

the  
**CrossFit**  
JOURNAL ARTICLES

## Supplemental Olympic Lifting for CrossFitters

Mike Burgener, with Tony Budding



In our series of articles over the past year or so, we've introduced all the basic elements of the snatch and clean and jerk, as well as some of the important assistance and skill-transfer exercises. Starting this month, we'll address strategies for going beyond the basics. We'll make some assumptions about different types of CrossFitters and create programs for them. The goal is not to create competitive weightlifters, but to help CrossFit athletes improve their lifts.

1 of 4

## Supplemental Olympic Lifting for CrossFitters (continued...)

Several times a month we get e-mail questions from CrossFitters who want to improve their Olympic lifting about how to combine such a focus with CrossFit training. Because there are several CrossFitters who come to Mike's Gym on the weekends to train, I deal with this situation there on a regular basis. Most of the CrossFitters who come to Mike's Gym are committed to CrossFit and want to continue to train hard-core CrossFit while they also work on getting better in the Oly lifts.

In this month's article, we'll assume that you have no extended formal training in the lifts, that you regularly follow the WOD (Workout of the Day) from CrossFit.com, that you've read our other articles and can perform the movements reasonably well with low loads, and that your basic goal is to improve your performance on those workouts that call for heavier cleans, jerks, and snatches. In other words, we're approaching this as if you consider the Oly lifts a chink in your general fitness armor.

The Burgener warm-up is the foundation for learning all the lifts (see our article in the *CrossFit Journal* issue 53 for more information and detailed instruction on the Burgener warm-up). It should be done every day with PVC. It can also be done with a light barbell if desired. The Burgener warm-up trains the mind and body to move properly for the Olympic lifts and reinforces the central principle of jumping and landing with the barbell in a vertical plane. The warm-up is performed specifically with the snatch, but the skills transfer directly to the clean and indirectly to the jerk. These movements have to become second nature before your brain will let you move aggressively under a max load. The Burgener warm-up builds the muscle memory that is essential in all heavy lifts.

The Olympic lifts are unique in the degree to which they combine coordination, accuracy, agility, and balance with strength, speed, and power. Many of you will find it easy to perform the snatch with PVC, but will find that your form falls apart when you introduce even small weights. Your feet may go super wide, or you might start pulling early with your arms. One main cause of this is lack of confidence in the mechanics of the movement. The hips are much stronger than the arms, but the brain doesn't trust that.

Training the movements with PVC and light weight is essential for developing confidence. Weight must

be increased in small increments. The many skill transfer exercises we've described are also designed to develop confidence in different aspects of the lifts. For example, the overhead squat builds confidence for the snatch. Knowing you can overhead squat 100kg gives you confidence when you attempt a 70kg snatch. Sometimes, even that is not enough. The snatch balance, for example, adds a dynamic element and drills timing, but it requires no pull, so it's a useful intermediate step between the overhead squat and the snatch.

Incorporating an Oly-specific drill or two several times a week can take your lifts to the next level. Below, we describe a sample strategy for improving your lifts that won't interfere with your standard CrossFit workouts and the three-days-on/one-day-off cycle of the WOD. The athletic skills both demanded and developed by these lifts translates directly into all aspects of a broad, inclusive fitness, and it's well worth it to put some extra time and energy into mastering them.

### Program for weeks 1-4

This is a basic program that exposes you to the lifts and associated skill-development exercises. It builds your competency and confidence in the movements. They are the same kinds of drills that all Oly lifters use. Here, we're using them in small doses and mostly in isolation. They are effective by themselves, but they also build on each other to improve all aspects of your lifts.

For the first four weeks, follow the program below, repeating it every eight days for about four weeks. Start with loads well within your comfort zone, and try to increase them gradually each week. Remember, these exercises are prescribed to help you develop confidence in your lifts, not necessarily be a workout in themselves. You're doing the CrossFit WODs for developing the fitness and strength. This is primarily about skill and exposure through repetition. For now, be patient, keep loads manageable, and build a good foundation for later success at the actual lifts. Commitment to the fundamentals always pays off in the end.

In the fifth week, you will switch to the program for weeks 5 through 8 (see next page), which moves from primarily preparatory and supplemental exercises to more actual Olympic lifting.

## Supplemental Olympic Lifting for CrossFitters (continued...)

### Day 1, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- Skill transfer exercises for the snatch:
  - 3 sets:
    - 3 overhead squats
    - 3 pressing snatch balances
    - 3 heaving snatch balances
    - 3 snatch balances
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 2, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 3, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- 3 front squats + 3 jerks x 5 sets
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 4, weeks 1-4

Rest day

### Day 5, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- 3 high-hang snatches + 3 overhead squats x 5 sets
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 6, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 7, weeks 1-4

- Burgener warm-up
- 3 high-hang cleans + 3 push presses x 5 sets
- CrossFit WOD

### Day 8, weeks 1-4

Rest day



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*This is primarily about skill and exposure through repetition. Be patient, keep loads manageable, and build a good foundation. Commitment to the fundamentals always pays off in the end.*

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## Supplemental Olympic Lifting for CrossFitters (continued...)

### Program for weeks 5-8

In the second four weeks, we incorporate more complex movements. Begin with loads that allow you to perform the entire set properly (full range of motion with correct technique). Each week, seek to increase the weight, but only to the degree that you can keep proper form and range of motion. If you cannot perform the sets properly, don't hesitate to reduce the weight and/or substitute appropriate skill transfer exercises until you can.

#### Day 1, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- 5 sets:
  - 3-position snatch + 1 overhead squat (power snatch from the high hang, from mid-thigh, and then from the floor, followed by an overhead squat)
- CrossFit WOD

#### Day 2, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- CrossFit WOD

#### Day 3, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- 6 sets:
  - 3-position clean + push press
  - 3-position clean + push jerk
  - 3-position clean + split jerk

#### Day 4, weeks 5-8

Rest day

#### Day 5, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- 3 muscle snatches + 3 overhead squats x 3 sets
- 2 snatches from the floor x 5 sets
- CrossFit WOD

#### Day 6, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- CrossFit WOD
- 5 Turkish get-ups per side x 3 sets

#### Day 7, weeks 5-8

- Burgener warm-up
- 3 power cleans + 3 front squats + 3 jerks x 5 sets
- CrossFit WOD

#### Day 8, weeks 5-8

Rest day



### Olympic lifting demo videos on CrossFit.com

<http://www.crossfit.com/cf-info/excercise.html#Oly>

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### Burgener and Budding CrossFit Journal Articles

Dec 2007 (64): *Supplemental Olympic Lifting for CrossFitters*  
Oct 2007 (62): *Fixing Loopy Lifts*  
Sep 2007 (61): *Assistance Sequence for the Snatch*  
Aug 2007 (60): *Teaching the Jerk, Part 4: Skill Transfer Exercises*  
Jul 2007 (59): *Teaching the Jerk, Part 3: Split Jerk Drills*  
Jun 2007 (58): *Teaching the Jerk, Part 2*  
May 2007 (57): *Teaching the Jerk*  
Apr 2007 (56): *From the Snatch to the Clean*  
Mar 2007 (55): *Pulling Positions for the Snatch*  
Feb 2007 (54): *Snatch Assistance Exercises*  
Jan 2007 (53): *The Burgener Warm-Up*  
Dec 2006 (52): *Learning the Olympic Lifts: The Grip*  
Nov 2006 (51): *Learning the Olympic Lifts: The Stance*  
Aug 2005 (36): *Digital Coaching with Mike Burgener*

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