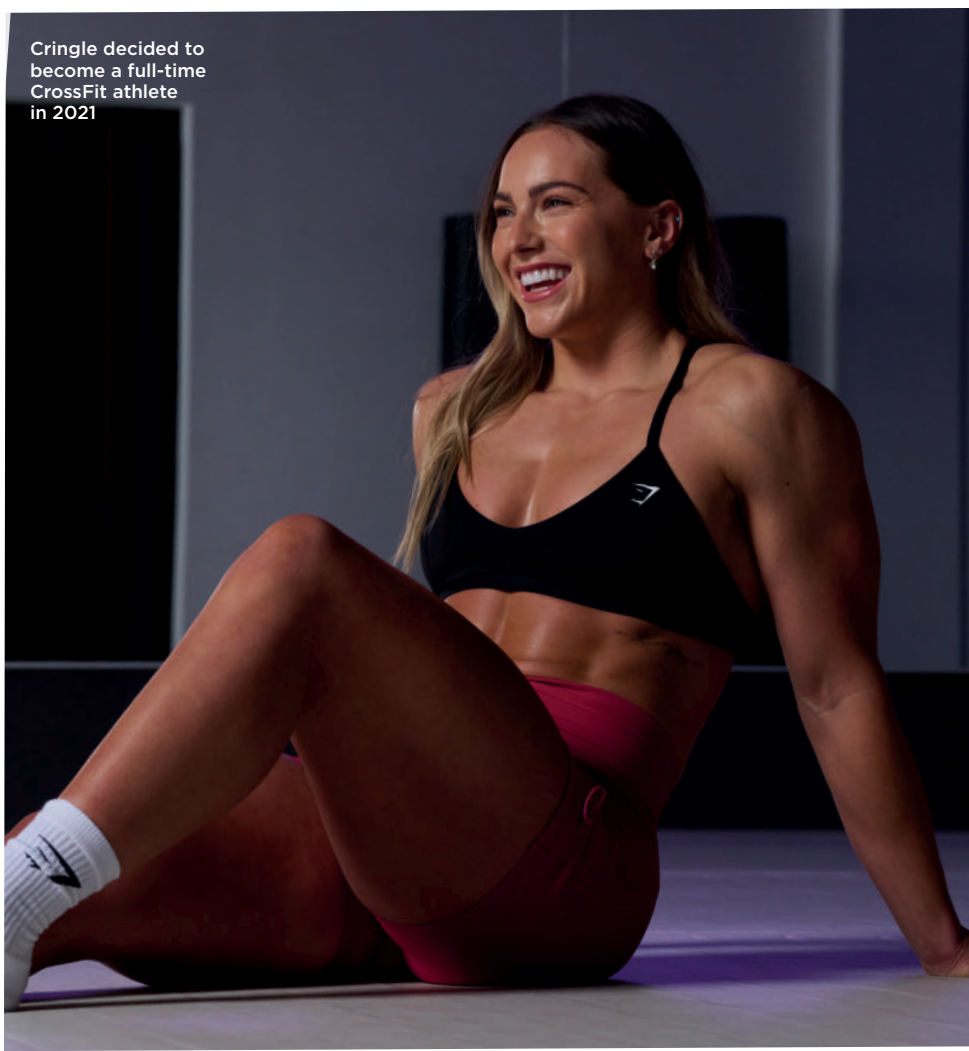


‘I TRAIN TO FEEL HAPPY’

Aimee Cringle is one of the best UK female CrossFit athletes. Here, she talks about her journey to the top, overcoming weaknesses and building muscle to power her performance

Cringle decided to become a full-time CrossFit athlete in 2021



I don't think there's been a day in my life during which I haven't done something active.

I did gymnastics from a young age and started athletics and cross country at the age of 11, but I only heard about CrossFit from a friend at school when I was 14. He explained how CrossFit combines many fitness elements such as gymnastics and athletics with skills work, and I thought it sounded like so much fun. So, I went along to my first kid's class on a Sunday at the CrossFit IOM [Isle of Man] gym with my two best friends and, 10 years later, I'm still doing it.

I can't say I touched a barbell when I started doing CrossFit a few times a week.

It was more about kids running around doing kettlebell swings. I was still focusing on athletics at the time – specifically, the long jump – but I kept getting shin splints and that meant



'I'm performing at my best right now, and that's what counts... I'm all about showing people what female bodies can do rather than how they look'

Cringle is currently placed first in the UK for the Open



I couldn't run that much, so CrossFit helped me keep fit and get a sweat on. I loved it so much that I started paying more to get extra programming from my coach at the age of 16, with a view to entering competitions for fun.

I had no idea back then that CrossFit would end up being my career.

It was only when I came fourth in the 2020 European Championships after coming 49th the year before that I realised I wasn't too bad at CrossFit. I was studying for my nursing degree at this point, but it seemed only natural to try and get on the podium the next year. I achieved that goal in 2021 when I won the European Championships title, and after winning it once, I figured I had to try and win it again [Cringle won it again in 2022].

I decided to become a full-time CrossFit athlete in July 2021 once I finished my degree.

I had a few sponsors by this point and, while no one put any pressure on me, I put a lot of pressure on myself to perform well – especially because I didn't want to waste my degree. But I knew I could return to nursing later, so I moved to England in August 2022, trained with a new coach and gave it my best shot. So far this year, I have placed first in the UK in the first stage of the season (the Open) and so hope to qualify for the final stage of The CrossFit Games.

I'm always training to improve my weaknesses because I want to be the best athlete I can be. This

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season, I've been working on my weightlifting, power output, heavy barbell cycling and legless rope climbing while trying to build more muscle because I used to be quite small physically. Last week, I managed to power clean 100kg for two reps and then jerk it afterwards, which I could never have attempted a few years ago. I just need to make sure I can still run while carrying the extra muscle, as I'm most comfortable and confident doing the endurance running events and monostructural workouts (like rowing and skipping), and I'd hate to compromise my cardio.

I'm only just starting to learn how important food is for fuelling my workouts.

I used to eat whatever I wanted, but I started working with a nutritionist a few months ago and I'm trying to eat more natural protein now. I guess it's all about making that transition from training for fun to fuelling myself properly to train as an athlete. I get my meals from Fresh Fitness Food (freshfitnessfood.com) and that makes things so much easier and exciting. I also top up my protein levels after training with a Foodspring Cookies & Cream Whey Protein powder shake (foodspring.co.uk) or a protein bar, and I'll have a caffeinated NOCCO (nocco.co.uk) drink with BCAAs [branched-chain amino acids] and vitamins for an extra hit of energy when I need it.

I didn't set out to get bigger and put on more muscle mass. I've just consistently stuck to my training programme and it's

happened naturally. That's a good thing because the women I'm competing against at the highest level are far from tiny. I want to excel in the sport, so I'm fine with weighing more so I can lift heavier weights. I'm performing at my best right now, and that's what counts - not a number on the scales. I'm all about showing people what female bodies can do rather than how they look.

I train twice a day, five days a week, which sounds a lot,

but I honestly love it. I also train to feel happy within myself, and it helps that my training is always varied and fun - I'm constantly refreshing my programme on my phone to see what my coach has in store for me next! My short term goals include getting into this year's top 10 at the European Semi-Finals of this year's CrossFit Games. I'd love to get to the CrossFit Games at some point, but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it! 🏋️‍♀️

Consistency in training has meant Cringle built muscle that enables her to lift heavier weights

