



# **Embrace the Suck: What I learned at the box about hard work, (very) sore muscles, and burpees before sunrise**

*Stephen Madden*

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With irreverence, humor, and soul-touching candor, the former editor of *Bicycling* magazine explores the CrossFit phenomenon, the fitness revolution sweeping America, chronicling his experience "inside the box" and how he got into the best shape of his life.

Lifelong amateur athlete Stephen Madden decided to put himself to the test, physically and mentally, by immersing himself in the culture, diet, and psyche of CrossFit—the fast-growing but controversial fitness regime that's a stripped-down combination of high intensity aerobic activity, weightlifting, calisthenics, and gymnastics practiced by more than two million athletes worldwide. But what's crazier? The fact that such a grueling regimen—in which puking and muscle breakdowns during workouts are common—is so popular, or that people pay good money to do it?

In *Embrace the Suck*, Madden chronicles the year he devoted to mastering all of the basic Crossfit exercises like double unders, muscle ups and kipping pullups, and immersing himself in the Paleo diet that strips weight from its followers but leaves them fantasizing about loaves of bread. Throughout, he explores the culture of the sport, visiting gyms (boxes) around the country, becoming a CrossFit coach, and confronting some basic questions about himself, his past and athletic limitations—and why something so difficult and punishing can be at once beautiful, funny, and rewarding.

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