

# CROSSING OVER

Reigning Fitness Olympia champion **Adela Garcia** steps into the wildly popular world of CrossFit

BY ADELA GARCIA | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DARTER



● CHALLENGE FOR A CHAMPION

Four Fitness Olympia titles. Three Fitness International titles. With a résumé like that, you know Adela Garcia's training must be intense. But her day in California's San Fernando Valley offered the 5'1" dynamo a new challenge: Valley CrossFit's "Sick... Mean...Hateful" workout.

**W**hen it comes to training, I'm old school. I've always believed that if you want to build muscle, you have to train heavy with few reps and a lot of rest. And if you're out to get lean, you have to do a lot of cardio. This has worked for me for most of my career. I do like trying new workouts, however, and I'm always preaching to my clients about the importance of keeping an open mind when it comes to training. It's a good way to motivate them.

So when Allan Donnelly, editor in chief of MUSCLE & FITNESS HERS, said he wanted me to try CrossFit and write about it, I didn't even blink. "I'm game. Let's do it," I said.

When I arrived at Valley CrossFit in Van Nuys, California, a couple of weeks later, I felt good. I had done about 75 minutes of cardio that morning, but that's just me; I don't feel normal without it. When it came time for class, I felt ready. I had energy and was injury-free. Bring it on.

Mike Latch, owner of Valley CrossFit, took me through the four moves that would make up the workout that night: burpee, box jump, wall ball and ball slam. He explained that he didn't want to include Olympic lifts or anything too technique-heavy because he wanted me to get an idea of the energy and pace of a class. I asked him if we were going to do more than four exercises and he said, "Maybe I'll add something as we go." No worries, I said. This looks easy. I train for five hours a day when I'm getting ready for a fitness show.

Most of the workouts in CrossFit have names; this one was called "Sick... Mean...Hateful." I'd soon find out why. Latch invented it and it's based on the format of a CrossFit workout called "Fight Gone Bad." It's set up like a mixed martial arts match: three rounds of five minutes with one minute of rest in between. You perform each exercise for one minute and then move onto the next. Everyone has a partner who's in charge of counting your reps for each set, which add to your final score.

"It's only 17 minutes and you're done," said Becca Voigt, an assistant instructor at Valley CrossFit and my partner for the day. Seventeen minutes? *This isn't going to be so bad. I thought we were going to be here all night!*

"Just remember, we do this every day. Don't push yourself if you can't do it. Go at your own pace," said Voigt, who has been a certified CrossFit coach for two years. I nodded, but I was thinking: *Of course I'm going to push myself.*

After about 10 minutes of jumping rope to warm up, Latch started the clock and the whole room exploded into action. My first station was burpees. I do these a lot when training for a competition, so I felt really comfortable. A lot of people do burpees with just a squat thrust before they jump. I love how in CrossFit you have to do almost a full push-up. That's exactly how I do them.



● CROSSFIT CURRICULUM

While this type of fast-paced metabolic conditioning (aka "Met Con") is a hallmark of CrossFit workouts, Olympic lifts, powerlifting moves, kettlebells and dumbbells are also commonplace in CrossFit.



The only problem was I got excited and went too hard. I did 25 burpees in that first minute. By the time Becca ushered me over to the plyo station for box jumps, I could hardly feel my legs!

I started off more slowly with the box jumps, partially because I was tired but also because at 5'1" I had to drop to almost a full squat to jump the 20-inch box. The tall guy next to me barely had to bend his knees.

The next exercise was the wall ball. You hold a medicine ball, squat deep, and as you come up you throw the ball 10 feet high, catch it and repeat. I had never done this before and I just couldn't get it, even with an 8-pound ball (which is pretty light). Finally Becca's explanation of how it's one motion clicked: You explode up and throw the ball using momentum from your hips, catch it and squat back down. By that time, the minute was over and I knew my score was plummeting.

From there, it was another minute of burpees and then another minute of wall balls. Thank God for Becca. Not only did she guide me through each minute — in a class like that your mind isn't even focused; you just go — but she was a great coach, too. She kept an eye on my technique and it was nice to have someone push me.

