

Olympic Lifting

Should it be part of a golf athlete's workout program?

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Like most golfers, I am always looking for ways of creating more power and ultimately more distance off the tee. About 6 years ago I began investigating what elite athletes across a variety of sports were incorporating into their training programs. More specifically, what they did in the weight room.

And what did I find? Well, in every sport where the development of power played a vital role, Olympic lifts were being used (i.e. The Clean and Jerk and The Snatch). These lifts require tremendous levels of skill, flexibility, control, strength and obviously power, just like in the golf swing. In fact, the only sport to my knowledge that produces more force than a golf swing is Olympic lifting!



The power output for an elite athlete performing the Snatch is about 3750w, (however during the clean and snatch this can reach as high as 5000w at certain stages of the lift) similar to that of a powerful golf swing. The similarities between a golf swing and Olympic lifts are evident if we consider the following:

- How energy is passed through the kinetic chain;
- The sequence of body motion during the movement (proximal/distal relationships);
- The muscles with the greatest contribution or involvement - the gluteals, quads, lats, traps, triceps abdominal and upper back muscles that control the scapula are also important for a quality golf swing (these muscles largely make up the posterior chain help to combat both the pull of gravity and flexion of a golf stance and maintain posture or spine angle during the actual swing);
- The high level of flexibility and control required.
- EMG studies have shown that the muscle contractions and the level of the MVC of the muscle and the sequence they 'fire' in are very similar to the golf swing.
- The Energy systems used in both lifts and the striking of a ball are almost identical 95% anaerobic and 5 % aerobic

In fact, one of the physical screening tests used by many golf fitness professionals today is the overhead squat. This exercise (or slight variations) is then routinely included in athletes training programs as part of a well-rounded strength program. Interestingly, for those who are not aware, this 'squat' movement actually plays a vital role in the recovery stage of The Snatch. Were you aware that even the time it takes to execute The Snatch is almost identical to the time it takes to complete a downswing in golf?

Like in golf, correct instruction is vital and the process I went through, from practicing the technique with a broom handle at home, to lifting now more than my body weight with the snatch took almost 3 years. I do feel however, that as a direct result of including these activities in my training, my flexibility, strength and power improved enormously and best of all my driving distance now reflects that. Consequently, I would strongly recommend any golfer who is serious about becoming a more powerful athlete to seriously consider incorporating the Olympic lifts into their training regime.



Information courtesy of Harvey Newton, Newton Sports. Any questions or comments can be directed to Mark Bull (Total Golf Analysis) through his website www.totalgolfanalysis.co.uk