

MORE VARIATIONS OF THE OLYMPIC LIFTS



PERFORMANCE
TRAINING INSTITUTE

More Variations of the Olympic Lifts

In this the instalment we will be looking at three variations of the Olympic Lifts that can be used as stand alone exercises or as progressive exercises that can lead to the full Olympic lifts.

To recap on why the Olympic Lifts and their variants are so beneficial I have included the following 5 points from the first instalment of this series:

1. The exercises are performed from standing
2. The exercises involve multiple muscles
3. The exercises involve triple extension
4. High levels of motor recruitment
5. Increase range of movement and posture

In this article we will have a look at 3 new variants. These variants will all be performed from the hang position. The hang position is a great place to start from; particularly when you want to focus on the catch and receiving positions of the lifts.

The three new variants are:

- The snatch from the hang
- The clean from the hang
- Behind the neck power jerk

In the first article of this series the variants of the clean and snatch were both 'power' variations from the 'hang' position. The 'hang' position refers to the starting position of the bar and means that the load is not on the ground, but is suspended or from a 'hang' position generally between the knees and hips. The 'power' variation refers to the catch position and is a partial receiving position equivalent to the bottom position in the quarter squat.

In this article the first two lifts will start from the 'hang' position but will finish in the full squat receiving position. These first two lifts are the Snatch from the 'hang' and the Clean from the 'hang'. The third lift in this article will be the Behind the neck Jerk.

The benefits in receiving the load in the full squat position include:

- The ability to absorb a load (being hit or tackled)
- Reaction time and foot movement
- Increased range of movement

The benefits of starting from the hang position instead of from the floor:

- It's a faster learning curve
- Some athletes/ participants may have injuries or poor levers which hinder lifting from the ground but can manage from the 'hang'

a. The Snatch from the Hang

The Snatch from the Hang is fantastic as a stand alone exercise, as a progression from the Power Snatch from the Hang and as a developmental exercise for the Snatch (full/squat). The Snatch from the Hang develops speed, explosiveness and power, it also improves posture and strength in the torso and upper limbs as well range of movement and strength in the hips and lower limbs. More weight can be used in a Snatch from the Hang than in the Power Snatch from the Hang as the weight does not need to travel as high.

Key lifting technique tips: Snatch from the hang

Start position

- Feet are shoulder width apart
- The bar is gripped in a wide, snatch grip, and is in the hang position just above the knees
- Weight is through the whole foot
- Knees are slightly flexed, a stretch is felt in the hamstrings
- Hips are flexed and torso, chest and head are forward of the bar
- Lower back is arched, thoracic is extended and tight, head is looking forward
- Arms are straight, elbows are locked

Pull

- The pull is initiated by triple extension occurring across the ankle, knee and hip causing the bar to travel vertically
- Lower back remains arched, thoracic extended and tight and the head is looking forward
- Chest, shoulders and head are still forward of the bar

Jump

- The ankle knee and hip are at full extension so a jump action is performed (the feet may or may not leave the floor)
- The bar continues to travel vertically until at a position between the navel and the sternum

Pull under

- As the bar continues to travel vertically the body pulls under the bar
- The shoulders slightly shrug and the elbows begin to flex
- The ankle, knee and hip quickly flex to pull the body under the bar

Catch / receiving position

- The upper body catches the bar overhead; the elbows extend and the shoulders contract
- The lower body simultaneously reacts so the heels contact the ground and the knees and hips are flexed and in the bottom of a full squat position

Recovery

- The bar is then stood up by extending the knees and hips whilst remaining overhead

b. The Clean from the Hang

This lift is similar to the Snatch from the hang in that the Clean from the hang works as a stand alone exercise, a progression from the power clean from the hang and as a teaching exercise for the Clean (full/squat). More weight can be lifted than in the Power variant (as long as the receiving position is strong) as the bar does not need to travel as high. The clean from the hang is brilliant for developing off the mark quickness and explosives as a lot of weight needs to be moved fast! This is crucial for athletes whose movement, agility and first step are important.