I was fried after the first round and the minute of rest went by fast. My score dropped quite a bit in the second round, from 68 in the first round to the 50s. My burpees and box jumps were strong, but



**SNAPSHOT**

**Name:** Adela Garcia

**Age:** 38

**Height:** 5'1"

**Weight:** 114 pounds

**Birthplace:** Cabrera, Dominican Republic

**Current Residence:** Pflugerville, Texas

**Career Highlights:** 4-time Fitness Olympia champ; 3-time Fitness International champ

**ADELA'S INTRODUCTION TO CROSSFIT**

**Workout: Sick...Mean...Hateful**

**Directions:** Complete three five-minute rounds, performing each exercise for one minute as prescribed. Rest for 60 seconds between rounds. Count your reps on each exercise and tally all three rounds to calculate your final score. See if you can beat Adela's score of 190.

**Round 1:** Burpee, box jump, wall ball, burpee, wall ball

**Round 2:** Box jump, ball slam, burpee, wall ball, ball slam

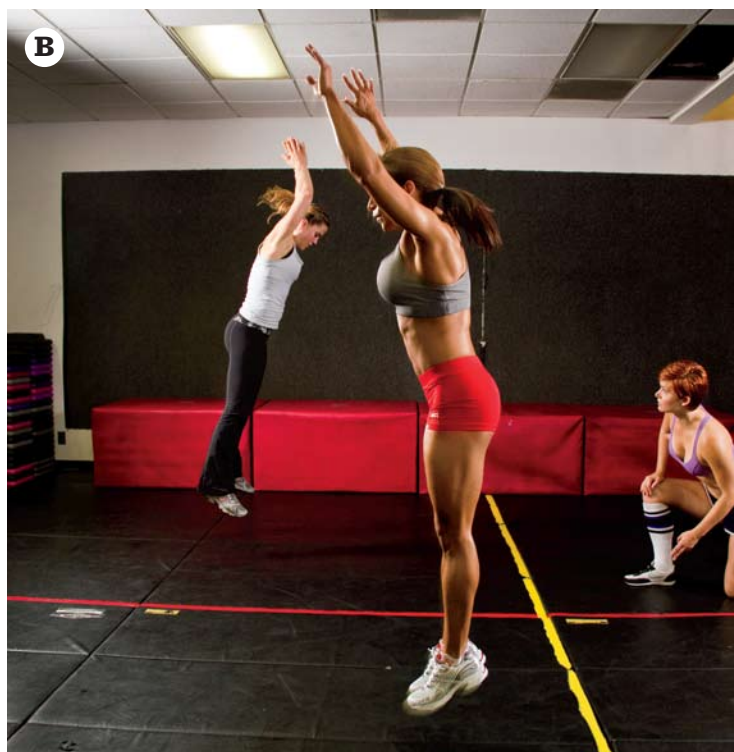
**Round 3:** Wall ball, burpee, ball slam, box jump, burpee



Becca Voigt and Rachel Kimsey help demonstrate the moves with Adela

**BURPEE**

● Drop into a squat and plant your hands on the floor in front of you. Kick both feet behind you so you're in a plank position. Lower into a push-up and then return to the plank. (By CrossFit standards, you don't need to do a complete push-up, but your chest must touch the floor for the rep to be counted.) Jump your feet toward your hands, and explode into a jump and clap your hands overhead. That's one rep. Each burpee should be performed fluidly and rhythmically.

