kettlebell, Mobility, Rowing, Olympic Weightlifting, and CrossFit Kids, and he also holds the USAW Club Coach Certificate. He has a small business, Samson Rings, where he makes wooden gymnastics rings. He competed in the 2011 CrossFit Open, where he placed 34th in the Southwest Region. Nick currently lives in Moorhead, Minn., with his wife, Jessica, and their two boys, Samson and Jonas, where he runs a strength program four days per week at Wild Knights CrossFit.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

"I WOD for Ted Hoyt"

After one of its members is diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor, CrossFit Mission Gorge shows what it means to be part of the CrossFit community. Jack Goodson reports.

By Jack Goodson

November 2011



All images: Geoffrey Pascua and Roger Cerros

Fall 2009.

CrossFit Mission Gorge was not two months old. And times were understandably difficult.

1 of 7



Ted Hoyt (center) was one of CrossFit Mission Gorge's first members, helping them stay afloat when times were tough.

The first rent was coming due. And there was no membership base at the San Diego, Calif., box.

Concern gripped co-owners Ian McHugh and Geo Rockwell.

It was clear they likely would have to reach into their own pockets—and funds were already low after investing most of what they had into their California dream.

"We had less than 10 members at the time," Rockwell said. "Most people who came through the door of our semi-empty warehouse were not convinced, sold or even slightly interested in paying for a membership at this point."

Warren Hoyt is not most people.

Hoyt was—and still is—a true believer. He was all-in from the start.

"Ted," as he is known, didn't hesitate. He offered to pay his membership in full for the year.

There was no convincing from the staff. No "Hey, do you think you could front us? We could really use the help." This was simply Ted being Ted.

Rockwell and McHugh didn't think much about it at the time. They were just excited to make rent.

"The fact that he believed in us so much during the start of our CrossFit journey here at CFMG is absolutely amazing to think back on."

—Geo Rockwell

Now, the business partners call the moment a significant one—for them and their livelihoods.

"The fact that he believed in us so much during the start of our CrossFit journey here at CFMG is absolutely amazing to think back on," Rockwell said. "People would ask us about our 'expensive' prices and 'why does CrossFit cost so much?' all the time. Ted just wrote a check and did not think twice about it."

This summer, CrossFit Mission Gorge had an opportunity to pay him back.

A Moment in Time

May 2011.

Hoyt, a protective services worker for San Diego County, was on his lunch break. The 43-year-old endurance junkie went for a run along the San Diego River.

Beautiful afternoon, Hoyt said. That was until he began to feel a gradual numbness travel from his right foot up his leg, hand and arm and through half of his face. The incident lasted maybe a minute. Hoyt said he nearly fell but managed to limp it off.



The entire CrossFit Mission Gorge community immediately united to help Hoyt.

His right foot had been bothering him earlier that day; Hoyt had shrugged it off as a pinched nerve.

“I knew just looking at the tech’s face as I got out of the machine that the news was not going to be good.”

—Ted Hoyt

During another run, the numbness returned; Hoyt was able to walk it off again.

He felt it later during a session at CFMG—this time in his feet while doing push-ups. His performance was, as Hoyt said, crap.

The symptoms still were simmering after a week. The sensation, Hoyt said, was like wearing a hat for too long—no pain, just pressure, particularly in his right hand. Hoyt was scheduled to run in the Rock ‘n’ Roll San Diego Marathon on June 5, but at the urging of friends and his wife, Julie, first went to see his doctor.

Hoyt’s doctor recommended he skip the event until tests were completed, as they believed there was a possibility he had suffered a stroke or had an aneurysm. He returned to the hospital on June 12 for an MRI.

“I knew just looking at the tech’s face as I got out of the machine that the news was not going to be good,” Hoyt said.

The usual technician-to-patient chit-chat didn't happen. Hoyt only was told to call his doctor once he got home.

That was at 2 p.m. At 5 p.m., the doctor called.

"Mr. Hoyt, are you OK?" were the first words out of the physician's mouth.

"I was before you called," Hoyt said.

The diagnosis: glioblastoma multiforme, or GBM.

GBM is the most common and most aggressive malignant primary brain tumor in humans. It is considered the most prevalent form of primary brain tumor, though it only occurs in two-to-three cases per 100,000 people in Europe and North America. Median survival time is about 14 months.

Scripps Green Hospital's ER admitted Hoyt that night. Three days later, he had intensive surgery to resect the tumor.

Call to Action

June 15.



Working together, CFMG members provided Hoyt with meals in the hospital and helped out with household chores.

McHugh got a text message from Dawn Fletcher, a fellow coach at CFMG. It was vague. All either knew was that Hoyt was in the hospital having something checked out.

Information remained sparse until the next morning, when Rockwell got a call from Hoyt's sister. The news spread quickly: Ted was in recovery after having surgery to resect a cancerous tumor from his brain, he was doing well but under anesthesia, and, amazingly he already was talking about returning to the gym to work on his double-unders.

**"The Facebook group
let people communicate,
interact and feel as if
they were really part of
something special."**

—Geo Rockwell

Fletcher, McHugh and Rockwell and were inspired. It was time for CFMG to act.

The trio decided that providing Hoyt with meals during his initial series of hospital visits would be a great way to get the ball rolling for the support effort. Assisting with household chores also was mentioned as a possibility. CFMG member Mark Lin ran from there, first establishing a Facebook group in a move he deemed necessary in terms of organization.

He was right.

More than 70 people joined the group almost overnight. That success saw Lin expand the support's reach even further with the use of Google Calendar to coordinate tasks and meal delivery. These community-driven ideas proved to be crucial, allowing those involved to communicate without overwhelming Hoyt or his wife with questions.

"It all started with Mark," McHugh said. "He immediately wanted to know how he could help."

"Mark was the one who really headed things up for the Facebook group," Rockwell said. "It all started with that. Before we knew it there was a ton of people who were throwing out ideas. The Facebook group let people communicate, interact and feel as if they were really part of something special. There was a buzz around CrossFit Mission Gorge."

Lin was, like most at CFMG, Hoyt's friend. They had met in April 2010, when Lin joined; the two quickly found they had a lot in common within those concrete walls.

"When someone like Ted, someone who is part of your family, is in need, jumping to their aid isn't even a question," Lin said. "Short of actually operating on Ted myself, I wanted to do everything humanly possible to help him."

For Lin, that meant juggling the support effort with the fast-approaching launch of his own affiliate gym, CrossFit 858, and a full-time marketing job.

**"Short of actually operating
on Ted myself, I wanted to
do everything humanly
possible to help him."**

—Mark Lin

"What was funny was that within a typical five-minute window at my old job, I would decide what type of bumper plates to buy for my box, coordinate who from CFMG would bring Ted a Paleo meal that night and haphazardly fill out a TPS report," Lin joked.

Office Space references aside, it was chaos.

"I wouldn't have had it any other way," Lin said. "It was a labor of love—less emphasis on labor."

Before Lin and company knew it, members were walking dogs and mowing lawns. Trimming hedges, even. Paleo-friendly meals worthy of a Michelin star regularly arrived at the Hoyt residence.

Hoyt said it morphed into some sort of amateur chef competition—one, of course, without the benefit of its own cable television series.

"I honestly think people were trying to out-cook each other," he said. "I hate to state it—Julie, forgive me—but I never ate better in my entire life. They would have kept going, too, had I not called it off. It was very cool and awesome and overwhelming."

And that was only the beginning.



***The benefit WOD for Hoyt was, appropriately,
a team workout.***



Ted Hoyt, working through his burpees.

One Community

Aug. 6.

It was a surreal day in America's Finest City: beautiful, cloudless, warm, with a touch of cool air to accent the chill, Miles Davis mood in town—a 1950s postcard. In a sense, perfect.

CFMG was jazzed. They were holding a benefit WOD for Hoyt at Mission Bay Park.

The event was a massive success, more so than the organizers could have imagined.

CFMG members came out in droves, with members from three other affiliates joining.

Everyone was decked out in green—Hoyt's favorite color—for a day capped, fittingly, by the man himself knocking out some burpees alongside some 100 people.

CFMG friends and family joined strangers and non-CrossFitters in support of a singular cause.

"I was, for the lack of better words, thrilled, excited and maybe even a little emotional," McHugh said. "Geo and I have worked hard to create a sense of community within our gym, so to see all these people wanting to help was a great experience. I knew that those at our gym who know Ted would be willing to help out, but I never expected strangers to jump aboard."

What had started with a few coaches wanting to help a friend in need had grown.

"In CrossFit, we cheer each other on," Lin said. "We suffer together, and we rejoice together. We feel each other's pain and happiness. There is undoubtedly a bond among the CrossFit community that you will not find in any other fitness realm. As a matter of fact, this type of bond is rarely found in any community, aside from perhaps the military or sports." He added: "The benefit was a true testament to the spirit of CrossFit and the kind of people that this program creates and draws in."

Hoyt agreed.

**"I would expect a similar
reaction from any affiliate
with any member.
CrossFit's just that way."**

—Ted Hoyt

"In a way, while it was me that was being supported, it was also the 'CrossFit athlete' that people really wanted to support," he said. "There was nothing special regarding me with the exception of having fantastic coaches. It was really about Mark, Geo and Ian bringing the CrossFit community together. I would expect a similar reaction from any affiliate with any member. CrossFit's just that way."

Hoyt added: "But, to answer your question on what it was like to see that kind of support, I have to use words that seem to resonate: awesome and super cool."

"It's time for enjoying life for me."

—Ted Hoyt

The Best of You

At the Hoyt benefit event, there was a brief introduction followed by a pair of gifts.

One was tickets to a baseball game. The other was a pair of tickets to a Foo Fighters concert. Foo Fighters is Hoyt's favorite band. CFMG viewed the tickets as more of a symbolic gesture—a date, a goal, to which Hoyt could look forward.

Hoyt was speechless. Well, almost.

"CrossFit has given me more than I ever expected," he said.

Lin yelled from the crowd: "I better see you moshing in the pit with the young bucks."

Hoyt has done his fair share of moshing in the pit of life of late. Although he has not been able to train at CFMG since his diagnosis, he has refused to allow his condition to have a negative effect on his lifestyle.

A trip to Kenya—for Julie's birthday—and another to the Panama Canal preceded the diagnosis. One week might include chemotherapy, but the next might include a beach party, maybe another trip, who knows?

Simply put: there's no stopping Hoyt from living.

"It's time for enjoying life for me," he said.

"Ted is exemplifying the 'never quit' mentality that makes us all proud of who we are," Lin said. "I think other athletes see this, too, and look up to him because of it."

"Is someone getting the best of you?" asks the Foo Fighters' song *Best of You*.

Hoyt, for one, is making sure nothing is going to wrestle the best from him.



Courtesy of Jack Goodson

About the Author

Jack Goodson, 29, is a professional journalist in northeast Tennessee. A graduate of the University of Richmond, Jack has been a member of the sports staff at the **Kingsport Times-News** since 2004. Additionally, his musings about the English Premier League can be seen on a variety of national websites, including [The Offside](#). Jack began his CrossFit journey in June 2009 and has since been satisfying his addiction daily.

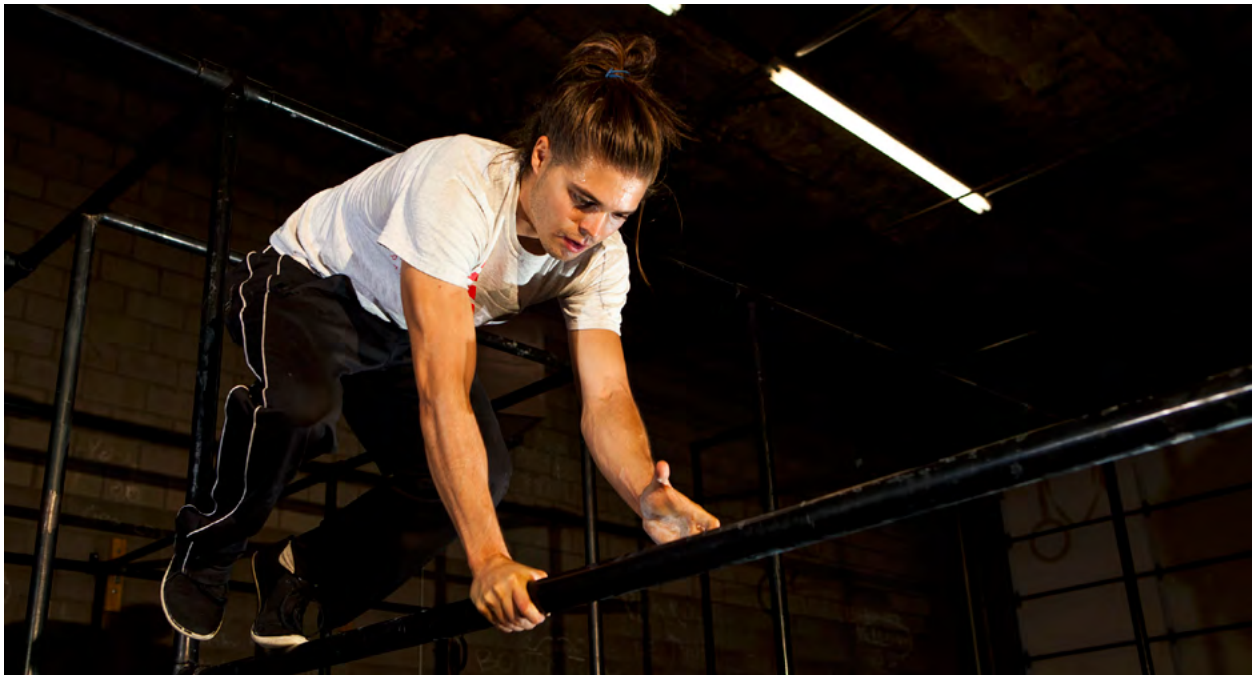
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Climbing the Urban Jungle

Ryan Ford explains five basic parkour-inspired exercises you can do in the urban jungle.

By **Ryan Ford** AMG CrossFit

November 2011



Photography by Cosmo Dudley

Parkour is an art of movement in which you train the body and mind to overcome everyday obstacles with speed and efficiency.

In everyday life, we constantly encounter walls, rails and benches. While most people avoid these obstacles, seeing them as nothing more than a barrier or an inconvenience, parkour practitioners—known as “traceurs”—and children see these as opportunities to express oneself, stay fit and have fun. All of us used to be 10 years old, climbing trees, jumping between rocks and coming up with physical challenges on the playground. If we can preserve that childhood mentality and creatively use our environment for fun and fitness, we will gain confidence, functionality and health. Even if you have no plans to become parkour’s next all-star, at least take the time to see your environment in a different way.

1 of 10

In this article, you will learn five parkour-inspired exercises that use a simple wall or rail to increase strength, balance, coordination and power. Learning to overcome obstacles is not only fun but useful. You might not be ready to land a high-paying stunt gig in Hollywood's next blockbuster chase scene, but at least you'll be able to traverse the urban jungle to catch that train or bus. You also might be ready for the CrossFit Games, as both the 2010 and 2011 events challenged competitors to climb over walls and swing between bars. Will you be ready?

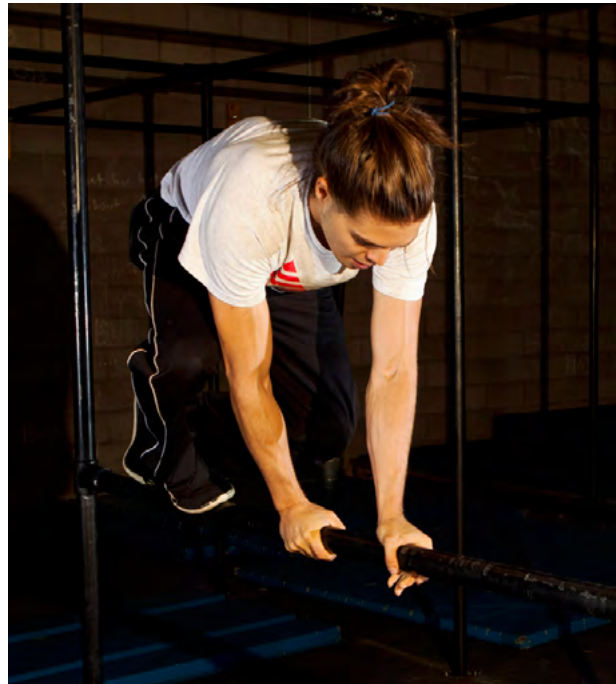
**If we can preserve that
childhood mentality
and creatively use our
environment for fun
and fitness, we will gain
confidence, functionality
and health.**

Cat Balance Application

The cat balance is a method used to move along the tops of narrow obstacles such as rails, walls or I-beams. By keeping the center of gravity low and having more points of contact with the obstacle, cat balancing can be safer, faster and more stable than moving on two feet. Because every muscle in the body helps in balancing and moving along the obstacle, the cat balance is a great conditioning exercise. In addition to its practical uses and fitness benefits, cat balancing increases balance, proprioception and sensitivity.

Preparation and Body Position

1. Squat down on a rail with both hands and both feet contacting the rail. Your weight should be evenly distributed among the four limbs.
2. The limbs should be arranged so that each side alternates. For example, a correct order would be right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot.



Meow! Cat balancing engages every muscle in the body to balance on a rail or narrow wall.

3. The head, back and butt should form a relatively straight line approximately parallel to the ground. Do not allow the butt to rise higher than the head.
4. The hands should grip the rail with the center of the palm on top of the rail, not on the side of the rail.
5. Turn the knees slightly outward so that you do not hit your elbows with your knees when moving.

Execution of Movement

1. Take reciprocating steps with the hands and feet. For example, move the left hand and right foot at the same time.
2. Next, move the right hand and left foot together.
3. Remember to always keep the butt low.
4. Constantly balance yourself, starting with the forearms and then engaging the shoulder muscles.

Exercise Science

- Primary muscles worked: Legs, deltoids (anterior, medial) and forearms.
- Synergists: Pectorals, latissimus dorsi and core.



For better balance, place the center of your palms on the top of the rail, not the sides.

Progressions

Begin by learning the cat balance on the ground. When you have the basic idea on the ground, try doing it along a straight line on the ground, with every step contacting the line. When you are good at this, try doing it along a wall, and then a narrower wall and, finally, a rail.

Because every muscle in the body helps in balancing and moving along the obstacle, the cat balance is a great conditioning exercise.

Other Notes

- A common problem people have when practicing the cat balance is their knees bump or get tangled with their arms. This can easily be fixed by turning the knees slightly outward so they do not hit the elbows. Another fix to this problem is lengthening out the entire body and taking smaller steps that leave space between the legs and arms.
- Another problem people have is with placement of the hands. When the palms are positioned contacting the sides of the rail, it is difficult to correct balance in both directions. However, moving the palms to grip the top of the rail will result in a much sturdier base and it will be easier to balance.

Related Exercises and Variations

- Quadrupedal movement (basic)
- Uphill cat balance
- Downhill cat balance

For a video example, click [here](#).

Climb-Up Application

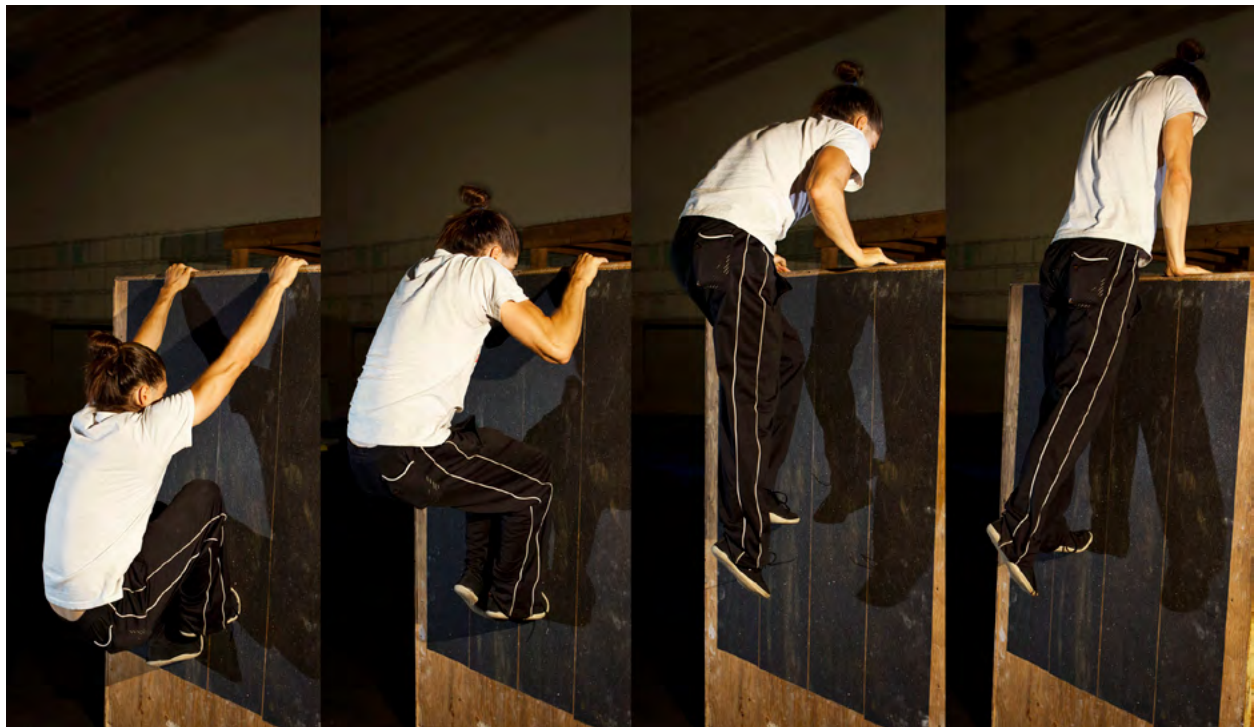
A variation of the muscle-up, climb-ups are used to climb up and over a wall from the hanging position. Climb-ups are used extensively in parkour after doing wall pops, arm jumps and climbing in general. The climb-up builds the necessary strength and coordination to overcome any shape of wall and is an invaluable skill for any practitioner.

Preparation and Body Position

Hang from the side of a wall by the arms. The feet should be pressed against the wall just a little bit lower than hip height.

Execution of Movement

1. Level 1 climb-up (by any means necessary): From the start position, pull, push and scramble up on top of the wall using whatever means possible. Try to contact the top of the wall with only your hands and feet. At first, you might need to use your forearms, but for the sake of safety, speed and efficiency, never put your knees down on top of the wall.
2. Level 2 climb-up (symmetrical arms, distinct pull-up and dip motions): From the start position, apply pressure into the wall with your feet while pulling up. When you make the transition from pull to push, do so symmetrically. When the transition has been made, push yourself up to the support position. You should be able to do at least 10 dips and 10 kipping pull-ups to achieve this level.
3. Level 3 climb-up (symmetrical and straight arms, appears to be one fluid motion): From the start position, do an explosive knee drive and pull-up, finishing in the support position. The arms should be symmetrical and straight for the entire movement, skipping the transitional pause that splits a Level 2 climb-up into a two-part movement. You should be able to do at least 20 dips and 20 kipping pull-ups to achieve this level.
4. Level 4 climb-up (from hanging position to feet on top of the wall in one fluid motion): From the start position, do an explosive knee drive and pull-up, finishing in a squat position with both feet on top of the wall you were grabbing. The arms should be symmetrical and straight for the entire movement. You should be able to do at least 30 dips and 30 kipping pull-ups to achieve this level.



Climbing a wall requires a transition from a pull to a push, as in a muscle-up.

Exercise Science

- Primary muscles worked: Latissimus dorsi, biceps, pectorals, rhomboids, trapezius, quadriceps, gluteus maximus, hip extensors, ankle dorsiflexors, triceps, deltoids (anterior), pectorals, rotator cuffs, external rotators (infraspinatus, teres minor), teres major, deltoids (posterior), abdominals, pectoralis minor and serratus anterior.
- Synergists: Spinal erectors, abdominals, pectoralis minor, serratus anterior and lower traps.

Progressions

For some people, it will take time to become skilled enough and strong enough even for the Level 1 climb-up. Some things to work on to obtain the Level 1 climb-up:

- Dips and pull-ups—lots of them.
- Introduce extra momentum. Find a wall between 4 and 6 feet tall and practice getting on top of the wall with a jump, a run and a kick off the wall.
- Practicing climb-downs to get strong enough to do a climb-up is just like training negatives for muscle-ups or pull-ups. Practice by starting on the top of the wall and lowering yourself slowly into the hang position. This is a great way to work toward a Level 1 climb-up. Practicing the climb-down with symmetrical arms is also a great way to train for Level 2 and Level 3 climb-ups.

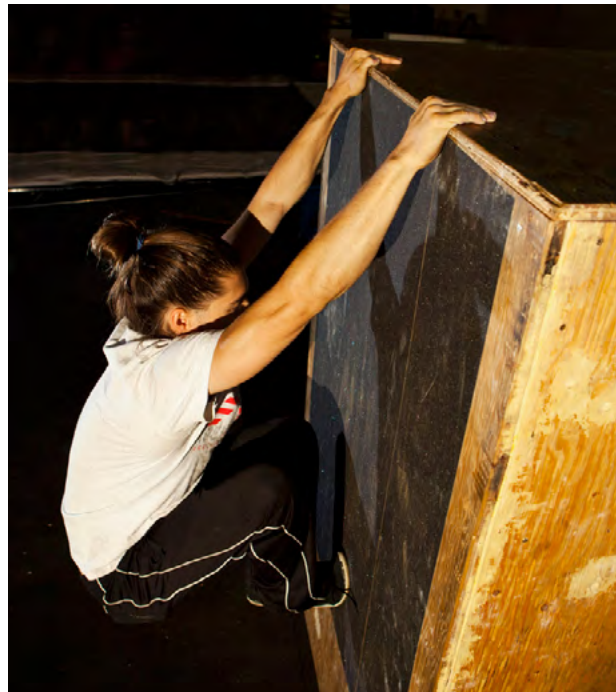
The climb-up builds the necessary strength and coordination to overcome any shape wall and is an invaluable skill for any practitioner.

Other Notes

- The starting position of a climb-up is very important. A good starting position will set you up for a quicker, smoother climb-up followed by a vault onto or over the obstacle. The three main body parts to pay attention to

in the starting position of a climb-up are the fingers, the arms and the feet. In addition, full body tension should always be maintained in this position and throughout the movement. When muscles are relaxed, there is a higher chance of slipping down the wall.

- When gripping the wall, the entire fingers should be contacting the wall, not just the fingertips. By getting the fingers over the wall, you will have a stronger grip from which to pull up.
- While in the starting position of a climb-up, the arms should be straight. Straight arms allow for more power and strength than bent arms. To experience this concept, try doing a muscle-up starting from bent arms. Then try a muscle-up starting from straight arms. Starting from full extension is much easier.
- To maximize the contribution of the feet and legs to your climb-up, the feet should be slightly staggered when in the starting position of a climb-up. This allows you to take a step up the wall and set yourself up for a better transition between your climb-up and your vault over the wall.



When starting a climb-up, keep your arms straight and grip the wall with the length of your fingers, not just your fingertips.

Related Exercises and Variations

- Clapping climb-up
- Kipping pull-up
- Wall dip
- Muscle-up
- One-arm climb-up

For a video example, click [here](#).

Rail Squat Application

A spin-off of the regular squat, the rail squat builds leg strength, balance and proprioception skills. In addition to targeting the typical muscle groups of a regular squat, the rail squat develops small stabilizer muscles throughout the body as you fight to keep your balance on the rail. This balance training is invaluable in developing a solid precision jump (precisely jumping from one point to another) and other skills.



