

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

Fixing Loopy Lifts

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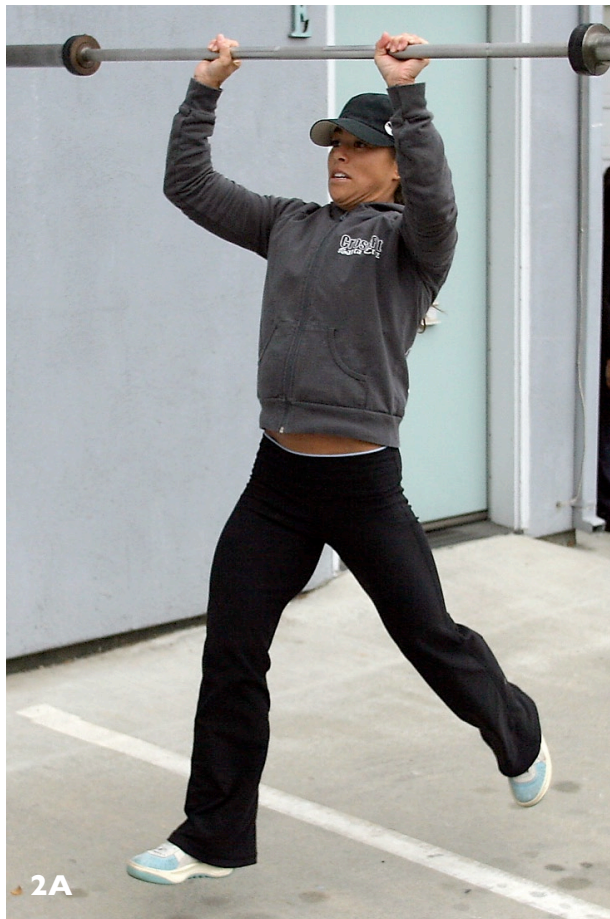
Continuing our series on the Olympic lifts, we focus this month on addressing a common problem for many CrossFitters: looping and floating under the bar. All three lifts—the snatch, the clean, and the jerk—must be fast, explosive, aggressive movements. Success in these movements requires the attitude of a junkyard dog. Unfortunately, we see too many CrossFitters pulling aggressively off the ground only to get passive in the pull-under (or drive-under, in the case of the jerk) and when they receive the barbell.

The problem

What is slow, loopy movement? It's movement that at first glance appears correct in its technical execution. It is in fact triple extension. It is in fact a jump, as we have taught. But what it is not is aggressive. It is a slow change of direction. Remember that what we are after is a vicious jump against the ground that creates momentum and elevation on the barbell. When that bar moves up to its final height, at that exact moment, the

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body immediately reverses direction and the arms start pulling the body down under the bar in the snatch and clean, and driving the body down in the jerk.

CrossFitters can sometimes get away with slow, loopy movement because they often work high reps with relatively low weights. They pull the barbell hard and then take their time going down, often getting too much height off the ground and not moving their feet fast enough. This is not an efficient way to lift, and it creates a bad habit that is hard to break when speed and aggression are needed. Max loads can never be successfully lifted with slow, loopy movement. With heavy weights, the window of opportunity for getting under the bar is extremely small and you must move fast. You also need the bar to travel in an efficient and controlled path, but a loopy lift typically results in the barbell crashing onto the body. Slow movement will result in not getting under in time, and crashing often creates enough instability to result in a missed lift.

Annie demonstrates this passive, loopy movement in video 1. You can see the difference in photos 1A and 1B as well, which show a floaty, loopy clean and a tight, aggressive one, respectively. In photo 1A, the barbell is way too far out in front and above the shoulders of the lifter, and her body is fairly relaxed. At no point in any Olympic lift should there be either distance or relaxation. In contrast, in Photo 1B, the lifter receives the barbell at its apex by aggressively pulling her body to the bar. You can see extreme tension in Annie's body as she receives the barbell.

In the jerk pictures above, photo 2A shows a position that should never be. Here, Annie is well off the ground with her hips and legs extended and the barbell far in front of her face. In contrast, Megan demonstrates a tight, aggressive jerk in photo 2B. Her hips and arms are in almost exactly the same point in the jerk as Annie's, but her feet are just far enough off the ground to move quickly to the split position. The bar has passed just in

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front of her face, and she is aggressively pushing her body down with her arms against the weight of the barbell.

Video 2 gives a detailed look at the difference between loopy and proper movement in all three lifts. Listen, too, for the sound of Annie's feet hitting the ground, and how fast it is in the well-executed tight lifts.

Remedies

Fortunately, there is an effective solution for going from the loopy, passive movement to the tight, aggressive movement (one for each exercise): work tall snatches, tall cleans, and tall jerks. These have been described in detail previous articles, but their essence is that they eliminate all momentum from the pull or drive so that the athlete has to move with lightning speed and extreme aggression to get under the bar. They are all demonstrated in video 3.

In the tall snatch, the athlete uses the snatch grip to hold the bar at the high-hang position at full extension—meaning standing tall with the hips and knees extended and up on the toes (or flat-footed, depending on your perspective on triple extension). The only part of the body that can generate force or movement is the traps. The athlete violently shrugs the shoulders up to create elevation and a bit of momentum (speed) on the bar and then pulls the body down under the bar into the

overhead squat position. Finish the lift by standing up from the squat with the bar extended overhead.

In the tall clean, the same principles apply. The athlete uses a clean grip while holding the bar at the high-hang at full extension. Creating movement with the traps causes elevation on the bar and a bit of speed. The athlete violently pulls the body down under the bar, racking the bar into the front squat position, and then finishing by standing.

To do a tall jerk, the athlete presses the bar to a position just above the forehead while rising onto the balls of the feet. With no dip of the knees or hips, the athlete initiates the movement with a violent drive with the arms driving their body down into the split position.

In all three movements, the athlete must engage the arms in the pull-under of the snatch and clean and the push-under of the jerk. One must learn how to engage the arms at the correct time in order to get the aggressive speed required to be a junkyard dog! Examples of proper attitude and aggression can be seen in video 4.



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Video 1



Video 2



Video 3



Video 4