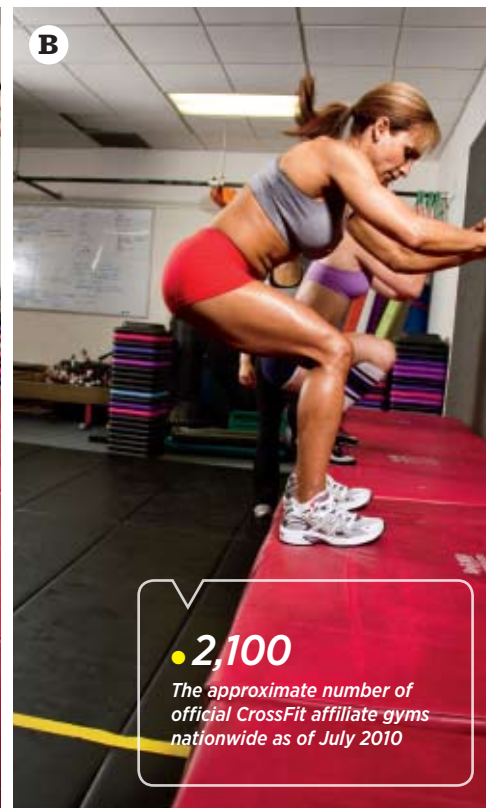


FAR LEFT: KEVIN HORTON



**BOX JUMP**

● Stand in front of a 20-24-inch plyo box or stable platform. Bend your knees and dip into a small squat, then jump up and plant both feet solidly on the box. Make sure to stand up at the top so your hips fully extend. Jump or step back down and repeat.



● **2,100**

The approximate number of official CrossFit affiliate gyms nationwide as of July 2010



LOCATION: VALLEY CROSSFIT, VAN NUYS, CA. VALLEYCROSSFIT.COM



**WALL BALL**

● Place a medicine ball of any weight on the floor about 2 feet in front of a wall that's at least 10 feet high. Choose another medicine ball — 8-20 pounds — and hold it at chest level. Stand right in front of the ball on the floor. Descend into a squat until your glutes lightly touch the ball behind you (not shown). Immediately drive through your heels, and use your momentum and the force of your hips to toss the ball almost straight up. The goal is for the ball to hit a target that's 10 feet high. (Most CrossFit gyms have an X marked on the wall at 10 feet.) Catch the ball as it comes down, immediately drop into another squat and repeat.

the wall ball was awful. This time we did a minute of ball slams, where you lift a 25-pound ball overhead and throw it to the floor as hard as you can. I had never slammed a ball before, but it was fun. It felt like I was smashing someone's head on the floor!

Round 3: *This is it. I'm going to push it now.* My wall-ball technique improved and I started to have fun with it. During the last minute, everybody tried as hard as they could to squeak in a few more points. Partners cheered and the energy in the room was crazy. My score shot back up into the 60s.

Then it was over. I was drenched in sweat, and my throat and lungs burned. I couldn't believe it had been only 17 minutes. It was so intense it felt like I had done my fitness routine all-out a few times, but without having the endurance to do it. We must have burned calories like maniacs. My total score was 190. Not bad, but I'm competitive so I thought I could've done better.

"Your burpees are insane!" Voigt said after I was done. "A score of 190 is really good. We have another girl here who did 190 and she has been doing CrossFit for about a year now."

The session wasn't over — it was Voigt's turn. She had been an awesome coach so although I wanted to sit, I was going to cheer her on the way she did for me. She

### CROSSFIT IN 100 WORDS

• "Eat meat and vegetables, nuts and seeds, some fruit, little starch and no sugar. Keep food intake to levels that'll support exercise but not bodyfat. Practice and train using major lifts: cleans, clean and jerks, deadlifts, presses, squats and snatches. And master the basics of gymnastics: dips, flips, holds, pirouettes, presses to handstands, pull-ups, push-ups, rope climbs, sit-ups and splits. Bike, run, row, swim, etc., hard and fast. Five or six days per week combine these elements as creatively as possible. Routine is the enemy. Keep workouts short and intense. Regularly learn and play new sports."

— Greg Glassman, creator of CrossFit

### BALL SLAM

• Stand over a 25-pound medicine ball or "dead ball." Drop into a squat and scoop up the ball with both hands without hinging at the waist. As you stand up, lift the ball overhead and lock your elbows. Push your hips back and slam the ball to the floor. Follow the momentum all the way down so you can scoop the ball back up in one fluid motion and repeat. There'll be almost zero bounce to the ball, so you'll need to drop into a relatively deep squat on each rep.



