

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## An Explosive Combination

Michael Rutherford



*An active athletic stance is the start position for the “pro agility,” and it has broad application and crossover to other sport movements.*

Early last month I launched the third volume in my Dumbbell Moves DVD series. It was a momentous occasion for me, as it pulled together several concepts I had been working on since before I began Volume I. And it was especially rewarding because I had the assistance of one of the first prominent CrossFit athletes—two-time skiing Olympian Eva Twardokens—demonstrating the combination moves for the DVD. What a treat!

The series is dedicated to presenting a concept of conditioning that combines agility training with full-body resistance movements. To my knowledge, this has been unusual in the athletic conditioning world. Since the early 1980s, while I was working with athletes ranging from luge participants to collegiate volleyball players, I have employed both agility work and functional full-body movements, but it wasn't until more recently, with the influence of CrossFit, that I put them together on a regular basis.

Taking my cue from CrossFit, I shredded the conventional rule books and combined what many traditionalists would not combine. I took power movements using barbells and dumbbells (such as Olympic lifts) and traditional agility drills and concocted workouts that combined the two. To many traditionalists, of the ilk I was reared to be, this would not be kosher. The traditionalist would want a fresh nervous system for complex movement combinations and more rest and separation of modes in the daily workout plan.

These “combination” workouts were quite different from the other workouts I had been writing, and they added great conditioning variety for my seasoned athletes and a completely different stimulus. When athletes work

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together, they can race head to head. When teams work together, I can have them move through in groups, creating an entirely new dynamic and changing up the stimulus and work-rest patterns. If six show up to train, we can work three against three. Three trips through the combination, three minutes rest, for three sets. Great training!

In this month's article I want to present a power combination that you will really enjoy. This workout moves from an overload of dumbbell hang power cleans and front squats to the 5-10-5 drill that is an old standard in football conditioning (where it is also known as the "pro agility" drill).

The pro agility is the gold standard for many football coaches. It's a benchmark—not unlike CrossFit's "girls"—by which football athletes from across the globe can be compared. A good pro agility score shows excellent change-of-direction and agility skills and is at least as valuable for a player as a good 40-yard dash time.

The execution of my explosive combination goes like this: After completing an assigned number of clean and squat reps with the dumbbells (three hang power cleans followed by three front squats, in the example shown in the video), the athlete moves efficiently to a set of three cones placed in a line with five yards between them. From

the center cone the athlete performs a crossover step and sprints to the right cone. He gets low by dropping the hips, touches the top of the cone with the right hand, and then immediately reverses direction as quickly as possible and sprints to the opposite cone ten yards away. Again dropping the hips to lower the center of gravity and maintain an athletic stance, the athlete reaches down to touch the top of the cone with the left hand and then blasts back to the center cone.

From here there are several programming options. If the athlete is working alone, he can immediately go back to the start for a time-based or tasked-based workout, or, if working in a group, the next person can begin. There are lots of ways to mix it up and make useful combinations. Just remember to vary the load, rest, and overall duration to optimize the conditioning stimulus.



Explosive  
Combination Video



Michael Rutherford (a.k.a. Coach Rut) is the owner of [CrossFit Kansas City/Boot Camp Fitness](#). He has over a quarter-century of fitness coaching experience with athletes of all ages. He has also worked in hospital wellness environments and rehabilitation clinics. Coach Rut holds academic degrees in biology, physical education, and exercise physiology and sports biomechanics. He is a USAW-certified Club Coach and is a CrossFit level 3 trainer. He is also the current national Masters Champion in weightlifting at 94 kg. You can learn more dumbbell exercises from his DVDs [Dumbbell Moves Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).