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CrossFit
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Skill-Transfer Exercises for the Clean and Snatch

Treatments for Common Problems

Tony Budding



The snatch and the clean are two of the greatest exercises known. They are unparalleled at developing athleticism in general and power in particular. All CrossFitters should incorporate them into their routines in some form. Yet the movements are complex, and perfecting them can be a lifelong pursuit. This article describes skill-transfer exercises that can be used to break down the movements and drill specific aspects of them, train good technique, and help correct some common problems. For simplicity, I describe the skill-transfer exercises here in terms of the snatch, but they can all be applied to the clean also, with just a change in grip width. Of course, any of the exercises described here can be done with no weight (e.g., with a length of dowel or PVC pipe) to learn and practice technique.

For descriptions and video of variations of the snatch balance, another skill-transfer exercise used to develop the snatch, see *CrossFit Journal* issue 39.

Prescriptions

Problem: Pulling too early with the arms

Treatments: Tall snatch, positioning pulls, dip-shrug into hang snatch

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Skill-Transfer Exercises for the Clean & Snatch (continued...)

Problem: Catching the bar with too wide a stance, donkey-kicking

Treatments: Overhead squat, lands, Sots press

Problem: Jumping too early

Treatments: Positioning pulls, practicing the transition, high hang to top of the knees to mid-shin

Problem: Not shrugging, not getting full extension

Treatments: Tall snatch, dip-shrug into hang snatch

Tall snatch

Holding a light bar or dowel with a snatch grip, stand on your toes with your feet under your hips (in the "jumping position"). Shoulders down, arms straight. The movement begins with a violent shrug of the shoulders followed by an aggressive pulling of the body under the bar to catch it in the bottom of an overhead squat. Important: Do not begin by dipping and jumping! (That would make the move a hang squat snatch from the toes, which is not what you want). This is the challenging part for most people to wrap their minds around at first. You must begin with ankles, knees, and hips already extended, without rebending any of those joints at start of the move. The shrug begins the upward momentum of the bar, and the aggressive movement pulls you into the overhead squat. This is an extremely fast exercise.

Positioning pulls

Using a snatch grip with heavy weight (working up to as much as 150% of your IRM snatch weight), keep the chest up while straightening the legs (deadlift). When the bar passes the knees, transition the weight back toward the hips by lifting the chest, rebending the knees slightly, and bringing the hips forward without extending them. When the chest is



upright, then stand tall to full extension. Lower the weight in reverse until it is about one inch off the ground. Repeat two more times. On the third rep, finish the extension with an explosive shrug. Other



Skill-Transfer Exercises for the Clean & Snatch (continued...)



than that final burst of power, the movement should be slow and controlled.

Snatch land

Stand with the bar locked overhead in the frontal plane with a snatch grip (as in the top of an overhead squat). Drop rapidly into the catch position (the bottom of the overhead squat). This is not a jump or a squat, but a drop and land. It does not begin with a dip, and the feet should barely move at all.

Dip-shrug into hang snatch

The dip-shrug is 1-2-3 of the Burgener warm-up and the second pull of the snatch. Keeping the chest up, dip down and drive up with a shrug. Repeat once or twice to ingrain the movement, and on the third or fourth

rep, complete the snatch movement by pulling yourself under the bar and landing in the overhead squat. Be sure to achieve full extension and the shrug on the full movement, and keep the bar in close to the chest as you drive under it.

Sots press

This is very simply a shoulder press from the bottom of a back squat. In the bottom of the back squat, with the bar racked on the upper back and the hands in a snatch grip, press the bar straight overhead, reaching toward the ceiling. Keep the shoulders active, chest up, glutes and hamstrings engaged, and a good lumbar curve in the back. Start with a dowel and add weight in small increments. This movement both requires and develops flexibility and comfort in the bottom of the squat.



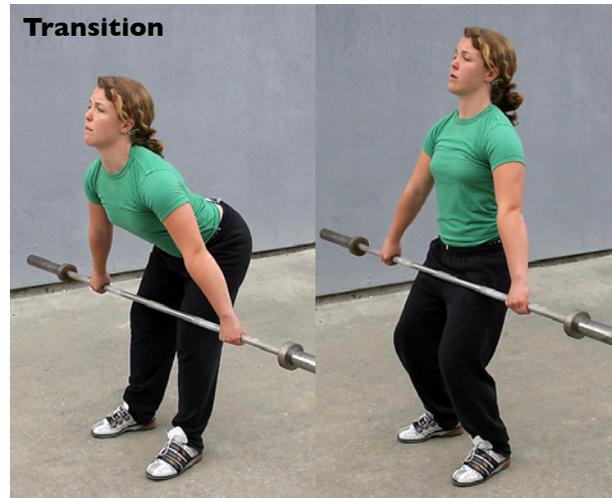
Skill-Transfer Exercises for the Clean & Snatch (continued...)

Practicing the transition

The transition (or “scoop”) is the movement from the top of the first pull (deadlift) to the start of the second pull (the jump). Start with the legs almost straight and the bar touching the top of the knees. Keep a good arch in the low back, with the eyes focused forward and the chest up as much as possible. Lift the chest and slightly bend the knees as the bar slides up the thighs into the hips. Go back and forth until this movement feels natural and automatic. (For more information on the transition, see “The Scoop and the Second Pull” in CFJ issue 41.)

High hang to top of the knees to mid-shin

First, do a squat snatch from the standing (high hang) position. The movement begins with the down-up (dip-shrug), which is the proper positioning for the start of the second pull. Second, do a squat snatch with the bar starting at the top of the knees (using the transition or scoop to position the body for the second pull). This develops confidence in the transition and reinforces proper positioning for the second pull. Finally, do a squat snatch starting from mid-shin. This is the complete snatch movement, beginning with the deadlift (first pull), through the transition, and into the second and third pulls, with a full squat landing. Practicing the three in sequence discourages jumping too early, bending the arms too soon, and not coming to full extension.



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