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Arnold Sports Festival



The 2019 CrossFit Endeavor Ohio Teams



Photo: Logan Aldridge

The Spirit of CrossFit

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The Fitness EXPO is among the must-see attractions at the Arnold Sports Festival for many of the Weekend's 200,000 attendees, and so it was for our staff from Dayton. This would be the 31st Year for the Arnold Sports Festival and has grown to 80 sports and events with 22,000 participants, most of which are youth. Our original plan to cover boxing and wrestling went right out the window after walking into the Fitness Expo inside the Greater Columbus Convention Center / Hyatt Regency. The experience could only be described as a spectacular mind-blowing International event. Thousands of people, wrapping themselves around seemingly endless booths of the latest in sports equipment, apparel and nutrition products, surrounded by four stages hosting unique, nonstop competitions and entertainment. While this was to be our first time at the Arnold, I soon realized that we weren't going to make it to the Ohio Expo Center, where boxing, gymnastics, wrestling and martial arts competitions were taking place. After getting the general lay of the land, we divided our forces and decided to cover the CrossFit Endeavor competitions where four CrossFit teams from Ohio are competing. Tom Greene, one of our photographers, decided on CrossFit Excess, located in Vandalia, Ohio and I would take the Team, Some Assembly Required (SAR), of Portsmouth, Ohio. The other two teams were, Ohio Strength and Clintonville, both from Columbus, Ohio. This competition in so many ways demonstrates the spirit of CrossFit, which is community; defined by a set of interactions between a group of people and those interactions are mainly through shared encounters. The OLY Scramble, was Inspirational and unforgettable, the athletes from Team Some Assembly Required, a crowd favorite was determined to complete all exercises in the competition. The president of (SAR) Josh Cinnamo, described the experience this way; "The 6-person team finished 31st out of 32 teams, but that included an injury. We're very proud of the performance and the 4-man team finished 8th of 24.

This team consisted of two veterans and two civilians, the civilians are both missing parts of arms and the vets were missing legs above the knee. Consider the idea of a 4-man team missing two legs and beating half of the field. Tremendous! This is the 7th year Team SAR has been involved with the Arnold Affiliate Gathering and Validus Events. They've always been gracious hosts of the team and we've always treated their event with respect by giving our all. This isn't always about fun and easy pats on the back for us; we're trying to earn our place in the competition by beating teams, and with different athletes each year. It's a great spectacle to see live. Additionally, we had team members participate in the Arnold Strongman event and jiu jitsu competitions and we'll be back for year 8 in 2020". The Team Some Assembly Required, is sponsored by Dale King of Shark Tank fame.

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Photo: Jenna Fisher

CrossFit By the Book

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Did you know how big CrossFit at the Arnold Is? There were 288 athletes from all over the United States. The competition draws 24 four-person men and woman teams and 32 six-person co-ed teams competing to be the Best of The Best. The Arnold is the start of the competitive season for CrossFit. In order to be competitive, the teams need consist of a gymnast, utility person and a person good at aerobics. CrossFit Affiliates consider the Arnold to be the most important team event of the year. This is about the being best team. The athletes individually my not stand a chance but as a team they combine their strengths to be the best. At the Arnold Sports Festival CrossFit Excess from Vandalia Ohio had three teams participating in this year's Sports Festival. After talking to Brody Mayse, the owner of CrossFit Excess, I realized how unusual it is to have 3 competitive teams in the Arnold, from the same gym.

CrossFit Excess had two teams in the final round. One team placed fourth in the competition. I was shocked to hear that the top three teams at the Arnold were composite teams that handpicked members from various gym's or the U.S. Army in order to find the components needed to be competitive. I was confused. If it's that difficult to come up with the athletes to be competitive how does CrossFit Excess find the athletes for three teams from one gym? Brody's answer was simple "Follow the CrossFit principals". Create a culture that develops members into athletes while making them feel welcome and part of the gym. Spend the extra time needed to develop members into athletes. According to Mayse It doesn't matter what your fitness level is when you join you will advance. Whether it's issue with mobility or wanting to compete there is a level for all members. When you are in an environment where you feel better, get stronger and work-out with friends, members do become athletes. Some Athletes decide the Arnold competition is for them.

I talked with Jenna Fisher, who has been a member of CrossFit Excess for 5 years. Jenna has been an athlete all her life, her passion is soccer. She played competitively for 15 years. After laying off soccer for a while Jenna decided that CrossFit was the way to reenter competitive sports. When starting the CrossFit experience, she found out quickly just how far she was out of shape. When starting to train she attended the stay at home mom 9:30 A.M. class and she was out paced by mothers. Not giving up she went back and worked her way up to the top. Note: I think she is up there, but she doesn't.

So, what is the secret? Brody and Angie create a supportive environment that allows athletes to progress with the support of all the other athletes. They pay attention to the details, take the extra time to develop their members, no matter what their ability. They program sessions at the level of the top athletes in the gym and scale the training down to the individual's ability. At the end of the day even the members with the least ability go away a winner. What a rush when you are trying to lift 45 lbs. and the top athletes are cheering you on. In this environment adding 5 lbs. to the bar is a big deal. Setting a personal record is a reason for everyone to cheer.

The bottom line: You just must read the book. When Greg Glassman started CrossFit in the 80's he wrote the book on how to bring members along. As a member of CrossFit Excess, I am proud to say Brody and Angie train CrossFit by the book. Their members progress into athletes and that's how the can do the impossible, have 3 competitive teams at the Arnold. One of those teams placed 4th in the United States only to be upset by what I call composite teams.