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by **ROBB WOLF** | 667 comments

The Black Box Summit Or How I Got Fired from the CrossFit Nutrition Certification

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and opportunity. The Summit's purpose was to begin a trend of professionalism and education that would, in theory, address the needs of the CrossFit community from every conceivable angle.

Quality Control & The brand of CrossFit

Jeremy Theil, CrossFit Games competitor and founder of the successful affiliate, CrossFit Central, opened the day and focused on the issues of quality control in CF and what role CrossFit HQ would play in this process. In short CF HQ will play “no” role in the quality control of affiliates. The most public explanation of this position is an open market “cream rises to the top” philosophy, however the legal/business anchor for this position is that any attempts on HQ's part to police or institute best practices would put the organization into a franchise scenario. These are some interesting topics, which will need some exploration later, but this should suffice for now simply to paint a picture of the opening of the Summit. Jeremy concluded the opening session with a brief analysis of the controversial GreySkull blog post which created quite a stir several months ago. Jeremy made the point that if you love the community you would stay in and fight for it. A sentiment shared by many of the commentators to the Greyskull thread. This would however be prophetic for me, as my **love** for the community and desire to see it improve would lead to my sacking in a little over 48 hrs.

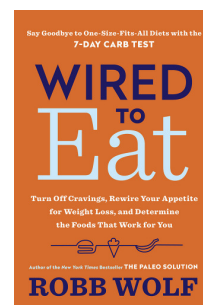
Better Business Practices

The first section of the business practices was fantastic. Attendees

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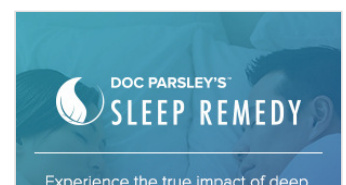


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clients in an area are “turned off” to CrossFit by poor training or injury? What if something happened in a gym with a similar name and you are confused with that affiliate? CrossFit HQ’s stance on this topic has been an analogy of Starbucks’s and the fact there are “multiple Starbucks on some city corners”. Indeed there are, but this is a ridiculous comparison. Starbucks is a centrally owned business with solid, consistent business practices. CrossFit affiliates are unregulated and highly variable from location to location. Anxiety about the quality of a neighbor that essentially SHARES your name is valid on the part of the affiliate owner. The HQ position: “quality will win out” provides remarkably little solace for those affiliates who have neighbors who have driven down prices and possibly alienated clients with poor training. Perhaps someone should inform HQ that Starbucks has seen massive cutbacks? Would HQ be friendly to competitive strength & conditioning entities providing certifications? Whatever the case, Nicki couched all of this in terms that were positive and helpful: Pick a name that is unique. Distinguish yourself by quality actions such as training and business systems. This suggestion resonated with many of the attendees as evidenced by the questions Nicki received throughout the weekend. At least one attendee did not appreciate the suggestion, Director of Training, Dave Castro. I’d soon get an earful of what Dave thought about Nicki’s recommendation to co-brand oneself. Initially, I could not make sense of Dave’s animosity until I thought things through: If you have two names you not only distinguish yourself from your neighbors who may or may not have good business practices, you liberate yourself from the control of HQ. You have little recourse if you are dissatisfied with the parent organization when your only name is “CrossFit Anvtown” and your only url is

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situation for years. My position has been and continues to be: If Twilight stole from you, SUE HIM. It seems an airtight case, so why the lack of action? Anyway, Russell asked many questions throughout the weekend, always after either Tony (on day 1) or Dave (on days 2 & 3) leaned over and whispered in his ear. Russell, I believe DOES own an affiliate (experience neither Dave nor Tony have) but the emissaries from HQ are interesting:

- None have extensive training experience.
- None have ANY strength and conditioning education outside CrossFit and are largely incapable of articulating any of the nuanced methodology in strength and conditioning.
- None have a background in anatomy, physiology or exercise science. Greg Glassman never had a formal education in this material but has a formidable self taught knowledge. For the most part, the HQ staff does not reflect this knowledge base, and this in not only a “fitness” company but a “fitness juggernaut”.

I gave my talk on effective strategies for implementing nutrition in a gym. I detailed the systems such as integration with On Ramps and how to customize your approach for divergent populations such as fat loss vs. performance. My main focus for the talk was a food quality approach using “Paleo” concepts. I shared some case histories and then opened the floor for questions. Russell asked “when would I introduce the Zone in my practice?” and I said I tend not to. We have produced top tier athletes without the hassle of weighing and measuring. This did not satisfy him and he probed for how I would know what ratio athletes need for their best running and would it not be better to emulate a Zone

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I started on the Paleo diet and I started to lose about half a pound a week. I have now achieved my target weight plus a bit more. All my tests are completely normal and I feel

thousands of hours working with people on their food) offered support for my position. Dutch Lowy (who was facilitating the questions) said we were out of time. Dave Castro stood up and loudly said: “That was Robb Wolf’s lecture on why the Zone Sucks”. Dave then walked outside and began texting on his phone.

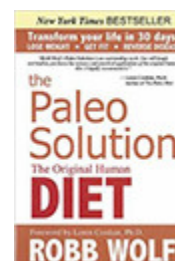
After my talk at the Summit Dave Castro eventually grabbed me and said “You need to calm down on the Zone bashing”. I told him I was NOT bashing the Zone but you CANNOT weigh and measure shit food and get the same results.

