



Garage Gym Reviews

By: Cooper Mitchell
August 13, 2015

When I started on my journey with CrossFit my mobility was simply put...terrible. In fact, to be completely honest, it's still not quite where I want it to be. I come from a background of playing ice hockey at a collegiate level, then bodybuilding, and powerlifting. All of these endeavors require little mobility. For hockey, my foot was strapped in a boot made out of kevlar that had no flex in the ankle. For bodybuilding, it was all about constant tension meaning hardly ever reaching full extension on any movement. For powerlifting, the goal was to get to a certain depth that would get me three white lights. That's it. Ass to grass? That meant nothing to me as it displayed a weakness and I only worked on strengths.

I decided to give CrossFit a try and like many former athletes went in with the idea that it was going to be easy. I would be stronger than everybody else and the workouts would always be doable with little practice. I was wrong. In fact, I was so wrong that my first time overhead squatting I failed to reach depth with an unloaded barbell. However, when I found a weakness, I wanted to attack it so I could be better than everybody else in the gym. I knew I had the strength, but my joints and muscles were so tight I could never reach the potential I would like to. So, on my journey to better movement and mobility and discovered a technique called Graston, also known as Instrument Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization (IASTM.)

Essentially what happens with IASTM is you use a dull piece of material to rub the adhesions out of your muscle fibers. The way it was described to me originally was to think of your muscle fibers as spaghetti. Over time due to movement faults, your fibers become jumbled like a bowl of spaghetti. A supple bundle of muscle fibers are in alignment with each other and move without restriction from other fibers. The way you move a collection of muscle fibers from a jumbled mess to a supple railroad of fibers is by rubbing the aforementioned piece of material over the troubled area to straighten and remove the adhesions. Interesting right? I thought so and I was willing to give it a shot. So in my typical DIY fashion and to the abhorrence of my wife I went into the kitchen and grabbed a butter knife.

It may seem silly, but a butter knife is quite honestly a very good tool for IASTM and is typically the first tool for beginning "adhesion rubbers®." But, like any novice blossoming into something more there becomes a need for better tools. Tools that aren't found in the kitchen or anywhere in the house. Enter HawkGrips.

Let me speak a little bit on HawkGrips before I get into some of the details. HawkGrips are in my opinion and of many others who have much more knowledge on anatomy than I, are the premier IASTM toolset. These aren't toys. These bad boys are professional tools made for the foremost chiropractic and physical therapy practice or the individual like myself that accepts nothing but the best in every aspect of life. In my opinion and you've probably noticed this from my reviews, if I'm going to purchase something, I'm going to purchase it once. Buy the best and you shall experience no buyer's remorse or need for upgrade. HawkGrips are the best IASTM tools money can buy and keep reading to find out why.

LOOKS

I'm going to speak on both the use of these tools in a clinical setting as well as just for your home. From the perspective of using these tools for commercial purposes, when a potential client is seeking the help of a professional, they often look to the tools they use to get the job done. When I was seeking a CrossFit gym for the first time it was important that the equipment was up to the standard it needed to be for what it's use was. When I seek the help of an accountant I want them to be using the most up to date software and communication tools to make things as easy and seamless as possible. With these prerequisites in mind for

who I choose to do business with, and many others, it becomes even more important that when I and others seek the help of a medical professional the tools be more than capable of doing the job well. The look of HawkGrips simply oozes professionalism. They look like jewelers tools. From the display case that showcases the beautiful, over-engineered tools and ointment, to the carrying case, everything is simply as it should be for a professional service practice. Subdued enough to not be gaudy, but noticeable enough that they stand out in a room.



For the individual like myself who enjoys training and wants the best that's out there, HawkGrips are simply cool. Sure, functionality is important and I will go over that in much more detail, but I want my gear to look as good as it performs. Take my Rogue R-3 Squat Rack for instance. Nobody needs the level of craftsmanship that goes into the R-3 rack, but if you can afford it, why not. It will last you the rest of your life as will these tools. Display these in your garage gym and I guarantee every friend that walks into your gym will say, "woah, what are those?"

DURABILITY



There really isn't much to get into as far as durability. HawkGrips are forged from stainless steel. These tools are heavy. Not in a sense that they're tiring to hold, but in the sense that you can tell there is something substantial in your hand. Like when you hold an iPhone, they may be thin and sleek, but there's a weight there that lets you know there's more than what appears to the eye. I've used my set of HawkGrips for about 2 months with quite a bit of use and they still look like they've never been picked up. For the high volume practice I don't see why there would ever be a need to replace these tools and that's especially true for individuals. Like I said, this is a buy it for life product.

IN USE

Okay, so the tools are pretty and they will most likely outlive myself and my kid's, kids. But, who cares how nice something looks or how durable something is if it doesn't perform well. Before contacting HawkGrips, I researched their competitors and nothing was at the quality level of HawkGrips. Nothing was even close. Most of the tools feature multiple edges depending on it's use and with the higher end sets there are tools that can be used for every body part. Is that level of customization needed? For every individual I don't think so, but for a clinician I would say without a doubt.