Start a rail squat balanced on the balls of your feet, with your arms outstretched for balance.



Use the same body position in a rail squat as in an air squat, and grab the rail with both hands at the bottom of the squat.

Preparation and Body Position

1. Stand on top of the rail with the feet shoulder width apart and pointing straight forward. You should be balancing on the balls of your feet, not the arches or the heels.
2. Keep the arms out in front of the body to aid in balance.

Execution of Movement

1. Squat down as low as possible.
2. At the bottom of the squat, grab the rail with both hands.
3. Release the rail and push through the legs back up to standing.

In addition to targeting the typical muscle groups of a regular squat, the rail squat develops small stabilizer muscles throughout the body as you fight to keep your balance on the rail.

Exercise Science

- Primary muscles worked: Glutes, quadriceps, hamstrings and calves.
- Synergists: Abdominals.

Other Notes

- Although the technique for the rail squat will undoubtedly vary slightly from the regular squat, it is still important to follow the technical guidelines for the regular squat as closely as possible. When squats are done improperly, they can lead to excessive strain on the legs and back. Proper squatting form consists of four major points:
 1. Always keep the feet flat on the ground.
 2. Track the knees above the toes.
 3. The back should always retain its lumbar curve and remain relatively upright.
 4. Always keep the head up.
- While it is impossible to keep your entire foot flat on the rail when doing rail squats, it is still important to keep your head and chest up. Also, maintain the lumbar curve as much as possible and try to keep the knees right above your toes.
- When doing rail squats, always maintain soft joints. Never lock any of your joints out as this will cause you to lose your balance. This concept applies to any parkour technique on top of a rail.
- Be sure to grab the rail with both hands at the bottom of every squat. Not only does this give you a standardized point to reach during each repetition of the exercise, but it also gives you four points of contact on the rail, allowing you to correct your balance more easily. This position can also be used to rest from the muscular demands of constantly trying to balance on top of the rail.

Related Exercises and Variations

- Squat
- Pistol
- Rail pistol

For a video example, click [here](#).

Plant Plyo Application

Like the broad-jump burpee, the plant plyo is a great exercise for building strength and endurance through commonly used movement techniques. The plant plyo takes elements from other basic exercises and movements, including punches, squats, tuck jumps and blocks. In addition to developing the skills needed for vaulting, the plant plyo is a draining, full-body-conditioning technique.

Preparation and Body Position

1. Begin by standing next to a wall that's about waist height.
2. Place the feet about shoulder width apart and about 1 foot away from the wall.
3. Place the hands on top of the wall about shoulder width apart.
4. Maintain a slight bend in the legs and arms.

Execution of Movement

1. Simultaneously jump up with the legs and push up with the arms; the goal of these pushing motions is to raise the hips above the obstacle.
2. When the hips have been raised above the obstacle, bring the knees toward the chest.
3. As the knees come to the chest, place the feet on top of the obstacle, in between the arms; this results in a squatting position on the obstacle.
4. With good squat form, stand up on the obstacle.
5. Squat back down to a full squat position.
6. Shift the weight forward onto the arms while raising and pushing the hips backwards.
7. Ending in the starting position, land on the ground and absorb the impact.

Exercise Science

- Primary muscles worked: Glutes, hamstrings, calves, spinal erectors, quadriceps, serratus anterior, deltoids (anterior), rectus femoris, hip flexors, abdominals and pectorals (upper).
- Synergists: Spinal erectors, abdominals, quadriceps and calves.



Look around your neighborhood for a waist-high wall and start practicing your plant-plyo technique.

Progressions

- A beginning traceur should begin this drill by bringing one or two feet onto the wall, but placing the feet to one side of the hands. Bringing the feet to one side of the hands is easier and less scary than between the hands. However, it should be a goal to achieve a symmetrical plant plyo with the feet going between the hands.
 - As the traceur becomes more confident, he or she can work toward the strict plant plyo by finding a wall that is several feet wide on top. Next, place the hands farther onto the wall and bring the feet together toward the hands. At first, the practitioner might only be able to bring the feet within a foot or two of the hands. The goal is to get the feet all the way to the same spot as the hands.
 - Once a practitioner can perform a strict plant plyo, he or she should further develop it by exploding into the plant even more. Instead of landing on the wall in a full squat, try to skip that part of the movement and land as close to standing as you can get. If you can plant onto the wall all the way to a stand, you have developed a massive amount of power and coordination!
-

Like the broad-jump burpee, the plant plyo is a great exercise for building strength and endurance through commonly used movement techniques.

- For an added challenge, try doing this exercise on a rail. In addition to the workout it already offers, practicing the movement on a rail will also test balance and proprioception skills.

Other Notes

Remember, this is a quick and explosive movement. The slower you perform this exercise, the more impractical and anatomically difficult it becomes.

Related Exercises and Variations

- Squat
- Tuck jump to silent landing
- Dip
- Push-up
- Monkey plant plyo to precision jump
- Monkey plant plyo to vertical jump

For a video example, click [here](#).

Hang Shimmy Application

The hang shimmy is another practical movement that is also a great conditioning exercise. It is often used to traverse along the tops of walls before finding a suitable place to climb up or dismount. In addition to building endurance, the hang shimmy is a brutal upper-body and core exercise.

Preparation and Body Position

1. Hang from the side of the wall by the arms.
2. Place the legs against the wall for support.

Execution of Movement

1. Reach 1 to 2 feet along the wall in your desired direction with your leading hand.
2. As this leading hand re-grips the wall, move the back foot, immediately followed by the front foot.
3. Place the back foot back on the wall, immediately followed by the front foot.
4. Move the back hand along the wall so it is almost touching the front hand.

Exercise Science

- Primary muscles worked: Abdominals, latissimus dorsi and forearms.
- Synergists: Deltoids and pectorals.



Practice the hang shimmy, and soon you'll be a real-life Spider-Man, easily traversing across walls.

Progressions

- If this movement is too difficult, you might need to work on your strength in the hanging position—most importantly, your grip strength. Practice getting into the starting hang position and just holding it. Make your first goal to hang for 10 seconds. As you get better, you should be able to hold it for 30 seconds, and then 60-plus seconds. At this point, try hanging by one arm to further develop your grip strength.
- Once you have developed the strength to hold yourself up comfortably in the hang position, begin by taking small “steps” with your arms and feet. Each step should only cover a few inches. As you get better, try to cover more distance with each step until you get up to 1 or 2 feet.
- When the standard hang-shimmy movement becomes easy, try explosively moving both hands at the same time so you are effectively “dyno-ing” laterally along the wall. Another challenge is to do the hang shimmy without using your feet.



Take the strain off your arms by applying constant pressure to the wall with your feet and legs.

(The hang shimmy) is often used to traverse along the tops of walls before finding a suitable place to climb up or dismount.

Other Notes

- Because you are moving laterally, one side of the body will be using slightly different muscles than the other. Make sure you practice moving in both directions.
- The three main body parts to pay attention to during a hang shimmy are the fingers, the arms and the feet/legs. In addition, full body tension always should be maintained in this position and throughout the movement. When muscles are relaxed, there is a higher chance of slipping down the wall.
- When gripping the wall, the entire fingers should contact the wall, not just the fingertips. Getting more of the fingers over the wall results in a stronger grip.

- The arms should always be straight while moving in a hang shimmy. Straight arms allow for more endurance and strength than bent arms. To experience this concept first-hand, try hanging from a wall with bent arms. Next, try hanging from the wall with straight arms. If done correctly, you should be able to hang for a longer time with straight arms.
- To maximize the contribution of the feet and legs to your hang shimmy, the feet should constantly be applying pressure directly into the wall. This helps to take some of the strain off the arms.

Related Exercises and Variations

- Without feet/legs
- Straight arms
- Bent arms
- Moving both hands at once (taking lateral jumps)
- Kipping pull-up
- Muscle-up
- Climb-up

For a video example, click [here](#).



About the Author

Ryan Ford is the owner of AMG CrossFit and *Apex Movement*, a parkour gym. Ryan also is known for his online parkour training video series called *DemonDrills*.

THE CrossFit[®] *kitchen* K I D S



Sweet Cheeks Headquarters

BREAKFAST PIZZA

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Sometimes it's hard to get your kids to eat breakfast. When that happens, get crafty and combine one of their favorite foods—pizza—with eggs to go. This Paleo pizza is a sure-fire hit. It's easy to make and easy to modify with your family's favorite breakfast toppings.

Makes 2 servings.

blocks per serving

.5 carbohydrate blocks

2 protein blocks

4.5 fat blocks

ingredients

crust

- 1 cup almond meal
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ tbs. olive oil
- ⅛ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. chopped fresh oregano

toppings

- 2 eggs
- 2 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 heirloom tomato, sliced or chopped
- A few sprigs fresh basil, torn
- Salt and pepper to taste

notes

There are several options to create more balance in this meal. Serve your pizza with a side of fruit, add sautéed vegetables of your choice, or sauce it up, which actually helps the eggs stick to the crust.





directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together almond meal, eggs, olive oil, baking soda and garlic powder with a spoon. Once combined, use your hands to form the mixture into a ball. If the dough is too thick to mold, add a small amount of olive oil.
3. Place the ball of dough on a baking sheet and press into a crust shape (round or oval will work).
4. Bake in the oven for 12-15 minutes, or until slightly crispy.
5. While the crust is baking, chop the tomatoes and tear up the basil.
6. In a small bowl, beat the eggs.
7. Just before the crust comes out of the oven, cook the eggs over medium-low heat until they are still slightly runny. Don't completely cook the eggs, because you will be cooking them in the oven for a few minutes. Salt and pepper the eggs as desired.
8. Crumble the eggs onto the crust and top with tomatoes and bacon.
9. Bake in the oven for 2-3 minutes.
10. Remove from the oven and top with the fresh basil. Cut and serve.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Bearing the Standards

Jeff Tucker and Dusty Hyland of CrossFit Gymnastics set the standards for basic gymnastics movements.

By Jeff Tucker and Dusty Hyland

November 2011



All images: Jeff Tucker/Dusty Hyland

A question I am often asked is what are—or what should be—the standards of movements for gymnastics skills we use within CrossFit?

Although we are not being subjected to a panel of USAGF judges under the scrutiny of USAGF standards, we agree that the time has come for some solid standards of movement and judging standards for the CrossFit faithful out there, whether those standards are to be used for CrossFit Games events, grassroots affiliate events or training in general.

1 of 7

So here is a list of these definitions, movements and specific standards set in order and designed to be easy to judge. More importantly, these standards will allow for good movement and strength development in competition or training. I do not consider this a mandatory layout but merely my opinion in regards to gymnastics skills and CrossFit.

Cubit—A cubit is defined as the measurement from the longest finger to the elbow on any given athlete. Normally, it's about the width of the shoulder girdle and is allowed for hand placement by any athlete when performing handstand movements, static holds, etc.

The Push-Up—The hands are set just outside shoulder width (measured by the cubit of each athlete or within 30 inches). The chest touches the ground and the athlete's body returns to a locked-out position. There is no deviation in the trunk or breakage of integrity between shoulder and hip; i.e., no angle in the body line.

Hand-Release Push-Up—This push-up is often employed and seen in competition, and at the bottom of the movement the hands must retract completely from the floor before concentric loading is achieved.

The Freestanding Static Handstand—The athlete is performing a "handstand," an inverted balance on the hands. The arms are locked out with hands placed just outside the measured cubit (or within 30 inches), the shoulder girdle is open and extended, and the legs are together and unbroken (no angles in the body line) with toes pointed toward the ceiling. The body should be in a hollow, which is ideal, but simply put, a broken hip line resulting in a pike form is not allowed as the body should be in a nice vertical or "stacked" line. Think of it as feet over knees, knees over hips, hips over shoulders and shoulders over hands. The head form can be in any position for the balance hold: neutral or fully open with eyes directed toward the ground.

Lockout/Open Shoulder—"Lockout" refers to a position where the arms are fully locked out and straight and the shoulder is fully open. No angles are allowed in a fully open shoulder and locked-out arm.



The cubit: a standard distance in the gymnastics world.



In a good handstand, no angles are present in the body line.



The “handstand push-up” is more accurately referred to as a “headstand push-up.”

HeSPU/Headstand Push-Up—It is important to note that what we in CrossFit classify as a “handstand push-up” is normally a press with 50 percent range of motion. It is truly a “headstand push-up,” and we will classify this as a range of motion. For ease of conversation, we will refer to the movement as an “HeSPU.” It begins in a fully extended static handstand hold against a vertical wall. As you lower to the floor, our target area is the top of the head, not the forehead or nose. The head should be at a neutral position

so you can ensure its top will touch. Furthermore, this simple ROM should return to a position with fully locked-out arms and fully open shoulders. Should flexibility of the shoulder be an issue, then one must open to capacity, showing some ear beyond the arm and shoulder plane due to the lack of fully open shoulders. This will be completed with the head moving forward in order to see the full ear of the athlete. The legs should be together and straight (no bent knees), and the toe point is optional. The hands are to be within an athlete’s cubit or a 30-inch measurement. Any hand placement within 30 inches is fine. The same rules apply if Olympic plates are used for a platform and an AbMat laid between them for a softer touch of the top of the head.

Normally, HeSPUs are performed against a solid vertical surface with heels to the wall. If an individual completes the range of motion of the inverted press while coming away from the wall and yet can meet the standards given for hand width, leg extension, fully open shoulders and/or ear visibility, then the rep is considered good. This would essentially be what we classify as a “balanced HeSPU.” Hand placement in relation to the inverted body for foundational support—meaning distance from the body when inverted—elbow placement during performance (turned out or turned in when pressing), and hand distance from the wall are all issues that merely load the athlete’s system in a positive or negative way based on strength of the athlete or habits developed when training. These considerations should not be part of a judging standard, but they will certainly affect the inverted press.

KHeSPU/Kipping HSPU—All form issues discussed above stay the same with the exception that the legs are now allowed to be bent and apart while generating momentum. This is a form of inverted kick to aid an individual in completing the inverted press. Consider it an inverted form of the push-press movement. It is also considered a scaled movement for a normal HeSPU.

The kip is primarily used to add momentum for the HeSPU. All standards should apply as for a normal HeSPU as discussed above in relation to the shoulder, arms and ear-plane positions. I have seen several who perform this movement when allowed but let their hands move sometimes, so it’s important to note that they need to stay within the 30-inch allowance or the athlete’s cubit. As for the fully open shoulder or showing of the ear, it becomes very important to focus on these aspects as they allow for a faster inverted press.

HSPU/Handstand Push-Up—This is a movement on any elevated platform whereby the head actually lowers below the hand placement. It is performed on plates, parallettes or rings, for example, and the head's target is now meant to be lower than the hands as one lowers in the negative portion before returning to lockout. The more one lowers the head below the foundational support of the hands, the heavier and more difficult the movement becomes and the more strength required. All standards for lockout—open shoulder, legs together, ear plane, no body angles—apply as discussed.

In this movement, you can require that the top of the head touch a target, such as the ground or a mat, or comes below the hands' foundational placement. The point of this movement is to increase the load of the press and begin to approach body-weight press movements while inverted. The handstand push-up is about increasing ROM (range of motion) by evaluating the depth of the athlete's head as it lowers in reference to the apparatus. If an athlete is on parallettes, then the standard to be judged is how deep the head is in reference to the horizontal handle gripped by the hands. The athlete must lower below the parallette handle/horizontal plane created by the dowel and then return to the fully locked-out position. If we require more depth, we can place a target on the ground such as an AbMat or plate or soft target.

I prefer to use the apparatus for a point of reference when performing the inverted press, rather than the ground or a target. The point of reference for full extreme range of motion (EROM) will be when an athlete's head comes below the rings or parallettes or plates used for elevated platforms and returns without the head making any contact with the ground. This more than meets the standard and allows for a safer position of the athlete with no pressure on cervical spine.

HSPU on Rings—The rings should be set at 50 centimeters for width, and the straps should not be allowed to move outside of that width. The ring handle should be 10 inches off the ground (measuring the lowest point of the ring to ground). Wooden rings are preferred, and straps are fine. The buckles need to be high in placement to avoid encumbering the arms or body. We will use the rings as a point of reference for the ranges of motion (depth) for ring HSPU: with relation to the top of the head, the standard depths of movement from A to B will be determined by the top or bottom of the ring itself.



In a true "handstand push-up," the head moves lower than the base of support.



In a ring handstand push-up, the bottom of the rings themselves will determine the required depth.

An athlete starts this movement in a locked-out position. He or she must kick up to a static handstand hold in any safe manner, or a straddle press can be used. Once locked out, the athlete can wrap the legs in front or in back of the straps (or perform the movement freestanding with the feet together), and the EROM may begin. The head should remain neutral, and once the top of the head breaks the horizontal plane of the bottom of the ring where the hands are placed, the return to lockout can begin. The athlete is allowed to turn the rings in line with the shoulder as though holding a bar, or the rings can stay facing forward and parallel to one another.

The target for the head is not to the ground but rather below the bottom of the ring. You can also target the top-most portion of the ring when lowering if you wish to lessen the strength component of the movement.

When the athlete's head comes below the rings, the return is allowed without the head making any contact with the ground to show full range of movement. This standard can be used for elevated (on plates) and dynamic planes (the rings). As stated above, using the apparatus as a target is preferable to the ground to prevent excessive pressure on the cervical spine.

Body forms will be varied and angles will occur in this for a workout. It is obvious there are strategic ways in which to game such movements, and this is not the point. We are looking for judging standards only for the EROM on HSPU on the rings. It is far better to be in a hollow-body position with good vertical stability for this advanced form, but many will over-arch and rely on leg pulls and leverage completion. Your job as a judge is to judge the standard from Point A to Point B. The shoulders should be fully open when at the top of the lockout, and again, if flexibility is an issue in the shoulder girdle, then a full ear must be seen from the side of the ear plane relevant to the shoulder opening.

Strict Muscle-Up on Rings—Starting in a hang position with the rings turned out, thumbs facing forward and away from the body, with no momentum or swing, the athlete pulls up through transition of the dip to a locked-out support position above the rings. The movement is finished with a slight turn out at the top to 45 degrees or beyond. The movement must begin with the athlete having no contact with the ground, so the feet must be elevated beyond the ground at least 3 inches.

The ideal strict muscle-up starts with a static hang into a strong pull and transition and finishes in support. Some body angles may occur with a broken hip/piked body. If a pike occurs and the athlete uses momentum to complete by swinging the piked form, it is a no count. Once again, no momentum is used, merely false-grip leverage (optional). The ROM of the dip is not important; however, a lockout with a turn-out with thumbs facing forward is required at the end of the movement. The legs should be together with the toes pointed.

Kipping Muscle-Up on Rings—Use the same starting position as for the strict muscle-up: with or without a false grip, with the thumbs facing forward, turned out and away from the body. However, the athlete may employ movement and a dynamic tap that doesn't exceed the height of the rings in either direction. The ROM of the dip is not important; however a lockout with a turn-out with thumbs facing forward is required at the end of the movement. The legs can be apart in this move but cannot come higher than the rings (in front or behind) at any point in the swing.

Pull-Over on a Bar to Support—Starting in a dead hang with any grip, the athlete pulls the body up and pikes over the bar to a support position. Again, the arms are straight at the beginning and in finished support. (This form mimicks a backward roll on the floor.)

Pull-Over on a Bar to Support to Lowered L-Sit Hang—After the pull-over is completed, the athlete must lower under control, backward or forward to a static L-hang where the legs are straight and parallel to the ground at 90 degrees and the arms are straight.



In an L-sit, the legs should be parallel to the floor.



***Not mentioned in this article but critical to success:
always stick the dismount.***

Kipping to Pull-Over on a Bar to Support—Starting from a straight-body hang, the athlete is allowed to use a tap or dynamic swing to assist achieving the end position in the pull-over. The athlete's body must travel up and over the bar (mimicking a backward roll) and finish in a static locked-out support position on the bar.

Dead-Hang Pull-Up—From a static hang, the athlete pulls his chin above the bar, breaking the horizontal plane of the bar.

Chest-to-Bar Pull-Up—From a static hang, the athlete pulls his or chest to the bar. The bar should contact the chest just below the clavicle.

Kipping Pull-Up—From an arms-straight dead hang on the bar (any grip), the athlete uses momentum to bring the chin above the bar, breaking the horizontal plane of the bar.

Strict Muscle-Up on Bar—From a static hang with no contact made on the ground by the athlete (any grip), the athlete with no swing or momentum performs a pull up and transfer to a fully locked out support position above the plane of the bar (not a pull over). Legs together, toes pointed.

Kipping Muscle-Up on Bar—From a static hang (any grip), the athlete will use a swing or momentum and possibly a tap to perform a pull-up and transfer to a locked-out support position above the plane of the bar. This is not a pull-over. The legs can be apart, and angles will be created in this momentum movement.

L-Sit on the Floor—From a seated position with the hands just outside the hips, the athlete pushes into a support position with the legs straight and parallel to the ground. The arms are locked out, and the hands may be in any position.

L-Sit on Parallettes—From a support position on the parallettes, the athlete lifts the legs straight up and holds them parallel with the ground with arms locked out.

L-Sit on Rings—From a support position on the rings, the athlete lifts the legs straight up and holds them parallel with the ground. The arms are straight and locked out, with thumbs facing forward.

Ring Dips—From a fully locked-out support position with thumbs facing forward, the athlete descends, breaking at the elbow, past parallel or 90 degrees of the elbow, then presses out to a support in a locked-out position with the thumbs facing forward. He will finish with a 45-degree turnout.

Support to Iron Cross—From a locked-out support position, the athlete lowers with straight arms to the cross position. A false grip may be employed, but the shoulder is on the same plane as the bottom of the rings. The athlete holds for two seconds, then returns to fully locked-out support.

Backward Roll on Rings—From a hang position with thumbs facing forward, the athlete pulls up, then tucks and rolls backward into a controlled support position at the top of the rings. The arms are straight, with the thumbs in a 45-degree turnout. This is similar to the movement of a pull-over on a bar.

Forward Roll on Rings—The athlete is in a support position on the rings and tucks and rolls forward to a lower hang position with thumbs finishing forward in a turnout position.

This is merely an introduction to standards for movements currently used, and I will put forth standards for more movements as we develop such body forms or moves in CrossFit competition and training.



About the Authors



Courtesy of Dusty Hyland

Dusty Hyland is the co-owner of DogTown CrossFit Culver City, Calif. By the age of seven, he had started an active athletic regimen that has continued throughout his life. At 13, Dusty gave up a host of other sports to focus on gymnastics. He was a very successful gymnast, and after his father's job promotion and relocation to Northern California, he began to train at Stanford University under two-time world champion Tong Fei. By 16, he competed at the Junior Olympic National Championships and trained with the U.S. Olympic Team. In college, he competed in NCAA Division 1 men's gymnastics and scored a NCAA record perfect 10 on the still rings. After one more year of competition, he retired due to injury. He then travelled the world starring in a Cirque du Soleil-type live show before settling in Los Angeles and doing some stunt work in films.

He has CrossFit Level 1, Gymnastics and Mobility certificates, and he is an NASM CPT and a USA Gymnastics Coach.



Courtesy of Jeff Tucker

Jeff R. Tucker, or "Tucker" to those who know him, is the CEO and founder of Global Sports Xtreme (GSX) in Fort Worth, Texas, and he has a passion for teaching gymnastics. At CrossFit Gymnastics Seminars, he and his staff delve into basic and intermediate gymnastic forms in a lecture setting followed by practical application. Skills are repeated until the student has a satisfactory understanding of how to learn, spot and teach such methods safely. Students are also taught how to scale the movements until they become second nature. Tucker's goal in this course is to aid CrossFitters in using gymnastics for strength development, core control and WOD progressions. Result: the CrossFit community will become more engaged in using one of the foundational blocks for CrossFit workouts—gymnastics.

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.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

In Service to Their Country

Lon Wagner visits the VA Medical Center in Hampton, Va., to discover what it means to be a veteran.

By Lon Wagner

November 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

It's pretty much any day at the VA Medical Center in Hampton, Va.—and every last parking spot outside the main hospital is filled. Drivers circle, cars idle, waiting for someone to back out.



The VA Medical Center in Hampton, Va., is full of veterans who lived through important parts of U.S. history.

Wars or conflicts or “operations” have been steady over the past seven or eight decades. Many men have enlisted, or been drafted, and then more and more women joined them. Doctors got better at saving lives from devastating injuries. The War on Terror started—and never ended.

Here, it’s all added up to this:

A full parking lot. Full buildings. A construction schedule that can barely keep up.

Suffice to say that here, in Hampton, right on the Chesapeake Bay, right across the water from Norfolk Naval Station, just miles from military strongholds such as Oceana Naval Air Station, Fort Eustis, Little Creek Amphibious Base and too many other bases to name, active-duty soldiers and sailors get familiar with the turf and stick around when they retire.

And the older they get, the more they come here, to the VA Medical Center.

So it is that here a person could walk the halls on any day, introduce himself to anyone, at any time, and find a story.

And if that person introduced himself to enough men and women, enough veterans of the U.S. military, he could piece together a pretty good story. Sure, he could tell many stories of battle heroism, selflessness and sacrifice. He could tell a tale of the changing nature of war—of the shift from hand-to-hand combat to surgical strikes and back to IEDs. But he could also tell a bigger story of race relations, of women’s gains toward equality, of the shift from war protesters to the “support the troops” movement.

He could tell, by talking to these veterans, a pretty honest version of the recent history of America.

Brothers in Arms

In one wing, inside a nice but modest office, is Dr. Laurie Lindbloom. Her title is spinal cord injury service chief. Her office is hot.

“It’s very warm in here,” she says, apologetically, “because a lot of the fellows like it warm.”

There’s a new clinic being constructed, on the other side of the full parking lot. Lindbloom says the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn Outpatient Clinic will be nice—private bedrooms, private bathrooms. In the hallway outside her office, evidence of the demand abounds. Chairs constructed especially for those who can’t move their arms or legs or both line the hallway—a dozen sit in a row. Lindbloom says that the VA tries to make it so people can get the care they need as outpatients and live at home as long as possible. But once they move in, usually they’re there for good.

“One of our fellows, he’s almost 90,” she says. “One time I told him, ‘Why don’t you go home for Christmas?’ He said, ‘I don’t want to go home. Here, I go to the library, I play Bingo, I go fishing ... I can’t do that stuff at home.’”

Go outside her door, go left past the special chairs and down the hall, and you’ll see Eugene Hodge. His electric scooter sports his old car license plate on the back, which says a lot about him: Virginia 628ZN (handicap symbol). Vietnam Veteran. Bronze Star.

Hodge has a mustache, tinted glasses, a plaid shirt and, notably, Champion sports shoes that remain perfectly white—because he can’t walk. But he can talk, and when asked, doesn’t mind doing so.

Grew up a country boy, in Orange County, Va. Drafted in 1968. Army, E6, staff sergeant, attached to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

Sure didn't want to be a hero, sure wouldn't use that word on himself even now. Served a complete tour of Vietnam, was on the command track.

"We did night ambushes, combat assaults, called in air support, stuff like that."

He manned a .50-caliber machine gun. He fought for his life in cities most Americans never would have heard of but now know like they know "Philadelphia" or "Seattle." His unit patrolled from Da Nang to Saigon. He was 20 then.

This man who was tough enough to run through a barrage of lead to drag three of his buddies to safety is man enough to keep talking as his eyes fill with water.

What did Hodge do to get the Bronze Star?

