

Incorporating Variations of Olympic Lifting Exercises into training programs

Research and hand on experience has proven that utilizing variations of Olympic lifting exercises with sound technique can have dramatic affects on explosive ability, first step quickness and vertical jumping ability. Although I am an advocate of Olympic lifting exercises due the high transfer of performance from the weightroom to the athletic field of play, typically I use many variations of the full Olympic based movements to achieve very positive gains in explosive power (measured via vertical jump in inches or power wattage (factors in BW)).

The vertical jump is the gold standard for assessing power output; it is also strongly correlated to the ability to run fast and explosive first steps. Proper execution of variations of Olympic lifts can promote the development of a stronger, more stable core, increase jumping and landing skill. Olympic lifting exercises done properly are plyometric exercises by nature and can help teach athletes how to jump higher. Essentially, Olympic lifting exercises can be viewed as jumping with resistance. These exercises can take months to execute with proficiency. The time spent learning and practicing proper technique will provide huge improvements in power development long term. Additionally, it is important to learn these exercises with little weight and be patient; it is not uncommon to practice Olympic exercises and their variations for weeks prior to loading the bar with resistance. The weightlifting movements (clean, snatch and their derivatives) are ground-based exercises that require total body involvement from a standing position. They help promote acceleration aspects in respect to hip movement and help develop decelerator ability when catching the bar. These components combined can help athletes jump with more explosion and can help athletes stop faster and stay injury free when landing from a vertical position. Lastly these exercises stress the body in a ground-based action/reaction fashion which is characteristic of most sport disciplines. The lifts utilize triple extension (hips, legs, and ankles) very similar to sprinting, jumping, and other athletic movements.

Outside of explosive power development, Olympic movements require complex motor coordination. This high level of stimulation for youths can not only help develop a youth's coordination for increased efficiency during jumping and landing maneuvers, but they can help in his/her ability to learn and perform other complex coordinated task.