A main challenge in CrossFit is learning how to ration your energy for maximum efficiency

FASHION DIRECTOR: CINDY WHITEHEAD; HAIR & MAKEUP: DONNA GAST; APPAREL: SHORTS & SHOES BY ASICS; BRA TOP BY NIKE



### ADELA'S SCORE SHEET

#### ROUND 1

BURPEES: 25  
BOX JUMPS: 11  
WALL BALL: 8  
BURPEES: 14  
WALL BALL: 10  
68

#### ROUND 2

BOX JUMPS: 15  
BALL SLAM: 13  
BURPEES: 11  
WALL BALL: 6  
BALL SLAM: 11  
56

#### ROUND 3

WALL BALL: 15  
BURPEES: 13  
BALL SLAM: 12  
BOX JUMPS: 11  
BURPEES: 15  
66

**TOTAL: 190**



Soon after coaching Adela through this workout, Valley CrossFit coach Becca Voigt won the Southwest Regional CrossFit Competition

### THE GIRLS OF CROSSFIT

Since CrossFit workouts contain variations of exercises, sets, rep schemes, and timing and scoring methodologies, you could theoretically take two classes a day for five years and never do the same workout twice. But there are a series of classic workouts that regular CrossFitters use to set benchmarks and chart progress known as "The Girls." Like hurricanes, they're given female names because like hurricanes, "They can leave you wrecked," describes one CrossFit coach. Here are three of The Girls. For the full list, go to [crossfit.com](http://crossfit.com).

#### Cindy

- 5 Pull-Ups
- 10 Push-Ups
- 15 Squats

Directions: Perform as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes.

#### Helen

- 400-meter run
- 21 Kettlebell Swings (1.5-pood)
- 12 Pull-Ups

Directions: Perform three rounds for time.

#### Linda (aka "Three Bars of Death")

- Deadlift 1.5 times your weight
  - Bench your weight
  - Clean three-quarters your weight
- Directions: Perform these three exercises for time in order without rest for 10 rounds using the following rep scheme: 10-1.

was an animal. She did the wall ball with a 20-pound ball. “Damn, girl, you got it going on!” I said. Her final score was 268.

I was surprised by how many strong, fit girls were in that class. Voigt and Rachel Kimsey, who scored 241, both had nice bodies and looked really strong, and were in great shape. I’m leaner but our sports are completely different. I have to diet and worry about how my abs look. CrossFitters, on the other hand, are all about performance. They carry more muscle and are a lot stronger.

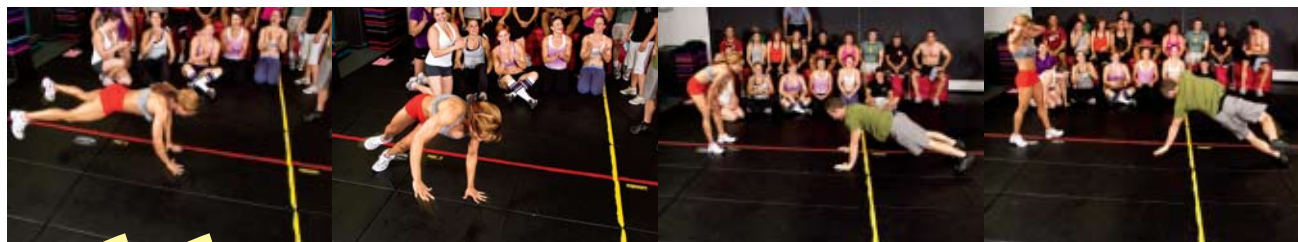
After the session, I challenged Latch

to do my Psycho Push-Ups: a regular push-up, then a plyo push-up where my feet and hands come completely off the floor. I landed on one hand with my feet apart. I repeated it on the opposite side and ended with a 360. The whole class broke into applause. Even though Latch was nursing a sore wrist, he gave it a shot and actually did pretty well. I got my booty kicked in CrossFit, but I was happy to show off what I do in my sport.

When I first took the class I didn’t know anybody who did CrossFit. Now everywhere I turn, I meet CrossFitters. A couple of days after I got home from California, I was telling my friend, fel-

low IFBB competitor Heidi Fletcher, about my experience and she told me she does CrossFit twice a week! A day after that I was doing cardio at Gold’s Gym in Round Rock, Texas. I watched this couple do a circuit of burpees, pull-ups and the rowing machine, and when I asked they said they were doing CrossFit. I can’t get away from it!

I looked around my gym and noticed it had kettlebells, plyo boxes and medicine balls. I grabbed my fiancée and we finished our workout with 50 box jumps. The next time I do that CrossFit workout, I’m definitely getting 250. Maybe 300. **hers**



*Everybody was so nice and supportive. A few people came up to me at the end and said, ‘You did so awesome!’ It’s such a good support system. I was really impressed by that.*

