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CrossFit
JOURNAL ARTICLES

Skill Transfer Exercises for the Snatch

Greg Glassman



In our August issue we explored the overhead squat, which we billed as “the ultimate core exercise, the heart of the snatch, and peerless in developing effective athletic movement.” This month we introduce three skill-transfer exercises based on the overhead squat and commonly used by weightlifters to develop the snatch.

To learn to perform and coach these exercises correctly, we ventured to Mike’s Gym, a CrossFit Affiliate, in Bonsall, California, to learn firsthand from Coach Mike Burgener and his 15-year-old daughter, Sage, how to

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Skill Transfer Exercises for the Snatch (continued...)

perform these exercises correctly. Mike is the current U.S. Pan American Games coach, and Sage is a nationally competing junior champion.

The three exercises are known as the pressing snatch balance, the heaving snatch balance, and the snatch balance. Each essentially demands successively greater dynamics and athleticism to reach, hold, and control the catch position of the snatch—which is, in fact, the bottom of the overhead squat.

Each of the three snatch balance exercises begins with the bar in a racked position on the upper back, as for the back squat. Starting with bar on the back, rather than in the front rack position, gives the athlete greater control and easier access to a line of action that is truly upward and not derivative.

Each exercise begins from standing, bar on the back, with a snatch grip. In the pressing snatch balance the athlete slowly lowers the hips into a squat while simultaneously extending the arms to press the bar overhead. In the heaving snatch balance the athlete executes a very short and powerful “dip and drive” to initiate the movement (bending briefly at the knees and hip and then powerfully extending to drive the bar upward) and then comes to rest at the bottom of the overhead squat.

Both the pressing snatch balance and the heaving snatch balance begin and end with the feet slightly wider than shoulder width, the same as in the catching stance of the clean and the snatch, which is also the squatting stance of the rock-bottom overhead squat.

The snatch balance, in contrast, begins in a narrower stance, with feet directly under the hips—the pulling stance that is the starting position for the clean and the snatch (what Coach Burgener often calls the “jumping stance”). The snatch balance requires the athlete to initiate the movement with a strong dip and drive, then dive under the bar and move the feet to land in the slightly wider catching stance with the bar overhead—all explosively and in an instant.



Skill Transfer Exercises for the Snatch (continued...)

The pressing snatch balance and the heaving snatch balance are more commonly used for beginning and intermediate lifters, whereas the snatch balance and overhead squat are typically used with experienced weightlifters.

Each of these exercises, not unlike the overhead squat, must be learned, practiced, refined, and perfected with a dowel or PVC pipe before any appreciable weight is introduced. Practicing in this manner—with negligible load—constitutes an excellent warm-up tool that not only readies the athlete for more rigorous work but

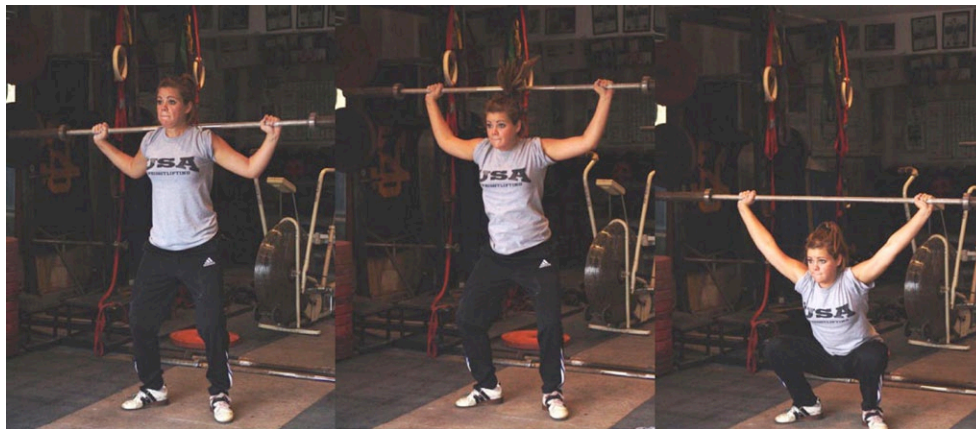
also reinforces fundamental mechanical skills vital to more athletic and complex movement.

Generally, weightlifters will be able to handle more weight in the snatch balance than in the snatch. The boost this gives to confidence and control with maximum snatch loads is one of the primary benefits to training the snatch balance family. At any given weight, the dynamics of the snatch are wickedly greater than those of the overhead squat.

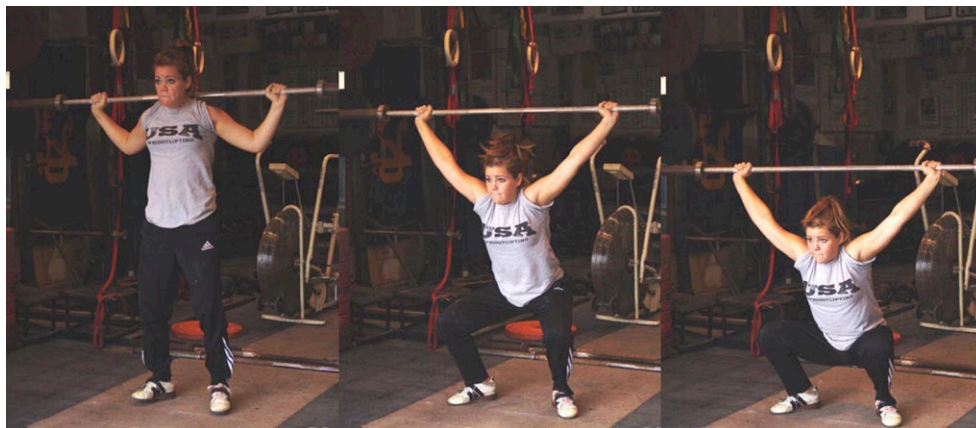
The snatch balance can help bridge that gap.



[Pressing Snatch Balance Video](#)



[Heaving Snatch Balance Video](#)



[Snatch Balance Video](#)

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