

CrossFit Certification Seminar
February 11, 2005
Day 1

Didn't do a headcount but there looked to be about 50 students in attendance, not counting the various coaches and trainers. The group photo is on the website.

Lauren and Coach Glassman made a point to introduce themselves to everyone in attendance. When you come down to do this...and you will, you must...expect a big hug. Very friendly environment. When next someone asks "Where's the love?" tell them it's down in Santa Cruz at CFHQ.

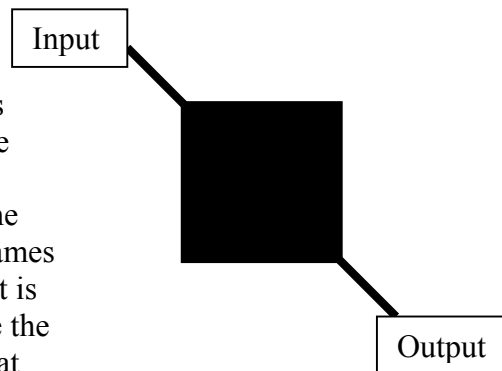
My God...the talent Coach has assembled: Steve Cotter, Brian Mulvaney, Robb Wolf, Mike Burgener...the list goes on and on. I was all wiggly inside just being around all these people. It's like a fantasy camp I swear. Oh, you should see Lani Lau squat. Coach used her as an example and if ever there was perfect movement, Lani has it. And Annie Sakamoto, she's a friggen machine. After we all did a bottom to bottom Tabata squat torture, she did a squat demo in her jackhammer style and did 27 in 20 seconds. We did a long Helen with the first run being closer to 800 meters than 400 and Annie was only bested by a Navy Seal named Grady and Dave Leyes. She spanked the rest of us.

Coach is an engaging, funny, informed and effective speaker. He started the day with about two hours of CrossFit 101 beginning with the definition:

*"CrossFit is a strength and conditioning program built on constantly **varied**, if not randomized, **functional** movements executed at **high intensity**."*

He got into the highlighted bits but not before answering the question, "Where'd you get this s**t from?" Coach answered, "I dunno...from you." Having been involved in training and fitness for over three decades what came to him was that what works is empirically driven...it is motivated by what we see is successful. Try something, see what happens. Keep the good stuff.

Input is whatever collection of exercises and training you do and output is the result you get. The black box is where stuff happens that changes you in some way as a result of the input. If the output is positive, you picked the right input. If not, change the input. We let the folks in the lab coats with initials after their names worry about what is in the black box. CrossFit is about identifying the input which will produce the most favorable output. This a craft. Keep what works, let the rest walk. Try it, don't analyze it.



Coach was quick to point out that he has no bone to pick with science or scientists... although he did ask us to come up with something science has done to create a better athlete. Pretty much the only answer was steroids. But from a training perspective science is woefully lacking in coming up with what works. He gave an example of a world class female athlete, a skier as I recall, who was in a training environment where most of the people responsible for her training had doctorates, there was incredible funding, state of the art equipment, blood lactate and other biochemical analysis, the very best money could buy. Coach got hold of her and found she could not do a pullup or any of a number of really basic functional strength movements. Where'd all that money go? Anyway, back to the scientists, what they do well is describe things that have happened and give certain processes very wonderful and long names. Inside that black box on the previous page by the way is where some variety of neuro-endocrine response took place...or maybe it was a neuro-synaptic facilitation....

Another problem: You have Star Wars, and before that you had the Clone Wars, now we have the Theory Wars. The CrossFit ideology was presented on some website and some Air Force people got hold of it. Hated it. They dismissed it out of hand because it did not contain a discussion of neuro-synaptic facilitation or if the efficacy of the program was based on the neuro-endocrine response created by production of hormonal changes as a result of the intensity of work and so on and so forth ad infinitum. While the Air Force continued to debate why CrossFit would not work, the Navy decided to put it to the test and the Navy Seals began to incorporate CrossFit into their training program. That stud Grady I mentioned who hammered Helen like a man possessed is in charge of Phase II of BUDS training down in Coronado. The SEALs do CrossFit. Nuff said.

