



BY WENDY RUBICAM

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ARE YOU TOUGH ENOUGH?

Scottsdale athlete Chris Rutz wants to inspire you to join him in the ultimate fitness challenge—if you dare

The concept of fitness continually evolves, from Arnold pumping iron in the '70s and the step aerobics of the '80s (remember leg warmers, anyone?) to rows of cardio machines in mega-gyms, Pilates and yoga. 5k and 10k races and triathlons have grown to be immensely popular events in virtually every city in America, but if you want to lead the fitness pack today, be prepared to get dirty.

Tens of thousands of fitness enthusiasts are lining up to belly-crawl through the mud under menacing rows of barbed wire, run through fire, scale walls, swing from ropes and drag 50 lb. weights as they prove to themselves that not only can they run a 10-mile race, but they can master a true test of their toughness.

Events like the Tough Mudder, Warrior Dash and Spartan Race are sold out across the country, while their Facebook pages boast well over two million fans

collectively. The Spartan Race claims that it is "designed to test your resilience, strength, stamina, quick decision-making skills, and ability to laugh in the face of adversity...Our unique obstacle course trail races will demand every ounce of your strength, ingenuity, and animal instinct."

And you thought running a marathon was challenging.

At age 42, Chris Rutz has wholeheartedly adopted the "tough" lifestyle as he prepares to compete in the first World's Toughest Mudder competition in December, which is an unprecedented 24-hour, continual loop of a 10- to 12-mile obstacle course that only 10% of the participants are expected to finish.

An avid competitor, Rutz has enjoyed road bike racing, triathlons and Ironman races over the last 20 years, but found himself searching for a new challenge. He added CrossFit workouts to his trail running and biking routine about five years ago, hoping to build more upper body strength, and has benefited from increased overall fitness and stamina.

"To me, what CrossFit says to me is basically, 'Do CrossFit.' You don't necessarily know what you're going to do with it, but it's getting you ready for something, and you can do almost anything once you're good at CrossFit," he says.

Rutz continued training, realizing, "I could do 30 or 40 pull-ups, I could do the pushups, I could do the weightlifting—I got to the point where I cut down on the biking because I could see the progress I was making with CrossFit, but I was still missing something. I didn't know what I was missing."

Rutz discovered his missing link when he signed up for the Spartan Race in February of this year. He finished the 8-mile obstacle race 15th overall out of 1,000 participants and came in first in the over-40 age bracket. He was hooked.

"I got really excited about this obstacle race thing. It's something I'm good at, something I enjoyed, something that brought together CrossFit and running, and it's new," he shares.

As he embraced training for the grueling events, he found that he was continually answering questions about his routine, his diet, and even what gear and clothing he recommends.

"I don't want to say I got tired of those questions," he explains, "but I wanted to be able to help people with that and that's when I came up with Live the Tough Life and Tough Training, which was really to be a mechanism to help people who want to get into the obstacle racing, or help people who just want to get fitter or even just get off the couch."

The blog (www.livethetoughlife.com) offers daily workouts, training and equipment advice, a recommended diet, and a general overview of how Rutz makes the most out of life.

In terms of connecting with an audience that includes friends fit enough to compete with Rutz, as well as those who might be just beginning their fitness

journey, he hopes to provide encouragement and inspiration. For those new to training, Rutz says, "It's just talking to people and getting them to recognize that you can scale the workouts, both for CrossFit as well as the endurance pieces of it. Basically, sign up for [an event] and it'll be fun. Have fun with it, don't worry about it—just get out there and do it."

For those who are more serious competitors, Rutz offers his well-developed training strategies. "I talk

about the Paleo Diet and I talk about CrossFit. There are people who think that all you have to do to train for the World's Toughest Mudder is run 100 miles. No, you need to eat right, you need to rest, you need to recover," he shares.

Rutz takes a holistic approach to health and fitness, incorporating the Paleo Diet as a major component of his everyday life. He is extremely disciplined about eating meat, vegetables, some fruit, a little starch, no sugar, no dairy and no grains.

When asked about his diet he explains, "Tough Training, in my way of speaking, is really sarcastic. Because to me, it's not tough. The eating is easy."


He prefers to keep life simple by stocking up on healthy foods and always having smart food choices at hand, even during his frequent business travel. "Almost every city has a Trader Joe's and I know the food that I want there. I go in and get it, I'm done and I'm out, and it's a lot less time than trying to find a restaurant, not knowing where you're going to eat," he insists.

All of his dedication really boils down to one thing. He sums it up by saying, "For me, the reason I do this is I like the competition, but I also look at it as living a long life, living a healthy life, and living an active life."

As he leads the pack, emerging from under the barbed wire covered in mud, Rutz wants to share that message along the way, hoping to "inspire other people to achieve what they can achieve and be the best that they can be from a physical perspective, and I think get people to recognize that it all starts with just one small step."

Wendy Rubicam can be reached at www.rubicamwriting.com.

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CHRIS RUTZ

**CONTENDER FOR
WORLD'S TOUGHEST
MUDDER 2011**

AGE: 42

BLOG: www.livethetoughlife.com

TYPICAL DAY OF FOOD: Three or four scrambled eggs with one or two of the yolks, veggies like kale, broccoli or Brussels sprouts; avocado and tomato for a pre-workout breakfast. 4 oz. chicken and Trader Joe's Low Sodium Vegetable Juice and some nuts after workout. Chicken and vegetables for lunch, fish and vegetables for dinner. Brings a cooler full of protein, fruits and veggies to work and eats throughout the day.

WORKOUT SCHEDULE: Works out three days on, one day off. "On" days are CrossFit workouts found on the website or in the CrossFit 480 gym, yoga, and trail running. Does one longer workout per week, usually on the weekend, such as a canyoneering trip or four hour run/scramble in the McDowell Mountains.

FAVORITE WORKOUT: Once a week hit Camelback for 30-40 pull-ups at the bottom, runs halfway up then does pushups, then heads to the top for burpees.

Reverses the process on the way down. "I just love Camelback Mountain because it's different—it's not a trail run, and it's kind of true to CrossFit, which is a high intensity workout for a short period of time." We're talking 20 minutes to the top and 20 minutes down.

FOOD PHILOSOPHY: "Nothing tastes as good as feeling good feels."

BEST THING ABOUT SCOTTSDALE: "I love the McDowell Mountains and having them in my backyard to rock climb, mountain bike, trail run, hike or just look at. It's just a nice, serene place to get away from everything."