

# **POWERLIFTING**

**Instructor: Dave Mansfield MA, MSPT, CSCS**

## **I. THE COMPETITIVE LIFTS**

Powerlifting competition is made up of three lifts: Squat, Bench Press and Deadlift. Three attempts are made for each of these lifts. The best of each legal lift makes up the total points. Competitors are divided by class: High School, Junior, Open, Submaster, Master, Grandmaster. These classes are the same for women and men (although they do not compete against each other). Sometimes a competition will not be a full Powerlifting Meet, such as: Push/pull (bench and deadlift), Bench Press only.

## **II. RULES (see attached handout)**

There are a number of different lifting associations, each has it's own rules, however, the basic rules for lifting are very similar.

## **III. EQUIPMENT**

Competitions are held with assistive equipment or sometimes "Raw" i.e. without assistive equipment

**A. Squat:** a squat suite, 4" power belt and knee wraps

**B. Bench:** a tight bench shirt

**C. Deadlift:** a tight lifting suite, power belt

#### **IV. TECHNIQUE**

Correct technique is best taught by demonstration and best learned through practice. Below is a brief description of the legal lifting technique for the three lifts.

##### **A. SQUAT**

Bar must be under control at all times, feet and hands may not be shifted once “squat” command is issued. Lifter must descend so that hips are below knees (below parallel). At completion of the lift the judge will order “rack”, at which time the lifter must initiate a controlled movement toward the racks (once the movement is initiated, the spotters may legally assist in racking the bar).

##### **B. BENCH PRESS**

Spotter assists in taking the bar from the rack. Lifter brings the bar to chest under control and must stop the bar on the chest before pressing the bar. Sinking or bouncing the bar on the chest is illegal. The buttocks, shoulders and head must be in contact with the bench at all times and the lock out extension must be even. Some Associations do now allow the head to be off the bench. As with the squat once the lifter starts up with the bar the bar cannot move downward.

There are two variations of commands for the bench press, depending on meet affiliation.

- 1) The lifter lowers the bar and holds the bar motionless on the chest until a “press” command is given by the official (about one second). At the completion of the

lock out the lifter must wait for the “rack” command before touching the racks with the bar.

- 2) A variation of this is that after the lifter unracks the bar he must wait with arms extended for a “start” command then lower the bar to a dead stop on the chest and on his own judgement press the bar up to wait for the “rack” command.

## **C. DEADLIFT**

The lifter must lift the bar from the floor without hitching the bar along the legs. The bar must not move down once the lift is initiated. The lift is completed when the lifter stands upright with the shoulders squared and the knees straight. At this point the official gives the “down” command, the bar must then be lowered under control to the floor.

## **V. TRAINING**

### **A. Cycles: in-season vs. off-season**

There is tremendous personal variety in training cycles depending on the needs of the individual. It is not our purpose to present a comprehensive discussion but to outline some basic concepts.

- 1) In-season cycles are usually 8 -12 week work ups to the max lifts required for the contest. Early in the cycle would be a brief conditioning phase followed by a high volume phase with the inclusion of a number of assistance exercises. In the last phase (or microcycle) the lifter will concentrate on the three competition lifts reducing the volume and increasing rest periods and weight on the bar.

- 2) Off-season cycles are used for recovery (active rest), muscle hypertrophy and mass and to work on weak links that effect the competitive lifts. In the off-season the lifter may or may not actually perform many exercises with the competitive lifts.
  
- 3) There are many variations possible depending on the experience of the lifter. However, fundamental to all programs are the following:
  - a. multi-joint lifts for most exercises
  - b. work both sides of the joint (e.g. the push/pull principle)
  - c. perform all exercises with perfect technique
  - d. get sufficient rest to recover between workouts (this means that you will not lift more than 3 or 4 times per week)
  - e. keep the intensity high (if you are doing this then "d" will make lots of sense)

## **B. Assistance Exercise**

Assistance exercises are meant to enhance performance of the competitive lifts and will vary with the needs of the individual lifter. Listed below are some examples of assistance work that might apply to each lift. This is not intended to be a complete list.

- 1) For the Squat:
  - a. high bar squats, 20 rep squats, safety bar squats, box squats, front squats, hip belt squats, cambered bar squats
  - b. "hyper" extensions, reverse hypers

- c. abdominal work: standing crunches, bar or dumbbell side bends, weighted “sit-ups”
- d. speed work with chains or bands
- e. good mornings

- 2) Bench Press:
  - a. flat, incline and decline barbell and dumbbell bench press.
  - b. overhead press, push press
  - c. close grip bench, weighted dips
  - d. partial reps (e.g. board press, rack press, lock-outs)
  - e. speed work

- 3) Deadlift:
  - a. trap bar deadlifts, deadlifts off plates, rack work (partial pulls)
  - b. power cleans, low pulls, isometrics
  - c. stiff leg or Romanian deadlifts
  - d. straight leg good mornings
  - e. grip work

## **VI. STRETCHING**

A comprehensive stretching program is essential in order to prevent injury and to aid in recovery from workouts. It is essential that the trainee warm up thoroughly including doing full active range of motion for the exercise to follow and some dynamic stretching prior to tackling the work sets of an exercise. During rest periods between sets it makes sense to perform some stretches for the muscles being worked. At the end of each training session some time needs to be allowed for post work-out stretching, this not only improves/maintains range of motion but will help to minimize DOMS.

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## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Instructor: Dave Mansfield MA, MSPT, CSCS**  
**AAU Power Lifting World Championships**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Place Master's Division**

This program is designed for coaches or athletes who are seeking to improve their strength and who may be interested in Powerlifting competition. It is also suitable for clinicians who work with strength athletes and who may be looking for a further understanding of the lifts and training involved. This program will be lecture accompanied by demonstration (or video/photo examples) as well as discussion of the needs specific to the participants. The nature of this program makes it suitable for basic and intermediate levels. The program can be readily modified to make it appropriate for advanced level instruction.

The purpose of this course is to provide the participants with a sound knowledge of the techniques required to perform the three competitive Power Lifts correctly (squat, bench press and dead lift). The program will cover an overview of Power Lifting competition, the basic rules for the three lifts, safe lifting technique and variations on the lifts as well as a section on training both off season and in preparation for competition which will include assistance exercises, set and rep schemes and peaking cycles.

### **Objectives**

At the completion of this program participants will be able to:

1. Describe the three Power Lifts and safe performance technique.
2. Identify the requirements for a "legal" competition lift.
3. Design a training program to increase strength in the squat, bench press and dead lift.
4. Identify safe and unsafe technique for assistance exercises and be able to apply the appropriate assistance exercises in their training programs.
5. Describe the difference between "Raw" and "Assisted" lifting and have a basic knowledge of the equipment available to enhance safety and/or allow for the use of maximum poundage.