CrossFit is empirically driven and clinically tested. It has been found to be efficacious in the stadium, on rocks and mountains, in the ring, on the street or battlefield and in the gymnasium. CrossFit works where it counts...in the real world.

Coach likened muscle recruitment to a symphony. **Training in a segmented fashion develops a segmented capacity.** (Love that). You must not try to develop your muscles separately, but rather in the fashion in which they are designed to be used and the way you will use them in whatever it is that you are doing. What athletic endeavor is simulated by a pec deck, flyes or the abductor/adductor machine? Since functional exercise is irreducible (more on that in the next section) you can't take movement apart to single joint exercises and expect it to do you any good...except for what you look like in the mirror. Superior athleticism is developed through functional, multi-joint movements that involve substantial muscle recruitment patterns, in a variety of methods and applications at great intensity. We've heard this song before but it is a great tune and one that bears repeating. Now sing along with me:

*“Crossfit is a strength and conditioning program built on constantly **varied**, if not randomized, **functional** movements executed at **high intensity**.”*

Very good. But I'd keep that day job.

Functional: Functional movements are *common, universal motor recruitment patterns*, they are things you see and do all the time. We have to bend down to pick things up, lift things up over our heads to put them on a high shelf but we never put our elbows under some weighted object and lift it with our outer delts...except on that machine in the gym. Well, *we* don't do that. I swear Coach, I don't even know what that machine looks like. Functional movements are *efficient and effective* and are not single joint movements but rather multi-joint movements. They are *compound and irreducible* in that taken down to smaller components (the pec deck and tricep press down do not even begin to add up to equal the bench press) and maintaining their integrity is not possible. They are thus *elemental* and are (as Mark Twight brilliantly says) the *primary colors of all movements*. Functional movements are safe, develop very powerful and useful *core* strength, provide a tremendous *neuro-endocrine response* (a systemic adaptation) and is the best *cardio* and best *rehab* training you can do. Additionally, functional training always moves from *core to extremity*, not the other way round. That systemic adaptation thing is why doing deadlifts makes you stronger all over and why squats, especially if you have not been doing them, will improve your bench.

Intensity: Power is a function of Force and Weight over Time. Intensity is all about hard and fast. Power is an issue wherever velocity is important. The key component to exercise success is intensity – **INTENSITY IS WHERE THE RESULTS ARE.** All of the best adaptations are a result of high intensity work. Functional movements can tolerate high loads and move them long distances. Concentration curl, french press, lateral dumbbell raises? Hah, I blow my nose at you. Functional movements like the snatch and clean and jerk in particular move a heavy load a long distance in a short time. Intensity then is a measure of how far, how fast and how heavy. My Latin motto is Tunde Decidis...Hammer till you drop.

Varied: We want to be able to do whatever, wherever. Embrace change. Where we fail is at the margins of our experience. If you are stuck in some 8 to 12 rep scheme, you probably stink at 15 to 20. Change things up and go heavier slower, lighter faster, more sets, more weight whatever. Stagnation, comfort zones, and worn paths are the enemy. You want to constantly challenge yourself in different ways. Satisfaction is death. Learn a new sport, run a different route, change your routine and keep it fresh.

CrossFit is the sport of fitness:

“We have taken high intensity, constantly varied, functional workouts and distilled load, range of motion, exercise, power, work, line of action, flexibility, speed and all pertinent metabolics to a single measure...usually time.”

So, how do we maximize this intensity issue? Simple, keep score.

“Men will die for points.”

Ken Cooper adds *“Fear of sporting failure is worse than the fear of death.”*

If you doubt this consider the competitive shooter and the soldier or policeman. I have been all three and I can tell you for sure that I spent a lot more time practicing my shooting when I shot competitively than at any other time and I'm a SWAT guy. Cooper is right. Keep score and people will bust their hump.

