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Burg's Eye View No. 5

Coach Mike Burgener analyzes James Hobart and Lindsey Valenzuela in the clean and jerk.

By Mike Burgener

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James Hobart has always had a reputation as a good Olympic lifter, and he didn't disappoint at the CrossFit-USA Open in Colorado Springs, Colo., combining a great performance on the platform with a solid outing in the triplet to finish fourth overall in the 85-kilogram class.

Lindsey Valenzuela absolutely dominated the platform by posting an Oly total 23 kilograms above her closest competitor. Incredibly, she boosted 91 kilograms with a power clean on her final lift in the first half of the contest.

In Part 5 of this series, Coach Mike Burgener breaks down one lift from each great competitor.

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James Hobart—125-kg Clean and Jerk

I would like to see James' starting position one frame earlier. Note his back angle at liftoff. His back could be a tad bit tighter.



So far, so good. I like the feet here: he's back on heels.



James is missing the pocket position here (see inset, Page 6).



You can see good extension in this shot, and James is on his way down.



Burg's Eye ... (continued)

I like the shrug under and elbows high and out, keeping the bar close to his body.



James' elbows are in a good position to come around. He's meeting the bar where it is and then riding it down into the full position.



This is a strong and stable receiving position.



Still riding it down: strong and in control.



Burg's Eye ... (continued)

The recovery looks good. The weight is back on the heels with the torso and elbows up.



Straight dip. I'd like the elbows maybe a tad bit down, but I like the feet here.



Note that James is making adjustments of the hands and feet as he's getting ready for the jerk.



The drive is going up now. Note the feet here. James' weight is on his full foot, and he's balanced, getting the full benefit from the feet and the floor.



Burg's Eye ... (continued)

Excellent drive!



He's pushing his body away here, and his front foot hits before his back foot.



James is an excellent athlete, so he makes this lift. But if this weight was much heavier, he might not have made the lift with his front foot hitting first. But his excellent foot position in the drive allows a ton of speed and height on the barbell, which gives him time to drive his body down into the receiving position.



Good recovery. He's well in control.





Beautiful. James needs work on foot position while driving his body under bar, but this is a great athlete and a great lift!



Hit the Positions!

In these six shots from Mike's Gym, Sage Burgener shows excellent positioning as she snatches the weight. Pay close attention to where the bar is in relation to the body, but also to Sage's torso angle and foot positions at the various stages of the lift.



Courtesy of Mike Burgener

It's common to see athletes on their toes too soon, and it's also common for athletes to miss any of these positions. Many athletes fail to fully extend and finish the pull (Picture 4).



In the third frame of James Hobart's lift (Page 2), he's missed the pockets position. Luckily, Hobart is strong enough to make the lift, but with perfect positioning, he'll be in even better shape.

—Mike Warkentin

Lindsey Valenzuela—91-kg Clean and Jerk

Good set-up for this young lady. I love the fact that her hips are higher than her knees and her shoulders are over the bar. Check out that back angle.



Liftoff is perfect. Check the back angle again and compare it with Frame 1.



We are missing two frames here, I think. I think Lindsey is actually on her way down here, so we missed the pocket position as well as the finish. Note that her shoulders are starting to shrug her under the bar.



The elbows are ready to whip under the bar. This young lady is quick!



Good elbow position, and the knees look good. The position for a power clean is outstanding. For the record, I do not like power cleans in competition. Lindsey can, if trained properly, squat clean the world and jerk the world, too. Why? She's strong, aggressive and—most of all—junkyard-dog passionate!



Lindsey needs to sit back a tad more. The weight on her toes could make her dump the bar, so she should stay back on the way up.



Good position!



The dip for the jerk looks good. I do, however, like the elbows down and out. See the picture of Natalie Burgener on the left. I know there are many ways to place the hands on the bar, but for me, keeping the elbows down and out, like Natalie's elbows, allows for more drive with the triceps and quickness driving under the bar.



Natalie Burgener prepares to jerk. Note the elbows are pointed down.

Courtesy of Mike Burgener

Burg's Eye ... (continued)

Here, Lindsey is on her toes way too soon and cuts her drive short. She should stay flat-footed as long as she can so she can get 100 percent of the drive out of the quads and hips.



She is so strong and quick!



Outstanding lockout and foot position.



I like a step back of 6 inches to start the recovery on the jerk. When one steps forward first on the recovery, it can put the torso in a forward lean, and with heavy weight the body will not support the bar by what I call "stacking the bones."



Now that is what I am talking about!



Lindsey Valenzuela: I am a big fan!



Passion! Aggressiveness! Ms. Lindsey is a champion!



About the Author

Coach Mike Burgener is the head coach of CrossFit's Olympic Weightlifting Seminars. *Mike's Gym* in Bonsall, Calif., is a USAW Regional Training Center, and Coach Burgener regularly works with top athletes and beginners there in the company of his unflappable dogs. Coach Burgener's son Casey is a top American lifter and national record holder, and his daughter-in-law Natalie, also a national record holder, competed in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, finishing 12th. Anyone who's worked with Coach Burgener will tell you that his enthusiasm and expertise are always worth a few more kilos on any lift.