"I was just a country boy, so they gave me all the bullets so I could shoot."

Well, I didn't serve, but I know they don't give the Bronze Star for firing a weapon, I thought.

"We were in a firefight. Three of my guys were wounded. I went in and brought them out. Under fire."

What's it mean to Hodge to be a veteran? He doesn't hesitate.

"The brotherhood of serving, the closeness, is something that ... it's probably closer than you are to your real brother at times," he says. "It made me a better person. It gave me a sense of ... how do I say this? ... being able to trust someone with your life."

This man who was tough enough to run through a barrage of lead to drag three of his buddies to safety is man enough to keep talking as his eyes fill with water.

"The respect that my men had for me is something that I cherish. My captain, who is now a retired colonel, he called me up one day and said in his 30 years in the military, he had never served with a finer non-commissioned officer than myself."

Hodge isn't here, in the electric scooter, because of anything that happened in Vietnam. No, he came home safely. Became a schoolteacher. It was a car accident in 1989 that put him in the scooter.



In the 21st century, war has evolved to include surgical strikes and IEDs, but the courage of those who serve has remained constant.

Iwo Jima to Virginia

Two wars previous, of a different race but from the same military branch, and in the same spinal-injury unit, is Willie T. Manning.

Manning rolls into Lindbloom's office, where it is still hot, but not hot enough. He wears a black U.S. Army hat, a beige scarf, a plaid blanket over his legs.

I reach out to shake his hand, and he extends his arm and an apology for his hand. His fingers curl in, permanently.

"It can't straighten out," he says.

He is 93 years old and still remembers the day he was drafted: "the 20th of December, 1942."

**"Right there, we were on
top of Suribachi."
—Willie T. Manning**

And, oh, was he part of history. He was in "the segregated Army," an all African-American unit responsible for supplies, burials, setting up cemeteries after a battle.

His caregiver has brought with her two photographs: one is of a young, handsome Manning in his Army uniform; another is blurry, grainy, a group of men, on top of a hill, holding a flag pole that looks like ...

"Right there, we were on top of Suribachi. That's me with the hat on."

Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, Japan, the famous photo, U.S. Marines raising the flag. Manning's not in that picture, but one like that.

He and his unit, they sat offshore on a boat for 22 days while the battle for Iwo Jima raged.

"The Marines took Iwo Jima, and the Japs took it back, and the Marines had to retake it, that's why we stayed in the boat so long," he recalls.

His unit was salvage and repair. They repaired shoes, clothes, tents. They waited for bodies that couldn't be repaired, so they dug graves.

"See, in that picture, we were leaning right against the flagstaff there," Manning says. "There's cemeteries on both sides of that mountain."

Manning at one time had earned the rank "T5," a technician's standing equivalent to corporal, but when he was transferred to Wyoming, his sergeant demoted him back to private. He was never sure why. He was told he would have to re-earn his stripes overseas.

So that's what he did.

"It took me the rest of the time to get it back."

Does he think he was demoted because of his race?

"I don't think so," he says.



Courtesy of Willie T. Manning

Manning and his unit on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima.

Courtesy of Mary Beamer



Mary Beamer trained with the Women's Army Corps and became a combat medic.

The Women Who Served

Mary Beamer wears her veteran status on her sleeve, pins on her blouse ("Don't Forget, I'm a Vet") and on her car: U.S. Women's Army Corp.

Still, in 2011, some assume "veteran" equals "man." If they assume that when, for instance, Beamer gets out of her car, they don't think that for long. And they won't think that again. Verbally, Mary Beamer takes no prisoners.

"Please thank your husband for his service," many have told her.

And she has told them back: "It's *me*. You can thank *me*."

It would have all been different, so different, had she kept her first job. She had just graduated high school in Madison, N.C., and her family was pleased when she landed a job at a local restaurant making hush puppies. But at the same time, she had been to the post office and had picked up some pamphlets about nurses, the Women's Army Corps, and had thought, "Maybe I'll do that."

She only made hush puppies for one day. They signed her up and she went to Winston Salem, N.C., for a physical, and they told her to bring pajamas. This was 1954.

**"It means I did something
good for the United States
and for the military."**

—Mary Beamer

As she sees it now, next thing she knew she was in Charlotte and then Fort Lee, Va., and then Fort Sam Houston in Texas, known as "Home of the Combat Medic," where Beamer went through the program to become a medic.

"I never really wanted to be a nurse," Beamer said, "but my uncle wanted me to, so he got pissed off, but that's another story."

She did, actually, become a nurse, because if you go through the training for advanced medical technical school, the civilian equivalent is a licensed practical nurse. Back in the '60s, military training for medics was what you call "hands on."

"Do you know how to save a goat?" Beamer asks. "I do."

During training, because this is 2011 and there are modern sensitivities, let's just say that goats ended up with gunshot wounds. The medic had to rush to the goat, and like we have seen in war movies or on *M.A.S.H.*, perform a tracheotomy with nothing more than a ballpoint pen.

"It was a metal pen back then," Beamer says, "you take off the bottom, and ..."

She scrunches her face and makes a jabbing gesture with her arm.

"You have to know where the larynx and pharynx are," she says.

Well, what became of the goats?

"Mine lived," Beamer says, proudly.

This was training for the Vietnam War, though Beamer ended up treating most of the people from that war once they got back home, at Fort Sam Houston. She worked in the burn unit there, treating patients flown back from Vietnam. She remembers that they often soaked the burn victims in tubs filled with Tide detergent, to soften the skin. She thinks that it was the use of waterbeds at Fort Sam—the body contouring of the waterbed helping to keep pressure off the patients' severely burned parts—that led to the mass market boom of waterbeds in the 1970s.

People from the waterbed factory came in one day and were walking around the unit.

"The next thing you know," Beamer says, "the furniture stores were full of them."

Beamer loved working in the burn unit. There, she felt like she was able to minimize the pain of military men who were in the greatest need. But there are psychological aspects of assigning someone that duty for too long.

"I wanted to stay," she says, "but they didn't let you work in the burn unit for more than six months."

During one re-enlistment, she told the Army she wanted to go to Germany, and they said, "We'll see what we can do."

Guten Tag, Stuttgart.

During another, she said she wanted to go to the Far East.

Konnichiwa, Okinawa.

It was in Okinawa that Beamer faced her greatest peril while in the Army, not due to combat but rather a natural disaster. She was there when rain and wind from a typhoon came so hard that it took off a corner of the hospital.

"We slept in the Red Cross room," she remembers, "and when we went to sleep, they warned us to put our shoes up high, not leave them on the floor."

As she slept, floodwaters rose steadily and came into the hospital—and kept on coming.

"So the next morning," Beamer remembers, "your butt was wet but your shoes were dry."

She sits here, at the VA, telling all these stories, in a beige pants suit decorated with patches and pins proclaiming membership in many military groups. At almost 76, she is trim and peppy and seems like, if asked, she'd board a plane and go put her medic skills back to work without blinking.



Courtesy of Mary Beamer

Beamer was stationed in Germany and Japan during her time in the military.



For some, military service was a way to support a family.

What's it mean to her to be a veteran?

"To me, it means I did something good for the United States and for the military," Beamer says. "And they taught me a lot of valuable things."

If push came to shove, she could still save a goat.

A Career Soldier

Harold Hoffstaetter joined the Navy in 1955, because "back in those days you had to help your folks out," and his folks were always lining up ways for him to help out. He quit school and enlisted.

Hoffstaetter represents a group of people who are not always thought of first when thinking of military service: joining the military was a way to get paid, support a family. It was a career path, even for an enlisted man, when no other path seemed as certain.

During his 20 years in the service, Hoffstaetter and his wife had eight children.

"The first five were so close I had five teenagers at the same time," Hoffstaetter says. "I still had a little hair on my head when that was over."

In between having children, he went on five Mediterranean deployments on either the USS Saratoga or the USS Forrestal and retired in 1974.

But, as with others, he came through his tours of duty—more or less—without a ding and suffered his worst injuries afterward. He's a paraplegic, a permanent resident at the VA, because of the time he stopped along the highway to help a stranded motorist and got plowed into by a van.

He has a van that he can drive with hand controls, so he drives home every weekend. Like several who live at the VA, or use it for health care, he uses those driving skills to help out.

"I'm a runner for the nursing home," Hoffstaetter says, "so I stay busy all the time—and in between, I play pool and Bingo."

The thing he loves about VA Bingo is that when someone gets a blackout—covering every spot on their card—"they yell obscenities."

Veterans After 9/11

The word "veteran," in the minds of many, came to evoke the elderly men walking proudly in the Memorial Day or Veterans Day parade. In the newspaper or on TV, it seemed that the older the man pictured, the more the picture meant "veteran."

Everything that has happened since Sept. 11, 2001, has changed all that. In fact, now 17 percent of the veterans being treated at this VA are women.

Come to the VA and meet Jennifer Rogers, an 11-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force. As a radio communications specialist, she has served in OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan) and OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom). She was responsible for classified information to aircrews flying in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq.

She was on a base in Japan on Sept. 11, when much about the military, military service and her home country was greatly changed. In fact, on the base that day, Rogers and everyone else was already on lockdown.



Jennifer Askey

Jennifer Rogers is an 11-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

"We were going through a typhoon at the time," she says, "we were not allowed to leave our homes."

By the time she returned to the States, three years had passed. The bases were totally different. At Andrews Air Force Base, entire roads had been rerouted.

She grew up in Maine, but her husband is active duty, and an assignment brought him to Virginia. Rogers has her veteran card and can get health-care service at the VA if and when she needs it, but that's not why she is here every day.

She was here one day and heard about a job. Now, she is associate director for operations, and being a veteran helps her out with the older veterans.

"A lot of the veterans want to walk into the director's office to say their concerns or pay a compliment to the director," Rogers says. "I say, 'You know, sir, you were in the military, you can't just walk into the commanding officer's office and expect to speak to him then and there.'"

Being a veteran, she knows that, too.

And what does that veteran status mean to her?

"You know, I've thought about that a lot, and the only word that comes to me is 'proud,'" Rogers says. "I'm proud to be a veteran, and if it was a little different, I'd still be in, probably."

"I love the fact that I still have a connection to the military."



Courtesy of Lon Wagner

About the Author

Lon Wagner is director of communications for a medical-science company and a freelance writer who lives in Norfolk, Va. He spent more than two decades as a reporter and feature writer for newspapers in the Mid-Atlantic, and his stories won national awards in several top feature-writing competitions. His series about a Navy pilot downed during the first Gulf War was nominated by his newspaper for the Pulitzer Prize. He and his wife have three daughters.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Run, Baby, Run!

Hilary Achauer reports on the upcoming Richest 5K at the Atlanta Motor Speedway on Nov. 19.

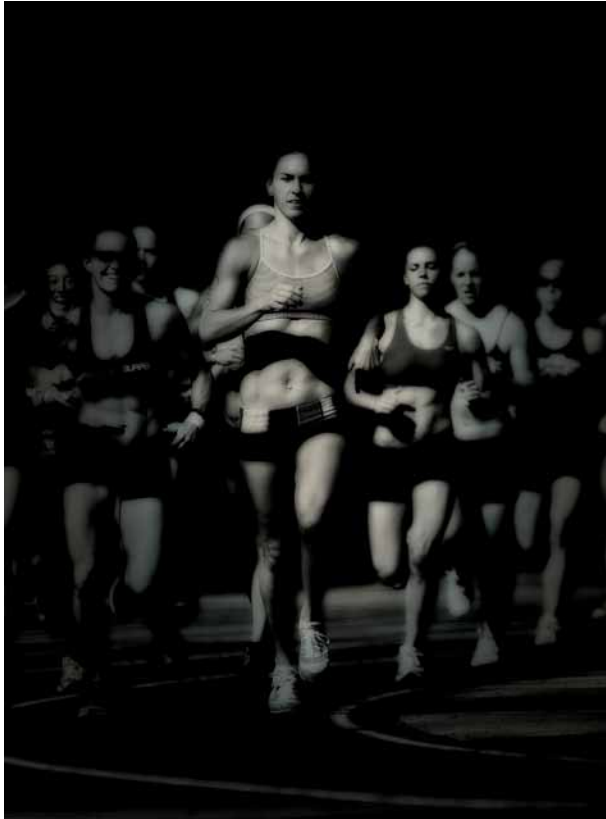
By Hilary Achauer

November 2011



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

Speed: It's one of the 10 general physical skills used by CrossFit to define fitness. But how will a CrossFit athlete fare against an elite runner in a straight-up road race, especially when there's \$30,000 on the line?



Nov. 19 WOD: Run 5K.

On Nov. 19, CrossFit athletes will have a chance to test themselves against elite runners in the Richest 5K Run, presented by CrossFit. It will take place at the Atlanta Motor Speedway, a place built for high velocity. The \$30,000 prize purse is attracting world-class runners along with well-known CrossFit athletes like 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games athlete Michelle Kinney.

"Coach Greg Glassman has wanted to do a 5K for years," said CrossFit HQ's Madeline Letchford, one of the organizers of the event. "He is reaching out to the running community with an event that will be fun for everyone. If you can move your legs, you can participate."

In addition to the \$20,000 that will be divided among the top individual finishers, the fastest team (made up of five men and five women) will win \$10,000. The CrossFit affiliate that registers the most racers will win \$5,000 worth of Rogue Fitness gear as well as custom affiliate apparel from Reebok worth \$500. There will be a 1K race for the kids, with the winner receiving a custom Reebok gift certificate.

No matter where you place, each participant will get a free Michelob Ultra after the race. In addition to the beer garden, the finish line will also feature food vendors, a sponsor expo and a Q&A session with Coach Glassman, the founder of CrossFit.

Unlike many high-stakes races, the Richest 5K Run has no qualifier. In true CrossFit style, anyone can come out and test him- or herself against the best.

"We're hoping to see a jacked CrossFit athlete right on the heels of a professional runner," Letchford said. "We're bringing together the CrossFit and the running world. Who knows what will happen?"

For more information, or to sign up for the race, visit [The Richest 5K website](#) or like [The Richest 5K on Facebook](#).



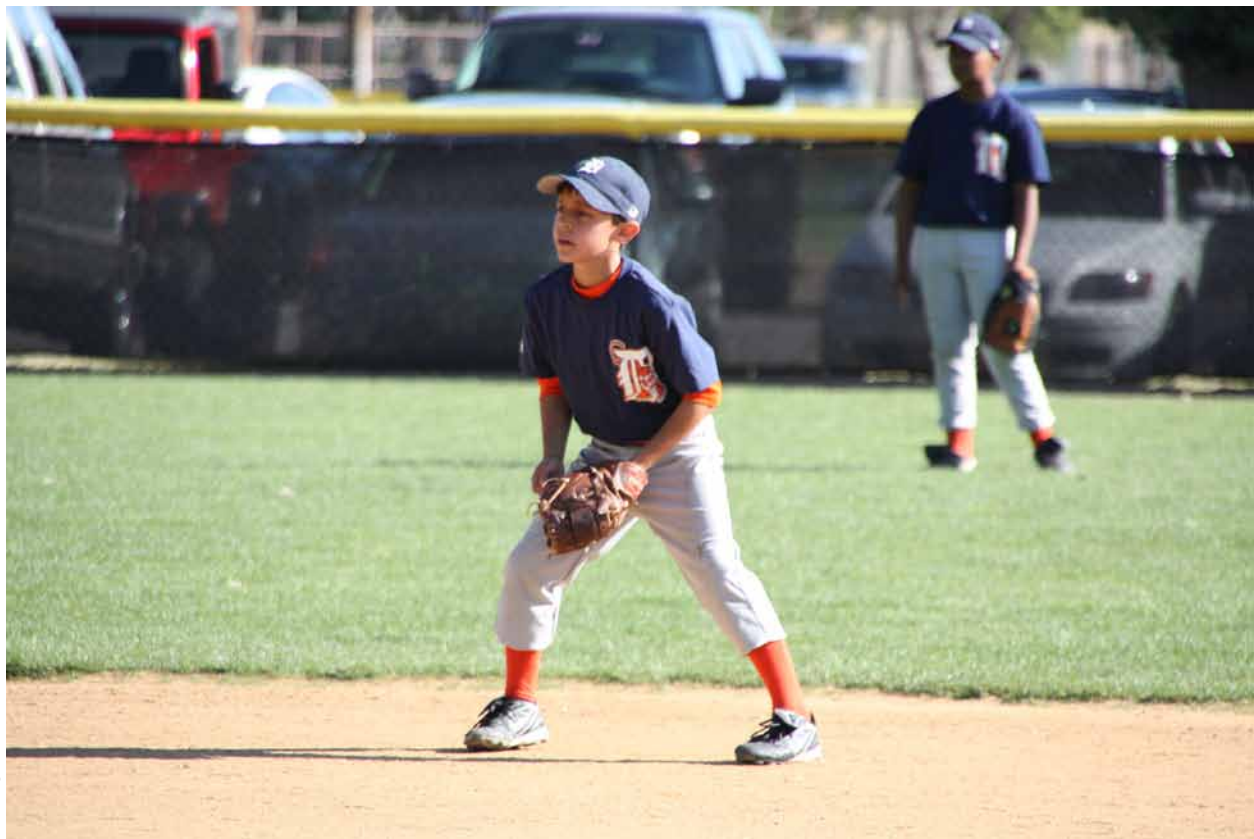
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Talking a Good Game

Dan Edelman tries his hand at coaching Little League the CrossFit Kids way.

By Dan Edelman

November 2011



All images: Dan Edelman

"I want to be the greatest shortstop in New York Yankee history."

Bold words for a 6-year-old.

Or not.

1 of 16

Really just the equivalent of wanting to be an astronaut, a movie star, president or master chief when he grows up. But in that instant—and being a has-been who, for one regretful decision, never quite got the game out of his system—I decided I'd help my son get as far as he wanted to go in baseball.

Ensuring he had good gear and opportunities to play would be relatively easy—just takes money or, rather, credit. It would be tougher to find him the proper training; that is, knowledge and leadership in a fertile environment. Options were limited, despite the fairly robust youth-baseball scene in Ramona, Calif.

And there was no way I was coaching my son. Ever. I'd determined that even before I had children, not least because I doubted my ability to instruct kids in a sport that had evolved well beyond my experience. I had other reasons:

- Loud-mouthed parents living through their kids.
- Has-been/never-were, know-it-all-know-nothing coaches using the diamond and the boys as a stage and props for their personal psychodramas.
- Unfocused, uninterested, un-coachable kids who, despite the classic fiat, cry.



Could more effective practice have prevented this lack of focus?

Not enticing at all.

Besides, any time I contemplated the notion, I found myself questioning my true motivation. I mean, of course this was about my ego, but did I think I would find it gratifying to do something together with my boy and teach other kids something about the game, or was I really just drifting about the edges of some dreary hero fantasy?

My son has been playing organized ball since he was 5—he's 9 now. Five seasons. Most of that time, I've been a spectator, one of the "birds on the fence," offering an extra hand for fungo drills or batting practice, generally keeping out of it for the aforementioned reasons. (I did actually take on the assistant "coaching" spot for my son's second T-ball season—but, really, T-ball at that age barely qualifies as organized sport.) But I've observed.

I've had plenty of time to contemplate the mental side of CrossFit from amidst the desolation following an epic cratering of some WOD or another.

I've seen aimless practices painfully rote and void of any genuine preparation for actual game play. I've seen kids not make plays simply because they didn't believe they could. I've seen coaches and dads humiliate their sons with no apparent awareness of their cruelty. And I've seen kids having all kinds of fun during the game, but not having fun playing the game.

So even though I had no intention of ever taking a team, a coaching philosophy gradually began to coalesce. Just a few basic what-if and it-would-seem-like ideas I never figured on testing. Nothing earthshaking for sure, but I'd idly ponder these theories from my perch on the fence.

During the 2010 tournament season, I found myself engaging in running commentaries about the ball games with another dad I knew from a couple of seasons, and I learned he shared my perspective. We both wanted to help our boys develop their baseball so they could go as far as they wanted to go. The short of it was we decided to play "Daddy Ball": we would take a team—he as manager, I as coach—protect our kids from certain self-deluded frauds and, if all went well, provide a good environment in which to sharpen our boys' skills with an eye toward long-term development.

Operative words: "if all went well."

And it wasn't just about my boy; there'd be 11 other players (and their parents) to whom I'd have a responsibility to provide a fruitful season. I was reasonably confident my viewpoint was sound. I was less confident I could communicate it to a dozen 9- and 10-year-olds. What I needed was a teaching methodology with which to frame my fledgling philosophy. What I turned to was CrossFit Kids.

"Baseball is 90 percent mental—the other half is physical." —Yogi Berra

Like much common wisdom, Berra's quote seems, among other things, pretty obvious, a cliché even; sport performance hinges on mental preparation. In many ways, the mental dimension of baseball is essentially like any other sport. Dot your mental I's and cross your mental T's, and the athletic requirements are more readily fulfilled.

But there's something about baseball that distinguishes it from more fluid sports like basketball, tennis, soccer and hockey. For those uninterested in the game, baseball seems boring: long lulls characterized by routine game play broken up with occasional bursts of action. And if you're not down with it, then that action doesn't hold a candle to play by play in, say, football.

From inside the sport, a third baseman might spend six innings with nothing and then, bang, a shot down the line that could make the difference between win or loss; or a player sits on the bench for nine innings before getting the nod to pinch hit with the game on the line; or a relief pitcher is expected to put out the starter's fire with tens of thousands of fans mercilessly screaming hatred at him. One pitch can change a ball game. You gotta remain focused, you gotta know the situations from pitch to pitch, and you gotta execute when the time comes. And the time often comes rather suddenly.

On the whole, this kind of alertness eludes 9- and 10-year-olds such that game play is marked by a lot of spaciness and chicken chasing, and coaching at that level involves cat herding and handholding, hand wringing and hands over the eyes.

By encouraging kids to test their athletic limits, a coach can show them they already have what it takes to be better players.

CrossFit made me a student of the mental game. Sounds pretentious, but the fact is the mental dimension is the weakest link in my decidedly tenuous CrossFit chain. Similar to Daigle (8), I pretty much suck at CrossFit, which lends me a certain singular vantage point from which to study the program and sport. I've had plenty of time to contemplate the mental side of CrossFit from amidst the desolation following an epic cratering of some WOD or another. I've learned a lot. Mostly unpleasant stuff about myself, but also a great deal about the significance of mental toughness, discipline and preparedness.

Coupled with that is my experience as a CrossFit trainer under the tutelage of CrossFit's Director of Youth Training and CrossFit Kids founder Jeff Martin at CrossFit Brand X in Ramona. There I've learned—and continue to learn—about differences between children and adults with respect to athletic development, mental preparation for sport and sport conditioning more generally. So by the time the 2011 baseball season rolled around, my coaching philosophy for 9- and 10-year-olds centered on three inter-related principles:

1. Most kids are better baseball players than they realize, but they need to test their limits.
2. More than just lip service must be paid to the concept of hustle.
3. The assertion that youth sports should be fun for children is empty rhetoric and does not serve the kids.



Confidence and desire will improve almost any young player's game.

“Ya gotta believe.” —Tug McGraw

Since my son's first T-ball season, I noticed something about the expectations for defensive play.

For example, right up through “mustang” level play (ages 9-10), most adults don't really expect the average ballplayer to catch fly balls, particularly if the play requires ranging to get the ball. More significantly, most kids don't seem to think it possible, either. Kids simply don't think they can make the play. Putting aside technical aspects, kids drift toward fly balls with no urgency. This lack of exigency is unwittingly reinforced by the conniption fits parents toss if an outfielder actually gloves a fly ball. It's a miracle! A youth baseball field is awash in stealth anti-Greg Amundson negative self-talk and other talk, thought and energy.

I contend a baseball coach can make young players better without teaching them anything new about the game, rather, by getting them to believe they can get to the ball, make the catch, beat out a grounder to shortstop, stay in the box and drive the pitch. By encouraging kids to test their athletic limits, a coach can show them they already have what it takes to be better players.

How is this done?

Well, it occurred to me that this apparent “can't” is really more about a lack of want. The kids have to want to field that ball. They have to want to get to first base. They have to want to hit. In other words, they have to want to be involved in the game. Knowing you are capable of being involved in the game—i.e., confidence—stokes that desire. And, in many ways, this confidence-fueled desire is the essence of athleticism. So kids can make the play if they want to make the play, if they know they can make the play. That's obvious for sure, and just as obvious is the notion that “hustle” is critical to achieving this. Great plays do not require great players.

“You'd be surprised how many shortcomings you overcome by hustle,” Pete Rose said (17). I agree. The problem is getting 9- and 10-year-olds to understand the purpose of hustle, a concept that has kind of been hollowed out into just another sports cliché.

Nice hustle.

We gotta hustle.

Hustle in.

Hustle out.

Show some hustle.

What does that mean? Out on the diamond, such phrases take on the character of white noise.

In one way, hustle is a means of achieving a proper state of behavioral and physiological arousal so an athlete can perform. For example, we demanded our team hustle on and off the field. Whereas the manager considered it classy, I looked at it as mental preparation for the kids. We also demanded kids sprint to every base. A dribbler back to the pitcher? You run like your life depends on it. We demanded hustle during practices as well (another cliché: you play the way you practice—but it's true). Same went for between-inning warm-up: have a purpose. Hustle psyches the players up and whispers to the opposing team that we're going to shut 'em down or light 'em up.

**In many ways, this
confidence-fueled desire is
the essence of athleticism.**

Hustle also is a way to get kids to discover their limits. You get a player to hustle and all of sudden he's under a fly ball he might otherwise consider uncatchable. You get a kid who's afraid of getting picked off first base to take what seems like a death-defying lead and have him dive back safely to the base and all of a sudden you've created a base-stealing threat. Successes like these instill confidence and a sense of adventure that encourage kids to take the kinds of chances that lie at the core of hustle, that form the foundation on which skills can be built. So without teaching anything technical, the kid is a better player, basically having gifted himself with lifelong abilities he's always possessed.



***When kids hustle, they take chances and
discover new abilities.***

And frankly, hustle is just another way of saying “intensity.” For CrossFitters, that’s a rather loaded term, isn’t it? In that light, it might be easier to understand why some kids don’t seem to want to hustle. We need to be careful how much intensity we demand from children. So how do you elicit intensity from 9- and 10-year-olds? How do you get them to want to contribute so they can make the plays? How do you get them to hustle with purpose?

**“When they start the game, they don’t yell,
‘Work ball!’ They say, ‘Play ball!’” —Willie Stargell**

Sports are supposed to be fun for kids. That’s what they say. “They” being adults. Adults have it all figured out because they have the vast wisdom that comes with age. If nothing else, youth baseball should be fun. Here in Ramona (and elsewhere), the baseball program is known as “rec league.” It’s recreational.

Just go out and have a good time.

Havin’ fun now, right?

Here we go now, kid, have some fun up there!

Fun.

Fun how, exactly? You know, playing. Oh.

Many adults have determined kids should just play baseball “for fun”—who cares who wins or loses or how you play the game? Kids need to be able to go out and have a good time with their sports—no consequences, no bad feelings, everybody’s an MVP.

Many adults have determined kids should just play baseball “for fun”—who cares who wins or loses or how you play the game? ... That’s over-rationalized nonsense.

That’s over-rationalized nonsense. During a game, 9- and 10-year-olds can have fun doing a whole lot of stuff that’s got nothing to do with baseball. Sure, they ain’t worried about winning or losing—heck, they haven’t a concern in the world. “How many outs? What’s the score? Can I get something from the snack bar? Oh, am I on deck?”