Keeping score will give:

- Relative and absolute performance measures
- Provides great metrics for monitoring of development
- Creates camaraderie and support among participants
- Provides a substantial and bucket seeking gut check

Next came a primer on squat form and I refer you to the December 2002 CF Journal and page 2 for details on proper squat form. As I mentioned above Lani Lau came out and climbed up on a box so we could all see the enviably perfect squat form she has. Simple thing really, squat down – stand up. In spite of that, most of us received plenty of corrections to our form as we prepped ourselves for some bottom to bottom Tabata squats. Coach wanted us to maintain that curve in our back with a posture that is only ever so slightly canted forward at the bottom of the squat movement as compared to standing. The torso to thigh angle should be the same as the thigh to calf angle at the bottom which eliminates resting your hammies on your calves. Head and eyes forward, hands slightly above parallel with the ground and perhaps most difficult of all that erect back. No forward lean or rounding of the back and no raising of the heels. Still sound easy? It gets worse.

While we did the B2B Tabata squats we would hear heels if our heels came up, extend if we didn't stand up enough, depth if we didn't go down far enough, standing if we tried to sneak in a rest at the top, propping if we rested forearms on thighs, rounding if we rounded our back and collapsing if we sat on our calves. We did numerous reps of squats hanging out at the bottom (for a long friggen time by the way) while Coach and the trainers checked our form. Then we started, from the bottom. Annie was out in the middle of our Tabata circle and she repped out the squats with hardly a change in rhythm from start to finish. After about four times through most of us would groan in unison when moving up (very slowly) from the bottom after the *rest*. What kind of sick bastard calls sitting at the bottom of a squat a rest? I know this comes straight from the Marquis de Sade book of superior leg development.

Next came some squat therapy where Lauren and Lani helped a pair of volunteers with their squatting techniques. Both of them fell back in the hole at the bottom of the squat and went “plop” on the box. L & L worked some magic and in just a few reps managed to improve both men's squat substantially. Much of the problem was proper muscle recruitment and non-engagement of the glutes and hamstrings. You must push from the heels in order to include those two very important muscle groups and Lani showed this off by squatting with her toes in the air.

The girls at CrossFit can wreak havoc on how manly you think you are.

Next the sticks came out and we got a primer on the press, push press and push jerk movements. The press is just the pressing movement of the bar overhead. The push press is the dip, drive and press. The push jerk is the dip, drive, press and dip and then stand to finish. Josh Everett demonstrated the movement with 135 pounds and made it look easy. I hear tell we get to see him drive up a big load tomorrow. My big load was a wooden dowel and the movements we did with *that* made my shoulders hurt. In addition to doing the lifting movements we also passed the stick from front to back with a solid grip and straight arms while standing and then later while squatting. We also inched our hands in bit by bit to improve our shoulder flexibility. Repetitions of this with a few ounces of wood made me sweat. Fabulous warm up.

The discussion of functionality came up as relates to the press, the push press and the push jerk and the push jerk won hands down. More load, more reps, more speed...a far better movement for functional development. The comparison was made to the kipping pullup and its superiority over the dead hang. The pullup with a kip has a far greater metabolic potential, has much more power, tolerates and produces a greater load and is much more functional. There is a marvelous video of Annie and Cill doing pullups and both of them have a wonderful kip. Cill's is more graceful because she is 9 feet tall and the movement comes at a visually absorbable speed. The mutant Annie however moves like that rubber ball with the elastic tether you hit with the paddle. OK, Cill is not really 9 feet tall, but she does have a 36" inseam.

Then five guys hammered Fight Gone Bad with rowing, wall ball, sumo DLHP (75 lbs), box jump and push press (75 lbs) for 5 minutes switching on the minute x 3, with a 1 minute rest. They made me tired just watching. Coach developed this for the UFC guys training for 5 minute rounds with a 1 minute rest and a score of 350 was at the bottom of UFC readiness.

CrossFit is a strength and conditioning program. What's strength and conditioning? Well, simply put, it's fitness. Our first model of fitness identifies 10 general physical skills: 1. Cardio-vascular and cardio respiratory endurance (gas exchange), 2. Stamina (muscular endurance), 3. Strength, 4. Flexibility (these first four are organic and are developed through training) 5. Power, 6. Speed (these middle two are developed both with training as the 4 above and with practice as the next 4) 7. Coordination, 8. Accuracy, 9. Agility and 10. Balance (these last four being neuro-muscular and developed through practice). We want to develop all of these things, so we do CrossFit and the Olympic lifts and gymnastics will take care of all 10.

