EXERCISES OF THE MONTH

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-- Basic --

Wrist Curl

Starting Position

- Sit on a bench or chair.
- Grasp a barbell with a supinated grip (palms facing out or up).
- Place forearms on thighs so that the lower arm is fully supported.
- The hands should extend past the knees.

The Lift

- Bend the hands backward as far as possible.
- Extend the fingers slightly so that the barbell rolls to a point where it is held only on the fingertips.
- From this point, curl the fingers back up toward the palms.
- As the fingers finish contracting, flex the wrists until the hand approaches the vertical position.

Muscles Worked
Flexors of the hand and forearm.

Variations
This exercise can be done without the finger roll. It can also be done using a pronated grip (palms facing in or down), which will work the wrist extensors. Dumbbells can be used in place of barbells. To make the exercises more difficult, use a thicker handled barbell or dumbbell.

Drawings by Jim Seward

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Power Clean From the Hang Above the Knees

Starting Position
- Place the feet approximately shoulder width apart.
- Grasp the barbell with a pronated grip (palms facing in), hands about shoulder width apart.
- Using hip and quadriceps muscles, lift with a flat back until standing erect with arms hanging free and the barbell at the top of the thighs.
- Take a deep breath, straighten the back, and try to stand as tall as possible.

The Lift
- Simultaneously bend the knees and bend forward at the waist so that the barbell is lowered to a position just above the knees.
- Shoulders will extend past the feet.
- This will put you in a preliminary jumping position or "breakdown" position.
- Maintain a tight back in this posture and throughout the lift.
- To begin the lift, raise the shoulders upward while extending the lower back.
- Ankles and knees may rebind during this phase, which will cause a shift of balance toward the front part of the foot as in jumping.
- As the body straightens up and the barbell passes the waist, bend the arms by lifting the elbows upward and out.
- When the barbell reaches its maximum height, rotate the elbows under it and catch it on the chest.
- As the body is pulled downward, bend the knees to absorb the bar landing on the clavicles and deltoids.

Muscles Worked
Extensors of the legs, hips, and back; flexors of the arms; trapezius.

Safety Considerations
Basic physical preparation is important for beginning athletes wishing to use the power clean. At least 8 weeks of squats, upright rows, stiff leg deadlifts, and good mornings are recommended before attempting power cleans. Stretching of the wrists and forearms is also recommended, since many athletes cannot hold the barbell at the final resting position on the shoulders due to tight wrists. This tightness forces the athlete to catch the weight off the chest and support it with the arms only.

During the lift the athlete should be discouraged from swinging the barbell away from the body. If the barbell is swung too much it could knock the lifter off balance or place undue strain on the low back if he or she fights to catch it. The power clean is like an upright row, not a reverse curl.

The footwork at the end of the lift is also important. The athlete can use a small side-to-side foot movement combined with a slight bend of the legs to lower him/herself under the bar. Athletes should avoid very wide foot spacing or a combination of a squat and split position. If the athlete moves the feet excessively while catching the bar, the weight is probably too heavy to execute properly.

Spotters are not recommended for the power clean. The athlete should learn to miss the lift and be taught to let errant lifts fall. A dedicated lifting area for power cleans is also recommended.