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Burg's Eye View No. 2

Coach Mike Burgener explains how Kristan Clever uses athleticism and raw aggression to overcome minor form breaks.

By Mike Burgener

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Reigning CrossFit Games champion Kristan Clever began the CrossFit-USAW Open with a miss that sent the barbell rolling off the platform toward the center judge. The SoCal athlete smiled, shrugged it off and went on to nail the 62-kg snatch on her next attempt before hitting 64 kg on her final attempt.

Starting with a miss can rattle an athlete, but Clever was mentally strong enough to come back and make the weight. According to Coach Mike Burgener, she's also strong and tenacious enough to overcome a few form errors he found in her successful 64-kg lift. Once she irons out the kinks, the sky is the limit for a powerful athlete with a good streak of junkyard-dog aggression.

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Burg's ... (continued)

Snatch—62 kg

Great starting position.



Kristan begins her pull a tad too soon. However, her weight is well distributed from the feet.



Unloading of the legs will begin a premature pull.



In this frame, Kristan begins a premature arm bend that will cause her to not finish this lift. She wants to pull the bar up here when she should pull her body down.



Burg's ... (continued)

Kristan is not finishing this lift. Again, she is trying to pull the bar up rather than her body down. Note that there is very little shrugging of the body under the bar. Compare this frame and the last one on Page 2 with the picture of Sage Burgener finishing her lift (below).



Note the feet in this picture. They are way too wide in the receiving position for this young lady. The width of the feet here causes her to be unstable in the receiving position.



Again, note how wide the feet are. Also note the torso is forward, which is really caused by the lack of finish seen two frames previous.



Courtesy of Mike Burgener



Burg's ... (continued)

The weight on her feet here is well forward, causing her to move forward while she is trying to recover.



Because the weight is forward, Kristan has to step forward to try and save the lift.



Note the torso and feet again.



Kristan is such a great athlete that she almost saves this lift.



She would have made the lift with another 12 inches of platform and a bit more experience.



Summary: Close! Kristan is a tough, tough competitor. We are going to adopt her at Mike's Gym!

Snatch—64 kg

Kristan's starting position is acceptable, but I would suggest a slightly higher position than the one in this picture. However, her shoulders are in front of the bar, which is what we want. Normally, the position is hips above knees and shoulders over or ahead of the bar.



Here, I feel like Kristan needs to work on her ability to use her legs in bringing this bar to mid-thigh. I felt this way at this position in the 62-kg miss as well. Note the back angle of the starting position vs. the back angle of this position.



Burg's ... (continued)

Due to the unloading of the legs, she begins her pull a bit too soon.



The feet are flat and ready to drive off the ground to create speed through the middle.



Kristan is well on her way to finishing the lift. Note the angle of the legs at this position in the 62-kg miss vs. the angle of the legs in this picture. Note also the extension of the hips and the elevation of the torso on her way to finishing.



We are actually missing a frame here that I would assume shows an awesome finish. Note how high this bar is. When Kristan learns how to lift, I am sure she will be snatching 10-15 kg more than this 64 kg. She is a great athlete and very gifted physically.



Burg's ... (continued)

As before, I feel her feet are too wide in the receiving position, which creates instability.



See above—but Kristan is one tough competitor.



She tightens up nicely here to save a forward lift.



Due to the wide stance of the lift, she has to recover by raising her butt first. I like to tell my athletes that one must drive through the heels while raising the chest up when recovering. Doing so gets the hips under the bar during recovery.



What an athlete! She barely misses 62, comes back to make the weight and then adds 2 kg and makes that lift, too. Aggressive athletes with junkyard-dog attitudes make big lifts!



About the Author:

Coach Mike Burgener is the head coach of CrossFit's Olympic Weightlifting Certifications. *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.