Model 2 is statistical and is a measure of an athlete performing relatively well at any physical task thrown his way. Load a hopper with athletic tasks and the better athlete is able to do more of them better than the other guy. CrossFit is designed for this type of general physical preparation. Nature, on average, punishes the specialists. The more specialized you are the less cross-adapted you are likely to be in other measures of physical prowess. The CrossFit athlete is better able to deal with a variety of athletic demands than the athlete training with other fitness modalities.

Model 3 is the balance of metabolic pathways. We have the phospho-creatine or phosphogen pathway which is the max effort energy system that lasts to a max of about 10 seconds. Next is the glycolytic or lactate pathway and this peaks around a minute and then tapers off to a max of about 2 minutes and finally we have the oxydative or aerobic pathway and this has a much lower intensity than the other two and does not have a drop off point. This energy system is sustainable to the degree that the individual athlete trains it. The CrossFit system develops all three pathways by spending some time in each of them, frequently.

Neat point here: Take the Tabata protocol of 20 seconds on and 10 seconds off and recognize that the 10 seconds off really is not sufficient to provide much of a recovery. The reason Tabata is so effective is that it blurs the line between the three energy systems and trains them somewhat simultaneously. Gotta love that. In fact the folks who made a one of those stepper devices did a study which revealed: *“Shifts in the load/velocity matrix in a single workout cause startling adaptations in fitness.”* They included the study with the exercise device but did not publish it for some reason. Change how hard you work not only workout to workout, but within the same workout. Change is good.

Model 4 is the wellness model. On one end of the bell curve we have sickness and at the other fitness. Sitting on top of the bell is wellness. If on the sickness side of the scale we have high blood pressure, weight, body fat, and cholesterol and on the other we have low BP and HR, body fat and so on then we have a way to measure numbers that are indicators of fitness. Thus by being fit we have a long way to descend before we wind up being sick. We have to go through wellness first. If you are fit, then, and you find yourself getting well, watch out. You are about to become sick.

CrossFit Certification Seminar
February 12, 2005
Day 2

We began this fine, sunny Saturday morning with a review of yesterday’s video of the Fight Gone Bad. “Anybody have thin skin?” Coach asked before the video rolls, not that it would matter. The video review left no form errors hidden. Low elbows on the sumo DLHP, lack of extension on the push press, starting the pull on rowing machine too soon, looking at the box...don’t do these things. Form is everything...**BUT** form deterioration is a natural outgrowth of fatigue. If you’re form remains perfect throughout the movement, you are not working hard enough. The worry of perfect form is frequently responsible for preventing a person from starting.

Coach says, **“READY. FIRE. AIM.”**

As one of the T-shirt suggestions said, “Just Do It. Again. Faster.” The trick is to get it done, hard, repeatedly. FGB makes your form deteriorate, if you slow down to perfect your neuro development, you will lose the organic benefit.

Coach Mike Burgener

Hard core. You'll get one if you do what Coach Burgener says, and hardcore is what Coach Burgener is when he is teaching you how to get there. He is the kindest, nicest man when you are talking to him one on one. But when he puts on his teacher's cap, watch out. He is truly a fire breather.

Coach Burgener started on the chalkboard but clearly his preference is for doing rather than telling about doing. The rest of the morning was devoted to the snatch and my God a wooden dowel gets heavy after awhile.

JUMP the barbell through a range of motion (which means putting it overhead) and then LAND keeping the barbell within the area of the base (which means don't let the bar drift forward past your toes) creating momentum and elevation which allows you to pull yourself under the bar. You don't duck under, you don't squat under you PULL yourself under.

There are three pulls that must occur to complete this snatching motion. The first pull (begun with a hook grip where you tuck your thumb under your fingers) is to a position just above the knees which positions the bar for the second very violent, explosive pull which is an EXTENSION of the hips not a thrust of the hips, tracking the bar very close to the body with elbows high and outside not back and down, and a high, upward shrug of the shoulders. At some point the bar will reach the maximum height of your pull and become weightless but only for a very brief moment. It is during this interlude of momentary weightlessness that you pull yourself under the bar into a deep squat and receive the bar with extended and locked arms, palms up, bar behind the ears, 8 to 12 inches over your head and head and eyes forward.