Things Get Jerry Springer

After lunch, Greg Everett was up and he would tackle the topic of why the Olympic lifts are valuable for the CrossFit athlete. Greg’s presentation was fantastic. Clear, concise and it opened with an example of a top level CrossFitter improving her performance dramatically with just a few weeks of instruction in the O-lifts. Greg had numerous photos in his power point presentation, one was of Annie Sakamoto doing a barbell clean. This was a photo HQ had used on crossfit.com as an example of “good” form and Greg pointed out the shortcomings of the technique displayed in the photo. A bit later Greg showed a photo of Nicole Carroll doing a medball clean with a form error Greg would later explore in depth.

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Greg continues his lecture remarkably unfazed while Castro seethes and wiggles, texting on his phone. When Greg's talk finishes Dave rushes forward and starts yelling at Greg. Dutch is trying to calm Dave down because Dave Castro, Director of Training for CrossFit HQ is yelling at one of the best and brightest coaches in the community because Greg said CrossFitters will benefit from technical proficiency in the O-lifts. Having a cooler head than Dave, and actually giving a shit about the attendees experience, Greg asks Dave to go outside so they can talk.

At this point I'm shocked but reticent to get much more involved. I did not want my presence to provoke matters further and frankly, I did not, in my wildest imaginings, think Dave Castro, Director of Training for CrossFit HQ, the fitness juggernaut built on Empiricism and facts and OPEN SOURCE CONCEPTS, would conduct himself as he was doing. I could see Dave yelling at Greg outside. Dutch Lowy and Michael Rutherford were trying to quiet things down. Mind you, this is in the middle of a SEMINAR with 70+ people in attendance. I could see Greg's head getting redder and redder so I went outside and Dutch is pushing a motormouthed Castro away from Greg. Greg is repeating "I have nothing to say to you Dave" while Dave is obviously working to provoke Greg. Every time Michael Rutherford or Dutch would get between, Dave would push his way around, all the while yelling a stream of obscenities at Greg. Dave was saying things like "you just hate HQ, you are just waiting for this thing to fail so you can swoop in and benefit. You are a parasite on the community...you should de-affiliate, we should de-affiliate you!!" I get between Dave and Greg and said "HQ cannot hear an ounce of criticism, you are above reproach and it is ruining the organization" He said I was no better than

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two subjects he is about to execute. That's the flavor of this professional exchange.

Dutch Lowy finally tells Dave he needs to leave. That the cops would be called if need be. Jeremy is trying to keep things as mellow as possible but the whole of the 70 people are taking in the spectacle of the Director of Training trying to provoke a fight with Greg Everett over an OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING LECTURE. I have received 2 emails from people who said they filmed parts of the outside yelling match. I'll post that video when I get it.

As an aside, imagine a similar scenario playing out at a Level 1 CrossFit cert. What could so enrage an attendee that the individual would rush the stage and start spewing threats and obscenities like Dave did? Who knows, but the individual would obviously need to be very insecure with the material that was presented to react this way.

Day 3

Dave would not make eye contact with me all day on Sunday. The seminars were amazing, particularly some of OPT's material. Inspiring and some very high order thinking. All of the presenters were brought up front for a Q&A. This went pretty well till Russell Berger asked "If the Main site WOD would optimally prepare an athlete for the Crossfit games. He gave some numbers which had the appearance of being vague, but it was pretty obvious he had a specific person and situation in mind. Of the panel, NOT ONE PERSON thought the crossfit.com WOD would get a person to

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fill the coaching for the several sold out certs on the books. I asked Eric if HQ had an “official” position on the topic. He said he did not know anything else. I said “You do know I will make a public statement about this. I have hundreds of people signed up for and looking to sign up for a cert in which I am the instructor. I will post this publicly. Attendees need to know it will not be me instructing the course. Are you prepared for this and are you sure you want to go through with it?” To this black said he was not 100% sure the situation was final...that there might be some discussion, that I should consider if I had a message for Glassman. I said I was stunned they did not have a written, formal reason for dismissing me, that it was appallingly unprofessional that Glassman, whom I’ve known for nearly 10 years now, did not have the Stones to do this himself. And That I was DONE. I was not interested in a kiss-and make up session.

I shot an email to CrossFit Legal and the Glassman’s that I wanted a written explanation of why I was being replaced within 24 hrs.

Monday

John Welbourn called me and said Dave Castro wanted to know if John was going to leave. If he was going to continue programming CrossFit Football. John said he would, for he foreseeable future. John said to Dave: “I was not there but I hear you did some remarkably unprofessional things.” To this Dave Castro, Director of Training for CrossFit HQ said “ Greg Everett was running down CrossFit and he was running down Mark Rippetoe. I was not going to let Greg Destroy Rips legacy....”

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Generally, I'm just shocked the emissary from HQ conducted himself in this way. Dave acts with an impunity that is frightening in it's severity.

In the phone call Eric Black said HQ had a replacement for my upcoming nutrition certs. I want attendees to know it will NOT be me there. I do not want people rolling into the cert expecting to see me.

As of this writing I have not received any communication from HQ other than a voicemail from Glassman saying "Robbie! I hear you started another fire..call me kid!" Classic lack of professionalism on HQ's part and Glassman's preferred method for dealing with unsavory situations: Make it look like it was not his decision.

I'm REALLY interested to see the HQ response to this if any. they NEVER take responsibility for actions. We will see some kind of 90* take on this. My guess is that I'm using this as a media stunt.

I'll continue to serve the community I've been a part of for so long via my blog. I'm going to take this time and finish my book. On my writing breaks I will ponder the same thing on most CrossFitters minds: Where IS my RRG money?

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