

## **When to Push and When to Pace**

CrossFit's ideology is based around the concept of broad time and modal domains. Such variances in the duration of a workout call for an athlete to be intelligent about when they should push, and when they should pace. High intensity in the gym is indeed a key component of CrossFit workouts; however, your pacing strategy should depend on the length of the workout you are about to tackle. This takes some strategic thinking before the timer begins, but it can have huge benefits, especially in terms of performance. Luckily, we have a few tips for you.

An efficient way to pace long workouts (6 minutes +) is so you are performing at 80% max effort for 80% of the workout. Then, in that final 20% of the workout, you go all out. If you are unable to increase the pace at the end, then chances are you were working at more than 80%. This strategy will ensure that you do not redline too early and are not just sitting there staring at your piece of equipment that you should be moving.

For shorter workouts (less than 6 minutes) one should be moving quickly and hanging on until the end; almost climbing a crescendo. One way to think about it is pretending that you are a train, and the longer you go down the tracks the more smoke you pump and speed you gain. Power, power, and more power - find the pain cave and stay there.

Another tip is to define your rest periods before going into the workout so that you do not let your pace slip away from you. This can be done by a number of breaths, seconds, or steps away from and back to the piece of equipment. We want to minimize rest and optimize our ability to move the prescribed load in the most efficient way possible.

Finally, a lot of us have a tendency to look at a multiple round workout and think "Yeah, I could do one round unbroken." However, not taking into account the complete picture: you are doing multiple rounds, not one. You will fall behind in later rounds by starting all out in round one and then proceeding to crawl your way through the remainder of the workout as you struggle to recover. Muscular failure means serious trouble. Recovering from complete muscle failure takes far longer than recovering from a sub-maximal set; we tend to see this more often with gymnastics movements. A good tip is to find out what your max reps in a single set is for a specific movement, and then during workouts aim to do 40-50% of that per set. Say you can do 10 toes to bar as a max effort set, if you see toes to bar in a workout you should aim for sets of 4-5 reps with a short rest period in between. Re-testing your max set every 6-8 weeks and adjusting your strategy as appropriate is recommended. In addition, shooting for negative splits in workouts that have multiple rounds and prescribed rest. This will force you to start slower, and thus increase your pace throughout the latter rounds, which in the end will force and teach you how to pace.

Even when you carefully plan your strategy, some workouts will not go to plan. Instead of you crushing the workout, the workout will punch you in the mouth. Use these instances to help you learn about yourself and refine your strategy. A great way to put this into practice is to record your workouts using Wodify or making it tangible in a journal. Including notes about your strategy and how it went are critical to improving your performance the next go round. This allows you to look back and see whether a particular rep range or weight felt too easy, too hard, or just right. A useful practice to include in your notes could be an actual prescription for the next workout, such as "Next time, do sets of twenty," or "Next time, push the row pace to 1:50."

If you do not record your workouts, you will not remember their details in the long run, and will not be able to learn from your successes and mistakes - so do it! CrossFit is highly physical, but as we all know, it may be more mental than anything else. Use your workouts to hone your mental edge, and your physical self will become sharper as a result. With experience, you will become more and more comfortable identifying what is the appropriate / most efficient way for you to tackle a workout. If you are not sure of the best personal strategy to use during a given workout, do not be afraid to ask your coaches to help you determine one!