Components of the snatch:

- * JUMP and LAND. This we heard all day. These are the key components to both the snatch and the clean and jerk.
- * Hook grip – not a progression but a necessary component of the lift. To get the hook grip you wrap your thumb around the bar and then grip your fingers over your thumb.
- * Bar position 8" to 12" overhead (determined by grip width) arms behind the ears.
- * Keep the bar in the area of the base (don't let the bar wander forward over your toes).
- * Create momentum and elevation

Warm up progression:

- Jump and shrug – jump and at the top of the jump shrug the shoulders straight up.
- Jump, shrug and high pull – same as before with high elbows on the pull.
- Muscle snatch – through above but snatch the bar overhead.
- Muscle snatch with landing – add enough jump to lift the feet slightly and move them to the landing position.

The first thing we did was to get our feet right. We had a jump position which was with the feet directly under the hips. You get the best drive in the position. Closer costs you balance and farther apart, though nice and stable, costs you power. You will have your best push against the ground with your feet under your hips. We would jump from this position and land in the land position where our feet were just outside the jump position.

After moving through the snatch progression listed above we continued with the:

- Overhead squat. Very tough for many of us to keep the bar back behind our ears. The admonition was that there were to be no relaxed muscles in the shoulder girdle or upper back. We had to pull the arms back behind us and it seemed to help to pull our arms to the outside as if trying to stretch the bar. Heels down, back flat, head and eyes forward.
- Pressing snatch balance. Bar starts behind the neck on the shoulders. Coach Bergener's son Bo demonstrated and it was beautiful. Press upward against the bar but rather than elevate the bar, push yourself under it into a full squat. Not a fast movement but rather a slow powerful push.
- Heaving snatch balance. With this one the tempo is such that you bend at the knees to start the bar moving, then rather than slowly push, you move more quickly to the full squat position.
- Snatch balance. The position is the same as the others to start and finish but the movement in between is much faster and replicates the actual speed of the snatch.

So, what is the snatch? "Jump the barbell through a range of motion and land keeping the barbell in the area of the base creating momentum and elevation."

Now, what is the clean? "Jump the barbell through a range of motion and land keeping the barbell in the area of the base creating momentum and elevation."

Are you seeing a pattern here? Coach Bergener made a specific point to describe each lift in the very same way. He taught the snatch first because it is much more technically difficult than the clean and jerk. Proficiency in the snatch lends itself to success in the clean and jerk. He pointed out that the pulling movement to initiate the snatch and the clean and the pushing movement of the jerk all involve the same movement.

One of the drills we did was to jump up from a starting position with our hands on our knees. You must drive your legs downward which brings your hips forward and your knees back getting them out of the way of the bar. We started with the upper components of the lift, and dealt with the bottom portion of the lift by moving the bar from the hang to mid thigh and going up from there. Then down to below the knee and back to the thigh several times before pulling hard to the snatch.

Burpee

Clean and Jerk

Though the description above is identical to the snatch, they do finish differently. The snatch finishes with the bar locked overhead and the clean finishes with the bar on your shoulders in a front squat position. Even though the grip on the bar is different and the finish is different, the movement itself, the way you pull upward and then pull yourself under the bar, is exactly the same.

Coach Bergener warned us that it is difficult to get your elbows out in front of you with just your fingertips touching the bar when using just a PVC pipe or in our case a wooden dowel. Sure enough that proved to be a struggle for most of us, well for many of us at least. OK, for me. The dowel was tearing me up. We had been doing the snatch pulls before so now we just had to change grips and do essentially the same thing. We started from the hang position with our hands a thumbs distance out from our hips. Coach Bergener said he usually does not go through the same warm up series with the C & J as he does with the snatch, but suggests that if you are new to this or otherwise having trouble with the movement that it will help. Also helpful was this little trick: Holding the bar in the hang position and leaving it there, squat a bit and then jump. Do that three times and then initiating in exactly the same way jump (but not into the air) and once at the top of the jump shrug, and once at the top of the shrug pull the elbows up and outside and when at the top of that pull yourself under the bar to a full squat and receive the bar at your shoulders with your grip opened up and the bar on your fingertips making double extra sure you get your elbows up parallel with the ground.

