



STRONGWOD

StrongWOD Training

Why 'StrongWOD' training should be a part of every CrossFitter's training programme. (Or...Why not hitting StrongWOD is no Yoke).

This article is about the benefits of including 'Strongman' style workouts in your training. The first thing that I need to address, however, is the term 'Strongman'. In my opinion and for obvious reasons the term is problematic: It is probably time to use different terminology, which is what we have tried to do with StrongWOD/Strong Sunday. One of the main reasons I love this style of training is that it is easily accessible and hugely beneficial to absolutely everyone and so to use a term that can easily put someone off before even looking into it seems a little divisive and self-sabotaging. Therefore, we are going to refer to this style of training as simply 'StrongWOD' for the purposes of this piece.

A brief history. Many, many years ago a young Alex joined a CrossFit Box. Said CrossFit box had a couple of Atlas stones gathering dust in a corner. Young Alex never went anywhere near those stones. Fast forward a couple of years and as a member of CFG Alex is exposed to 'StrongWOD' equipment regularly as part of WODs and gets a real taste for it. He loves the equipment, the movements and the weight he is able to move.

Yokes, Atlas Stones, Tyres, Farmers Handles, Logs, Axle Bars, Sandbags and Kegs are an integral part of training at CFG for Alex. CrossFit Glasgow has hosted the CrossFit Strongman certificate course run by Hybrid Athletic's Rob Orlando (total legend) and Alex is now all-in; hooked; has totally 'drunk the Kool-Aid'. Alex now spreads the gospel of this training with StrongWOD every Sunday, ably assisted by competitive Strongwoman and CFG OG Viki Elo, for a growing number of like-minded enthusiasts in attendance every week.



So why 'StrongWOD' training? Constantly varied functional movements performed at high intensity. Sound familiar? I cannot think of anything more functional than StrongWOD style training. We are lifting and moving awkwardly shaped objects, picking up and carrying heavy loads and spending time under tension. We are also mimicking movement patterns that we find in every-day life. Whether it's carrying your shopping home, shifting a bag of cement, chucking your suitcase on a carousel or giving your kid a piggyback, StrongWOD style training will help develop the strength to perform these tasks both now and in the future and will help us live functional lives for longer.

'StrongWOD' style movements are also the ultimate compound movements, making both large and small muscle groups work together to perform a task. If we take the 'Yoke' for example (my personal favourite): walking with that heavy load challenges the central nervous system, both the anterior and posterior chain, upper back, lats, obliques, hips, knees, calves, ankles and feet - not to mention the mental toughness it develops. Completing a max lift with a heavy frame will leave you with your lungs bursting, sweat lashing and that pleasant metallic taste at the back of your mouth to let you know you've done some work.



The crossover benefits into Olympic lifting and Powerlifting are numerous. Keeping control of an awkward and heavy object during a lift will help develop a powerful leg drive, hip extension, grip strength etc. and will make lifting a barbell comparatively easier. StrongWOD training is also particularly beneficial outside the gym for a variety of sports, especially where there is a physical contact/collision element. As a rugby player I have found my ability to be 'strong' in the collision area, either making dominant tackles or being able to stay upright whilst being tackled, has developed significantly since I began StrongWOD training. I'm confident this is true for other sports that require strength and movement.



For those of us who are either currently participating in competitive CrossFit or who want to in the future, StrongWOD training is very important. The crossover into other areas of CrossFit has been noted above but the fact that most CrossFit competitions, from The CrossFit Games, to Tribal Clash, to Clash of the Clans; will have a StrongWOD element to a greater or lesser degree means that the complete CrossFitter will need to have this discipline in their wheelhouse. I've been at plenty of comps where athletes who are extremely capable with the barbell in hand, have great gymnastics and a huge engine for metcons, have come unstuck when confronted with a workout with a Yoke, Stone or Handles. My message to Competitors is - don't leave a hole in your game and get caught out! 'StrongWOD' style training is included in CFG's Competitor Cell programming and if you are looking to compete, at any level, it should feature in yours too.

Another positive to 'StrongWOD' training is that from a Trainer's perspective the movements are relatively simple and not massively technical, which makes them both easy to teach and easy for even a novice athlete to pick up. This also means that athletes can start moving heavy loads pretty quickly. Which brings us on to the fact that

StrongWOD allows you to go really, really heavy - way heavier than a barbell movement will allow. A Yoke or Farmers carry will most likely be way in excess of what an athlete can back squat or deadlift. And we all know that heavy is good, right?

To me personally 'StrongWOD' training looks and feels cool AF! Flipping your first tyre is an epic feeling. There is something incredibly cathartic and primal about throwing Iron and Stone around the gym that taps into your inner Conan or Red Sonja (cultural references for the Masters athlete), and not only benefits you tremendously physically but also mentally.

If you are put off from trying this style of training because you've watched World's Strongest Man at Christmas and don't fancy mixing it with Eddie Hall et al then don't worry. Firstly, just like everything we do in CrossFit we can scale workouts by weight, reps, time, range of movement etc. Secondly, 'StrongWOD' training perfectly adapts to CrossFit WODs. Coach Glassman's original mission for CrossFit was to break down the barrier between strength training and cardio because he observed, quite rightly, that "everyday life doesn't recognise this distinction". This is the ideal that guides us when we programme for StrongWOD.

Finally, at CrossFit Glasgow we are in the very fortunate position in that we have access to a large amount of specialist StrongWOD equipment and even during the current Lockdown CFG has continued to invest in StrongWOD with the addition of more logs. It would make sense to use this great kit. Every Sunday you can road test this equipment under the guidance of experienced Trainers and in the company of good people and heavy music. We would love for you to join us.

See you there for The Heavy!

Alexis Allen, CF-L2, BA Hons