Further, these efforts to protect children’s self-esteem from reality amount to only a weak salve for the information-society-spawned anxieties plaguing adults and fail miserably to help fledgling athletes grasp a huge part of baseball: outs, errors and, yeah, losing.

“Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of 10 and be considered a good performer.” —Ted Williams

That’s Ted Williams, one of the greatest hitters in the history of the game. Basically, when it comes to baseball—particularly hitting, which is the most heavily weighted measure of success in youth baseball—players fail. A lot. In my opinion, this dimension is not addressed often enough. Certainly not with the objective of encouraging the idea of failing forward. So kids have trouble handling failure; i.e., when they do not perform like the all-stars our society insists we all are.

Well, I just tried to go out and have some fun, but watching that third strike and hearing everyone cheering for the pitcher sure didn’t seem like much fun to me. Mom’s shrieking, “Nice try!” and “That’s OK!” But it doesn’t feel nice or OK.

The assertion that there’s no crying in baseball is really just wishful thinking at the mustang level. And the real problem here is the kid does not fail forward, which CrossFit Kids supports intrinsically and organically. A player can carry that apparent failure with him throughout a game and even the season, caught in a vicious cycle that terminates with a headlong crash into that delicate self-esteem we’re all so concerned about safeguarding.

The ultimate goal of CrossFit Kids is to pair fitness with fun so kids embrace super-wellness as a lifestyle from an early age. That fun is in evidence everywhere during a CrossFit Kids class. From the vibrant whiteboard to the energetic trainers to being with friends to the special themes to the music choices and especially through to the game, CrossFit Kids always associates class time with fun. Why? The children might not always comprehend the reason they are participating in the program, but if they’re always having a good time, what could be bad? I borrowed this simple but powerful idea and tweaked it a bit. I started with the assumption that the kids knew why they were on the diamond and then, from the very first team meeting, I engaged in a process of attaching fun to a particular concept: competitive baseball.

The real problem here is the kid does not fail forward, which CrossFit Kids supports intrinsically and organically.

That is, we’re not here to have fun playing; we’re here to have fun playing baseball. Big difference. In fact, that difference is similar to the distinction between a CrossFit Kids class and a Teen/Advanced class, where fun begins to look like adult CrossFit fun.



Everybody makes errors. The key is to teach kids how to learn from their mistakes and improve.

We emphasized this specific idea constantly: it's fun to give your best effort on the baseball field; it's fun to catch fly balls and field grounders; it's fun to steal bases; it's the most fun to hit. We tied that idea to the notion of contributing, of "making something happen" during the game. Just as a child who associates CrossFit Kids with fun will want to keep returning to class, a kid who connects competitive baseball with fun is going to chase that fun via the means I have put forth as the best way to get there: hustle. And along the way, the kid is going to make something (positive) happen and make a contribution.

In this context, we also tried to get the kids to understand how much of baseball is about making outs and how some outs are actually productive; that is, they make something happen. We discussed errors and how they're part of the game; everybody makes them. We often mentioned how even professional ballplayers have bad moments and that while they're probably not happy about it, they get out there next time ready to give their best effort. After games, we urged the kids to think about not only what was good about their effort but also what they might want to correct for next time.

Strike out, boot a groundball, launch a throw into the stands—every player does these things. What every player does not do is learn from those inevitable miscues and get right back in there ready for the next opportunity. Kids do not learn how to fail forward. Simply telling a kid that "it's OK" after an error—as if you're letting him off the hook—is not enough. He knows it's not OK (just like a kid knows his team is losing even if you tell him not to worry about the score), and now he's going to stress over what's gonna happen the next time a ball is hit to him.

After an error, we take the player aside and tell him that he will have another chance to contribute, but that he has to be ready. And if he is ready—wants to field, wants to hit, etc.—then there is fun to be had. Keep at it, keep hustling, there's always another chance to contribute, always another opportunity to have a good time playing competitive baseball.

"In baseball, my theory is to strive for consistency." —Tom Seaver

Our baseball league is pay to play. Nothing unusual about that. Parents register their kids to play the sport of baseball: springtime rec ball. Practices are more about getting teams ready to play games than they are about long-term development (we had young kids coming into the division and a couple of first-time players). Further, busy family and league schedules do not lend themselves to pursuing any kind of genuine developmental program. We knew this going into the season and set out to provide the kids (and parents) with the most bang for their buck.

Prior to each practice, the manager emailed a practice plan to the parents and asked them to review it with their kids. Consider this the whiteboard.



A shorter, fast-moving practice keeps kids engaged and improves their hustle.

Practices were structured similarly to a CrossFit Kids class. We began with a buy-in comprising throwing with a purpose, focusing on technique and arm strength (long toss scaled for mustang division); a short dynamic warm-up; and a base-running drill that emphasized speed, accuracy, sliding and ball awareness. Skill work generally focused on one or two defensive skills. We would then move on to situational defense, rotating base runners and position players. Sometimes we would end with coach-pitch batting practice under game conditions, which the kids enjoyed the most. But more often, given the complexities of hitting, we held batting practice at the manager's batting cage on a separate day.

Many rec-league coaches seem to think the more baseball, the better. So they hold two-to-three-hour practices up to three times a week. I found that kids spent a lot of that time standing around waiting to do stuff. At this age, standing around usually means screwing around. CrossFit Kids suggests keeping classes well-oiled, flexible and short to hold kids' attention. We applied that and ran

shorter-than-average practices using drills designed to engage all the kids and minimize standing around. Any general loss of focus and we changed things up or even ended practice; we ran one field practice and one batting practice a week most of the season. Perfect practice makes perfect play, and we embraced that cliché by really focusing on rudiments and encouraging as much hustle during workouts as we wanted to see during games.

But let me reiterate: given the compressed time frame in which to work, practices were about game preparation and not long-term development. In this way, my baseball-coaching experience differed fundamentally from CrossFit Kids. As much as we wanted to, we did not have the luxury of really breaking down highly complex skills like hitting and hammering technique over a long period of time in pursuit of consistency, which is as much a pillar of the CrossFit Kids program as it is for CrossFit. We went after a level of consistency as best we could, and I was able to draw on CrossFit Kids for assistance in how I approached technical corrections.



Young players respond well to simple, kid-friendly cues.

Cues were simple and kid-friendly (32), particularly for the less experienced players; e.g., “squish the bug” is a popular (if ultimately off base) cue to help first-time players learn how to use their hips when swinging a bat. During batting practices, I tried to provide clear explanations along with various cues. This was not only for the players but also for any interested parents who might be listening. Over time, the explanations were dropped and the cues simplified even more as the players learned. For the more experienced players, I found the cues need not be as much fun as most of the CrossFit Kids cues. Not as long as I provided clear—and I mean “clear for kids”—explanations of what the cues and corrections were intended to accomplish.

Further, my experience with CrossFit Kids taught me to mitigate the one flaw that would yield the most improvement. Hitting is a hugely complicated endeavor. At this level and given the time frame within which we could work, I found the most productive problem area to address was the issue of focusing; i.e., seeing the ball.

“Keep your eye on the ball.” Who hasn’t heard that? There are a plethora of cues to address this, but the one I got the best response to was, “See the ball to the bat” (even though hitters do not actually see the ball hit the bat). For our team, this one cue led to success. It’s important to note that, when it came to game time, we wanted the players concentrating only on the baseball while in the batter’s box, so we tried to avoid all but the simplest cues, which were given prior to the batter stepping in. As the season progressed, I was able to use just the word “eyes” or even two fingers pointed at my eyes, Focker style.

We went after a level of consistency as best we could, and I was able to draw on CrossFit Kids for assistance in how I approached technical corrections.

This simple cueing method was used for our pitchers as well. Each tended toward a particular mechanical flaw, and once he understood that and its respective correction, we could cue quickly and simply between pitches so as not to distract when attention needed to be directed at the catcher’s mitt.

**“I motivate players through communication.”
—Tommy Lasorda**

Having the knowledge is one thing, and a good repertoire of cues is all well and good, but you have to be able to connect with your athletes to have any beneficial impact. In a significant way, CrossFit Kids taught me how to present myself to the players. I worked hard to make sure my cues were affirmative: “do this” rather than “don’t do that.” In addition, something positive accompanied any criticism or discussion of a lack of execution (e.g., strikeout): “Great cut, but next time keep your head in and see the ball to the bat.” Or a little differently, I might remind a player displaying a lack of confidence in the batter’s box we all know he’s capable of hitting because we’ve seen him do it before and that he’ll have another chance to contribute. And a chance to contribute means a chance to have fun.

I likely was the most animated first-base coach in the league. Some people who know me might've been a little taken aback at how excited I got once the bat contacted the ball or when we had base runners. People who really know me (or maybe have seen me deadlift) would not have been surprised at all; the coach's box was where I gave my best effort. My enthusiasm was a manifestation of my state of behavioral and physiological arousal, which I required to do my job. Our hitters had a series of simple goals: get on first base, then get to second, then third, then home, because scoring runs is fun. In fact, I tried to make sure achieving each of those goals was a good time: leading off and getting in the pitcher's head, stealing bases, sliding under the tag, advancing on over-throws. My job was to promote the proper mindset—i.e., hustle—and help them give their best effort, make something happen, contribute and have as much fun as possible on the base paths.

Having the knowledge is one thing, and a good repertoire of cues is all well and good, but you have to be able to connect with your athletes to have any beneficial impact.

When it came to our pitchers, I was more reserved. Cool concentration was what I wanted from my guys on the mound. At the mustang level, simply throwing strikes makes for a solid pitcher. However, throwing strikes also means giving the opposing team a chance to hit. This clashes with the irrational (but widely accepted among 9- and 10-year-olds) idea that a good pitcher strikes everyone out. Often our pitcher did his job and threw a ground ball, but it would promptly be booted for an error. This generated much angst when coupled with the usually empty and misguided "encouragement" from parents:

"You can do it!"

"C'mon now!"

"Throw strikes!" (Well there's a novel idea.)

"Just relax!" (Worst ever.)

I then became the chiller, doing my best to let the pitcher know he was executing properly and steer his focus back toward the glove. À la CrossFit Kids, the language was all positive, and the aim was to help them have fun giving their best effort.

Technical cues remain the essence of the coaching—and again, they need not always be kid-friendly provided their purpose is clearly articulated.

So I took my lead from CrossFit Kids for aspects of my communication style. However, in some key ways, my style does not fit the ideal CrossFit Kids advocates for children that age. While I can relate to older kids and enjoy working with the Teen/Advanced class, I am no poster boy for a Kids class. I am neither bubbly nor smiley, playful nor particularly patient, and I'm pretty sure the children would smell the fear on me and, in short order, tie me up and set me on fire in lieu of the game. That said, I have worked with a few baseball teams, ages 5-11, and CrossFit Brand X's Teen/Advanced class does contain a growing crew of (qualified) preadolescent athletes. While my experience is by no means comprehensive, I would like to offer an observation.

CrossFit Kids recommends the Kids class include children ages 5-12. However, I think there's a subpopulation at the top end of the age range that might benefit from a class that combines the programming methodology of Kids with the coaching approach of Teen/Advanced. This subpopulation comprises athletes with a few years of competitive sports experience. My feeling is these kids have a more mature understanding of intensity and are developing an awareness of performance accountability and thus a more sophisticated sense of what's fun about physical activity. They might tend to disengage in classes with younger children where the atmosphere strikes them as a bit too warm and fuzzy.



Year-round baseball and travel teams can lead to burnout and overtraining, even in young children.

Keep in mind these athletes don't necessarily move better than other Kids-level children, so they require the same attention to fundamental technique under no or very light load to foster the neuromuscular adaptation key to training gains in preadolescence (15,28,33). However, I contend this subpopulation of athletes will respond to a sterner communication style than what CrossFit Kids finds works so well for most children. Technical cues remain the essence of the coaching—and again, they need not always be kid-friendly provided their purpose is clearly articulated—but we can pepper that with a discourse that identifies overarching goals and actions to match those goals.

For example: you squat to become better ballplayers. The more you squat and the harder you work, the stronger hitters and throwers you'll become. You're working the big muscles that make you powerful.

We imply intensity without pushing the kids, we require staying on task without overly sugaring requests with niceties, and our encouragement and kudos tend toward the low-key and poignant; e.g., a finger point and "nice" or a fist bump. My experience has found these young athletes embrace the more serious atmosphere and remain engaged. Let me be absolutely clear: I am in no way suggesting these athletes are somatically more ready to handle higher intensities, larger volumes or heavier loads than the less sports-minded CrossFit Kid. I am suggesting these athletes might respond better to a communication style stripped of the kid gloves. This might have implications not only for retention but also for addressing the questionable privileging of sports-specific training over general physical preparedness, or GPP, for this age group (33).

"I ain't an athlete, lady. I'm a baseball player."
—John Kruk

In Southern California, we can play baseball year round. It's a gift and a curse. Here in Ramona, with rare exception, common youth-baseball wisdom has the big-dawg gamers do just that. Spring rec league and postseason tournaments; summer, fall and winter tournament ball; and travel ball throughout. Further, youth baseball (like all youth sports) has evolved since I played. The performance expectations for kids are much higher now. Big dawgs are encouraged to "play up" in older divisions. Some kids play on multiple travel-ball teams, and there is a kind of mercenary attitude among some (parents) who jump from club to club, seeking out the best, most prestigious program.

However, the sport's evolution has outstripped children's athletic development, and the problem with this is multifold. The athlete is at risk for mental burnout, physical and mental overtraining, and overuse injury (5,18,26,29,38,39). Although, in my experience, many parents recognize and act to address burnout in their children, fewer grasp the concepts of overtraining and overuse and their relationship to year-round sport-specific training. Further, I have not seen that many baseball parents and rec coaches appreciate the value of GPP for sport performance. Bottom line for them: if you're not playing ball, you're losing ground.

In the last three or four decades, baseball's commitment to strength and conditioning has grown (7,20,35,42), and relatively recently, the benefits of CrossFit for baseball have been documented (14,19) and should be obvious to any CrossFitter who plays or has played the sport. Further, the aforementioned urgency for short-term gains in the local youth-baseball scene stands in opposition to literature on the athletic development of children and expert performance more generally (3, 6,13,21,33,34). As a parent, I get it: I want my kids to shine all of the time, too. But if my son is to have long-term success in baseball, I, as his father and one of his key mentors, need to exercise as much discipline as will be demanded of him in terms of bridling my desire for him to be the best of the best right now. My ongoing education in CrossFit Kids methodology helps me with this, and I view the program as the linchpin to my son's baseball journey, wherever that might lead.

In the last three or four decades, baseball's commitment to strength and conditioning has grown and relatively recently, the benefits of CrossFit for baseball have been documented.

Given the stature of his parents and most of his extended family, my son will likely be undersized relative to the average pro ballplayer (29). To even the playing field when the time comes to try out for any higher-level competitive team, he will need beastly strength and power driving his baseball-specific skills. He will need to be a better athlete—stronger, faster, more agile, etc. CrossFit Kids is designed to provide that for the committed competitor. Although size is often judged as a proxy for strength (23), CrossFit Kids focuses on increasing work capacity by hot-rodding the motor; I want my son stepping onto the field with a warmed-over Hemi engine under the hood and an oversized gas tank.



CrossFit Kids can give smaller players the strength and power they need to compete against bigger athletes.

But that's not all that CrossFit Kids provides young athletes. The mental dimension of baseball is multifaceted. On one level, the ability to remain alert and ready for the ball throughout the entire course of a game is as much an issue of mental endurance as it is a child's interest in and knowledge of the sport, as well as basic emotional maturity. Further, even as a team sport, baseball's major components—pitching, hitting, fielding—are individual and often stressful endeavors for kids. Baseball, like many sports, calls for the kind of mental fortitude that Lisbeth Darsh is talking about:

"CrossFit can be about finding the darkness—and making it work for you, instead of against you. The person you'll find alone in that workout is most likely not the person you want to show to anyone else. And that's okay. You need to learn this person, this place, this pain. You need to learn to drive yourself onward in a way that no one else ever can. Internal motivation is the key to success in CrossFit and so much of life." (10)



Don't be fooled—he's got a deadly fastball.

CrossFit Kids fosters this development by safely putting children in situations that require problem solving through hard work, goal-setting, persistence and self-discipline, often while under duress. CrossFit Kids—and particularly the Teen/Advanced class—is also a controlled environment where kids can test their athletic limits by engaging in carefully designed WODs where, for example, they might discover that what was once considered a one-rep-max power clean is now a weight they can handle for multiple reps with a high heart rate. That's a great way to inspire the confidence and sense of adventure so essential in youth sports, which is one of the first arenas wherein a child will find himself alone and challenged and in need of the internal resources that a full-blown CrossFit Kids program will develop organically through skill work, WODs and platform work.

***"Pitching is the art of instilling fear."
—Sandy Koufax***

So how do I know the CrossFit Kids program yields results that transfer to sport? There's some anecdotal evidence (25,31), but mostly I have my observations of my son's pitching progress over the last year. My son was a decent pitcher in 2010. Some technical inconsistencies kept his pitch count high and he occasionally let the stress get to him, but he was decent nonetheless. His pitching goal for 2011 was to decrease his pitch count and keep his cool on the mound; each would help the other. My overall and expressed expectation for him was simple: he would give his best effort every game. In the off-season, he matriculated from the CrossFit Kids class into the Teen/Advanced class and Teen Weightlifting.

When my son stepped back onto the mound this season, his fastball was overpowering. You could see the despair seep into the eyes of the innocent after a four-seamer popped the dot; one kid in particular broke into tears during his at-bats against my son (yeah, maybe there is a little crying in baseball—heh). When my kid took the mound, they should've placed a sign next to the batter's box: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

OK, enough hyperbole.

**The one outstanding
characteristic of my
squid-ly son's off-season
vis-a-vis the other pitchers'
preparation was his consistent
participation in Brand X's
CrossFit Kids Teen/
Advanced class.**

Of course, my boy gained strength and power simply by having a whole year of natural growth and development under his belt. But remember, like his dad, he's a little squid. There were much bigger pitchers in the league, all of whom had that same year under their belts. Not to mention they were all a year older than him to begin with—and generally considered star athletes. He threw harder than all of them. Why? Is it that my son is "naturally" better than the rest? Hmm, maybe, but that sounds too pat. Is it that he worked on his pitching all off-season? No. Other than a half-day clinic during pre-season (that many other pitchers attended, too), he put in exactly zero work before opening day—and almost zero between games during the season. The one outstanding characteristic of my squid-ly son's off-season vis-a-vis the other pitchers' preparation was his consistent participation in Brand X's CrossFit Kids Teen/Advanced class.

“The players make the manager. It’s never the other way.” —Sparky Anderson

We were the 2011 Ramona PONY League Mustang Division Tigers. We finished the season in third place with a record of 14-6, just two games out of first place. We defeated every team at least once. We came back and won games from up to 10 runs behind. We led the league or finished high in a number of offensive and pitching categories. And more important than the fact that the Tigers produced five all-stars was that all players contributed on more than one occasion to team wins and, in general, improved their level of play by season’s end. Many of the parents asked us to draft their kids again next year.

We did not stress winning per se; we stressed the idea that always giving our best effort would make for good games and a good time. The Tigers earned a reputation as an aggressive, hustling team. It became clear that no team was excited to go up against us. In fact, the manager of the league-champion Indians told me the only team he feared was us, the Tigers. We crushed them twice and almost won the third time save for a rookie coaching error in the greatest at-bat I’ve ever witnessed in a youth ball game, an at-bat that epitomized the idea of making the most of another chance to give your best effort and make something happen.

More important than the fact that the Tigers produced five all-stars was that all players contributed on more than one occasion to team wins and, in general, improved their level of play by season’s end.

Yeah, this sounds like some self-congratulatory showpiece about me and my kid that also trumpets—yet again—the awesomeness and bullet-proofness of CrossFit and CrossFit Kids. But the fact is my colleague and I had a successful first season as coaches because we had a good group of kids

who were ready to work with us. CrossFit Kids helped me connect with the Tigers; in a sense, the program fostered an environment in which the kids could flourish.

So is my kid gonna play for the Bronx Bombers? Highly doubtful. Doesn’t matter. What does matter is when he’s a bird on the fence, he can look back with no regrets or doubts about how far he could’ve gone. I believe CrossFit Kids and CrossFit will be instrumental in this.

Here are a few other quotes in closing:

“I’m just a ballplayer with one ambition, and that is to give all I’ve got to help my ball club win. I’ve never played any other way.” —Joe DiMaggio

“Show me a guy who’s afraid to look bad, and I’ll show you a guy you can beat.” —Lou Brock

“Anything less would not have been worthy of me. Anything more would not have been possible.” —Carl Yastrzemski

“Some guys are admired for coming to play, as the saying goes. I prefer those who come to kill.” —Leo Durocher

“You gotta be a man to play baseball for a living, but you gotta have a lot of little boy in you, too.” —Roy Campanella

Note: Throughout, I have chosen to use the male pronoun to indicate the players. For the record, two girls played in Ramona PONY Baseball’s Mustang Division, one of whom was on our team.

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Burpee Stickball

Mikki Lee Martin outlines a game blending burpees and baseball.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

November 2011



All photos: CrossFit Kids/Danell Marks

After an energetic Teen class at CrossFit Brand X, Duncan, age 13, and E.J., age 9, created a CrossFit game that was a smash hit when we introduced it to the Kids class.



Some Major League pitchers should pay the burpee price for a hit, too.

Number of Players

Two to 10 players in teams of two (create two groups if necessary). Determine the order of team rotation to the pitching/batting positions.

Equipment

Stick (e.g., a SKLZ training bat—available at most sporting goods chain stores and online).

Gator Skin Dodgeball (S & S Worldwide).

Two cones or other markers to denote pitching and batting positions.

Facility

30-foot x 30-foot minimum-sized area for field.

Set-Up

One cone for the batting position.

Second cone set about 8-10 feet away to mark pitching position.

One two-person team pitches and hits.

Other teams spread out in the field.

Object

To avoid a burpee penalty, the batter must hit the ball, while the pitcher must throw strikes past the hitter.

Rules

Write these on the whiteboard for ease of explanation:

- The pitcher throws 5 pitches.
- The pitcher owes 1 burpee for every hit given up.
- A 3-burpee penalty is assessed if the pitcher hits the batter.
- The batter attempts to hit all pitches.
- The batter owes 1 burpee for every good pitch missed.
- A good pitch is defined as one thrown in the trainer-determined strike zone.
- Penalties are paid immediately after the 5 pitches.
- Fielders perform jumping jacks while the pitcher does burpees.
- Fielders can gain burpee credits for every 2 fly balls or ground balls caught per rotation.
- Burpee credits do not carry through successive rotations.



Mikki Lee Martin strategically calls in a southpaw to deal with a right-handed batter late in the game.

The CrossFit Kids trainer acts as an umpire (calling balls and strikes), assesses penalties for hit batters, and keeps score on the whiteboard for each team member, including burpee credits if earned.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Single?

Bill Starr explains how to sensibly integrate limit lifts into a strength program.

By Bill Starr

November 2011



All images: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

There are definitely two schools of thought in terms of doing singles in a strength routine. Some coaches believe that athletes shouldn't do them at all because they pose a much higher risk of injury than higher reps. This group emerged during the '80s, when becoming a strength coach entailed taking certification tests, and most of them knew very little about actually lifting heavy weights. The majority were more concerned about not getting any of their athletes hurt in the weight room than they were about getting their charges extremely strong.

1 of 8

What emerged were a number of extrapolating charts, from which a coach or athlete could determine how much he could do for a single simply by figuring upward from a certain number of reps. So if an athlete could back-squat 300 for 10 reps, his best single for that lift would be 390, if 10 lb. per rep was used, or 345 if 5 lb. per rep was used. This, according to the coach, was much safer, and the end results were the same.

But, of course, everyone who has ever handled any amount of weight knew this to be utter nonsense. It's the same as saying that if an athlete can run a 50-yard-dash in 4.6 seconds, his time for 100-yard-dash will be under 10 seconds. It would be nice if this were true, but in reality it isn't. If a strength athlete wants to say that he can bench 350 lb., he has to handle that amount of weight and not refer to any chart.

If a strength athlete wants to say that he can bench 350 lb., he has to handle that amount of weight and not refer to any chart.

This idea prospered primarily because the strength coaches and personal trainers didn't know how to incorporate singles into their athletes' routines. The extrapolations were an easy way out. When I was at Johns Hopkins, I can't tell you how many recruits came to the weight room with high-school records that were truly amazing. Five-hundred-pound squats, 400-plus benches, with corresponding numbers in a host of other exercises. When I found out these numbers were determined by charts and not by actually lifting those numbers, I knew they were bogus. And they always were. The 400-lb. benchers usually managed 315 at best. Most much less than that. And those 500-lb. squatters? Well, they were lucky to break 300 when they had to go below parallel.

As far as the risk factor of doing max singles, I was never concerned about that. I came out of an Olympic-lifting background where everyone in the sport, out of necessity, did lots and lots of singles. We had to. Contests required it. There were no competitions that utilized high reps

to determine the winner. However, that is currently happening a great deal in testing at the end of off-season strength programs. This started in the NFL and filtered down to colleges and high schools, again for safety reasons. One lacrosse coach at Hopkins wanted to do the all-the-reps-you-can-do-idea for his final testing. I agreed, but only if the athletes would also do a max single at a separate testing session. I bet him that the one who had the highest single would also be the one who did the most reps. I always won the bet.

And as for safety, I am convinced that there is a higher risk factor when maxing out on reps with a given weight, usually body weight, or 225, than there is when testing a max single. Here's why: with a limit single, the athlete either makes the lift or he doesn't. Period. Yet with the higher reps, he will resort to every ploy in the book to add another rep. On the bench press, he will rebound the bar off his chest, bridge until he's standing on his head, and squirm and twist his body like a contortionist, putting a huge amount of stress on his elbows, wrists, shoulders and back. In addition, it's much more rewarding to be able to say that you benched 335 than it is to say you did 225 for 20 reps.



***If you want to say you lifted it, you have to lift it.
No chart can do the work for you.***

So I'm very much in favor of utilizing singles in any strength program, and this includes programs for females and young athletes. Older athletes would, for the most part, be better off avoiding singles, with the exceptions being those who are still competing in Olympic and power meets. However, there are a few exercises where it's smarter to stick with higher reps regardless of age and reason for lifting weights. Those exercises are primarily the ones that hit the lower back specifically: good mornings and straight-legged deadlifts. Ditto for back hyperextensions and reverse back hypers. The reason being that one false move or attempting a poundage you're not quite ready for can result in an injury, and any sort of harm done to the lower back can be extremely painful and troublesome to rehabilitate.

But apart from those exercises specifically for the lumbar, everything else is game, even movements for the smaller groups like the calves and biceps.

Why Lift to Limit?

There are several reasons why I use singles in all my athletes' programs. First and foremost, they allow the lifter to move past the number barriers. Weightlifting is all about numbers, and there are some that pose more trouble than others. The century numbers are tougher to overcome than any others: 300, 400 and 500 on any exercise. These become mental obstacles for each and every athlete who touches a barbell. Three hundred is always a test of mental fortitude more so than pure physical strength. I've seen lifters do three reps with 290 and fail with 300. The strength was certainly adequate, yet the mind wasn't quite ready for that additional 10 lb. It's only human nature to fail at 300 lb. the first time you attempt it. Knowing how to use singles is very beneficial in overcoming those numerical barriers.



In a limit lift, certain numbers present mental blocks: 135, 225, 300, 400 and 500. With training, you can learn to blow past them.