IMPORTANT. Engage those elbows in the movement. **DO NOT** just let them passively roll under the bar. If your elbows point downward as you go to a full squat and your elbow collides with your thigh and you are using some weight and not a stick, you **WILL** break your wrist. As you pull yourself down into that squat position forcibly move your elbows up in front of you at shoulder height so they are parallel with the ground. A broken wrist will really set back your training schedule. Keep your elbows up.

Once you stand up with the bar you have to regrip it and point your elbows downward as you prepare for the jerk. We had already done the press, the push press and the push jerk, but this time we were going to do a split jerk. Another demo from Bo showed us what we were supposed to look like but there was one more demo to determine how to know which foot to put forward. Coach Burgener pulled out a volunteer and put his hands on his chest. Coach B told him to trust him and to just lean forward. This worked very well right up until Coach B let the guy go and true his instructions he just fell, almost on his face. They kind of caught each other but our mission ready, I want you in my foxhole army guy did not move his feet. Took Coach B rather by surprise. He was expecting the guy to take a step to show which foot he should put forward when doing the split jerk... like everybody else does. Instructions or no I don't think I would have been able to resist putting my foot out. Anyway, this showed how to determine which foot the athlete needs to have forward. The rest of us guessed and tried both to see which felt "right." More reps, squat clean, split jerk again and again. "Lemme hear those feet!"

Then a real treat. Josh Everett stood above 315 pounds and with little fanfare, no beating of the chest, ammonia sniffing, belt or baying at the moon he got set up and did the most beautiful pull to the clean position and then amid the raucous cheering of the crowd he powered that rather significant poundage overhead with relative ease. But wait, there's more. He added 25 more pounds and brought the total to 340 pounds, the successful lifting of which would be a personal record for him. It would be a personal record for me too...if I was able to even deadlift that much weight. He got all set up and took just slightly more time than before and then faster than you can imagine someone moving with that kind of weight he powered it up beautifully off the ground to a perfect split clean and then comfortably stood up with the bar. He readied himself again, bounced the bar a bit across his shoulders and then POW he drilled the bar up and slammed his feet down hard into the floor but it wasn't quite up. With 340 pounds in a less than perfect position, Josh actually stuck it out for a good 8 to 10 seconds vibrating like a guitar string as he struggled to hold the weight. If you look at the photo of this lift on the February 12th main page you can see Coach Bergener in the background willing the weight up with his eyeballs. At this moment in the lift Josh was just getting control and locking out and it was awesome. He said the noise of the crowd is what kept him under the weight.

From max power we went on to strength endurance. Grace. Though Grace seems to be much too elegant a name for this madness, the goal should be to do this kind of work as gracefully as possible for as long as you can. Clean and Jerk 135 pounds for 30 reps as quickly as possible. Tough enough as it is but the added complication was that you could not regrip in the down position because that would unload the weight and give you a rest. You had to hold the weight the entire time. Dave Leyes, Stephan Rochet, Josh Everett, Mike Rutherford and Bo Bergener each grabbed a bar and with a counter nearby set off after Grace. Remember that intensity thing on page 3? Grace is one intense babe. The boys hammered and the crowd support was incredible. Man they worked hard. Dave Leyes was done in an incredible 2:25. The more I watch these guys the more difficult it is for me to believe I am the same species of being as they are. Annie, Nicole and Chris AKA Chemgirl followed the guys and did Grace with 85 lbs. Nicole won that one and it was just amazing to watch the three of them work. They positively defined intensity.

The finish to the day came from Mike Rutherford with a dumbbell program. He got into dumbbell use for budgetary and availability reasons and then found that they had many advantages. Dumbbells are portable and can be easily transported to a workout location, they are less expensive than other lifting implements, they are very versatile in their training applications and they translate very well to athletic performance.

Mike split the group in half and the first group did a clean, push press, lunge with each leg, switch hands and repeat other side x 10 followed by 10 elbows to knees on the pullup bar and then a bear crawl lap up the stairs, across the upper deck and down the stairs x 5. The second group held two dumbbells and did clean left, clean right, full squat, lower the weights, clean right, clean left, lower the weights, double clean and split jerk x 10.

This just gets better and better.

