



COMMUNITY SPIRIT **CROSSFIT FACES**

Personal expressions of CrossFit from around the globe.

BY MIKE CARLSON, NASM-CPT, CFL-1

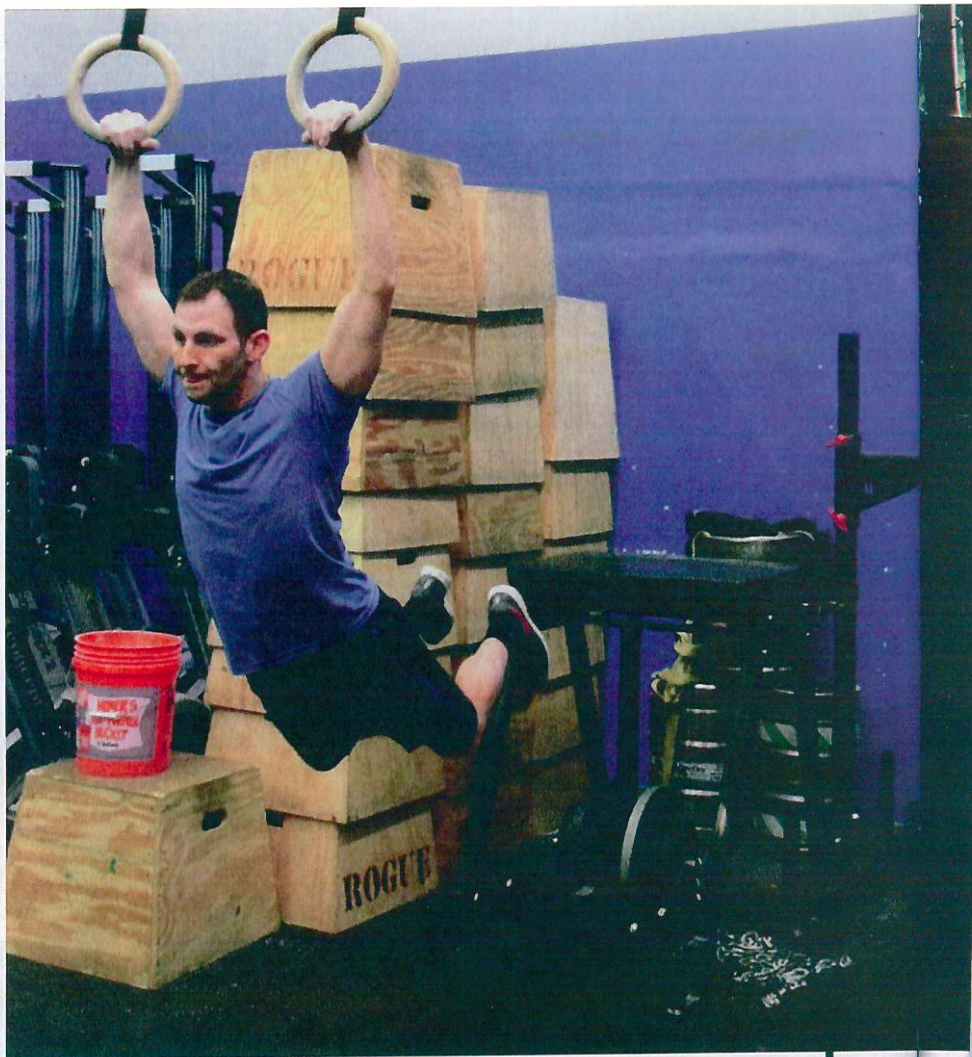
DR. JORDAN KERKER

CrossFit has long been a popular target for the mainstream fitness industry and the medical community, both of which love to portray daily WODs as veritable meat grinders, chewing up healthy athletes and spitting out injured ones. So when Jordan Kerker, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with a specialty in sports medicine, produced a video about how safe the sport of fitness really is and then threw it on YouTube, people noticed.

But Kerker didn't always have such a sunny viewpoint of CrossFit. Before he began participating two years ago, he bought into the bad press, just like most of his peers in health care. "My colleagues look at me like I have two heads when I tell them I do CrossFit," he says. "They all think I'm going to get hurt. And two to three years ago, I thought the same thing. Unless you're actually doing CrossFit, you can't understand the benefits of it and the lack of risk."

Tracking injury rates in CrossFit is nearly impossible, but Kerker is quick to volunteer his own small sample size. Out of the 250 members of his home box, CrossFit Central Long Island in Jericho, New York, he has seen no serious injuries. Likewise, when he swaps his Nanos for a pair of loafers at the Central Orthopedic Group, he still doesn't see any CrossFit-related injuries. He does, however, see CrossFitters. One patient tore his pectoralis while bench pressing, and another ripped her Achilles tendon doing a cartwheel. Neither was doing CrossFit when the injuries occurred, but he suspects that CrossFit is often collateral damage.

"CrossFitters are active people," he says. "They're generally



a healthier population, and they're doing other active things besides CrossFit. If you're a CrossFitter, you're not sitting home drinking a six-pack. You're out doing stuff. People who do CrossFit like to hike and cycle and do active stuff, and all that comes with a risk."

One of the best defenses against injury, according to Kerker, is scaling. Having undergone back surgery and living with degenerative arthritis in his spine, Kerker is no stranger to modifying workouts. Olympic lifts and deadlifts are off the table for him, so he has focused on becoming a self-professed "bodyweight ninja." And judging from the 25 pounds he has lost since starting CrossFit, scaling workouts hasn't hampered his progress. Kerker believes that being smart about modifying workouts is the best way to stay injury-free and that the most important modification is the load on the bar. "My biggest thing is, you should not be increasing weight unless you have perfect form," Kerker says. "I think every move is safe, but every move can be risky if it is done incorrectly. Unless you're going to Regionals or the CrossFit Games, there's no reason to risk back or shoulder injuries just to lift heavier weights."

Kerker's message is slowly getting out there. Recently, his video landed on Reddit and he was interviewed on Sirius radio about CrossFit and injury. A seven-minute YouTube upload can't correct the misconceptions of an entire industry, but Kerker's video is a good first step.