Another reason I like singles is that they help the athletes learn perfect technique. Form must be precise on a max single for it to be successful. When doing fives, threes, or even doubles, your form may be a bit off, but you might still be able to complete the lift. That's not the case in a PR single. Your groove has to be hairline, your coordination flawless, your exertion fully under control, and your mental preparation precise. Learning how to improve a single rep on any exercise has great carry-over value in sports. Learning how to focus completely on the task at hand is a discipline that can easily be carried over to any physical endeavor, such as settling your emotions and doing everything right when you're on the foul line for a chance to win the basketball game, or making the absolutely correct moves when lining up a shot in overtime to capture the national title in lacrosse.

As every competitive weightlifter knows so well, handling a max single is dependent on confidence, a mental surety that you are prepared for the task. And as the athlete learns to handle heavy singles over and over with success, he builds a greater belief in his powers and becomes very self-reliant. This is due in large part to the fact that once he learns how to deal with max singles, his lifts improve, which means he's getting stronger. I firmly believe that there is nothing in life quite as motivational as gaining strength.



A heavy lift is as much mental as it is physical and will teach you how to set your mind.

Performing a single rep on any exercise is useful in that it will reveal your weaker spot on the lift much more readily than by doing higher reps. For example, those who have a weak middle on the squat can often camouflage it if they have a very strong start out of the bottom. They can explode the bar upward with such force that they zip right through the middle so they don't really have to call upon those lagging muscle groups. They do fine as long as they're doing fives and even triples, but when they go after a heavy single, they can no longer blow right through the middle range, and because the muscles responsible for that action are relatively weaker than the others, they're unable to finish the lift.

**I firmly believe that
there is nothing in life
quite as motivational as
gaining strength.**

The same thing occurs on the bench press. Because of a strong start, the bar climbs right through the middle range effortlessly—until the lifter is no longer able to provide such a powerful first move. The bar sticks and the weaker area reveals itself. Yet this is a good thing in a left-handed sort of way. For once you identify your weaker area on any exercise, you can then take steps to resolve the problem, and that will allow you to move to the next level. Getting stronger and stronger is really a matter of finding the weaker muscles and spending time doing specific exercises to bring them up to par. It's a never-ending process because as you grow older, your body is constantly changing, so you must learn to adapt in order to advance.

It is common knowledge that singles develop a different sort of strength than what you get from doing lower reps. Singles bring the attachments, tendons and ligaments into play to a much greater extent than any other numbers. Simply put, the lower the reps, the more the attachments are activated. Fives hit the attachments more than 8s or 10s, 3s more than 5s, and so on down the line. The secret to functional strength lies not in the muscles but rather the attachments, which should tell you how important it is to include some singles in your routine.

Then there are the intangible benefits that come from setting a personal record on some exercise. A record boosts confidence like nothing else can, and once this snowball starts rolling, nothing can keep you out of the gym.

While many athletes shun singles for various reasons, others do them too frequently. Hitting a heavy single or a new PR is heady stuff, and some enjoy it so much that they want the high at every session. The basic thing to know about this is that the more advanced a strength athlete is, the more often he can do singles in training.

Jim Williams was the king of the bench press in the '60s. I saw him do 675 and barely miss 700 in 1969 in York. No suit, wraps, or any sort of aid from equipment, and he wasn't taking any steroids. I know this because Bob Bednarski asked him, and because 'roids were prevalent in the sport and not against the rules, he had no reason to lie.

Every time Jim trained the bench, which, by the way, was the only lift he trained regularly, he went to limit, and he trained four-to-five times a week. He was able to get away with it because he was very advanced and he was also well over 300 lb. Heavyweights can get away with lots of things that those lighter cannot.

And many of the foreign Olympic lifters hammer away at singles at multiple sessions in a day. Again, they can do this because they have, over many years of training, built a wide, solid foundation. But for average strength athletes, this will not work. What they must do is spend ample time building a firm base and perfect their form before moving on to a steady diet of singles.

On most exercises, there really isn't a whole lot to worry about in terms of getting injured by doing singles too soon because you usually won't be attempting that much weight. You will either make the attempt or miss it. No harm done. But that's not the case in the deadlift. If you try and pull on a weight that you're not ready for and end up using sloppy technique, you could seriously injure yourself.

Ease Into It

One of the main problems of doing singles regularly and often on any exercise is that you are actually lowering your total workload. Compare doing a triple with 315 and a single with 335 on that same exercise. The 3s yield 945 lb. while the single only 315. The intensity is higher, but in the long haul, volume is ultimately more critical than intensity, especially in the formative stages of training.



When you're starting out, it's best to avoid too many singles, even though a string of PRs can be addicting.

So before you start trying any max singles, you need to slowly expand your workload with higher reps. The ideal strength formula has been found to be 4-6 sets of 4-6 reps. I use the median, 5s, because I am usually working with a large number of athletes and that makes the math easier. I also use 5s for individuals for much the same reason. It's simpler for them to do the math.

Before you start trying any max singles, you need to slowly expand your workload with higher reps.

Fives allow an athlete to slowly expand his workload while perfecting his form. On high-skill lifts, I use 5s for the warm-up sets, then triples for the higher work sets. On movements such as full snatches, full cleans, and jerks, few can handle much weight when they try to do fives but are able to handle 3s rather easily. On those dynamic exercises, form is most crucial, so lower reps are in order. To up the volume, I merely add in more sets. How many more is dependent on the condition of the athlete. If he has a solid background and good form, he may be able to knock out 5 or 6 heavy work sets at a session. Should he not be that far along, I limit the work sets to 3. Better to do each set precisely than to start building bad habits with sloppy technique.

And using good technique is essential because when form gets ugly, the athlete is not going to be successful with a limit single. So as the base strength is steadily improving, so must the form. If technique starts to get raggedy, back the numbers down until you are doing each lift perfectly, then slowly work back up the ladder again.

After the athlete shows that he can deal with heavy 5s, I insert triples into his routine for those same exercises. But I don't switch him to a steady diet of triples just yet, unless, as I mentioned, he's doing the Olympic lifts. Rather, I alternate the two programs: 5s one week, triples the next. Moving right to singles from 5s is too big of a jump, while the 3s serve as a nice stepping stone to the singles.



Once athletes have hit lots of 5s and 3s, it's time to try some heavy singles.

Triples require a very solid base and a close adherence to the small form points. The final rep in a set of 3 is very much like a max single and will give you a good idea how you will respond to doing a limit lift without actually performing one. And the slightly lower reps bring the attachments into play a bit more, again preparing you for the heavier single.

Many find, to their dismay, that the first time they attempt a heavy triple, they are only able to handle 5 or 10 lb. more than what they have been using for 5 reps. That's because they haven't as yet done enough work to strengthen their tendons and ligaments sufficiently to deal with the more taxing weight. It simply takes time and effort, and they will eventually be more proficient.

Then there is a small group of athletes who are able right away to convert from using 5s to 3s without any difficulty whatsoever. A large part of this is mental. Those athletes who have had success in an individual sport such as wrestling or boxing or the field events in track make this transition more readily than those who have only participated in team sports or no sports at all.

It is also dependent to a great deal of technique. The athlete who has consistently improved and honed his form on the 5s is much better prepared for the heavy triples than the athlete who has not. In addition, numbers have different effects on different athletes, and it has little to do with form or background of workload. It has to do with self-confidence. There were national-level Olympic lifters at York Barbell who could only make increases of 5 lb. on any exercise, including back squats. They just didn't have that much faith in themselves to try for a bigger increase. At the same time, I've had athletes in their first year of strength training be able to make increases of 40 lb. in a single week. Part of this is a stout belief in their own abilities, and also much of it has to do with mental preparation the night before a workout.

I usually have my athletes stay with a combination of 5s and 3s for at least a month before I graduate them to singles. Most are eager to try a max lift, but I tell them that they can pretty much figure out what they can handle from the triples. For most, it's 20 lb. over their best triple. I've had athletes come to me and ask, "Do you think I'm ready to squat 400 yet?" I ask in return, "What's your best triple?" "Three-seventy-five," he replies. "You have a good shot at it," I say. "The numbers indicate that 395 is your max, but if you get your mind ready for 400, you'll make it."



Having a specific plan of attack will help you prepare for a limit lift. Pick your warm-up sets carefully, and stick to the plan.

This is the time I impress upon them the usefulness of mentally preparing for the upcoming workout. Hitting a max single is entirely different from doing a heavy set of 5s or 3s. Spending some time the night before a single session going over the numbers you plan to use, from the very first warm-up set to the final one greatly improves your chances of making a personal record.

Go Big but Go Smart

There are a couple of ways of inserting singles into a weekly program, and which one you select depends on your personality. For most, and especially for those just starting in on doing singles, I flip-flop the singles on the various primary exercises in the routine. In other words, I have an athlete max out with a single on his bench one week, his back squat the next, and his power cleans on the third week. Or any variation of this. It really doesn't matter what order you choose. Same deal for Olympic lifters: one week the clean, next the snatch, and end up with a limit jerk. The same idea holds true for any grouping of exercises.

The other method which a few prefer is to go to a limit single on all three, or four, primary movements in the same week. Because this is what most scholastic and collegiate strength athletes are going to do during testing week, some athletes like this idea. And being able to make three or four PRs in a given week really stokes them.

But the question often arises, "What if I'm also doing inclines and overhead press and even weighted dips? Could I hit all those and my flat bench in the same week?" Sure, why not? If you've been training hard and have been making steady progress on those lifts, you'll be able to handle the max singles. Which are, by the way, less taxing in many ways than the 3s and 5s. What the singles tap into more than the higher reps is the nervous system, so whenever someone decides to have a full week of singles, I remind him to get extra rest, up his supplement intake and make sure he does his mental rehearsal religiously.

As a rule of thumb, less is better than more when it comes to singles—although that rule doesn't apply to those doing full cleans and jerks and snatches.

How often should you do singles? Unless you're doing the Olympic lifts, about once a month is sufficient. Of course, circumstances such as spring break, vacations at Christmas and Thanksgiving, and mid-terms and finals play a role in every scholastic and collegiate athlete's routine. As a rule of thumb, less is better than more when it comes to singles—although that rule doesn't apply to those doing full cleans and jerks and snatches. The more advanced a strength athlete is, the more often he can get away with singles.

The main reason you shouldn't do singles close together is that your workload is going to be much lower than when you do 5s or triples, and if you allow your workload to drop appreciably, it will have an adverse effect on your progress. For example, the difference between doing a back squat with 405 x 5 and hitting 435 for a single is right at 1600 lb., or more, depending on your warm-up sets for the limit lift.

So to make up that deficit, I have my athletes do 1 or 2 back-off sets of 8 or 10 reps to help preserve the workload to some degree. If the athlete misses his single attempt, I have him double up on the back-off sets. Except for the deadlift: once you're done or missed an attempted poundage, you're through for the day. A back-off set is merely an invitation to injury.

For my very advanced strength athletes, I utilize a modified version of Doug Hepburn's program, which he gave to me when I visited him in Vancouver, B.C., in 1969. His program consists of doing 5 sets of singles followed by 5 sets of 5. That's a bit much for anyone to start out with, but I've found that they can handle 3 singles then 3 sets of 5 without any difficulty. The beauty of this routine is it provides plenty of intensity with the singles and also some solid work for the volume side of the coin.

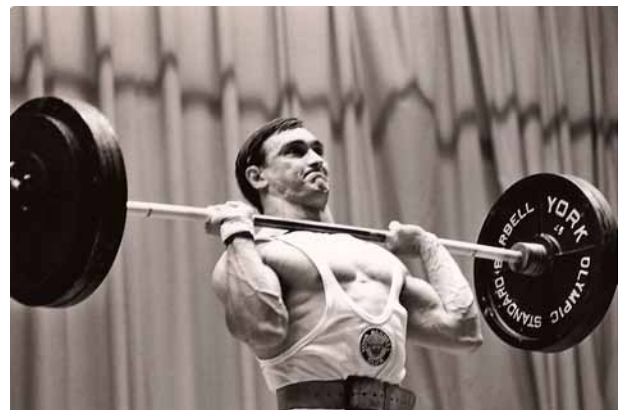
But this strategy only fits in the programs of advanced athletes. They must have a solid strength base, and they must also have mastered the art of full concentration. After the singles, most think they're over the hump, yet the most difficult part of this program is the sets of 5. Total focus is critical on these because the tendons and ligaments have already been tapped.

Start out conservatively with Hepburn's program. It's much tougher than it appears on paper. Let's say your best bench is 325. Start out using 305 for your singles, then drop back 50 lb. for your sets of 5. The key to making this bring results is that you have to make every rep on the singles and 5s

before you can add more weight. The fly in the ointment is usually found on the final set of 5 because at that point you think you're home free. You aren't.

When you're successful on every set, add 5 lb. to both the singles and 5s, and you'll soon move right past your former best. I've had several competitive lifters who were able to elevate to the full Hepburn routine of 5 sets of singles followed by 5 sets of 5. And it's a good idea to only do Hepburns for about a month or 6 weeks in a row. Then switch to another program for a while.

Singles will make you stronger, but only if you use them sensibly.



Jody Foster

About the author

*Bill Starr coached at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the 1970 Olympic Weightlifting World Championship in Columbus, Ohio, and the 1975 World Powerlifting Championships in Birmingham, England. He was selected as head coach of the 1969 team that competed in the Tournament of Americas in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, where the United States won the team title, making him the first active lifter to be head coach of an international Olympic weightlifting team. Starr is the author of the books **The Strongest Shall Survive: Strength Training for Football** and **Defying Gravity**, which can be found at [The Aasgaard Company Bookstore](#).*

THE CrossFit LIFE

Grow Your Mo

Jimi Letchford rallies the CrossFit community to participate in Movember, a mustache-growing fundraiser to benefit men's health.

Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

November 2011



All images: Madeline Letchford

Removing key aspects of a beard can reveal a hidden treasure on the upper lip.

Take a look at the men around you. Notice anything ... different? A dark shadow on their upper lips? Facial hair sprouting on the normally smooth and clean-shaven?

In any other month of the year, you could chalk it up to laziness or a belated attempt to join the mustache trend.

Not in November. In this month, men all over the world grow mustaches for **Movember**, an organization dedicated to raising money and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate cancer. In 2010, Movember had more than 64,500 participants, who raised \$7.5 million. It's now a global movement, with formal campaigns in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.K., Finland, Netherlands, Spain, South Africa and Ireland.

Knowing CrossFit athletes are dedicated to good health, the organizers of Movember reached out to CrossFit Headquarters and asked for support in this year's fundraiser. Jimi Letchford, Chief Marketing Officer for CrossFit HQ and one of the owners of CrossFit Ethos in Laguna Hills, Calif., agreed to spearhead the effort.

"We need to raise awareness because guys are more introverted about their health," Letchford said. "They should get checked out and pay attention."

One in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and testicular cancer is the most common cancer in American for males between 15 and 34. Men are less likely than women to schedule doctor's appointments and annual physicals, meaning that they could miss early detection and treatment of common diseases.



Jimi Letchford at the beginning of his month-long journey into amplified manliness.



Movember men appreciate the symbolic tributes of their "Mo Sistas."

Putting a fun twist on a serious issue, Movember challenges men to spend the month of November growing a mustache and raising money for men's health. The rules are simple. Once registered at Movember.com, men start out clean-shaven. For the rest of the month, participants leave their upper lip alone and join the other "Mo Bros" in raising money and awareness. Whether you go with a Fu Manchu, grow a Burt Reynolds-style 'stache or sport a full Hulk Hogan handlebar, your mo will encourage those around you to pay attention to men's health.

Women can get in on the act, too. Known as "Mo Sistas," women can register and help raise money in support of the men in their lives.

If you're a man and don't want to grow but would like to help out, you can still donate to the cause. Join the CrossFit network [here](#), or check out [Letchford's MoSpace](#).

"Any type of participation—from growing a mustache to donating to the cause—will represent your devotion to men's health," Letchford said. "We're looking for growers. We need more Mo Bros and Mo Sistas!"

Get the men and women in your box involved, and let's show the world that our dedication to health extends beyond the walls of the gym.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Oly Optimization

Olympian Chad Vaughn explains ideal positioning for success in the Olympic lifts.

By Chad Vaughn

November 2011



Susannah Dy/CrossFit Journal

As a spectator at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games, I couldn't keep the coach in me from slipping out during all the barbell movements.

Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal



As he breaks the bar from the ground, Vaughn has his shins slightly forward to distribute his weight properly.

It was easy to see the increase in the quality of weightlifting technique and leg strength, even from just the year before. I believe strength and technique will continue to increase through the next couple of years until everyone participating has the technique and positions of an elite-level weightlifter and an uncommon level of leg strength. These will be necessary for optimal efficiency through low-weight/high-rep barbell workouts, energy conservation throughout consecutive days of maximal exertion, and better results in one-rep maxes.

With regard to technique, this all-important efficiency will require the use of more core (hips and legs) and less extremities (arms). This is of the utmost importance as the arms are in great demand with a high amount of pull-ups, push-ups, muscle-ups and more scattered throughout any CrossFit competition. Proper positioning and movement of the bar and body will lead to efficient technique. Good technique means the bar is close to the body throughout its journey up the leg until the athlete achieves complete extension and applies that power to move the bar.

Easier said than done, right?

Top-Down Positioning

So how does one accomplish these positions and movements? Well, the critical position you must learn to create is vertical shins with the bar right above the kneecap as you complete the leg drive from the floor.

Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal



Note Vaughn's shins are now vertical as the bar reaches the knees, putting him in great position to finish the pull.

This is important and necessary because it accomplishes moving the body around the bar rather than the bar around the body. If the shins/knees are forward at this placement, then you have to consider the forces on the bar. It had to have gone forward and around the knee, and therefore the bar continues this forward momentum the rest of the way up.

The critical position you must learn to create is vertical shins with the bar right above the kneecap as you complete the leg drive from the floor.

From here, you will either have to chase the bar with the body to contact and get under or muscle it up with the arms with the bar away from the body. In either case, there will likely be that inefficient jump forward (unless you are strong enough to pull it back in, which would indicate to me that you are capable of much more if you can learn to avoid fighting against yourself).

From this vertical shin position you will be able to stand, extend and jump under the weight with the bar automatically and naturally closer to the body. This should be done from the knee, without the knees thrusting forward or re-bending, as this will also cause forward movement of the bar and body, loss of position and loss of momentum.

For those who create forward momentum and continue to jump forward, there are a number of cues we can give to hold this off, but it will be necessary for these athletes to exaggerate their movement to prevent the knees from coming forward at all. (Exaggerations are usually used to create movement that represents a “meeting in the middle” between two extremes.) One example of a cue I would give for this would be for lifters to feel themselves back on the heels for as long as possible as they stand to complete extension. In watching an elite lifter from here, you will see the knees come forward slightly—but look at that only as a shifting and not a re-bending.

To initially find this all-important spot at the knee, let's start from the top. Stand straight up with the bar in the hands (snatch or clean grip), with the arms hanging and relaxed. Then, with a very slight bend in the knee and without letting them bend any further, lower the bar to that specific position right above the kneecap, as if you are doing a Romanian deadlift.

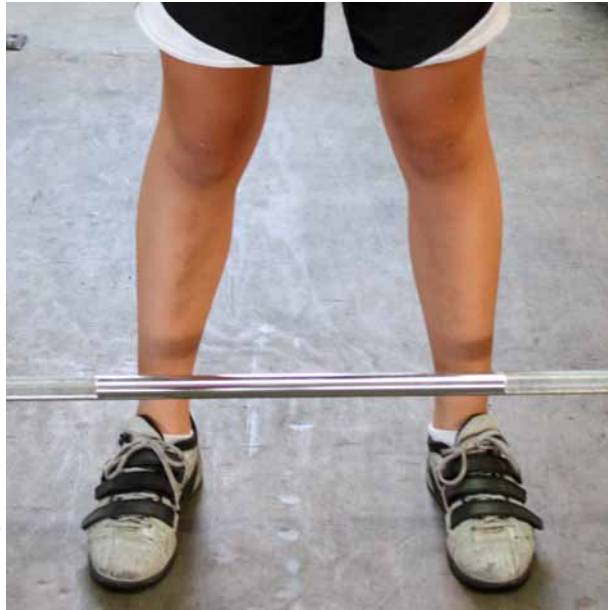
The amount of knee bend required to create vertical shins with the bar above the kneecap will be a little different for each person. Please realize that this vertical shin position requires the knees and shins to be so much further back than most people think, and it is hard for many to get to it without gaining flexibility in this specific range of motion. For most, if the hamstrings aren't screaming at you, then you are probably not there. Those blessed with flexibility might not feel much, but there should definitely be a lot of tension in the muscle. In either case, it will be necessary to use this movement as an exercise/tool to improve flexibility and build general muscle memory with the bar and the body in the proper positions.



The bar starts off close to the body and skims the shins on the way up.



Keep your shins vertical and the bar above the kneecaps before exploding to complete extension.



Chad Vaughn

Foot position: The feet are in a stance of flexibility, about shoulder width apart, toes slightly turned out.



Chad Vaughn

Start position: The shin angle is slightly forward to accommodate mid-foot body-weight distribution. The hips are lower than the shoulders to activate the legs. The back is set and tight. The shoulders are over and slightly in front of the bar.

Set up for Success

To get to the right position from the floor, we want a start position that will allow for the easiest transition. It's important that we avoid any extra and unnecessary movement of the body as we stand with the weight, and we want to pay specific attention to the back angle as the bar moves from the floor to the knee. Because we want the back angle to remain constant through this range of motion, the best way to find your ideal back angle from the floor is to take a picture or video from the side with the bar above the knee, the shins vertical and the back tight. Then, match that angle at the floor.

There are always exceptions to the rule, of course, so in a few cases we would use educated instincts of look and feel or a system of trial and error to find the best positions. In either case, some will struggle to get to this position or to create this specific back angle from the floor, especially with proper posture. This is usually due to problems of awareness or flexibility. Give some athletes a few reps and their bodies will do what's needed. Most who seem to lack flexibility are simply locked up by their stance or body-weight distribution.

When I work with any athlete for the first time, I always start by setting him up with a proper grip and foot position.

This stance is always about shoulder width apart with toes slightly turned out—a position of flexibility. Once we get to the lift from the floor, I usually end up moving many people's feet out even further. This is all about allowing the athlete to set the back, create closeness of the bar, and more easily move the body out of the way for an in-line bar path.

Of course, you don't want to be too wide, but it is far more common for athletes to have the feet in too narrow and to believe this is necessary. Think about an extreme example of narrow feet with toes straight forward, which usually noticeably hinders overall flexibility and therefore the ability of the athlete to set and tighten the back with good posture. If you are one who is blessed with excess flexibility, you will likely not be able to tell the difference no matter what your stance is, but this extreme example will still cause trouble when flexible athletes try to create the most efficient body movement and bar path. With the feet straight, they will either have to work harder to accommodate that bar path by flaring the knees out (rather than having the knees naturally come back as they drive from the floor out of a position of flexibility) or risk lifting around the knees, which will create forward momentum and take the bar away from the body.

Toes Forward?

Many of us are learning some benefits about a stance with straight feet (i.e., extra torque). I get it. I am on board and love the info. As a matter of fact, I play with it from time to time, particularly in the back squat, mostly as a warm-up and/or stretch. But, to me, you have to pay attention to sport specificity. For the CrossFitter, the Oly lifts fall into that category, and they show up in workouts regularly. So, if one's feet are going to jump out for the catch of the snatch or clean with toes slightly turned out in the body's most flexible, upright position at rock bottom, that is the stance I would recommended to strengthen those positions as much as possible, specifically in the front and overhead squats.

For the majority, any gains from straight feet will simply not outweigh the loss of posture and flexibility from the floor.

Furthermore, for these two squats (and even the back squat for that matter), if a particular foot position decreases postural quality in the slightest in any position of the movement, then you have to consider if it is worth using, at least for the time being. For the majority, any gains from straight feet will simply not outweigh the loss of posture and flexibility from the floor, which will create a loss of position throughout the entire lift and negatively affect bar trajectory.

On another thought, some will reason that their vertical-jump stance must be the best, most powerful foot position to aid in throwing a barbell in flight overhead. But, for starters, jumping up with your body weight is quite different than jumping under a barbell; the latter is far more about positioning.

Also consider this: why do you squat with a wider stance and with the toes slightly turned out? Obviously because it allows for more flexibility and the creation of a tight, quality position. And we lift the most weight when we use the best postures. I realize that many athletes lift more in the deadlift, but not usually without that "crapping dog" positioning!

Where's the Weight?

As for body-weight distribution, many lift with the weight too far toward the heels. Using another extreme example, placing the body weight excessively on the heels creates vertical shins and high hips, with the back parallel to the floor. If the shins are already vertical right from the floor, it will be mathematically impossible to replicate that back angle with the bar above the knee and the shins still vertical. With the back parallel to the floor as the bar comes off the ground, the distribution of the weight will be highly disadvantaged and will require most of the work to be done by the back. Furthermore, if the back is rounded—as is common with the decreased flexibility created by this position—we are talking about multiplied detriment.



Chad Vaughn

Above knee: Weight distribution is now toward the heels. The shins are vertical. Ideally, the back angle/shoulder position is a copy of what it was with the bar on the floor.

In addition, with your weight predominantly on only part of the foot, you can reason that you are using or activating only part of the rest of the body.

Look at your start position in terms of geometry: you need optimal angles of the shins and the back.

Look at your start position in terms of geometry: you need optimal angles of the shins and the back. With the shins, to increase the ability to set the back, shift the body weight to mid-foot (or evenly distribute it throughout the entire foot) and activate more lower-leg musculature (quads, glutes and even calves). A good back angle will do many of the same things but will also create better distribution of the weight being lifted throughout the entire body (the back and the legs mostly).

These angles and overall start position will be different for each person because of different limb lengths and body types, but the basics remain the same:

- You need a stance of flexibility.
- The body weight should be at mid-foot.
- You need a matching back angle with the bar on the floor and with the bar above the knees with vertical shins.
- The back must be tight.
- The shoulders should be slightly in front of the bar.

These points are especially important when learning the proper movement of your body, and they will help keep the bar close to your body.

Faults and Fixes

When coming off the floor, it can be difficult to master the transitions required to create that vertical shin position with the bar above the knees. Even out of the proper start position, the subsequent movement has to be learned and then hammered into muscle memory.

Of course, many faults can occur. It's easy to put too much emphasis on just getting the knees out of the way, which usually leads to excess back movement where the hips rise

faster than the shoulders. This means, among other things, that some of the energy that could/should be going into the bar is going into the body.

Remember what's happening in regard to body-weight distribution on the foot during this portion of the lift: the weight is at ideally mid-foot in your start position and at the heels by the time you clear the knee with the barbell. Use this as a cue and feel for the shift as you drift your entire body (not just the knees) back to the heel as you move the weight from the floor to the knee. This movement will actually need to be excessive or strongly exaggerated for most. Be aware that the more you sweep the weight back, the more downward pressure there will be on the chest/shoulders, so make sure you compensate here with extra upward pressure while drifting.



Chad Vaughn

Mid-thigh: The weight is now drifting back toward mid-foot as the lifter is standing to go into extension. The bend in the knee was produced at the end of the leg drive (above the knee), though the knees have slightly shifted forward as the lifter positions to extend and exert optimal power. The shoulders are still covering the bar.

Also, some will go into the jump too soon. This means that the leg drive is not being completed, the back is standing too soon and the bar is going around the knees. If the focus on drifting back doesn't fix this as well, then try to feel the shoulders stretching out over the bar longer.

