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CrossFit: Train Like a World-Class Athlete!

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Looking for a new workout that can whip you into champion shape? No matter your goal—whether you are getting ready to join the military, squeeze into that little black dress for your 20th high school reunion, fight off osteoporosis or simply look better in your birthday suit—you may want to consider CrossFit.

CrossFit involves high-intensity workouts that combine gymnastics, Olympic weightlifting/powerlifting and multi-mode sprint work. Think back-to-basics: dead lifts, squats, pushups and pull-ups, coupled with using old-school equipment such as medicine balls, iron and kettle bells and climbing ropes.



Founded by Greg Glassman, a former gymnast, who opened the first affiliated gym in Santa Cruz in 1995, the CrossFit brand contends that a healthy fit person must be proficient in 10 general skill areas: cardiovascular/respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, agility, balance, coordination and accuracy.

Whew! That may sound like a tall order for most of us average mortals interested in exercise, but according to Mike Pietragallo, owner of CrossFit Pittsburgh, the great thing about this program—utilized in over 2,000 affiliated gyms worldwide by many fire departments, law enforcement agencies and military organizations—is that it can be modified for anyone.

“You can scale these workouts so they are doable at any fitness level,” said Pietragallo. “The only difference between the demands put on a navy seal or a retired school teacher is the intensity level. Without sounding too cliché, it’s really for anyone and everyone.”

CrossFit offers two paths in using its methods. If you are familiar with its type of exercises, such as Olympic powerlifting, you can follow the video clips of daily routines on the CrossFit website. However, as the company states on its How to Start page, “This option is for those athletes with an extensive experience in athletic strength and conditioning.” If you are “only modestly acquainted with elite athletic training,” you’ll want to seek out an affiliated gym, “black box”, as they are often referred to.

Said Pietragallo, “I think the appeal of joining an affiliate is that it gives you a sense of community. You’re going to push harder because you’re surrounded by friends. Shared misery I guess I’d call it! Plus it’s like having a personal trainer every time you train.”

Tom Briggs, a 40-year-old real estate developer and triathlete, who has been doing CrossFit since March 2010, primarily at Elm City Cross Fitness in Hamden, Connecticut, appreciates how the training has enhanced his overall fitness. “My body doesn’t break down as easily as it used to when I compete,” said

Briggs. “And recovery time is much, much quicker.”

So if you’re up for a new exercise challenge, Pietragallo recommends, “Just try it. I have clients who came in just to get conditioned for a special event and three years later they’re still here because they love the results.”



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To learn more about CrossFit and to can locate other national and international CrossFit affiliates, visit www.crossfit.com.

By Stephanie Susnjara, a freelance health writer and fitness junkie who has worked her way through circuit training, Zumba, Pilates, rock climbing, and has just discovered CrossFit.