

Power Clean Primer

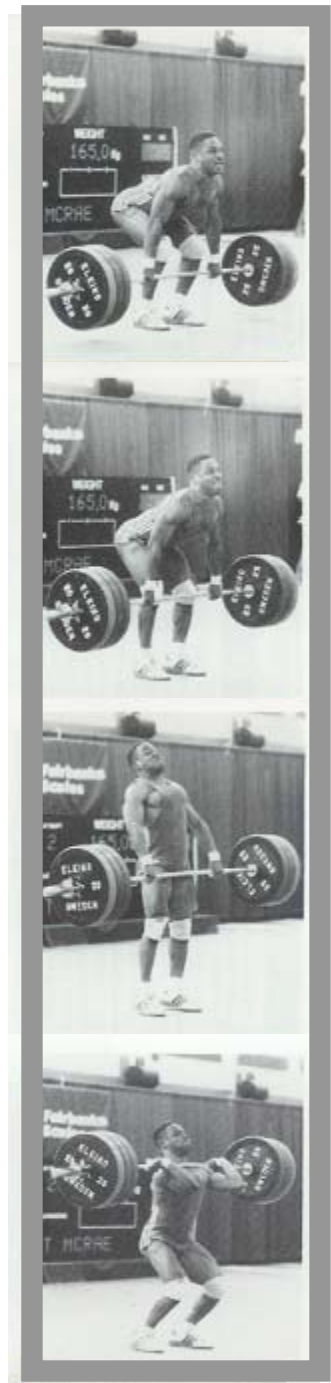
The power clean is one of the most effective exercises for the development of explosive strength and power. In order to effectively train the movement long term, it may be necessary to take an objective look at form and technique, in search of correctable flaws that may be limiting progress.

FIRST PULL

One common flaw relating to the ‘first pull’ (moving the barbell from the floor and into the ‘power position’) is essentially a sacrifice of position and form in favor of maximum speed. Many lifters will ‘rush’ the bar off of the floor, immediately losing position and allowing form to break down. As a result, the lifter is required to make a series of ‘corrections’ in order to complete the lift. The bar should be separated from the floor in a controlled fashion, accelerating as it ascends. It is important that acceleration is increased as the bar passes the knees. Many lifters, myself included, develop a ‘tempo’ that suits their individual performance of the lift. For me the first portion of the ‘first pull’ is almost a slow motion. It’s two beats. The second portion of the ‘first pull’ is one beat. The bar is accelerating past the knees and into the ‘power position’ (the upper-thigh/hip area). The bar should now be in position to begin the second pull. When this ‘first pull’ tempo becomes ingrained, this is where the lift really begins.

SECOND PULL

The second pull begins with a tremendous explosion. Many lifters will expel their breath at this point of the lift, causing them to ‘yell’ or ‘grunt’. Having been something like a coiled spring to this point, they now release energy in one explosive movement. This is the beginning of the ‘second pull’. The lifter fully extends. The legs straighten and the lifter rises on their toes, literally jumping with the barbell. In some cases actually leaving the floor. The bar continues on it’s path upward. One flaw common in the execution of the ‘second pull’ is allowing the bar to ‘loop’ or ‘drift’ away



from the body. To avoid this, imagine the knuckles 'pointing' to the floor. This will help prevent a 'flip' or 'reverse curl' type motion. Concentrate on keeping the bar as close to the body as possible. These simple keys will help to keep the bar on the proper path.

The elbows are key in 'racking' the barbell. With the knuckles 'pointing' to the floor a quick movement is required to rack the barbell. An effective key in accomplishing this is to think of 'flashing' the elbows up. Quickly rotate the elbows around the bar to a 'finished' position. Think of keeping the elbows 'high', to a position in which the triceps are parallel to the floor. This will allow you to keep your torso vertical, putting you in a strong position to receive the barbell without 'hunching' or an excessive lean forward.

When a lifter is competent in the performance of the power clean, strength gains can be achieved more easily. The exercise that has inspired more gains in the power clean than any other is the back squat. My coach has a saying that I am certain is not unique: "When your back squat is up, everything is up." I have never found this to *not* be the case.

WEIGHTLIFTING

- **CLEAN & JERK**
 - Variations
 - Power Clean
 - Hang Clean
 - Squat Clean
 - Transitions /Supplemental exercises
- **SNATCH**
 - Variations
 - Power Snatch
 - Snatch from Hang
 - Squat Snatch
 - Transitions /Supplemental exercises
- **CLEAN & JERK TRANSITIONS**
 - FRONT SQUAT
 - RDL
 - DEADLIFT
 - BLOCK PULLS
 - HIGH PULLS
 - SHRUGS
 - PUSH PRESS
 - BEHIND THE NECK PRESS
 - SPLIT JERK
 - HIGH BAR BACK SQUAT
- **SNATCH TRANSITIONS**
 - RDL
 - SNATCH GRIP DEADLIFT
 - BLOCK PULLS
 - HIGH PULLS
 - SHRUGS
 - SNATCH GRIP - BEHIND THE NECK PRESS
 - SNATCH BALANCE
 - HEAVING SNATCH BALANCE
 - OVERHEAD SQUATS

QUICK WORKOUT

A very effective and simple power clean workout, one I have found particularly effective for relatively new trainees, is the '5 x 5 routine'. This version could actually be called the '5 x 5 x 5 x 5 routine'. Perform five sets of five reps with static weight. Do this every five days for five weeks, increasing weight from week to week. More advanced trainees seem to benefit greatly from heavy doubles and singles. An effective combination of exercises is heavy clean pulls and power cleans from the (high) hang or power cleans in the rack (with the pins set so that the bar rests in the 'power position'). Experiment and find which exercises work for you. Change exercises and routines frequently to avoid burnout and keep your workouts fresh.

Look for my upcoming articles covering all aspects of weightlifting!

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