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“THE KNEE SLEEVES DO NOTHING!”

Mike Warkentin reveals the real secret to thriving in the CrossFit Games Open.



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“Everything is OK.”

The words were written in black marker—large block letters about an inch tall running down the inside of her forearm from elbow to wrist.

My friend, an artistic, freethinking woman with an occasional affinity for “consciousness expansion,” was very matter-of-fact when I asked her about the sentence staining her skin on a Sunday morning.

“I took mushrooms last night, and I needed a reminder in case anything got weird. You know, giant demon goats with flaming horns coming through the floorboards. Stuff like that.

“When I started to panic, I just looked at my arm.

“These goats are terrifying, but everything is OK.”

Open Your Mind

A psychedelic romp into the weird might seem unrelated to fitness, but it's become clear to me over the years that the CrossFit Games Open can be a mind-altering experience that causes paranoia where none is warranted.



You'll be fine. Really. Just walk it off and start cheering for someone who's still working.

You've probably seen it, too: A woman who runs a million-dollar company while raising kids and caring for an elderly parent becomes totally unhinged by seven minutes of burpees. A guy who thinks nothing of managing the air traffic over a major city suddenly can't figure out how to arrange his barbell and box. A cop who spent the day kicking doors in the inner city fearfully walks into the gym looking like he's about to swim 50 yards in a shark tank with steak in his pockets.

You might even be one of these people—totally fit and competent in every way but shaken like a Bond martini the second an Open workout is announced. It's neither uncommon nor abnormal.

Strange rituals and behavior identify those who are feeling too much self-applied pressure. Chalk is ceremoniously and liberally applied to equipment and body parts. Athletes gravitate toward

“lucky barbells” and favorite pull-up bars. Wrist wraps, knee sleeves, belts and compression tights show up on athletes who didn't own them before the Open. A fine mist of pre-workout supplement powder fills the air like a scene out of “Narcos.” And the bathrooms, of course, are always full.

With the Open almost upon us and 16.1 on the horizon, I'll offer the one thing you need to remember in order to bypass the tension and truly thrive in the Open:

Everything is OK.

You're a fine, hardworking human being. You've trained all year, and you're ready. You don't need to worry, so just have fun proving your fitness among friends. Relax, give your all, smile while you suffer, and cheer for your buddies. Then come back to the gym tomorrow and keep training.



Alex Tibbbs

“You said everything would be OK! Why the hell would you say that?”



Andreane Fraser

Even if you're rattled and having trouble focusing, remember this: Everything is OK.

No matter what's announced on Feb. 25, remember that everything is OK. You will come through the workout just fine, and someone will give you a hearty fist bump before allowing you to work on your sweat angel.

As you lie relieved and writhing on the rubber, you'll ask yourself why you were worried in the first place—yet you'll start fretting about the next workout an hour later.

So remember this: Everything is OK.

In the calm before the burpees, take a minute to write it on your arm now. Touch up as needed and refer to it any time you feel nervous.

Be sure to take a good look at it right before you do 16.1. Then draw in a big breath and grab your demon goats by their flaming horns. ■

About the Author

Mike Warkentin is managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and founder of [CrossFit 204](#).