Exercise Techniques:

The dumbbell power clean

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The development of "good" techniques in weightlifting movements is time consuming, demanding, and often tedious, but the benefits received in athletic strength conditioning justify the effort put forth in the training of these lifts.

After an athlete has established a technical base in the power clean, the basic tenets (overload, specificity, volume, variety and intensity) of strength and conditioning need to be followed if the athlete wishes to make continual progress. Sometimes during this training process the athlete may become stale, especially during off-season training, as the arduous rigors of strength training take their toll on many athletes. Regardless of when the athlete becomes stale, something must be done to avert overtraining. One way to do this is to introduce variety into the workout. A good strategy is to use substitute exercises such as the dumbbell power clean. Introducing dumbbell power cleans into the workout will accomplish two purposes: to provide the athlete with variety, allowing new training patterns for the neuromuscular system, and to continue the necessary training stimulus to elevate the strength and conditioning of the athlete.

Figures 1 through 4 show that the dumbbell power clean is almost identical to the normal power clean with a few notable exceptions (see the bibliography). The first difference (Figure 1) is the slightly lower starting position. This will allow the athlete more distance and time in which to apply force while pulling (similar to doing pulls from elevation).

Figure 2 demonstrates that the positioning is almost the same as in the power clean. The shoulders are over the bar just prior to the initiation of the second knee bend (scoop). There is also a slight outward rotation at the shoulder joint. This allows for a natural movement while preparing for the pulling motion. Straps may be worn to provide greater security while gripping the dumbbells.

The pulling motion in Figure 3 is extended to the maximum possible length to provide excellent development in the trapezius muscle groups. The lifter has powerfully extended the ankle, knee and pelvic joints, trying to explode vertically off the ground. When these actions are done correctly, as in this photo, all force generated can be applied directly to the dumbbells, enabling them to accelerate quickly in a vertical plane without losing energy through extraneous motion.

Figure 4 shows the racking of the dumbbells to the shoulders. Again,
this position is similar to the regular power clean. The feet have moved out horizontally to provide greater stability, the knees are slightly flexed with the torso kept in a vertical position. Even though the lifter will be elevating two objects (dumbbells) instead of a single barbell, the motion should be smooth and controlled.

Figure 5 illustrates a possible conclusion to the dumbbell power clean, the push press. The push press has been described in detail previously by O'Shea (7). When push pressing, especially with dumbbells, the shoulders and triceps secure an especially good workout. Also when using dumbbells, the athlete will develop excellent coordination and timing, due to lifting two independent weights in one movement. The lifting belt may be worn when combining the dumbbell power clean and push press. If only the power clean portion is completed, the lifting belt is not necessary.

Bibliography