

CATCHING CROSSFIT



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL MAY
BE TUFFY GOSEWISCH'S BREAD
AND BUTTER, BUT ON THE INSIDE,
HE'S A MAJOR LEAGUE
CROSSFIT FANATIC.



By Lindsay Berra | Photography by Peter Lueders



On April 22, 2014, Arizona Diamondbacks' backup catcher James Benjamin "Tuffy" Gosewisch got what he'd been waiting for his whole life: His first big league home run. It was at Wrigley Field in Chicago, in a 9-2 loss to the Cubs, but no matter; it had been a long time coming.

Gosewisch was 30 years old and had only finally made it to the majors the previous spring. He was thrilled, and so were his parents and his wife, Kyleyn. Also thrilled were the members of CrossFit Tustin in Southern California.

Gosewisch, sick of hitting up his globo gym in the off-season, had begun working out at CrossFit Tustin when his pal Joel Thompson opened the place in 2010. Gosewisch and his wife had just moved from Tempe, where they met at Arizona State, to SoCal, where Kyleyn grew up.

Gosewisch did his first Girl — "Angie" — and was hooked. "One hundred pull-ups, 100 push-ups and 100 squats took me about 20 minutes and ripped my calluses open, and I could barely breathe," Gosewisch says. "But I looked at Joel and said, 'I'll be back tomorrow.'"

And he kept coming back. He fell in love with thrusters and with workouts like "Jackie" (1,000-meter row, 50 thrusters, 30 pull-ups) and the "Lumberjack 20" (20 reps of seven different movements with 400-meter runs in between). He even got his Level-1 certification and coached at CrossFit Tustin in the off-seasons before his 2012 and 2013 baseball seasons. The benefits to his game were immediate and obvious.

First, there was that increase in power at the plate. But more important to Gosewisch was the increase in strength, explosiveness and durability in his lower half. Gosewisch is a catcher and therefore spends the vast majority of his time in a squat that is well below 90 degrees. "CrossFit has allowed me to become a lot more comfortable in that po-

sition and to be powerful coming out of it," Gosewisch says. "It's also given me a lot more muscular endurance. I have strength and power left in my legs in the ninth inning and throughout the long baseball season."

CrossFit also helped Gosewisch, who is 5 feet 10 inches tall, add extra muscle. He now weighs in at between 200 and 205 pounds, which helps him withstand long days in catcher's gear in the summer heat, along with the other day-to-day rigors of the baseball season, which include getting bowled over by opposing players coming in to home plate with a head full of steam.

The extra brawn helps Gosewisch even more fully live up to the nickname his father gave him when he was just 6 months old. "Apparently, I was kind of a pain in the ass," Gosewisch explains. "I broke a lot of things. I guess I would head-butt things and it didn't affect me." Gosewisch has a few aunts in Illinois who still call him "Jimmy," and some baseball buddies, like Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia and Diamond-



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backs pitcher Josh Collmenter, who call him "James," but for the most part, everyone in his life calls him Tuffy. That includes Kyleyn, who began CrossFitting along with her husband at CrossFit Tustin and now works out regularly at CrossFit Uprising in Phoenix while Gosewisch is playing ball.

During the season, Gosewisch modifies or cuts back on his CrossFit workouts. "It becomes just about maintaining strength as opposed to all-out effort," he says. "If I want to be on the field every day and play, I need to stay fresh. I miss the workouts for sure, but I know once I'm done with baseball, I'll be able to do CrossFit as much

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as I want. For now, it's just about being smart." So he reduces his weights and reps and shortens his met-cons, eliminates movements that overly tax his shoulders and supplements with baseball-specific exercises.

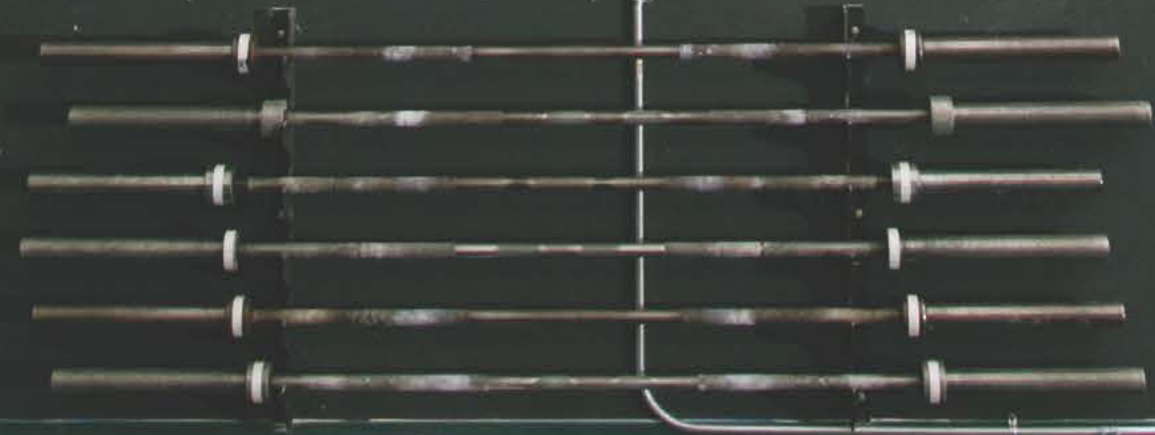
"Tuffy doesn't walk on his hands all the time or do vertical push-ups or other things that can negatively affect his ability to swing the bat, but he works hard and he knows his body," says Diamondbacks strength coach Nate Shaw. "He comes to camp in great shape and does all the explosive stuff and the mobility stuff he needs to do. He's great at doing the things he wants to do while also looking at the world through injury-prevention sunglasses because baseball is his livelihood."

Because CrossFit works so well for Gosewisch and because he's so cautious about the types of workouts he will do and when he will do them, the Diamondbacks don't ask too many questions about what their backup catcher does in his free time.

"People in baseball need to understand CrossFit isn't just about going as heavy as you can," Gosewisch says. "CrossFit teaches you to move better as a human, and that increases your ability to play well in any sport." □



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