In conclusion, I am not saying that this is *the* technique. There are even world-record holders who will set up and subsequently move their body and the bar differently. Nevertheless, the technique I'm describing is by far the most common and the one presuming the greatest overall efficiency while requiring the highest level of skill.



Chad Vaughn

Full extension: The hips have completely opened, and the body has gone through and beyond a natural standing position with the heels raised, shoulders shrugged and chest rising. This full extension is comparable to what the body looks and feels like as it is just leaving the floor in a vertical jump. However, the next move from here in getting under a barbell is of course “jumping down” as the body moves back and around the bar while the arms pull and push it underneath.

Look at it in terms of squat strength compared to Oly-lift capabilities, as one example. One lifter might be able to realistically reason that if he can double a certain weight in the front squat in training, then he has a good chance at being able to clean and jerk it in competition—but this requires a high level of skill and efficiency in getting almost everything out of the strength the lifter has.

A lifter on the other extreme will have squat capabilities that are in great excess of his current Oly numbers. The more “excess” strength one has, the more one can get away with less ideal technique; i.e., lifting around the knees but still being able to move quickly and land in the ideal spot after the jump under by overcoming that forward momentum or loss of position with great strength.

In either case, by mastering the skill of moving your body efficiently and quickly with heavier and heavier weight, any other physical skill you wish to achieve becomes easier and easier to accomplish. As additional benefits, consider the increased energy conservation through a WOD and increased potential in 1RMs!

Remember as well that this is a discussion on only one part of the snatch or clean. What do your catch positions look like? Are they as smooth as they could be? How are you interacting with the bar to get there? And what are you doing to prepare your body for this reception?

More to come!



About the Author

Chad Vaughn is a two-time Olympian, a seven-time national champion and an American Record holder in the sport of Olympic weightlifting. He was introduced to CrossFit in 2008 and began working within the community in early 2010. Chad is now part owner at CrossFit Centex, where he holds weekly weightlifting classes while doing occasional seminars throughout the U.S. Chad has a natural, matured understanding of how the body best moves and is highly motivated to help anyone interested find their “perfect snatch” and heaviest clean and jerk.



Mike Markentin/CrossFit Journal

THE CrossFit LIFE

Throwing Down the Gauntlet

Hilary Achauer recaps the first CrossFit Kids and Teens competition for girls and boys ages 13-18.

By Hilary Achauer

November 2011



All images: Danell Marks

It came down to a battle between Cole Dick and Garrett Janda. They had five minutes to find their 1RM squat clean. First, Janda cleaned 250 lb. Then Dick stepped up and cleaned the same weight, sending the two into a tiebreaker. Janda approached the bar, took a deep breath, and squat cleaned 255 lb.



The kids and teens showed off their hours of hard work in a competition that tested their stamina, strength and skill.

Impressive numbers, but even more so when you learn that Dick is 15 years old and Janda 18. They were competing in The Gauntlet, a CrossFit Kids and Teens competition for athletes ages 13-18. The competition included three divisions: novice, junior varsity and varsity. Boys and girls competed together in each division.

The event was held on Oct. 16 at CrossFit Brand X in Ramona, Calif., and featured three workouts, with variations for the junior varsity and novice athletes. Jeff Martin, the event organizer and the co-founder of CrossFit Kids, restricted the event to 35 competitors due to size and staffing limitations. He had to turn people away, and teens came from as far away as Wisconsin to compete. There were athletes from Texas and Colorado, and a pair of brothers who CrossFit out of their parent's garage. The older brother, Josh Brydon, placed third in the varsity division.

In the first workout, the varsity athletes had a chance to show off their double-under skills. They had 2 minutes to do as many double-unders as possible, then they moved on to 3 rounds of a 250-meter hill sprint, 10 overhead squats (95/65 lb.) and 15 box jumps (24/20 inches). Valerie Calhoun, a 16-year-old from Sacramento with a 2:38 Fran time, fit in 155 double-unders in 2 minutes, and then finished the workout with a time of 7:57. Janda did 169 double-unders in 2 minutes and finished with a time of 7:34.

In the second workout, titled "Karen Interrupted," the varsity athletes had 3 minutes to work their way through 150 wall-balls. After 3 minutes, they had 5 minutes to get a 1RM squat clean, then it was back on the wall-balls until they reached 150. Janda and Dick's squat cleans were sandwiched in between 150 wall balls, making their numbers even more impressive.

Martin said he was blown away by what he saw in the competition.

"I have not seen that kind of focus and intensity outside of the regionals and the CrossFit Games," he said. "Their technique and movement was spectacular—it was inspiring."



Different ages, different weight on the bar—same amount of heart.

The last event of the day was called “The Last Man Standing.” With a continuously running clock, the athletes had to do 1 push press and 1 bar-facing burpee in the first minute, 2 push presses and 2 bar-facing burpees in the second minute, and 3 push presses and 3 bar-facing burpees in the third minute, continuing on until each athlete failed to complete all the movements in 1 minute. The novice push-press weight was 45 lb., the junior varsity weight was 55 lb. (both girls and boys used the same weight in novice and junior varsity), and the varsity weight was 65 lb. for girls and 95 lb. for boys.

The winner of the novice division, Max Vargas, finished with 9 rounds plus 10 push presses and 8 bar-facing burpees. Also competing in the novice division was Trenton Lambert. He had to scale the push press, which prevented him from winning, but he made it through 11 rounds, showing incredible heart.

“He just kept going,” said Martin. “He was in the moment and did a whole round more than the winner. Even though he knew he couldn’t win, he just kept going because he could. It brought tears to my eyes.”

The Gauntlet was just the beginning for CrossFit Kids and Teens competitions. CrossFit Kids will be holding a powerlifting competition at CrossFit Kids Headquarters in Ramona on Saturday, Nov. 19, for kids and teens ages 13-18. The next CrossFit Kids competition will be on Jan. 29 and 30, 2012, at the Los Angeles Fitness Expo. This event will have twice as many competitors as The Gauntlet, although space is still limited.

For information about any of these competitions, or to learn more about CrossFit Kids, send an email to info@CrossFitKids.com.

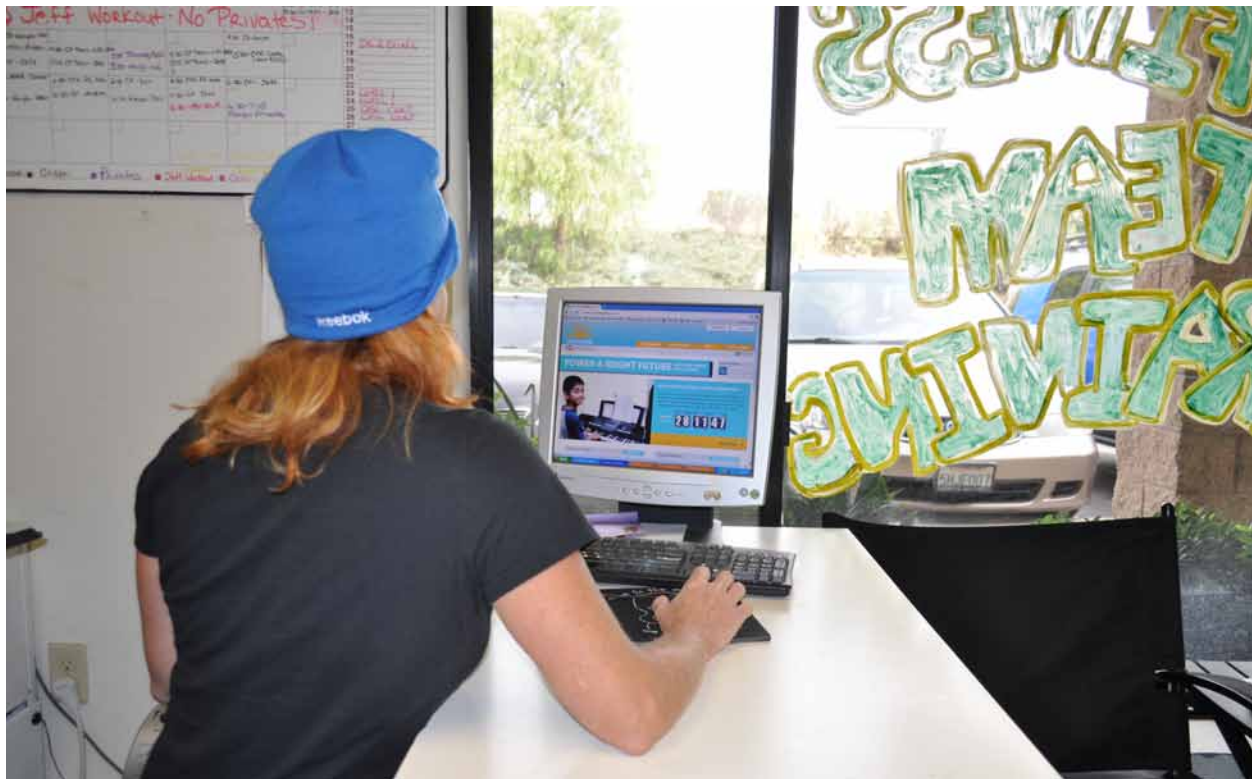
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Grant Writing for Kids Programs

Need help funding your program? Lura Poggi of CrossFit Kids HQ has some tips.

By Lura Poggi

November 2011



Danell Marks

Money! Money! Money!

Everyone needs more, and there isn't enough to go around. Winning a grant proposal can be a great way to augment your current CrossFit Kids program and add new, creative programs and services. Here are some thoughts to consider in your grant-seeking journey.

Before starting your grant search, ask yourself and your team these questions:

1. Who within your community could benefit from CrossFit Kids programs?
2. What makes your program special?
3. What is your mission statement? It must be clear, concise and meaningful.
4. What are your goals/intended outcomes?
5. Are your goals/intended outcomes measurable, repeatable and observable?
6. How will you measure the program's success?
7. Who needs to be involved/consulted in the process?
8. Are there local organizations that would be interested in partnering with you?

Each grant application is unique. It is important to closely look at the application information for the required qualifications. In a competitive grant market, grantors will be looking for small things to weed out grant applications from the pool. It is important you meet all the qualifications. Don't try to fake it! If your organization does not meet the qualifications, keep looking for another grant opportunity. They are out there!

Don't try to fake it! If your organization does not meet the qualifications, keep looking for another grant opportunity. They are out there!

Most grant applications will ask for a detailed budget. Make sure you have reviewed each area of your program and assessed the cost associated with every aspect. This includes staff time to administer the grant. It will take one of your team members time and energy to administer, track and report program and grant information.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Stay within the grant guidelines and don't make promises you can't fulfill.

If the grant application allows, make sure to build your personnel costs into the budget. It is often overlooked and critical to include into your budget. Additionally, will your organization be contributing money into the program? Some grant programs want to see other contributors to a program. How much are you willing or able to contribute? If you are not able to contribute, are there organizations in your community with similar programs that might be interested in partnering with you?

Is the Grant Worth It?

It is common to think any free money is worth whatever it takes to get it. However, don't make promises you can't keep. For example, if you are not able to assess childhood obesity with the research, statistics and reports the grant requires, then move on to the next grant. Further, it is extremely important to look at what the grantor will require of you at the end of the funding process.

Stay within the grant-application guidelines. If they are asking for a 250-word narrative, do not exceed that limit. You wouldn't want your application to get vetoed because you used 260 words, which can happen in competitive grant cycles.

Additionally, have someone not related to CrossFit review your application and ask questions. Often, we are so passionate, excited and familiar with our work we assume others will understand what we are talking about. The person considering your grant application might not know anything about CrossFit Kids or understand what in the world you are talking about. If your outside reviewer has questions or doesn't understand something in the grant application, chances are neither will the grant committee.

There are many ways to pursue CrossFit Kids grants. You can do an Internet search—jump on Google, Bing, etc.—and use keywords such as “fitness,” “children,” “obesity” and “physical education,” to name a few. Another approach is to contact organizations in your community and meet with them to discuss how they can partner with your CrossFit box in the development of programs that can have a profound impact on children’s lives.

The most important thing to remember is making a good first impression. Be prepared and have a professional-quality presentation to show the grantors.

**Have someone not
related to CrossFit review
your application and
ask questions.**

Case Study

CrossFit Brand X/CrossFit Kids Headquarters recently applied for the [Power A Bright Future](#) grant sponsored by The Clorox Co. The grant was found by an Internet search using the term “play grants.”

We are partnering with a local K-12 school. Meetings were scheduled with the principal, the parent-teacher-student association, teachers, staff and school site councils to get their buy-in and support. The grant proposal is to deliver CrossFit Kids programming in place of the school’s current physical-education program and to include an after-school program as well.

Final Advice

Keep your dreams big but manageable. Know your goals and intended outcomes. Share your passion but articulate your intentions and make sure you can measure your results.

You want to be the change? Grants are a great way to make your CrossFit Kids dreams come true!

For a video about CrossFit Kids in schools and the Power a Bright Future grant, please click [here](#).



Courtesy of Lura Poggi

About the Author

Lura Poggi has a master’s degree in college student personnel and a bachelor’s degree in communications. For 19 years, she has worked at public and private universities in the areas of residential life, alumni affairs, development, student activities, human resources, student government and women’s center programs. She is an adjunct faculty member in first-year programs at [California State University San Marcos](#) and a CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids trainer at CrossFit Brand X.

THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S



WHINE-FREE FOOD

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

"Mom, I don't want to eat an apple. Ugh!" Are your young ones bored with your Paleo foods? Keep them happy eating healthy with variety! Instead of giving them the same old apple to munch on, feed them this variation of crunch. Warning: whining is severely reduced when feeding your children fun foods.

Makes 1 serving.

blocks

2 carbohydrate blocks

1 fat block

ingredients

- ½ Granny Smith apple, cubed
- 1 cup jicama, cubed
- ½ tbs. dried cranberries
- 2 tbs. pistachios
- 1 fresh lime

notes

Serve with 2 ounces of canned tuna to add 2 protein blocks.
Serve it on the side or mix it right in!

directions

1. Place chopped apple and jicama in a bowl.
2. Cut lime in half and squeeze juice over the fruit. Toss to coat.
3. Fold in pistachios and cranberries.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

The Best of the Best

Mike Warkentin visits with CrossFit's finest coaches at the recent Trainers Summit.

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

November 2011



Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal

"You folks are the best trainers I've got," Coach Greg Glassman told the 90 or so HQ Seminar Staff trainers assembled at the Marriott in San Diego, Calif., on Oct. 26, 2011.

Looking around the room, you'd be hard-pressed to disagree with him.

Adrian Bozman, Pat Sherwood, Chuck Carswell, Todd Widman, E.C. Synkowski, Aimee Lyons, Jenn Hunter-Marshall—the roll call was a laundry list of the very best of the CrossFit community that extends from North America into Europe, Australia and beyond.

You'd also be hard-pressed to find a better group of athletes outside of the CrossFit Games themselves. The Seminar Staff includes two Games champs in Annie Thorisdottir and Jason Khalipa, as well as perennial Games competitors Heather Bergeron, Chris Spealler, Lindsey Smith, Austin Malleolo, James Hobart, Matt Chan, Pat Barber and more.

In the world of CrossFit, you won't find a more talented and passionate group of individuals, and they were all gathered in San Diego for several days of team building, professional development and workouts.

Seminars: Then and Now

Hollis Molloy was one of the early adopters who wanted to become a trainer, and doing so was a bit different when the original CrossFit HQ was a very small box—the only one of its kind—on Research Park Drive in Santa Cruz.

Molloy had been training with Coach Glassman and the original HQ crew, and when he wanted to start training himself, he was given keys to the gym. To try and drum up some business, Molloy offered to train five of his buddies for free for a month. After the month was up, all his freebie friends became clients and Molloy was in the business of training.



Hollis Molloy (foreground) was a member of Coach Glassman's original Santa Cruz crew long before he was a member of the Seminar Staff.



Coach Greg Glassman addresses the Seminar Staff on Oct. 27 in San Diego.

When a group coaching slot opened up at HQ, Molloy jumped at the chance to take it. Like rock 'n' roll, the CrossFit thing really caught on and spread around the world, with new boxes opening first in North America and then all over the globe. The rest, of course, is history, and Molloy is now on the Seminar Staff and runs CrossFit Santa Cruz with his sister, Danielle Edmundson.

**"You folks are the best
trainers I've got."
—Coach Greg Glassman**

The Seminar program originally featured one head coach doing all the lectures and instruction. Luckily, that coach was pretty good. In the early days, Coach Glassman did the seminars himself, with Nicole Carroll demonstrating the movements and Greg Amundson and Josh Everett doing workouts. There's a reason Coach will often tell people he's "just a trainer" at heart.

At a special dinner on Oct. 27 with the training staff dressed to the nines after washing off the dirt of the afternoon's obstacle-course WOD, Coach recalled some of those seminars, where he had to manage a large number of athletes with a small staff and limited equipment. When asked about once running a seminar himself with a few sets of dumbbells and now having a group of over 100 outstanding trainers doing up to six seminars a weekend, Coach just smiled—broadly—and looked around the room with pride.



Jenni Orr solves a problem the CrossFit way: with explosive power.

The CrossFit Seminar program is a hugely important part of the CrossFit community. At Level 1 Seminars, aspiring athletes will have their form adjusted and critiqued, but they'll also learn how to teach the movements to others. The Level 1 is just the beginning of the CrossFit trainer's journey toward excellence and virtuosity. It's no accident that at the close of the course, aspiring trainers are told to educate themselves with experience by grabbing a broomstick and teaching a neighbor how to deadlift, working with other good trainers in their area, digging into the *CrossFit Journal*, and participating in the myriad other courses CrossFit provides.

The key to it all is the Seminar Staff. They are the best examples of Coach Glassman's concept of virtuosity, and they are the ones who head out into the community and answer that most challenging of questions: "What is CrossFit?"

The trainers are ambassadors for CrossFit, and they're carefully selected for their character, personality and unique abilities to connect with athletes and trainers

and make them better. There are now over 100 of these individuals, and they're scattered around the world, from Los Angeles to New York to London to Brisbane. Despite the distance between them, they're united by a passion for teaching others about CrossFit.

Finding Passion in Every City

At breakfast, Chris Spealler asks the serving staff at the Marriott for some ketchup for his eggs. Some of the other trainers laugh as "Speal" smiles and sits down with a bottle of Heinz, as he does at many meals. Seated at the same table are Lily Cosgrove and Tracy Cooper, both from Australia. When asked about what it's like to meet their trans-global colleagues for breakfast, they laugh and point to Spealler.

"It's a bit overwhelming," Cooper says. "The fact that I'm with Chris Spealler at breakfast is kind of weird. We always joke, 'Oh my God! That's someone from the Internet!'"

Most of the Seminar Staff is based in the United States, and the ladies from Down Under are excited to meet the rest of the crew, rub elbows, share stories and learn. Both mention they were inspired by the fiery, confident and vibrant female trainers like Miranda Oldroyd and want to take that fired-up attitude back home, where they say many women are making the transition from laid-back to firebreathing females.

"I want to take away the passion these guys have for what they do, and we want to learn from that," Cosgrove says.

Cosgrove and Cooper do about six to 10 seminars a year right now—numbers that will no doubt increase as the sport of fitness catches on in Australia and the Far East. Compare that number to five-time CrossFit Games competitor Spealler, who runs his own affiliate, CrossFit Park City, and has done about 50 seminars a year for the last two-and-a-half years.

"There are times I forget where I'm going when I get to the airport," Spealler says. "There are times when I've landed and not known where I am."

The Utah athlete recalls phoning his wife to say he landed in Kansas City only to have a stewardess shake her head and correct him: "You're in Columbus, sir."

As one of HQ's "flowmasters"—the lead trainers who direct the seminars—Spealler has met many of the Seminar Staff members. Standing in the middle of a ballroom and waiting in line to receive some new staff apparel, Spealler says the whole Trainers Summit is a little "like a family reunion without the weirdness."

**"Every HQ trainer is someone
who is passionate about
teaching people CrossFit.
That's the common bond."**

—Chris Spealler

Despite being surrounded by a host of people from a host of different places, Spealler finds it easy to nail down a theme.



Mike Workentin/CrossFit Journal

**Lindsey Smith and Christmas Abbott plan an escape
during a team-building exercise.**

"Every HQ trainer is someone who is passionate about teaching people CrossFit," he says. "That's the common bond here. When someone is passionate about something, there's no faking it, and it's easy to find that common ground."

Standing near Spealler, Russell Berger laughs about the travel schedule, too. Berger relocated from Alabama to the travel hub of Denver and is now on the road for much of the year. That can cause some stress, he says, but every single weekend he's reminded of why he stands shoeless and beltless in airports around the world while people grope him, scan him and rifle through his bags.

"The travel side and the human-interaction side are very different," he says. "You meet so many people who want nothing more than to meet you and learn about CrossFit that it more than makes up for the difficulties. At the end of Saturday (at a seminar), it's always like, 'Wow. What a great job!'"

Another Kind of WOD

Lindsey Smith is tied to Christmas Abbott. The former towers over the latter.

They're linked together by two lengths of rope hooked together and attached to their wrists.



Michael Brian

There's always time for feats of strength at a CrossFit event.

Around the room, about 45 pairs of trainers are in the same situation. They've been instructed to find a way to separate the ropes without removing the loops from their wrists, and most of them are contorted in strange positions.

It's all part of the Mobile Team Challenge workshop, in which the trainers are presented with challenges that require thinking, planning, sharing and cooperation.

Burly Jason Khalipa is tied to Andy Hendel and looks as though he might just flex his arms and snap the ropes. Instead, he and Hendel dance around, getting the ropes more tangled with each attempt. Nadia Shatila and Kurtis Bowler are in the same boat. Widman somehow escapes from his partner almost instantly.

Smith and Abbott let out a whoop and raise free ropes in the air, triumphant. The facilitator asks them to do it again, and the women, laughing, try to replicate the feat without success.

Turns out there's a simple solution, and it has a message of cooperation behind it.

In another group, the members are trying to pass a small ball around the circle. The catch is that you can only use a body part once. Use your hand and hands are out for the rest of the circuit. In one group, Bozman bites a ball. In another, Cherie Chan and Nicole Christensen are getting to know each other very well while passing the ball with an "advanced technique." Carswell looks like he's getting choked out by Karianne Dickson.

Around the room, CrossFit's best trainers—the masters of our movements—are trying to coach each other through new movements by inventing creative cues.

Everyone is laughing wildly, with Spealler's characteristic giggle louder than any other.

Another group is trying to get each member to touch a ball in order in the shortest amount of time possible. Jenni Orr stands resolute in the middle of the circle, holding the ball as if she's going to do a max clean.

Around the room, CrossFit's best trainers—the masters of our movements—are trying to coach each other through new movements by inventing creative cues based on outside-the-box thinking.

After a short break, most of the athletes are banished to the hallway while a few "captains" are given specific instructions. When the teams are led back in, they're blindfolded, and the captains have to lead them through an obstacle course without speaking.

One chain of CrossFitters messes up on an obstacle and actually no-reps itself, going back and trying it again. The facilitators nod their approval.

Another group randomly picks up a few bags that were lying around, probably itching to move large loads long distances quickly.

Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal



The monkey bars at the SEALs obstacle course didn't slow down Austin Malleolo, who finished seventh in the Killer Kage event at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

In the end, the chains make it to the final goal, and high-fives and hugs are exchanged.

Everyone learns a little bit more about solving problems as a group.

Sharing Passion With Others

Cosgrove and Cooper wanted very much to hang out with some of the CrossFit "OGs," and Josh Everett certainly fits the bill. One of the early Internet stars, Everett is a down-to-earth, friendly guy who's been a huge part of the spread of CrossFit because of his character, training talent and athletic abilities.

Standing on the obstacle course at Naval Special Warfare Group 1 in Coronado, Everett is watching the training staff climb cargo nets, vault over logs, swing on ropes and hit the monkey bars that usually confront Navy SEALs.

He looks a little like a proud father.

"It's unbelievable," he says as he watches Dave Castro, Andy Stumpf and some active-duty personnel guide trainers over the 30-foot cargo-net obstacle. "I don't think I could have imagined it would grow into this.

"What I'm really impressed with is the quality of the trainers on the Level 1 staff. There's a lot of common traits. Passion for CrossFit and a commitment to the lifestyle CrossFit represents, all our trainers embody that."

**"What I'm really impressed
with is the quality of the
trainers on the Level 1 staff."**

—Josh Everett

Everett has been involved with CrossFit seminars since back in 2004, so he's one of the elder statesmen in the group. He says he really enjoys learning new cues and new ways of presenting things from the newer members of the Seminar Staff, and he says the energy of the Level 1 crew keeps him fired up for every seminar.



Michael Brian

This bridge isn't in Burma but rather Coronado, Calif., and it tests Navy SEALs on a regular basis.

Echoing Coach Glassman's sentiments from earlier in the day, Everett talks about a feeling of pride he gets from the Trainers Summit.

"It's a complete honor to be a part of this group," he says. "Not a lot of people get a chance to be a part of a championship team at the highest level, and this is a championship team at the highest level of fitness."

Beside him Australia's Doug Armstrong has the same feeling, even if he's been a part of the team for about a year.

"Everyone just has a passion for life," he says with a grin as Khalipa lumbers away from the cargo net and receives congrats from his buddies. "They're happy. There's a lot of leadership within the group, and everyone's a team."

And he's right.

If the trainers themselves select the word "passion" as the one that might best describe them, those outside the group might select a few others.

"Talented" and "enthusiastic" spring immediately to mind. "Dedicated" and "creative" too.

Coach Glassman, for his part, calls the Seminar Staff "the best."

They are indeed that, and they're bringing CrossFit to your city soon.



Michael Brian

About the Author

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

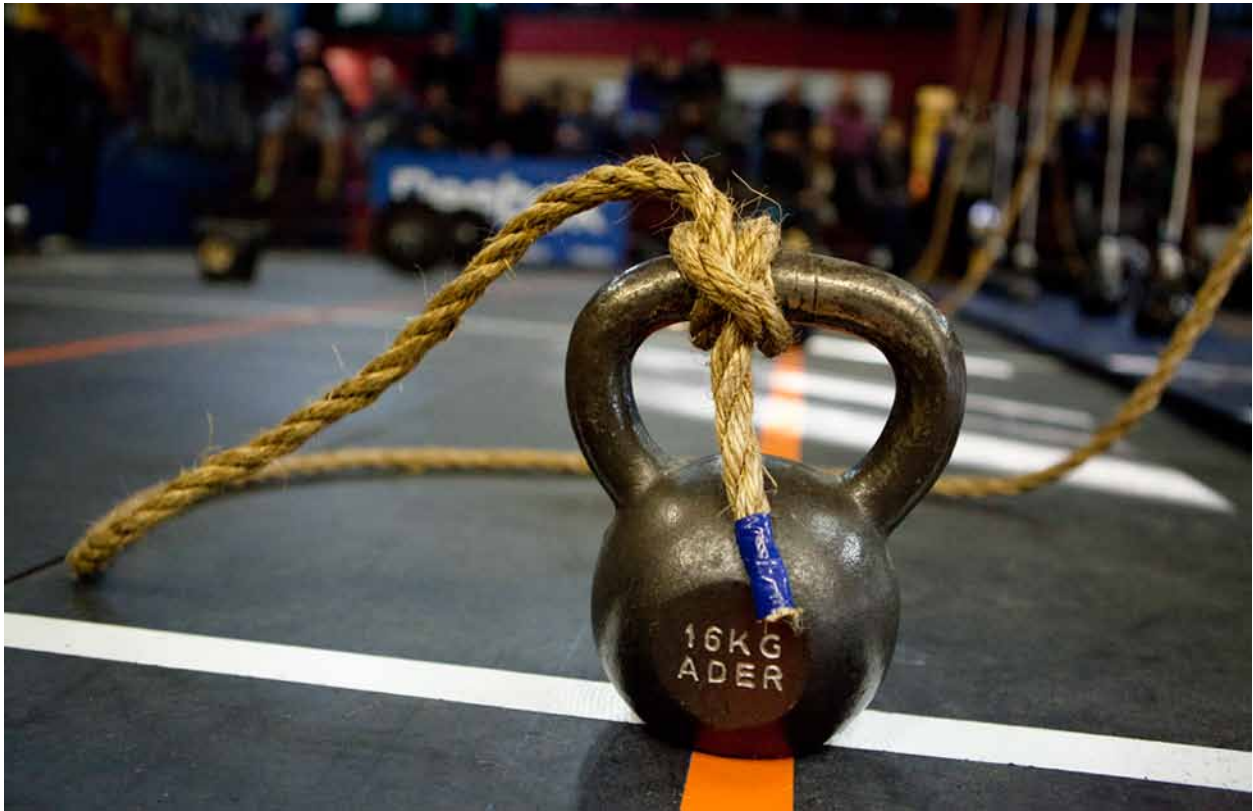
THE CrossFit LIFE

All in the Same Room

Emily Beers reports on the mix of veteran and first-time CrossFit athletes at the 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge, held Nov. 4-6 in Victoria, B.C.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

November 2011



Sara Carle

CrossFit Taranis owner Reed MacKenzie takes the microphone. A hush comes over the crowd as he announces the first workout to an eager audience. It involves 2 sets of max handstand push-up attempts, with some power snatches in between.