CrossFit Certification Seminar
February 13, 2005
Day 3

We began the day with some introductions of the various CrossFit Affiliates from all over the country. Brief discussion of the utility of gymnastic movements and then an offering of Cindy and Mary. There were 23 folks who went after Cindy and 8 that took on Mary. Just as a reminder Cindy is 5 pullups, 10 pushups and 15 squats and Mary is 5 handstand pushups, 10 one-leg squats and 15 pullups for max number of rotations in 20 minutes. The average for the Cindy group was 15 and for Mary it was 11.

Then inside for some nutrition discussion. CrossFit is to exercise as the Zone is to nutrition and is gasoline on the fire of your CrossFit training. Coach gave a number of real life examples of how diet proved to be the missing link to move performance from bland to good, from good to great and from great to world record breaking. Coach prodded Nicole into giving her story. If you have not had the pleasure of meeting Nicole, you owe it to yourself to go to CFHQ and look at what this training and proper diet can do to the human form. We need a poster Coach...Greg with that pose of his with the medicine ball in his hands and Nicole doing pretty much anything. Underneath it would read, "What CrossFit can do for you." Archetypes both. Anyway, Nicole started on the Zone the first of the year and completely changed her body and her performance. When she first started though she was something less than pleased with the portions. She asked us, "Do you know how small 1 ounce of chicken is?" She said that for the first two weeks she lost a lot of water weight...by crying. She said she was miserable and miserable to live with. In two weeks she shed 4 pounds and shred her body...and lost so much body fat she became weak and unable to do her workouts with any sort of intensity. Nicole is five-oneish and at the start 115 lbs. Not a lot of weight or body fat to lose, but she still got ripped to the bone. She needed more fat in her diet and when she upped her fat intake things leveled out for her and she got her strength and intensity back, and her dismal mood went away too. Nicole is a poster child for the Zone.

Go to CrossFit Journal #21, May 2004. It gives you meal plans and admonishes, "Our recommendation to eat meat and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch, and no sugar is adequate to the task of preventing the scourges of diet-induced disease, but more accurate and precise prescription is necessary to optimize physical performance."

Protein 30%, fat 30% and carbs 40%. With the zone you need to balance these proportions with every meal and that balancing act is done with what are called blocks. On page 3 of the May 2004 journal is a page of meal plans which shows under the protein section that 1 oz. of chicken breast is a block, most of the fish is 1 ½ oz. per block. Your meal plan is based on how many blocks you get. I am a fairly lean triathlete and at 5' 11" and 170 lbs. and my number is 17 distributed as 5 and 1. I get 5 blocks of protein, 5 blocks of carbs and 5 blocks of fat at each meal and two snacks of 1 block of each. Balance is important. Note that each meal and even the snacks has a balance of each of the macronutrients. The Glassman's went around the room and given the height and weight of each person gave their number and meal distribution.

More accurate and precise. The Zone diet is a method by which we can deliver to our bodies the accurate blend of macronutrients, based on our gender, weight, lean muscle mass and activity level, to deliver optimum health and performance benefits. The Zone diet uses the blocks described in the last paragraph to precisely measure your protein, fat and carbohydrate intake so you get a balanced amount of each with every meal and snack you consume. Each protein block contains 7 grams of protein, the fat blocks have 1.5 grams of fat and the carbohydrate blocks are 9 grams of carbs. Is this a bit of a pain, a somewhat annoying imposition on the free for all that describes how you may have been eating? Maybe so. But, as Brandon Lee brilliantly asks us, “For what level of mediocrity are you willing to settle?” If you can honestly say that you are as fit as you can possibly be or that you desire no further improvement in your physique, performance or health status, then go ahead and grab another Mountain Dew and Big Mac. Otherwise, check out the Zone Diet. It is the CrossFit of performance eating.

I cannot begin to do the Zone justice here, so it's fortunate there is a book all about the Zone Diet you must go buy now and read. Suffice it to say that the empirical data are in. (That still sounds wrong to me...the data *are* in? That singular/plural thing with those kinds of words sounds clumsy in my head...I'm sure you care too). It works. Input into the black box has delivered favorable output again and again in terms of weight loss, body fat loss, performance and health risk reduction. If this is not enough information to convince you to get into the Zone you need to go to HQ and visit with Nicole.

