

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

Snatch Assistance Exercises

Mike Burgener, with Tony Budding

Last month, we covered the Burgener warm-up, a sequence of six movements that ends in a high-hang power snatch with a length of PVC pipe or dowel. Whereas the full snatch, which begins with the bar at the ground and involves receiving the weight in a full squat with the bar locked out overhead, can be quite challenging, just about everyone can learn to do a high-hang power snatch with PVC, regardless of strength and flexibility.

This month's article is about teaching the four main skill-transfer exercises: the overhead squat, pressing snatch balance, heaving snatch balance, and snatch balance. All four exercises are part of the full snatch movement. Done with PVC, they train the body in the mechanics of dynamically handling a bar overhead. Performed with progressively heavier barbells, they physically prepare the body for the full squat receiving position in the snatch.

Overhead squat

The movement begins with the dowel locked overhead in the frontal plane (above the crown of the head or center of mass) with a standard snatch-width grip, active shoulders (i.e., shoulders pressed up into the ears), and feet in the landing position (see *CFJ* issue 51). The lifter takes a deep breath and holds it throughout the movement. The back is set with a good lumbar curve, abs are tight, and the lifter's weight is firmly on the heels (*CFJ* issue 36 contains a thorough discussion of the overhead squat). Keeping the bar pressed overhead, the lifter lowers into a full squat position with the hip joint below the level of the kneecap, and then stands upright into the starting position and breathes out before resetting for another repetition.



<http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/OHSquat.wmv>

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Pressing snatch balance

The movement begins with the dowel resting on the shoulders behind the neck, standard snatch-width grip, and feet in the landing position. The lifter takes a deep breath and holds it throughout the movement. The back is set with a good lumbar curve, abs are tight, and the lifter's weight is firmly on the heels. The lifter maintains the bar at that same height (it will feel like pressing it up), while simultaneously lowering the body into a full squat position until the hip joint is below the kneecap. The net result is that the bar does not change elevation until the arms are fully extended. From the squat position, the lifter stands upright back into the starting position. This exercise develops the "feel" and skill of moving down under the weight while keeping control and balance.



<http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/PressingSnatchBal.wmv>



Snatch balance

The final exercise in the progression is the complete snatch balance. The starting position is the same as for the previous three movements, except the feet begin in the jumping/pulling position, which is 2 to 4 inches narrower than the receiving stance. (Note the difference in starting stance width in the photo at right and the photo for the pressing snatch balance, above.) As in the heaving snatch balance, the lifter dips the hips and knees and then drives the bar up. The lifter then jumps the feet quickly out into the landing/receiving position, keeping the movement as low and fast as possible. This action should not result in the barbell moving up significantly, but rather should accelerate the descent of the body into the receiving position. The snatch balance requires and develops speed, accuracy, timing, agility, and balance. Before performing the snatch balance with any weight, lifters must know how to properly "miss" if the bar lands outside the ideal receiving position overhead. Lifters may eventually use moderate to heavy weights in the snatch balance. I have found that the snatch balance builds great confidence in moving under and fixing heavy loads in the receiving position.



<http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/SnatchBal.wmv>



Heaving snatch balance

The aim of the heaving snatch balance is to add dynamism and speed to the act of moving under the bar. The snatch is one of the fastest movements in all of sport, and it is the speed of the lifter moving under the bar that will make a successful lift.

The lifter begins with the weight in the same starting position as in the pressing snatch balance and then begins the movement with a slight dip and then extension of the hips and knees and to drive the barbell off the shoulders but without lifting the feet off the ground. It is essential to keep the trunk upright in this movement. As soon as the bar lifts off the shoulders, the athlete pulls himself into the full squat receiving position in a quick, smooth, and controlled manner. It is possible to work up to moderate weights with this movement. This further builds strength, confidence and skill for moving into the receiving position in a full snatch.



<http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/HeavingSnatchBal.wmv>

High-hang squat snatch

Though the high-hang squat snatch is not one of the four skill-transfer exercises, a lifter who can perform both the high-hang power snatch and the snatch balance with PVC is ready to perform a high-hang squat snatch. The simple instructions are to jump the barbell up and then land in a full squat with it overhead. More thoroughly: starting in the high hang position, dip the hips and knees and then jump the barbell through the full range of motion to land in the full squat position with the bar locked overhead. Keep the bar close to the body by pulling the elbows up high and to the outside. The feet move rapidly from the jumping position to the landing position, while the body moves rapidly from triple extension (of the ankles, knees, and hips) at the top to the full squat position at the bottom.



<http://media.crossfit.com/cf-video/HangSqSnatch.wmv>

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