1 of 4

The 10th-fittest female in the world from the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games, 36-year-old Angie Pye, makes her way to the warm-up area to get her body ready to go. She's decked out in Reebok gear from head to toe. Everything about her screams "pro athlete"—her physique, her veteran walk, the way she warms up and the confidence in her movements. This is just another day at the gym for Pye.

Warming up in the same area as Pye is Kira Hallwood, a 22-year-old who just discovered CrossFit a few short months ago. She is insanely nervous about her first CrossFit competition.



Sara Carle

Steve Howell is training hard for a shot at the 2012 CrossFit Games.

"What's a power snatch again?" Hallwood asks, 10 minutes before the workout. "Is that when you throw the bar over your head? Oh, and I've only ever done kipping handstand push-ups. I'm not sure I can do one without a kip," she adds.

She looks over and sees Pye.

"Holy shit. Look at that girl. She's ripped. I'm so scared now," Hallwood says.

I start laughing to myself. It's not every day, or in every sport, that the Hallwoods of the world get to compete alongside the Pyes. There was something so authentic about this dichotomy, something so refreshing about the diversity of characters that CrossFit attracts.

The 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge showcased a handful of these characters.

Steve Howell—Boom

Steve Howell has been talking about the 2011 Taranis Winter Challenge since the 2010 Challenge ended. He's possibly the most devoted man in the entire Northwest. Steve Howell lives for CrossFit. He doesn't read books; he reads the *CrossFit Journal*. He doesn't drink. He doesn't eat sugar or starch. He calls himself "80 percent Paleo." When you ask him what he eats for the 20 percent Paleo cheat, he says, quite seriously, "Whey protein powder."

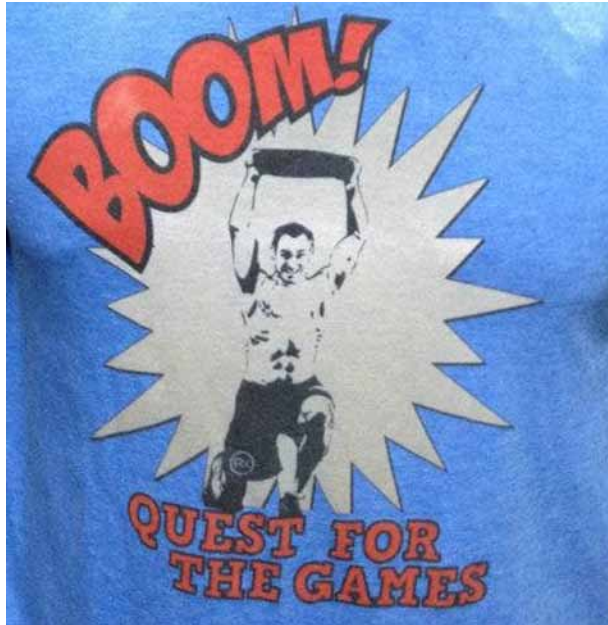
In short, he is the most dialed-in man around.

But don't mistake his possessed focus for selfishness. Howell is the first to give another man props on a big score. He is the first to graciously congratulate his competitors.

And I learned this summer that it's not just words he's willing to give. When my team went on a weekend retreat to Whistler prior to the 2011 CrossFit Games, it was Howell who volunteered his time, programmed for us and coached us all weekend before we set off for California in July.

As for Howell's own quest for the CrossFit Games, he puts himself out there, boldly and publicly. There's something so innocent and carefree about the way Howell has expressed his passion to get to the Games. And it has caused people all over Canada West to embrace him. It's hard not to jump on board the Howell quest.

Jordan Glasser/CrossFit Whistler



Howell has even printed a few T-shirts to keep himself motivated, and some of his fellow competitors are wearing them, too.

At the Taranis Winter Challenge, even some of his competitors were wearing T-shirts with a picture of Howell that said, "BOOM: Quest for the Games."

This weekend in Victoria, Howell took one step closer to reaching his quest. He chipped away, workout after workout, flirting with the leaders all weekend.

He finally reached the top spot for the first time after the final workout on Sunday afternoon, beating out Connor Nelson (second) and 2011 individual Games competitors Jeremy Meredith (third) and Lucas Parker (fourth).

The Whistler Ladies

Twenty-six-year-old Sophie Garneau, who has been involved in CrossFit for less than a year, competed in her first CrossFit competition with the CrossFit Whistler team this weekend. Garneau is a former gymnast from Montreal who looks like a mini version of Camille Leblanc-Bazinet.

Her coach, CrossFit Whistler owner Jordan Glasser, agrees.

"I told her that she could be the next Camille," Glasser said. "In response, she said, 'The next what? What's that?'" He laughed. For now, Garneau says she does CrossFit because it gives her more balance in her life.



Sara Carle

Sophie Garneau: CLB2?

"It's a reason for me to get out of the office at 5 p.m. I like going to the gym. I used to hate going to the gym, but now I feel like I have a purpose. It's about work-life balance for me," she said.

Garneau's teammate, 33-year-old Jo Macalister, also experienced her first CrossFit competition this weekend. She surprised herself when her team tied for first in their heat and went on to the team playoffs on Sunday.

"I thought we'd be shopping today," Macalister said after her team won its quarterfinal workout, putting CrossFit Whistler in the final four. "I just love the support. We're all competitors, but everyone is rallying for each other, too. You walk out after a workout feeling like you've done the best thing ever."



Sara Carle

Kira Hallwood during "the worst thing that's ever happened to me."

Judging by the crowd's response, Garneau and Macalister indeed did one of the best things of the weekend in the final team workout of the competition.

Garneau, who weighs just 100 lb., was stuck on kettlebell strict presses for a number of minutes during the workout, failing on multiple reps. But when the crowd grew louder, Garneau suddenly found a surge of energy and shoulder strength she didn't know she had and got through it.

Then it was time to back-squat Macalister, a woman twice Garneau's size and who weighs more than the Garneau's max back squat. Garneau managed to stand up a couple of times with Macalister on her back before the time expired. Between grimaced attempts, both Garneau and Macalister kept their smiles. The crowd stood up and applauded loudly to show their appreciation.

Macalister said she definitely wants to compete again, but that competition isn't what CrossFit is about for her.

"It might sound cheesy, but CrossFit has made me a better mom and a wife ... I'm a better person because of CrossFit," she said.

Kira Hallwood

It's Sunday evening. The awards ceremony is about to start. I approached Hallwood.

"So, are you loving this yet? What surprised you most about the competition?" I asked.

"It surprised me that the ball run was around a track. I thought it was going to be 400 meters in a straight line," said Hallwood, whose teammates are suddenly suspicious that this is her first athletic event of any kind. "I always thought people were such pussies for complaining about ball runs. Now I realize why. That ball run was the worst thing that's ever happened to me," she said, laughing.

Hallwood added, "Another surprising thing about the competition was the fact that the men have bigger pecs than the women have boobs. Honestly, I don't know if this is for me. This whole weekend has just been so stressful. I cried. I actually cried. Twice. And I never cry."

A teammate chimed in, "That's because this is pushing you in a way that you don't like to be pushed. You usually hide from things that are hard for you," he said.

"I know," Hallwood nodded.

"Wait a week and you'll realize you grew more this weekend than you have all year," I said. "CrossFit is personal development."

"I don't know. I need time to recover. I need a drink," Hallwood said.

The awards presentation began.

The announcer called Steve Howell up to the podium to accept his first-place prize.

"Who is he? Is he the guy who won?" Hallwood asked.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Memorial Days

Chris Pace spends three tough days traveling from Arlington National Cemetery to Ground Zero to raise funds for the Disposable Heroes Project.

By Chris Pace

November 2011



All images: Courtesy of Chris Pace

On the evening of Sept. 9, 2011, I began a journey that would test not only my physical limitations but also my mental strength.

The Journey of Freedom was a 250-mile solo endeavor from Arlington National Cemetery to New York City and consisted of a 150-mile bike ride followed by a 100-mile run, all without stopping to sleep. The purpose of the event was to raise money for the Disposable Heroes Project (DHP), a non-profit organization that helps and honors wounded veterans and their families.

On Sept. 11, after 40 hours of an emotional rollercoaster, I finished the event at CrossFit NYC. Through overwhelming support, I was able to raise just over \$10,000.

For the Fallen

I chose to support the DHP after attending one of its fundraising events at CrossFit Native in Oklahoma City. Brad McKee, a former Marine and founder of the DHP, spoke about the mission of the organization and recent examples of how it had assisted veterans. The most recent example was how it had helped the parents of Army Staff Sgt. Jack Martin III. Some of you may know him simply as "Jack." Martin was killed by an IED in the Philippines in 2009. Martin's parents were at the fundraiser and talked about how much their son loved serving his country. That is something Martin and I share. As an active-duty C-17 pilot in the Air Force, I am very proud to put on the same uniform as so many American heroes. After listening to Brad, and Martin's parents, I felt an irresistible urge to help the DHP.



Pace wanted to honor fallen soldiers and wounded veterans, as well as those who died on 9/11.

I couldn't think of a better time to honor our heroes than on the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

I had three goals when I started planning for my event:

- Raise as much money as I could for the DHP.
- Make it the most challenging experience of my life.
- Finish!

People were very skeptical of my goals, especially the last one. Because I wanted the tribute to be very challenging, I did not train specifically for the event. My bike was donated a week prior and I ran two miles once. That was the extent of my "endurance" training. I CrossFit five to six days a week and was very confident in my programming and training, but many others were not as optimistic. Initially, raising money proved to be difficult until people saw my dedication and motivation for the project.

It's surreal to see how many brave men and women have given their lives to provide us the freedoms we enjoy.

Starting in Arlington National Cemetery was a humbling experience. The day prior, I had the opportunity to visit the cemetery and pay tribute to all those who had made the ultimate sacrifice. The emotions that pour over you in such a place are indescribable. It's surreal to see how many brave men and women have given their lives to provide us the freedoms we enjoy.

My support team along the way consisted of my wife, my parents, my brother and my best friend from college. One car drove in front of me, and one drove behind me to provide encouragement and safety along the way. I also had the honor of being escorted for 70 miles through the entire state of New Jersey by the Warriors Watch, a motorcycle club consisting of war veterans.

Beating the Bike Ride

At "3-2-1 ... Go!" it hit me! Finally, I was starting the Journey of Freedom. After countless hours of planning and raising money, it was time to complete a goal I had set four months prior. The feelings of excitement and nervousness came over me at the same time. My adrenaline was pumping, but I knew I had some physical and mental challenges ahead. Because I had not trained specifically for an endurance event, there were many unknowns.

I had never really biked before, so I didn't know what to expect. I stopped every 20-25 miles or so to stretch my legs, refill my water or reapply some much-needed chamois butter. I rode through the night without much trouble and was planning on reaching my changeover point, Magnolia, N.J., around 9 a.m. on Saturday.

The Warriors Watch picked me up on the border of Delaware and New Jersey and led me into Magnolia. To say this small town of 5,000 people was welcoming is a huge understatement. The police shut down all the streets and provided a full escort into the town. When I arrived in Magnolia, they were playing the Toby Keith song *Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue* throughout the streets, where people were lined up waving flags and cheering. The support this town provided was remarkable. All I had planned for was a stop where I would change into my running clothes at the firehouse!

**People like those in Magnolia
are what make it easy to be a
part of the military and fight
for our country.**

And this wasn't even the tip of the iceberg. The mayor, fire chief and U.S. Congressman Robert Andrews were there to shake my hand and thank me for what I was doing. I then felt the need to say a few words to the townspeople and let them know how thankful I was. At first, I couldn't speak as my emotions got the best of me. I did my best to thank the most patriotic town I had ever seen.



***The Warriors Watch, a motorcycle club for veterans,
escorted Pace through the state of New Jersey.***

To cap off one of the most memorable moments of my life, a local girl, Ashleigh Neilio, sang *Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)*. There wasn't a dry eye in the entire town. People like those in Magnolia are what make it easy to be a part of the military and fight for our country. They are also a large part of the reason I finished the journey.

After I changed into my running clothes, people continued to come up to me to hug and thank me. Two instances in particular provided me with an opportunity to give back. The aunt of USMC Sgt. Christopher Hrbek was there and asked me to wear a bracelet with his name on it. Hrbek is another hero who paid the ultimate price for us. I also had the honor of carrying a picture of Laura Lee DeFazio Morabito for her family and friends. DeFazio Morabito was a passenger on American Flight 11, the first plane that was hijacked and crashed into the World Trade Center on 9/11.

After meeting these people and promising to fulfill their requests, I knew no matter what I had to finish.

A Rough Run

A couple of people from the town wanted to run with me for the first few miles, for which I was very thankful. As you can imagine, I was a little sore after almost 160 miles on the bike. I made it 15 miles before I had to take my first break. My knees were very sore, and my right shin had started to hurt, along with my hip flexors. My wife, who is a nurse, iced me for about 15 minutes until I was ready to get back on the road. The pain continued to worsen the further I ran. At 28 miles, I decided I needed to walk for a bit, hoping the pain would subside so I could continue on the pace I had set. As I attempted to run a few times, the pain was too much to bear, so I walked approximately seven miles with the help of my family and friends.



Pace was in a wheelchair for two days after he finished.

As evening approached at the 35-mile mark, the thought of physically not being able to finish entered my mind. I literally got to the point where I could not walk. My knees, shin and hip flexors were in excruciating pain. My physical limit had never been hit before. I felt completely helpless knowing how much support I had and the promises I had made. My family thought I needed to get to the hospital, but I knew if I went there I would definitely not finish.

The only possible way to accomplish my goal was to get back on the bike. However, I told myself that no matter what I was going to walk the last five miles from Brooklyn to Manhattan. My wife wrapped my shins and knees as tightly as I could stand, and I jumped back on the bike. Every pedal stroke hurt just as badly as every step of the run, but at least I had the ability to go seven or eight miles per hour. I biked another 50 miles through the night, stopping every 10 miles or so to re-wrap my knees. Every time I climbed back on the bike, I felt like I had cleared another hurdle.

1 Mile an Hour to the Finish

My walk across the Brooklyn Bridge began at 6 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 11. The support team, along with Josh Newman, owner of CrossFit NYC, was with me for the last five miles, which took five hours—no kidding. The entire time I had to lean on one of their shoulders to continue.

**But I still knew that no matter
how much pain I was in, it
was nothing compared to the
pain our wounded vets or
their families felt.**

On Sept. 11 at 11 a.m., I had accomplished all three of the goals I had set four months prior. Family, friends and people I had never met were at the end to congratulate me. I had never felt so many emotional highs and so many lows in a couple of days. It was a great feeling knowing I had accomplished what I had set out to do. But I still knew that no matter how much pain I was in, it was nothing compared to the pain our wounded vets or their families felt. That was the motivation that kept me going.



Pace visited the newly opened 9/11 Memorial and placed a picture of Laura Lee DeFazio Morabito next to her name.

After a nice cold beer, a trip to the ER, and some good sleep after being awake for 64 hours, I had the privilege of visiting the 9/11 Memorial. I cannot begin to explain the awe of being at Ground Zero. As my wife wheeled me into the memorial (I was in a wheelchair for two days), I just broke down in tears. To see all the names of the innocent lives that were taken that day is heartbreaking.

I placed the picture of Laura Lee DeFazio Morabito where her name was listed. Even though I had never met her, I felt as if we were close. Her picture I carried on my arm was one of the reasons I had finished the journey. Many prayers were said that day, not just for her family and friends, but for all those whose loved ones were on the walls. I knew I could never possibly imagine their heartache.

The Journey of Freedom was by far the most memorable experience of my life for many reasons. I will never forget all those who went above and beyond to support me. What I did was just a fraction of what needs to be done to help our wounded vets. We must all continue to seek ways to help those who protect us and the country we love.

Thank you to everyone for your donations and support. [The Disposable Heroes Project](#) is ongoing and will continue to honor our heroes.



About the Author

Chris Pace is a captain and C-17 pilot in the United States Air Force. He is stationed at Altus Air Force Base, Okla. Chris has been doing CrossFit for the last two years and qualified for the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games Regionals in both the Southeast and North Central regions. He was introduced to CrossFit at CrossFit Integrity in Charleston, S.C., and now works out in his garage, a place he calls "The House of Pain." Chris is sponsored by both 2POOD Performance Apparel and Infidel USA.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Chris Spealler: The Fire Inside

The legendary CrossFitter embarks on qualifying for his sixth Games by turning his training and nutrition upside down.
Russell Greene reports.

By Russell Greene

November 2011



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Throughout his athletic career, Chris Spealler has been known for pushing his smaller frame to compete with larger athletes.

It began long before he found CrossFit.

After wrestling for four years in high school, he earned a scholarship to wrestle at Lock Haven University. There, he was known for out-powering 197-lb. Division 1 wrestlers on the Airdyne, a stationary bicycle pedaled with both legs and arms.

Spealler is such a skilled athlete it's strange to call anything a struggle for him. His five-time CrossFit Games career, however, has been defined by the same struggle he encountered as a wrestler: capitalizing on his speed and stamina while forcing his body to exert ever-larger amounts of force seemingly through strength of will alone.

Each year he has excelled at events testing skill, speed and endurance. On the other hand, events with heavy weight have always held him back in the rankings. It has been a constant tension in his performance. Spealler has reached to new limits by lifting heavier loads each year, yet he has never seemed quite strong enough to win.

This year, however, “Speal” is trying something different.

Fed up with simply getting stronger while staying relatively the same size, Spealler has embarked on a radical weight-gain plan.

Wrestling at Lock Haven

A conversation with Spealler’s college wrestling coach shows how little Spealler has changed in a decade. The descriptors “mental toughness,” “engine” and “strong for his size” keep popping up.

Whenever the coach wanted to make a point about how a wrestler should train or otherwise act, Spealler was the “yardstick” for others to follow.

Lock Haven is a Division II school so focused on wrestling that it competed at the Division I level solely in that sport. Rocky Bonomo coached Spealler for five years at the Pennsylvania school—one year as an assistant coach and the rest as head coach.

Whenever the coach wanted to make a point about how a wrestler should train or otherwise act, Spealler was the “yardstick” for others to follow, Bonomo said. At the end-of-year team banquets, guys would often say they did as much as they could to improve but admitted they still only did a quarter of the work Spealler did.

Bonomo recalled a drill he had wrestlers do on the Airdyne: operate at max output for as long as possible. Spealler produced higher output for longer than wrestlers who outweighed him by 75 lb., Bonomo said.

Spealler’s conditioning was so good that “if a wrestling match didn’t have a time limit, he would have won every match,” Bonomo added.

But Spealler didn’t have every advantage. While many of his competitors had been wrestling since elementary school, he started much later—in high school.



Spealler wrestling in college—more hair, same intensity.

He “didn’t have the seasoning that some of the other guys did,” Bonomo said.

When he wrestled, Spealler often counted on his superior fitness and athleticism to carry him against more experienced wrestlers.

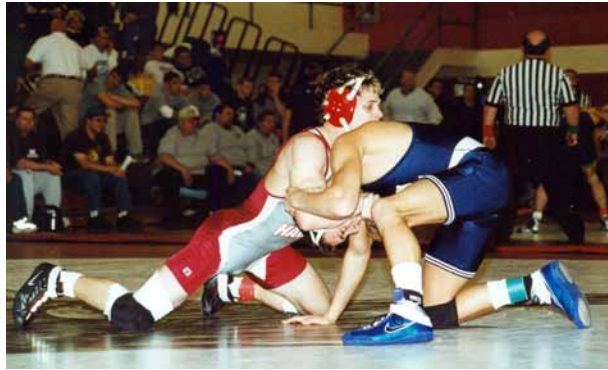
Although he had a bigger engine than most wrestlers, Spealler sometimes got himself into trouble with over-aggression, Bonomo said.

“If a wrestling match didn’t have a time limit, he would have won every match.”

—Rocky Bonomo

He would move so powerfully that he got “out of position.” In wrestling, a very skill-driven sport, one mistake caused by over-enthusiasm can turn a match. Another problem was that Spealler’s motivation at times got the best of him, Bonomo said. He would train with “reckless abandon” every day, not affording himself the opportunity to recover, the coach remembered. Every match, he expected not only to win but to outwork his opponent.

Courtesy of Chris Spealler



Instead of wrestling in the lowest weight class possible, Spealler jumped up one or two weight classes and fought heavier athletes.

To understand the fire that burns within Spealler, it helps to understand how he got started wrestling at Lock Haven. In his first year as an eligible wrestler, the head coach at the time had invested a lot of time and resources in three-time state champion Trap McCormick. The only problem was McCormick was in the same weight class as Spealler.

When two wrestlers on a team are competing to wrestle at the same weight class, the normal protocol is for them to have a wrestle-off. The winner represents the team at that weight class.

Spealler beat McCormick, but the head coach chose to start McCormick instead. It was a “super tough” experience, Spealler said.

Within two weeks of starting CrossFit, Spealler finished 30 muscle-ups with a time of 8:50.

For the next three years, Spealler did something unusual.

He bumped up a weight class to wrestle at 133 lb. and even sometimes at 141 lb. when the team’s normal 141-pounder was unable to make weight. Normally, wrestlers try to make as low a weight class as possible, but just as with the Airdyne, Spealler was a strong enough wrestler to compete with heavier athletes.

During his senior year, Spealler finished in the top 20 nationwide and reached the second round of the 2002 Division 1 National Championships. He came just two rounds away from his goal of becoming an all-American. Even though he fell short, he finished his season “with absolutely no regrets,” he said.

When he graduated later that year, Spealler had the opportunity to pursue wrestling at the next level. But after putting his body through stress for five years, he chose to take time off from the intense dedication to which he had grown accustomed.

Post-College Uncertainty, Then CrossFit

Spealler graduated with a bachelor’s degree in commercial recreation and moved to Park City, Utah. There, he started dating Sarah, his future wife.

At the time, Sarah was getting her master’s in elementary education in addition to “juggling a few jobs,” she said. She had already found her passion—children—but Spealler didn’t seem to know his purpose yet. For a while, “he didn’t know what he wanted to do with his life,” Sarah said.

To make ends meet, Sarah said Spealler worked at a shop “tuning bikes in the summer and skis in the winter” and coached wrestling at Park City High School. A long-term plan, however, proved elusive.

For a while, he considered being a gym teacher, but the amount of education required seemed like it would take too long. He even took a licensing exam to sell health insurance but didn’t like the idea of working behind a desk all day.

The couple was active. Sarah was an ultra-marathon runner; Chris wasn’t into running but would still accompany her on runs.

In October 2006, their friend Eric Bova, a Marine, told them about CrossFit.

From the beginning, it was clear Spealler had something special. Getting a muscle-up is a milestone for most beginner and intermediate CrossFitters. Within two weeks of starting CrossFit, Spealler finished **30 muscle-ups with a time of 8:50**. Even more impressive, he didn’t have rings, so he improvised by taking cable cross-over straps from a free motion machine and hanging them from a pull-up bar.

Two weeks later, he completed Linda as RX'd in 11:49—faster than Josh Everett and James FitzGerald, two of CrossFit's best at the time. When he hit Barbara the next week, he went under 2 minutes on 4 out of 5 rounds while cutting the rest periods from 3 minutes to 2:30.

Still, Spealler had his weaknesses.

Spealler already had made a name for himself on the CrossFit main site. But in Aromas, Calif., only live competition performances would count.

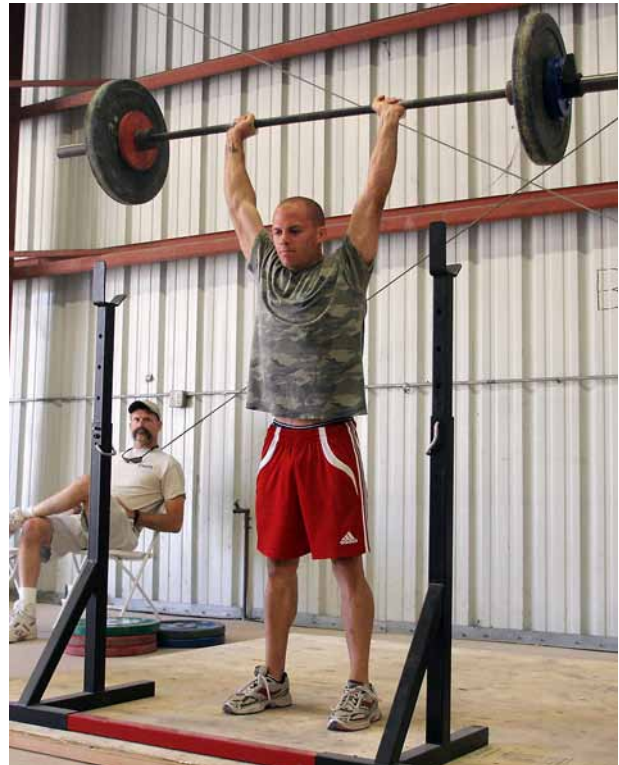
At 129 lb., he couldn't throw weight around the way heavier CrossFitters did. He only put up a 215-lb. front squat for 3 reps. When Diane showed up, he wasn't sure he could handle the prescribed 21-15-9 deadlift reps at 225 lb. with a max only around 300 lb. Still, with consistent CrossFitting, his powerlifting and Olympic-lifting numbers inched up.

In February 2007, the first CrossFit Games were announced for June 30-July 1. Spealler had already made a name for himself on the CrossFit main site. But in Aromas, Calif., only live competition performances would count.

Five Years of the Games

After nine months of CrossFit, Spealler headed to California to compete in the inaugural competition. His wife, who had not yet bought into CrossFit, was visiting family back east the same weekend. She was new to CrossFit then and said she "didn't really get it yet." It was the only Games she would ever miss.

The event kicked off with a 3-kilometer trail run. Beginning and ending with a flat straightaway section on a road, the middle portion of the run included hills so steep elite athletes like Everett crawled to the top. Seemingly unaffected by the incline, Spealler edged out FitzGerald in the final sprint and won by 2 seconds.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Spealler worked hard to increase his powerlifting and Olympic-lifting numbers when he started CrossFit, even though he only weighed 129 lb.