Along with most tools featuring multiple edges, each tool except for the bar's have a crosscheck pattern. At first, I thought it was a nice touch to stand out from the crowd of smooth IASTM tools, but in use, the grip of the crosscheck pattern is greatly welcome. When you are digging into adhesions and the skin is covered in emollient, the tools can become slippery. The extra grip is very helpful in keeping from having to think about keeping a solid grip and rather focusing on the area you're trying to attack.

INDIVIDUAL TOOL ASSESSMENT

The set I received is the HawkGrips Gold Set. It contains every tool available except for the large and small handlebar's. Each tool has a unique purpose and I'm going to detail what each one is made for, and a few of my thoughts on each.

HG2 – Medium Handlebar

I'll start with my favorite tool, the handlebar. This thing is an absolute monster when it comes to attacking large areas. Sometimes after a workout when my legs are full of blood and lactic acid I'll just rub this up and down my quads and calves to provide some relief. In my opinion the handlebar is a bit of the utility player

of the team. It can be used for just about everything, especially when working on someone else. Being able to dig into the shoulders and hamstrings of someone else with this is effortless because of the two handles and how solid it feels.

The Medium Handlebar is best suited for large muscle groups, shoulders, back, neck, obliques, and hamstrings.

HG4 – Small Multi-Curve

This little guy is the smallest of the three multi-curves and I found myself using it mostly on my fingers and feet. It has a single bevel, double bevel, and convex treatment edges which I found pretty remarkable for how small the tool is.

The Small Multi-Curve is best suited for very small muscle groups and joints, fingers, hands, toes, and feet.

HG5 – Medium Multi-Curve

The Medium Multi-Curve was great for attacking many of the trouble joints that we all have. For me, I use this tool extensively on my ankles. Coming from a background of playing ice hockey and having very limited ROM in my ankles, this particular tool was a godsend in removing the years of built up adhesions and allowed me to squat more due to better positioning.

Just a side note, if you find you have trouble staying upright in the Snatch and Overhead Squat, take a look at your ankle mobility. A lot of times people will start with blaming their shoulders and chest being tight, but often the ankles are the biggest problem areas due to elevated shoes and constant sitting. This tool has been the best in improving my ankle mobility and will probably be for you as well.

If I was only going to buy one tool, this would probably be the one due to its do-it-all ability. For instance, when I travel, this is the tool I bring because I know I can hit most areas with it.

The HG5 Medium Multi-Curve is best suited for various sized muscle groups and joints, wrists, elbows, calf area, knees.

HG6 – Large Multi-Curve

If you're a large athlete, the medium may not cut it for your ankles and elbows. I am naturally small and in fact have a very small bone structure, something I've spent years trying to overcome. If that's the case, then this tool is for you, or what I most used this tool for was my calves.

I found it fit right over my calf and provided a lot of relief after a long run or a day of cycling.

The HG6 Large Multi-Curve is best suited for various sized muscle groups and joints, great for larger athletes, elbows, calf area, knees, ankles, and large feet.

HG7 – Boomerang

The Boomerang is pretty similar to what I was using previously, a butter knife. It's very helpful at really digging into the muscle for aggressive treatment or for simply scanning your body to find where the adhesions lie. The Boomerang features a concave treatment edge.

The HG7 Boomerang is best suited for diagnosing problem areas, aggressive treatment, great for suboccipital muscles (top of spinal column).

HG8 – Scanner

I could see the Scanner being used quite a bit in a clinical setting. I used it when I was going over my body to find what areas most needed help. My assessment was pretty much every area of my body unfortunately, but I could tell by the feedback of the tool which area needed the most work, in large part due to its convex treatment edge.

The HG8 Scanner is best suited for scanning, treating various areas, covers a broad range of areas.

HG9 – Tongue Depressor

The Tongue Depressor is the sniper rifle of the set. This was definitely the most painful as it allowed me to really pin point an area and just dig in. I used it a bit on my forearms when they got overworked from gripping the bar too hard and it definitely relieved the pain, although it caused a bit as well. But, in order to have long term relief, sometimes you need some short term pain.

The crosscheck pattern was really helpful on this tool due to it being so small and how much pressure I applied to it. It features convex edges on all sides of the tool.

The HG9 Tongue Depressor is best suited for very precise, aggressive treatment, and pinpoint accuracy.

Emollient

The HawkGrips Gold set included quite a few jars of ointment to use on the skin so the tools slide over the area. I found the consistency very similar to coconut oil, but with a great smell. Such a good smell in fact that I wanted to eat it; it smelled just like cake batter. Interesting and delightful. This stuff is an absolute necessity to using the tools and the Gold Package comes with quite a few tubs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you're interested in getting started with IASTM I would suggest buying one of these tools and learning how to use it. By the way, all of the sets come with great instruction on how to use the tools that I found very helpful. There's also a million and one videos online.

If you're like me and have had some experience with IASTM or you're a professional looking to upgrade to attract new clients or provide better serve to existing clients I say jump right in. You will not be disappointed. No mobility tool has had such a positive impact on my movement as HawkGrips. This is an honest review and I have no connection with HawkGrips outside of them asking for an honest, no-holds barred review. This is simply a product I truly believe is worth the price.

Train On,

Coop

