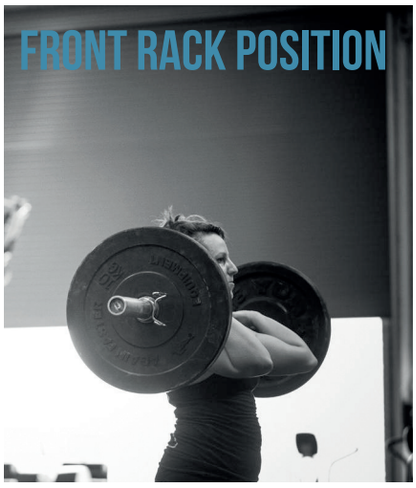
THE CLEAN

Check out the elements needed to perform a good clean

BY LIZZIE HAVERS

The Snatch and the Clean and Jerk together form the sport of Olympic lifting, and are the only lifting sport in the Olympic games to date. They're the fastest movement in sport requiring the athlete to lift the weight from the ground to overhead in one or two quick movements.



Although Olympic lifting is a sport in itself, the lifts are also used to increase the rate of force development in any athlete who requires strength, speed, power and jumping skills in their sport. Due to their technicality, the Olympic lifts are not easy to master and require great flexibility, mobility and strength, so if you are keen to learn or teach the Olympic lifts get some dedicated training yourself first.

The clean and jerk is split into two movements where the bar is lifted from the floor to rest on the shoulders in one move and then punched up overhead in the second. To perform a good clean first you should first master the front squat (where the bar is racked to the front of the body on the shoulders and kept in place with the hands with the elbows pointing forward).

THE GRIP:

Using a hook grip (thumbs wrapped under fingers around the bar) hands should be approximately fist width outside the shoulders so that when standing the bar rests at the top of the thighs.

THE RECEIVE POSITION:

When bar is lifted from the ground in a successful clean it is caught on the shoulders in the bottom of a front squat, with a straight back ready to stand up again.

KEY POSITIONS IN THE LIFT:

The start position:

The bar is on the floor raised to mid shin level with weights or blocks. The bar should be positioned over the balls of the feet a little further forward than a deadlift, the arms hanging vertically down the sides of the lifter, gripping the bar and in a squat position with the hips in line with the knees or very slightly above and the knees flared outwards, the back should be extended and eyes looking forward.

The first pull:

A deep breath is taken and tension created throughout the body. The bar is pulled up from the floor to the to the top of the thighs in one movement. The bar must stay close to the legs and not drift away from the body. This is achieved by using the arms and lats to sweep the bar inwards as the knees extend, the back angle lifts minutely but remains constant as the knees and hips rise with the shoulders remaining in front of the bar.

The second pull:

At the top of the thigh, the body starts to extend further in an explosive effort. The hips, knees and ankles extend further making contact with the bar at the thigh, the continued activation

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of the lats to keep the bar close to the body is key. The shoulders shrug naturally upwards and the lifter leans slightly backwards so that the bar can continues to travel up in inertia.

The third pull:
The bar is now floating at chest height and the lifter must pull themselves under the bar to catch it in the receive position. The lifter pulls aggressively with the arms directing the elbows up and to the side to keeping the barbell close at chest level whilst the extension of the knees and hips completes and the feet lose contact with the platform ready to land in a squat. As the body descends to the bottom of the squat the shoulders are retracted, pulling the bar into the shoulders so the elbows can swing up under the bar in a rack position. This part of the movement is fast and aggressive to beat the bar crashing back down.

Receiving the bar:
Once caught, the lifter's position should be like the bottom of a front squat or slightly higher and the bar will push the lifter down into a deeper squat. From here simply drive up out of the bottom like a front squat to standing straight to complete the lift.

The movements, due to their dynamic nature, require a high level of muscular and neurological activity and as such can be very tiring so care and attention to technique is paramount. Practicing with an empty bar until proficient is imperative to drill technique and limiting the number of repetitions with and without loading and taking longer rest periods allow the body to adapt without fatiguing the mind or the body.

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As a reader of *Personal Trainer Magazine*, I would like to offer five lucky readers the chance to improve their clean with online feedback. Simply tag #ILoveCleans with a video of you cleaning to my Facebook Page, the Wandering Weightlfter, which offers coaching, education and programming in weightlifting sports. If you would like to get in-touch or find out about my workshops please email wanderingweightlifter@gmail.com

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