CrossFit founder Greg Glassman selected the second event out of a hopper:

1000-meter row

5 rounds of:

25 pull-ups

7 jerks (135 lb.)

For Spealler, that meant lifting 6 lb. more than his body weight over his head 35 times. He finished third with a time of 13:52.

On Day 2, Spealler was tied for first with FitzGerald and Brett Marshall. The day's sole event was a CrossFit Total: three attempts each for maximum weight on the back squat, shoulder press and deadlift.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

Time and again, Spealler dominated the endurance and body-weight events and struggled when things got heavy.

Spealler put up a combined 756.8 lb., earning him 22nd place for that event and fourth place overall. Another 110 lb. would have beat Josh Everett and put him in third place at the Games. To win, Spealler would have needed 150 lb. across the three lifts.

“He felt as though he let everyone down.”
—Sarah Spealler

The year set the stage for his future Games performances. In 2008, Spealler finished the first three events nearly a minute faster than any other competitor only to fall to 10th after the final event: 30 squat clean and jerks for time (155 lb.). To go from first to 10th in just seven minutes was hard for Spealler to handle.

“He felt as though he let everyone down,” Sarah said.

In 2009, Spealler again won the long run event but finished 71st on the deadlift ladder with a 375-lb. pull. Despite solid finishes in other events, he finished in a comparatively mediocre 25th place overall and didn’t qualify to compete on the second day. To date, 2009 was his worst Games finish.

The following weeks were tough on the Spealler family. The couple was “bummed, frustrated and angry,” Sarah said.

For a while, Spealler thought about “not competing anymore and just continuing to CrossFit,” she said.

Eventually, he got back to training for the Games.

In February 2010, Sarah gave birth to Roark, their first child. While others worried that having a baby would hurt Spealler’s training, his wife gave his workouts a priority. Sarah would get up at night to take care of the baby so her husband could sleep, and she didn’t care if she had to stay at home all day or miss a workout so he could find time to train.

Sarah’s sacrifices paid off in 2010.

That year, Spealler's worst event finish again came in a heavy event: 26th place in the max-overhead event. Nonetheless, that respectable showing in a heavy event, combined with superior finishes in most of the other events, yielded his best finish ever: third overall. He was also given the Spirit of the Games Award.

After nearly leaving the sport, Spealler had shown he could compete with the best in the world.

After nearly leaving the sport, Spealler had shown he could compete with the best in the world.

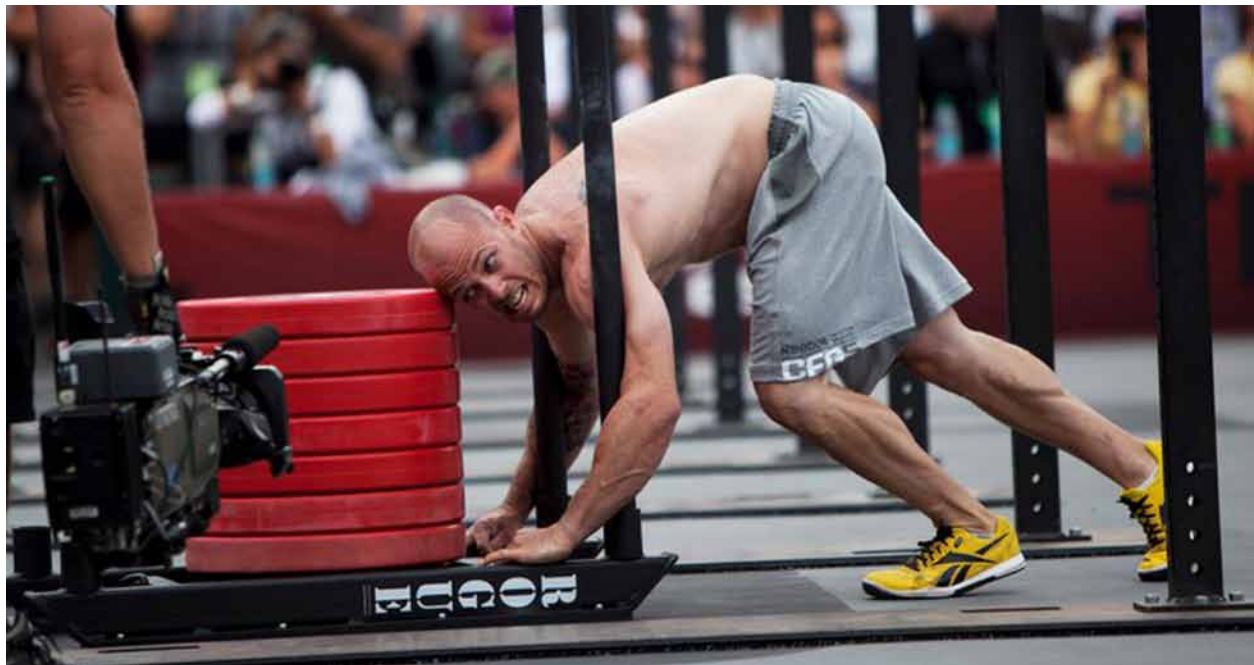
This year, he struggled with the sets of 7 front squats at 225 lb. in the Killer Kage event. Spealler moved through the monkey bars swiftly, but as soon as he reached the heavy bar, he fell behind. His 7:57 time landed him in 24th on the event—his worst finish besides the first skills event where a poor softball throw left him in 26th place.

The next event looked even more challenging. Immediately after a couplet of 135-lb. overhead squats and double-unders, competitors had to complete 3 rounds of 10 handstand push-ups and a 40-foot sled push (385 lb. plus sled).

When Spealler first tried to push the sled, it didn't budge. He tried again almost immediately, forcing it to move. With a very high hand placement, though, his first steps were slow and labored. Jason Khalipa blew past him, making the sled look light. After a slow start, Spealler improvised, driving his head and shoulders into the lower part of the sled.

The sled moved faster; Spealler completed the first push. He went back to the wall for a quick set of 10 handstand push-ups and was soon back for the second sled push. He used his new technique for the second and third pushes, moving faster as the workout continued. His first sled push took 50 seconds; his second took 27. Spealler took fifth place on the workout with a time of 6 minutes flat, an impressive showing in the heaviest event.

Spealler finished the 2011 Games in 11th place, a decent performance, but not what he was hoping for. He went home to prepare for his sixth Games. This time, however, he would try something entirely new.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

In the 2011 Games, Spealler initially struggled to push the weighted sled but quickly figured out a technique that gave him a fifth-place finish in the Dog-Sled event.

Committing to Weight Gain

Spealler's consistent performance across five Games belies the utter transformation his body went through between 2007 and 2011.

At the 2007 Games, he weighed 129 lb. with a 320-lb. deadlift, 55 consecutive pull-ups, a 195-lb. clean and a 155-lb. snatch. At the 2011 Games, he weighed in at 145 lb. with a 420-lb. deadlift, 106 consecutive pull-ups, a 265-lb. clean and a 210-lb. snatch.

Still, 2007's CrossFit Total, 2008's heavy Grace, 2009's deadlift ladder and 2011's heavy front squats all weighed heavily on him. He looked at "some of the other athletes at the Games that are similar to my size and doing well."

At 5 feet 5 inches, for example, Josh Bridges is the same height as Spealler but was 15 lb. heavier at this year's Games. The extra pounds came in handy on the Killer Kage's front squats; Bridges blasted through them much faster than Spealler, finishing with a time of 6:36 for a fourth-place finish in the workout. Bridges finished second overall at the Games.

Besides his heavier competition, Spealler also said he found himself "bumping into some walls and having a hard time making gains with lifts and numbers at that weight."

"He is always eating something."

—Miranda Oldroyd

To keep getting stronger at that body weight, he would have had to "focus on strength only," he said. Thus, to get stronger while improving his conditioning, Spealler decided it was time to make a concerted effort to gain weight.

The plan he devised involves dramatic changes to his training and nutrition. Whereas before this year's Games he ate fairly instinctively and didn't worry too much about tracking quantities, now he is making "a big effort to keep track of my calories and eat, eat, eat," he said.

He's now eating 4,700 calories a day. Miranda Oldroyd, his co-worker on the Level 1 Seminar circuit, reports that while Spealler isn't known for eating ridiculous quantities in one meal, "he is always eating something."

Besides the food, Spealler has cut his regular CrossFit training to two days per week and added four days a week of powerlifting and bodybuilding. And when he said "bodybuilding," he didn't mean just CrossFit staples like front squats and deadlifts but "meathead" exercises like "Tate presses, bicep curls, lateral raises and hammie curls with a band," he said. He does around 2 sets of 10-20 reps per movement, except for what he called "the miserable giant set." It's a combination of stiff-legged deadlifts, hamstring curls and back squats "all to failure in the 10-20-rep range with no rest between sets," he said.

It's not the type of training normally seen with Games athletes or regular CrossFitters. But the program is so far achieving Spealler's goals. He gained 7 lb. by Oct. 5 for a total of 152 lb. His back squat is "increasing steadily with sets of 3," as has his deadlift for 5-10 reps, he said.

His goal: a lean 155 lb.

At that point, Spealler said he'll "start to focus more on couplets and triplets in CrossFit again."

He'll also start focusing on the Olympic lifts more.

Despite the changes, one thing has remained constant for Spealler since 2007.

"I want to make it back to the Games this year," he said. "I want to win."



Lisbeth Darsh

About the Author

Russell Greene writes about the CrossFit Games for CrossFit Media.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

A Month of Pumpkins

Add fun to your CrossFit Kids workouts with these programming ideas from Mikki Lee Martin, Alison Patenaude and Lura Poggi-Bills.

By Mikki Lee Martin, Alison Patenaude and Lura Poggi-Bills

November 2011



CrossFit Kids/Danell Marks

It's so much more interesting to practice medicine-ball cleans with a pumpkin. Winning a pumpkin with all the kids' names written on it after the WOD is fun, too.

For the month of October, every CrossFit Kids and CrossFit Kids Pre-Teen class was involved in winning a pumpkin, maybe for best clean technique—dip, shrug, drop, stand—or best effort, focus or behavior.

As you will see, we did not always use the pumpkins for clean practice. Sometimes we used dumbbells, odd objects or no equipment at all to practice cleans. All the kids became notably more proficient and smooth with the clean toward the end of the month, even though other focus work—e.g., planks or squats—was often rotated into the programming. A pumpkin was awarded at the end of every class in October.

Although occasionally the pumpkin was used as the implement, the sheer number of kids in the class meant we would've needed 30-35 pumpkins each day. We purchased about 10 each week, and toward the end of the week as we gave them away, we became more limited in how many pumpkins could be rotated into the mix.

In November, substitute a Gator Skin dodgeball—available at ssww.com—with a turkey drawn on it. In December, substitute a wrapped gift the size of a dodgeball.

Sample Programming

Class 1—Mikki

Warm-Up

- Conga line at wall, 3 lines
- 1 medicine-ball clean + 1 wall-ball shot
- Side-to-side hops while waiting turn

Focus

Knees-to-elbows

WOD

AMRAP in a given time:

- 50-foot “football” side shuffle
- 10 box/tire jumps

Game/Challenge: CrossFit Limbo

1. Begin with a buy-in of 2 med-ball (or pumpkin) hang power cleans at cone placed 2 feet from limbo stick.
2. Limbo under PVC.
3. Cash out with 2 squats at cone placed 2 feet behind limbo stick.



CrossFit Kids/Danell Marks

Coach Mike Burgener would definitely appreciate the triple extension in this excellent pumpkin clean.

Class 2—Alison

Warm-Up

- 200-meter run around building
- 10 squats at each corner

Focus

Odd-object (kicking pads or pumpkins) hang power clean practice

WOD (With Partner):

Using kick pads, Partner A goes first, while B counts down reps 10 to 1 of:

- Bag-facing burpees
- Bag cleans
- Side-to-side hops over bag

Game/Challenge: Monkeys and Hyenas

1. Mark/cone off a 30-foot by 30-foot playing space.
2. Divide class in half.
3. Monkeys have tails (flag-football flags); hyenas do not.
4. On go, kids move around playing area doing locomotor movement given by trainer (running, skipping, bear crawling, broad jumping, etc.).
5. Hyenas try and grab monkeys' flags.
6. Monkeys try and stay away from hyenas.
7. If a hyena grabs a monkey's flag, he or she puts it on and becomes a monkey.
8. Monkeys who lose flags become hyenas.
9. After a couple of minutes, trainer yells, "Freeze!"
10. Remaining hyenas have to do 5 burpees (or another movement of trainer's choice).

Play again.

Class 3—Alison

Warm-Up

Running ropes (outdoor jump-rope relays)

Focus

Plank games

WOD

AMRAP in a given time (groups of 4 at 4 stations):

- 2x shuttle run
- Box jumps
- Sit-ups
- Jump rope

Groups rotate stations when runner is done.

Runner moves from box jumps to sit-ups to jump rope back to shuttle.

Game/Challenge: Dodgeball

Five medicine-ball cleans every time you get out (best clean technique scores the pumpkin).



Staff/CrossFit Kids

If you're creative, you could put bows on the med-balls for a holiday-themed WOD.



Staff/CrossFit Kids

Kids are never too young to have fun while building a little core strength.

Class 4—Mikki

Warm-Up

High-knees skips and sprawls in a circle

Focus

Plank-to-push-up

WOD

AMRAP in a given time:

- Broad jump to Cone 1
- Tire run to Cone 2
- Zombie walk to Cone 3
- 10 plank-to-push-ups at Cone 4
- Zombie walk to Cone 1

Game/Challenge: Med-Ball Throw for Distance

Twice each with 10-lb. medicine ball (possibly 2 lines divided younger/older).

1. Medicine-ball throw for distance.
2. Winner from each line gets to hurl the pumpkin into the garden!

Class 5—Mikki

Warm-up

Grasshoppers

Focus

In a circle, rotate on trainer count around medicine balls (or pumpkins) and cones and perform a single squat at the cones and dip-shrug-drop-stand at balls (or pumpkins).

WOD

AMRAP in a given time:

- 50-meter run
- Dumbbell farmer's carry
- Or if you get back fast enough, lucky overhead pumpkin carry.

Game/Challenge (Video): Farmers and Lumberjacks

Class 6—Alison

Warm-Up

1. Five to six cones set up about 25-30 feet apart from 5-6 medicine balls.
2. Kids line up behind cones.
3. First child runs to ball, does 3 medicine-ball cleans, runs back with ball, and places it in front of cone.
4. Second child does 3 cleans, runs to cone with ball, places it, and runs back.
5. Continue through the line.

Focus

Knees-to-elbows

WOD

AMRAP with kids in a square:

- 5 medicine-ball cleans
- 10 tuck jumps
- 5 knees-to-elbows
- 10 squats

Game/Challenge: Four Corners

1. Four cones with different-colored covers are set up in a large square.
2. One kid is in the middle of the square, face down, counting to 10.
3. Rest of class is running, skipping, duck walking, bear crawling, broad jumping, army crawling, running backward, hopping, etc. around outside of cones.
4. When counter gets to 10, kids stop at nearest cone.
5. Without looking, counter picks a cone color.
6. Everyone at that cone must perform 5 medicine-ball cleans (without balls) or another movement.
7. Best mover becomes the counter.
8. Everyone else who was at the chosen cone goes in the middle of the square and performs an exercise while new counter is counting to 10.
9. Continue until there is only one person left around the cones: pumpkin winner!

Class 7—Lura

Warm-Up

- 200-meter run
- Kids choice animal walks (bear crawl, alligator crawl, duck walk, etc.)

Focus

Dip-shrug-drop-stand

WOD

AMRAP at 4 corners in a given time:

- 2 pumpkin/medicine-ball cleans
- 4 box jumps
- 6 squats
- 8 sit-ups

On trainer's lead of "2-4-6-8 who do we appreciate?" kids yell, "CrossFit Kids! CrossFit Kids! CrossFit Kids!" while doing T-planks in the middle.

Game/Challenge: Three-Cone Relay

Run to a cone, balance dodgeball on the top of cone, run to the next cone.



Creating a "trophy" for a lucky kid to take home and carve!



Staff/CrossFit Kids

3, 2, 1 ... Go!

Class 8—Lura

Warm-Up

- 200-meter run
- High-knees skips (to outrun and skip over the goblins)

Focus

Bottom of the squats (to avoid the bats)

WOD

Tabata squats, sit-ups, push-ups and tuck jumps

Game/Challenge: Witches' Brew

1. Two teams each have a small plastic cup with a skull on it.
2. Each child fills the skull cup with water from the cauldron at the starting line, then lunges to a plastic pumpkin without spilling the brew.
3. The team that fills the pumpkin with the most water wins.

Class 9—Lura

Warm-Up

- 50-meter high-knees skip
- Jog back
- 10 side-to-side hops

Focus

Knees-to-elbows

WOD

1. Cauldron is filled with plastic bats attached with different movements.
2. Each kid pulls a movement from the cauldron and demonstrates the movement.
3. Everyone does 7 reps of each movement.

Game/Challenge: Power Cauldron (Power Ball using a cauldron with a smaller dodgeball)

1. Place two dodgeballs on cones 10 feet away on opposite sides of a cauldron (bucket) at the center of large playing area.
2. Divide class into two teams, each team lined up behind a cone.
3. Two trainers stand between cones and bucket and act as "blockers."
4. An exercise, such as a squat or burpee, serves as a buy-in at the cone.
5. After the exercise is performed, the athlete grabs the ball off the cone and attempts to score the ball in the cauldron.
6. Each athlete gets one attempt to score, then returns to the end of the line for his/her team.
7. Play ends after a designated time or point total.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Motherhood and CrossFit

Megan Mitchell and Allison Scahill interview an all-star list of CrossFitters who also happen to be mothers.

By Megan Mitchell and Allison Scahill

November 2011



Courtesy of Tanya Wagner

The duties of motherhood are enough to keep a woman busy every minute of the day. Add an elite CrossFit training regimen to the schedule and many wonder, "How do they do it?"

1 of 5

A Balancing Act

The demands of CrossFit and parenthood combined are overwhelming to think about, but a busy timetable is just a part of life for many of CrossFit's elite athletes, competitors and diehards.

"I schedule time to work out five-to-six days a week," said Carey Kepler from CrossFit Central in Austin, Texas. "If it was not on my schedule, it would for sure get pushed off and not (be) kept as a priority."

Kepler, who has two children under the age of 5, said working out and staying active help with parenting.

"I gain energy from working out. I gain joy from working out," she said. "I know that having a baby takes work. Nine months, labor, raising children—they are all WODs in a way."

Lindsey Smith, also from CrossFit Central, named prioritization and time management as essential for juggling a training schedule with motherhood.

"I am a mother before an athlete, and at times that requires me to put my desire to train aside to care for my daughter," she explained. "However, CrossFit is as much a part of my day as food and rest. My day is not complete without taking time to fulfill my training needs."

"Before I had my 4-month-old, the best way to get my WODs done consistently was to do them in the morning—6:30 a.m.—before the kids woke up."

—Charity Vale

Libby DiBiase, from CrossFit Omaha in Omaha, Neb., said the sleep deprivation after having her baby affected her training the most.

"After the baby came, I got hardly any sleep. I remember my first day back, working on about three hours of sleep, and I just felt sick," she said. "It was hard to imagine if I could ever get back to the way I was because I was so tired."



Courtesy of Charity Vale

Charity Vale has four children, owns a gym, homeschools her children ... and placed second in the 2009 CrossFit Games.

Charity Vale of CrossFit Snohomish in Snohomish, Wash., said the demands of training, having four children and owning a gym with her husband, Jeff, are difficult. Her children range in age from 4 months to 10-and-a-half-years-old, but being a mother didn't stop her from taking second place in the 2009 CrossFit Games.

"We also homeschool," she said. "It's been very difficult to focus on the WODs. Before I had my 4-month-old, the best way to get my WODs done consistently was to do them in the morning—6:30 a.m.—before the kids woke up. That way I knew nothing was going to get in the way of doing it. Now that I have an infant, it's been a lot more difficult. I'm usually trying to squeeze them in somewhere while he naps."

No More Burpees?

Recovery, mobility, injury and performance are all common thoughts for any CrossFitter, but a woman who's pregnant has to think about all that for two. For some, this meant a complete change in the structure behind a workout. For others, very little changed.

"I followed the main-site WODs pretty religiously," Vale said. "I scaled very little. Burpees, box jumps, GHD sit-ups, etc. looked different, but for the most part, I didn't really scale movements, reps or weights."

Vale saw a midwife to seek advice regarding how she should train.

"She said if I was doing it before, I could probably keep doing it. She just recommended I listen to my body more," she said. Vale said the differences between what her body was telling her and what her mind was telling her conflicted her the most.

Jolie Gentry, from CrossFit Oakland in Oakland, Calif., said her doctor told her not to lift more than 25 lb.

"I literally started to laugh," said the woman who won the first CrossFit Games back in 2007. "I had a second visit with a nurse practitioner who said that was dated info and the new standard is not more than 50 lb."

Gentry said she was not discouraged by that advice. She continued with her training as usual. At 21 weeks, she back-squatted up to 200 lb. At almost eight months, Gentry said she performed Grace as prescribed, and she snatched almost every week until the eighth month.

"The best advice I received was from a couple of ladies from CrossFit Central: just listen to your body because nobody knows it better and you will know when to stop if something does not feel right," Gentry said.

She noted the only thing she was very careful with was squatting.

"I didn't feel comfortable holding my breath and squeezing my stomach too hard," she said. "And running just felt awkward. I did it, but usually while holding my belly like a human sports bra."

**"Just listen to your body
because nobody knows it
better and you will know
when to stop if something
does not feel right."**

—Jolie Gentry

DiBiase said her training stayed pretty much the same for the first half of her pregnancy: "I trained the same way I train on a consistent basis for about four months. Then,

after I was about six months, we slowly removed the exercises that could harm the baby and slowly reduced the intensity in weight and volume."

According to the CrossFit Games veteran, scaling back on workouts was more challenging mentally even when she knew it was good for the baby.



Courtesy of Tanya Wagner

Most CrossFit moms agree that it's important to listen to your body both when pregnant and after the baby is born.

"I felt like I was defeated because I had to use lighter weights or go slower," she said. "But I got over it, because I knew it wasn't safe for the baby."

In contrast, Tanya Wagner, from CrossFit Apex in Telford, Penn., said her workouts changed dramatically from the beginning of her pregnancy.

"I (had) a whole new pace," said 2009's fittest woman on Earth. "It was a learning process as far as how hard I could push WODs, and I learned not to go out too hard for so long. I would start a WOD like I used to and then suddenly get hit with the reminder that I don't have as much oxygen as I used to."

Wagner said the difference in lung capacity affected her the most.

"If anyone is curious how it feels, here you go: work out with a bag over your head for nine months with just a pinhole of air to breath through. That's what it feels like," she said. "Then, for the last four months, strap on a weight vest all day and dissect your abs straight down the middle about three inches wide, and have at it."

Kepler was four months pregnant with her first child when she received her Level 1 Certificate.

"I was not sure how to totally do the transition as I had just been introduced to this new training," she said. Kepler kept her training regimen to her old lifting styles, as well as running.

"I recall running wind sprints up and down a football field the day before going into labor."

—Lindsey Smith

Smith said scaling weights and limiting exercises were mainly isolated to workouts that could increase separation in her abdominal wall. But the rest stayed pretty much the same.

"In fact, I recall running wind sprints up and down a football field the day before going into labor," she said.



Web Smith

Perennial CrossFit Games competitor Lindsey Smith and her daughter, Alexis—future CrossFit star?

Many said that being a CrossFitter helped throughout pregnancy.

"I wish all expectant mothers could experience the same benefits (CrossFitting) has physically and mentally on your body," DiBiase said. "I really think it helped me in labor. It made it super fast. It was just like a workout."

Kepler credits CrossFit and maintaining a healthy lifestyle for her "perfect" pregnancy.

"My first baby, Savannah, now 4-and-a-half, was about as perfect as perfect could be," she said. "I was not sick at all. I gained 30 lb., stayed very active and had her at home with my midwife."

She said it was important for her to not let the pregnancy stop her from doing what she loves: CrossFitting.

Time for Mommy to Work Out

After pregnancy, many athletes were looking forward to getting back in the gym right away. However, when that actually happened varied from woman to woman.

"I started about three weeks after giving birth," Vale said. "I got very antsy about two weeks postpartum."

Wagner said she started planning her post-pregnancy workouts even before she'd had her baby. And DiBiase waited only 10 days to get back into her routine.

"As a mother, I think I take my job as a role model very seriously, and I look forward to the day we can work out together."

—Lindsey Smith

"I couldn't take not doing anything for six weeks," she explained. "I knew I needed to get my strength back, too. Regionals were about seven weeks away. I gradually started lifting heavier and getting met-cons in. It was very, very hard to deal with, especially mentally."

Smith said her doctor was very understanding about working out.

"Fortunately, my doctor was pretty generous in allowing me to return to working out," she said. "He thoroughly explained my body's need to heal, and I really took that to heart, but he also encouraged me to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle."

Smith, who's finished as high as fifth in the CrossFit Games and was 16th in 2011, started about two weeks after having her daughter with walking, jogging and some light-weight work.

"I remember trying to push too hard at first and felt my body resisting. I decided to listen to my body as best I could, and I think I really benefitted from that in the long run," she said.

Kepler said CrossFitting is too important in her life to allow anything to get in the way of it—even children, which are an obvious priority.

"My husband and I both agree that we will not let our children stop us from living our lives, so we make sure that we do what we love and include them in every bit of it."

Smith said it's important for her to stay true to herself and recommends that for other CrossFitting moms.

"Take challenges, risk embarrassment, do what is right, make a difference, prove someone wrong, love others first, set goals, dream, and constantly evaluate your priorities, not by what you want them to be, but by what reality is proving them to be."

Kepler said her perspective changed after having children.

"I have always liked competition, but after having a child, I think you really realize everything else that you do in your life holds a different type of responsibility," she said. "It is more about if you are having fun doing it, keep doing it. If it sucks, get out of it no matter what."

Smith said she hopes to share her passion for CrossFit with her daughter.

"As a mother, I think I take my job as a role model very seriously, and I look forward to the day we can work out together," she said. "I look at CrossFit competitor and HQ coach Heather Bergeron working out with her daughter, Maya, and think to myself, 'Wow, I want that for Alexis and me.'"



Pregnancies vary greatly between women. Women should check with their doctor, ob-gyn or other specialist regarding the health of their fetus and their family history to ensure they're well informed about what they can and cannot do safely during pregnancy.

About the Authors

Megan Mitchell is a staff writer for CrossFit Media and the CrossFit Games website. At the urging of her high-school English teacher, Megan started CrossFitting at the original box in 2005. There, she witnessed Annie Sakamoto's training throughout the nine months of her pregnancy with her first child, Dylan. After studying biology at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., Megan has returned to her hometown of Santa Cruz, Calif., and trains at CrossFit Santa Cruz.



Courtesy of Megan Mitchell

Allison Scahill is a writer and copy editor for CrossFit Media. She earned a journalism degree in 2006 at Baker University and a master's degree in administration in 2009 from Bowling Green State University. She began CrossFitting in January 2010 in Houston, Texas. In April 2011, she had the opportunity to combine her love of writing and CrossFit to work for HQ. She resides in Santa Cruz, Calif., and trains at CrossFit Santa Cruz.



Courtesy of Allison Scahill