What about supplements? Robb Wolf is the go to guy on this nutrition stuff and he and Coach both said we need fish oil. Go to Costco and get their stuff as it is cheap and of good quality. Work your way up to 3 to 5 capsules per meal. Yes, per meal. I have been taking 2 or 3 a day which is apparently completely insufficient. Creatine is also on Robb's list but Lauren made a very sensible observation to me regarding the cost/benefit ratio. Creatine is pretty expensive and as soon as you stop taking it, the effects go away. True enough, but then again you could say the same about chicken or fish oil. Your call on that but I don't think I've talked to anyone who has not reported performance increases when using creatine. If you eat properly, which you will be when doing the Zone, you are getting the proper nutrients and your supplementation needs will be minimal. Lauren sides with Dr. Pauling and likes vitamin C.

Oh, sugar. Check this out. Cancer cells like sugar. They do not survive on protein and fats but they love sugar. I love Mountain Dew, Costco chocolate truffles and Thai iced tea. If cancer were to visit me, I have been providing a wonderful medium for its growth. I will probably freak out on this Zone thing without all my lovely, comforting sugar. I don't see any blocks on the chart for my truffles. I'll add that one.

Milk is a complete food. You can have that all by itself. Coach mentioned a super squat program where people did 20 reps of back squats with a weight they could do 10 times. Yeah, I thought that sounded pretty counter-intuitive too. They also drank a gallon of milk a day and put on 15 pounds of muscle in 45 minutes. OK, maybe not that fast but it was a very fast muscle and strength gain. Pester Coach for details, perhaps he'll write about it and fill us in on that.

Tyler Hass was next showing portions of the DVD he produced on this Bulgarian, I think, gymnast that is freaky strong. The DVD has his ring routine which is unique because it has 5 strength moves in a row. The difficulty of the ring moves is rated from A to E with A being easy stuff and E being the really, really hard stuff. The muscle up for example is, and this just kills me, an A move. If I do a muscle up for you the only reason you might guess that I was actually trying to do one would be because of all the grunting and leg kicking convulsions you would see at the top of my pull, substantially and obviously on the wrong side of the crux move. An A move, thanks a lot. A real kick in the collective manhood of all of us non-muscleuppers. The Bulgarian upped the difficulty of his routine and included a move that has never been done before and is considered a Super E move. Tyler described it with awe and as an expression of its difficulty called it impossible. The move now has his name on it. Not Tyler's, the Bulgarian dude.

We had rings hanging all over the place and at each of the ring stations we practiced pushups, or dips, or muscle up attempts or whatever the station coach had for you. Rings provide a very unique multi-planar, frictionless environment over which you must exert your mastery in order to complete your assigned movement. I had the pushup station and I had people try their hand at regular pushups, pushups with an arm extended to the side on the way down and flies. We also tried extending the arms out to the front as with an ab roller. Because of the freedom of movement we also moved forward and back at different angles and even in an arc. Fabulous abdominal muscle activation. Be sure to round your back when you do this. Lose the arch, round your back upward like a cat and hollow your core.

Someone joined the muscle up crowd. Forgive me for not knowing who that was. Would someone that knows please post his name so we can publicly celebrate his accomplishment while we secretly wish it was us?

A quick ab primer finished out the day. Lani did a demo on the ham/glute machine and showed how you need to lock your knees in order to activate your hip flexors and powerfully launch you upward for your sit up. Powerful hip flexor activation. I tried that and it felt very strong and dynamic. Coach put me down on an Abmat and had me knock out 21 slow, deliberate no momentum sit ups with my knees out to the sides, feet bottoms facing each other and heels up near my butt. Not too bad, I was feeling pretty strong. He said to everyone, "Watch, he won't make 22." After 21 he kicked out the Abmat and I might as well have had my ears stapled to the floor. I could barely move upward let alone do a situp...even with momentum. Try it yourself with a rolled up towel. This one takes the hip flexors out completely. Add L-sits and overhead squats and you have yourself a very solid core.

So, there you go.

Someone wanted me to remind them that if you want bands you should get them at Ironwoody.com. Good stuff there.