

Let me start by saying this is going to be long so I don't blame you if you don't read it all. In fact, if I were actually speaking this would most likely be more than you heard me say over the last 5 years.

As I get ready for my final trip to the Games I can't help but think of two different phrases (both older, so let's call them Master's references). One from a Grateful Dead song: "Lately it occurs to me, what a long strange trip it's been." The other famous phrase is from John "Hannibal" Smith of the A-Team: "I love it when a plan comes together." These both come from reflecting back on the 5 year plan I laid out. It's not often, if ever, that a 5 year plan works out exactly as planned. Go to the Games for 2 years, train for a year without going and then return for 2 more years before "retiring".

This is the one time of year that I acknowledge the attention, so that I can thank everyone that has assisted me in this incredible and unbelievable journey. I am not a "look at me" type of guy, as I prefer to come in quietly, do my work, and leave. I believe that my accomplishments don't define me, my effort does. Anyway, I am going to give a brief recap of the events here.

It was the fall of 2013 that my Games journey began when Dave Lorenzo and Barry got me started training. Dave approached me and asked if I wanted to train with him in hopes of qualifying for the Games. Dave took time from his own schedule to stay after hours and work with me and start progressing my skills. It was a dream that turned into a reality when I qualified for the Games in 2014. The rest just fell into place and it has been a great run. This year has been a long and challenging year because of the demands and expectations I put on myself to make it back again. It was especially nerve racking because I knew it was going to be my last and I didn't want to fall short of my goal.

I am excited to be representing Crossfit Generation. You don't know how much it means to me to be embraced by the entire Crossfit Generation community. It may seem that I go against the Crossfit philosophy of a community atmosphere by training separately, but it was a necessary evil to obtain the results I wanted. Believe me it isn't always easy training that way, which is why I am extra thankful for the Competitor's class and the many athletes that push me. Everyone has been so gracious from congratulating me to allowing me the space to train. I truly appreciate it, and it helps to motivate me. I don't have the words to express how grateful and thankful I am to everyone at CFG for the endless support.

Now to acknowledge everyone that has been an integral part of the Games team. Let's start with Dave Lorenzo who, as a young coach fresh out of college, asked me if I wanted to work with him to try and qualify for the Games. Without Dave approaching me I don't think things would have happened the way they did. Dave is now a licensed Physical Therapist and has his own box, RDT Fitness and Performance, in Mays Landing, NJ, where I'm sure he will be successful.

Next would be Barry for thinking I could possibly qualify and encouraging me to even participate in the Open. Without Barry's enthusiasm I wouldn't have even thought about it. Barry has also done all my weight lifting programming over the years and is constantly correcting my technique. Both he and Jocelyn have been there the whole time, providing support, allowing me extra access to get extra workouts in, and permitting me to do qualifying workouts after hours and during the day. I remember the first year of qualifying where Jocelyn judged me during the day doing 100 wall balls and 100 pull ups, we had to measure everything and video tape it and again last year doing a test run of the run, swim run. I know you are smiling right now Jocelyn☺. Without the two of them none of this would have happened. But their commitment doesn't start and stop with me. They treat everyone in their

community the same way, which is why they are so successful and have the best group of athletes of any Crossfit.

I'm not sure if thanking Vince for all the torture he has programmed for me over the last few years would be appropriate. The saying goes if it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger and I guess that's what Vince's programming did. Seriously, though, without Vince programming my work I don't think I would have been ready or able to handle everything that I have done. He always thinks of ways to keep things fresh and painful. He also is indispensable come Open and Qualifier time, strategizing the best way to attack the WOD and then breaking it down and figuring out a better way to do it a second time. At the Games he always takes everything in and then tells me what to do. The best part of Vince for me and my mindset is that he tells it the way it is, no nonsense, no sugar coating, just do the work.

Head Judge Mark is next on the list. I'm not sure how Mark got stuck being my judge but I'm sure glad it happened. Mark went out of his way to always be there for me, making sure I had the spot I wanted, the time I wanted and then pushed me through every WOD while holding me to the required standards so there was never any questions with my reps. He has watched me go to that dark place on a few occasions and without him keeping me on track I would never have qualified. Without him and Vince breaking down each of my WOD performances to find any inefficiencies, or bleeding, as we like to call it, and discussing where to make up time, those re-dos could have been much more painful and unsuccessful.

The Comp class athletes were also a key part of success as they were providing me with training partners and pushing me to be the best. Vince, Mark and Angela as well as Michelle, Zack, Melanie, Kari, Mike D (when he feels like participating in fitness) and Pete (Peaches). It is a remarkable group of athletes and without them, it would have been even tougher to train on the other days.

Lastly, a huge thanks goes to Mike. Mike not only handles updating everyone during the Games, but also takes the awesome pictures and videos, which takes away from the experience for him. He co-ordinates travel planning, our nightly dining and anything else from down time planning to the after Games activities so that everyone gets the most from trip.

I also want to thank my friends that are able to and willing to take the time off to travel and watch me compete at the Games. Without them the experience would not be complete or worth it. I can't express how grateful I am to have you there, knowing I have that support is such an awesome feeling and means the world to me.

Finally I can't thank my family enough, Zack and Melanie have been very supportive and helpful in many ways inside and outside of the gym. Melanie has been trying to get me to improve my swimming, which is a tough job in itself. There is a saying "Behind every great man there's a great woman" well I don't know about the great man part but I am in one hundred percent agreement about the great woman part. Michelle has been suffering through the last 5 years with my training and regiment even more than the challenges I gave her during our first 24 years of marriage. I honestly think it was harder and more painful on her than it was me, I just had to do the work but she had to put up with everything else. My schedule, the training, the Open and Qualifier workouts and the Games, spending our vacation time going to The Games instead of having a real vacation. She has been so supportive and more concerned about me and how I am feeling than I am. I think she feels my stress, pain and struggles more than I do.

Honestly, without Michelle I would never have been able to follow this dream and have the success I have had.

I know come Sunday afternoon after competing in my final Games no matter how I did, I will look in the mirror and see someone that gave everything he had and did his best and know there was nothing left to give. I will then take a nice long shower, then I will turn to Michelle and first tell her how much "I love her" and secondly I will say the two words that she expects and loves to hear from me "I'm fine". Then I am going to have a few adult beverages.

Thanks again everyone and see you in class soon.

JB