Key lifting technique tips: Clean from the hang

Start position

- Feet are shoulder width apart
- The bar is gripped in a narrow, clean grip just outside the thighs, with the bar in the hang position just above the knees
- Weight is through the whole foot
- Knees are slightly flexed, a stretch is felt in the hamstrings
- Hips are flexed and torso, chest and head are forward of the bar
- Lower back is arched, thoracic is extended and tight, head is looking forward
- Arms are straight, elbows are locked

Pull

- The pull is initiated by triple extension occurring across the ankle, knee and hip causing the bar to travel vertically
- Lower back remains arched, thoracic extended and tight and the head is looking forward
- Chest, shoulders and head are still forward of the bar

Jump

- The ankle knee and hip are at full extension so a jump action is performed (the feet may or may not leave the floor)

- The bar continues to travel vertically, but only needs to get as high as the top of the thigh/hip

Pull under

- As the bar continues to travel vertically the body pulls under the bar
- The shoulders slightly shrug and the elbows begin to flex
- The ankle, knee and hip quickly flex to pull the body under the bar

Catch / receiving position

- The upper body catches the bar at the rack position with the elbows high and the wrists flexed
- The lower body simultaneously reacts so the heels contact the ground and the knees and hips are flexed and the body is in the bottom position of a front squat

Recovery

- The bar is then stood up by extending the knees and hips

c. Behind the Neck Power Jerk (Snatch Grip)

The behind the neck power jerk is a great exercise for developing speed and power, however it is also a great exercise for increasing strength in the overhead position for the snatch. As well as developing; power, speed, explosiveness and strength (as mentioned above) the Behind the Neck Power Jerk is fantastic for strengthening the middle and lower trapezius of the middle back (thoracic spine) and great for improving strength and stability in external rotation at the shoulder joint. Essentially mastering this exercise will help to build strong and galvanized shoulders. So if you're any type of athlete at all or even a sedentary office worker who has shoulder problems this exercise performed correctly could be your next best friend. When starting it may be useful to put in a lot of practice with a dowel rod or broom stick to ensure correct elbow, scapula and thoracic positions throughout the lift.

NB: the elbows should remain below/under or forward of the bar. This is: if you view the lift laterally when the bar is across the shoulders the elbows should be directly below or even slightly forward of the bar (following a vertical line of gravity). The elbows should remain in this line throughout the lift and at no stage should end up behind the bar which causes internal rotation across the shoulder joint.

Key lifting technique tips: Behind the Neck Power Jerk

Start position

- Feet are shoulder width apart
- The bar is in the squat position on the back of the

shoulders and rests across the trapezius muscles behind and below the 7th cervical vertebrae (the one that sticks out).

- The hands grip the bar in a wide snatch grip and the arms contract and pull the bar down onto the body as if to bend it across the shoulders.
- The elbows are pulled below or under the bar to align the shoulders in the correct and strong position and aren't behind the bar causing the arms to internally rotate at the shoulder- a weak and dangerous position.
- Weight is through the whole foot
- Lower back is arched, thoracic is extended and tight, head is looking forward

1st Dip

- The dip is initiated by flexing through the ankle, knee and hip
- Lower back remains arched, thoracic extended and tight and the head is looking forward whilst the elbows remain high
- The bar remains in complete contact with the body

Drive

- The ankle, knee and hip extend forcefully and the shoulders elevate whilst the elbows extend to drive the bar vertically

2nd Dip

- As the bar continues to travel vertically the body pulls under the bar
- The ankle, knee and hip quickly flex to pull the body under the bar whilst the elbows continue to straighten and extend

Catch

- The upper body catches the bar; the elbows extend and the shoulders contract
- The lower body simultaneously reacts so the heels contact the Ground and the knees and hips are slightly flexed

Recovery

- The elbows are locked out and the bar is held overhead
- The bar is then stood up by extending the hips and knees

With all of the Olympic Lifts and their variants it is extremely important to master technique first. This can mean starting with a dowel rod or a bar until technique and range of movement are at decent enough levels to start with progressive loading. Most individuals will find the movements difficult and challenging enough, due to the speed of movement, without needing heavy loads.



PERFORMANCE
TRAINING INSTITUTE

Performance Training Institute Pty Ltd PO Box 881, Cronulla NSW 2230
P 02 9544 5577 F 02 9544 5588 info@performancetraininginstitute.com.au