Exercise Safety: The 3-Person Spot for the Back Squat

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■ Starting Position

Ready Position
The ready position is shown in Figure 1. The back spotter is the captain. The side spotters follow his command. Both the side spotters are positioned slightly behind the bar. This will allow them to assist the athlete by keeping the bar supported on the athlete’s back. If they were positioned in front of the bar they would actually push the bar away from the athlete’s body.

■ Descent (Downward Movement)

Back Spotter—Ready Position
The spotter stands approximately 1–3 ft behind the athlete in a slight bent knee and staggered leg position (Figure 2). The spacing between the athletes allows for the athlete executing the movement to sit back at the beginning of the exercise without the interference of the spotter. The spotter’s hands are in the “catch” position, under the armpits. The arms are not in contact with any part of the upper body. During a 3-person spot, the back spotter is the captain. The back spotter makes the decision to assist the athlete if he feels that the athlete is unable to complete the lift successfully. He will give both side spotters the verbal command “help” when the athlete needs assistance.

Side Spotter—Ready Position
The side spotter has a slight knee bend position (Figure 3). The spotter is positioned slightly behind the lifter at an angle facing the bar. The spotter’s hands are in the “V” position. This allows the spotter to grab the bar when the help command has been given. The spotter’s hands are approximately 1 ft below the bar so that he does not interfere with the descent of the exercise.

Back Spotter—Movement
The spotter is tracing the descent of the athlete and is ready to make a decision as to assist the athlete or not based on the athlete’s ability to perform the exercise to completion (Figure 4).

Side Spotter—Movement
The spotter traces the movement of the athlete. The spotter is always prepared to assist the athlete and is waiting for the help command from the back spotter (Figure 5).

■ The Catch

Back Spotter—Catch
The spotter has made the decision to assist the athlete (Figure 6). The spotter now drives into the athlete by stepping forward with the staggered leg. The spotter’s chest is butted up against the athlete’s back, and the spotter drives his arms up into the athlete’s armpits. His hands are on the top of the athlete’s anterior deltoids and upper chest (Figure 7). This position allows both the spotter and the athlete to lift the weight to the recovery position.

Side Spotter—Catch
The side spotter has been given the help command (Figure 8). The spotter now grabs the bar with both hands and assists the athlete to come back to the recovery position. In the case of the bar being loaded with numerous plates, 1 hand would actually be on the plates.
Recovery and Ascent
(Upward Movement)

Back Spotter—Recovery Position
The spotter assists the athlete to come back to the upright position and stabilizes the lifter as they prepare to walk back into the racks (Figure 9). It is important that the athlete must complete the lift to the upright position. It would be a mistake on the part of the athlete and the spotter to step into the squat rack before the lift has been assisted to completion.

Return the Weight to the Racks

Return to the Racks
When the bar has been recovered to the upright position, the spotters now reset their hands to balance out the assistance across the bar and to allow for a safe return to the racks (Figure 10). The athlete should never give up on the lift. His spotters are trained to help him recover the weight and to complete the lift in an efficient and safe manner.

Back Spotter—To the Racks
The spotter places his hands on the bar inside the athlete’s hands and helps the athlete walk back into the racks (Figure 11).

Side Spotter—To the Racks
The spotter places his outside hand on the end of the bar and his inside hand outside of the athlete’s hand. If the athlete has a wide hand position, the spotter’s hand is on the plates (Figure 12).
Figure 5–8

Figure 9–12