

# Your First Weightlifting Competition

## The Olympic Lifts

In a weightlifting competition, competitors have 3 attempts in the Snatch and 3 attempts in the Clean & Jerk. The competitor's best Snatch is added to their best Clean & Jerk to form the Total.

There are just a few rules of the Olympic Lifts that you need to know at this point:

1. The bar must be lifted overhead in one movement, that is NO PRESS OUT. You do this in training anyway so there is nothing to worry about there.
2. You must keep the bar overhead, arms locked out, until you are given a down signal by the referees.
3. You must STAND STILL with the bar overhead with FEET IN LINE, before you will get a down signal.
4. When you are given a down signal, let the bar fall in front of you to the ground but KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE BAR until it has passed the height of the shoulders. Then you can let go.

From a refereeing point of view it does not matter whether you perform snatches or cleans with full or partial squats. However, from a coaching point of view if you are used to doing full snatches you should persist with full snatches because this is better for the long-term.

## Format of the Competition

Shortly before competition commences for your group, there will be a presentation of all competitors. Be ready for this. After the presentation, there will be a 10 minute interval before the first lift takes place. There are rules that determine the order of lifting but you don't need to worry about this. In Weightlifting competitions it is the job of the coach to make sure that the athlete warms up and is ready for their first lift. The order of lifting follows the **ascending bar principle** and, as a beginner all you need to know is that those competitors requesting lighter weights will go before those requesting heavier weights, and that the bar gradually increased in weight until all competitors have completed their lifts.

There are rules in competitions about the length of time that a competitor is allowed. For your first lift, from the moment you are called to the platform, a time clock starts and you are allowed 1 minute to start the lift. You don't have to complete the lift in 1 minute but you must start the lift in one minute. Sometimes a competitor 'follows themselves', that is they take two consecutive attempts as there is no other competitor in between these weights. In this circumstance the lifter is allowed 2 minutes (an extra minute).

## The Weigh-in

All competitors must weigh-in during the allotted time. Usually there is a one hour period. As a beginner you should not try to reduce or elevate your bodyweight. Just weigh-in as you normally are. Your weight will be recorded. Competitors are weighed in by an official of the same sex and undergarments can be worn on the scales. In some cases competitors might weigh-in in Lycra bike pants, etc. At the weigh-in you must also nominate your starting weights (see below).

## Setting Your Starting Weights

This aspect of competitions is really important for beginners. The mistake that is commonly made is that athletes (and their coaches) make the assumption that starting high gives the best chance of a good result.

This assumption is incorrect, for two reasons: (1) Starting high often leads to getting just one snatch or one clean and jerk, and sometimes not even one (the lifter 'bombs out')! It is far better for the lifter to start low and make three confident lifts. This policy will generally provide the best result. (2) Athletes in the first competition, in any case, should not be concerned at all with trying to beat their personal bests. The actual weights lifted are not important in your first competition but what IS IMPORTANT is that you get all 6 lifts. This strategy builds confidence, and this is of the utmost importance.

Here is an example. Let's say that a beginner has never lifted more than 40Kg in training on the snatch. An appropriate starting weight might be 32Kg, then taking 36Kg for 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt and then 39Kg for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Possibly, if the coach thinks the lifter is going particularly well, the lifter might be allowed to go to 40Kg for their 3<sup>rd</sup> lift. So you see that beginners should not really be trying to beat their best in their first competition, and if they try it adds unwelcome pressure that is not helpful in the long run.

You will be asked to nominate your starting weights when you weigh-in.

## The Main Objectives

1. Enjoy yourself, be peaceful and calm
2. Don't put yourself under any pressure
3. Aim to get 6 out of 6 lifts (see setting starting weights below)
4. Learn a few things about how competitions work
5. Learn a few things about yourself
6. Support others

## Warming-Up

It's the coach's job to make sure the lifter does not warm-up too soon or too late. However, sometimes the coach has many lifters to look after and therefore it is useful for competitors to make a judgement for themselves. For the sake of simplicity, a good warm-up for either the Snatch or the Clean & Jerk will take about 30 minutes. In a period of 30 minutes an athlete can do 10 minutes of light mobilisation to get the body temperature up and improve flexibility, and then 20 minutes of specific warm-up on the lift. This 20 minute period should include 2 or 3 sets of just "playing with the bar" i.e. performing Snatches or Clean & Jerks with an empty bar, moving not too fast but nice and easily. This helps to calm yourself down. In these 2-3 sets you can perform 5 reps easily because it's just an empty bar. After these sets just begin to increase the weight of the bar by small amounts and doing one set every 2 minutes.

Here is an example for a female who is intending to start on 32Kg for the snatch:

15/5 reps x 3 sets, 20/3 reps, 22/2 reps, 24/2 reps, 26/2 reps, 28/1 rep, 30/1 rep.

Here is an example for a male who is intending to start on 60Kg for the snatch (males and females have a different bar!).

20/5 reps x 3 sets, 30/2 reps, 35/2 reps, 40/2 reps, 45/2 reps, 50/1 rep, 54/1 rep, 57/1 rep

Don't be tempted to do your starting weight in the warm-up before going on to the platform to do it! This does not help.

The problem for most competitors is that their 20 minute specific warm-up is interrupted by the presentation of competitors. It is necessary to allow for this. Therefore if a competitor knows they will be first on the platform because they are requesting the lightest weight, then their 30 minutes warm-up period should start 20 minutes before the presentation and continue 10 minutes after the warm-up period.

On the other hand if a competitor is due to start in the middle of the session, say after there have been 18 lifts, then they might start their warm-up just after the presentation. Then again if the lifter will be the last out onto the platform, they might not start warming up until after the competition has started.

So it is really helpful to have some idea where you are going to be in the competition order – early in the group, in the middle or towards the end of the group. This enables you to have some idea of when to start your warm-up routine. Fortunately, this is the responsibility of whoever is coaching but it is still helpful for the athlete to take a look at the list of competitors or the scoreboard and see where they will probably be.

When you are warming up, a simple rule to follow is to perform one set every TWO lifts on the competition platform. This really helps to work out when to start.

## Clothing

Beginners are not required to wear a 'lifting suit' but if you have one, that's okay. Normally beginners would wear something like bike pants or some type of stretchy but close fitting shorts, and then a T-shirt or singlet top tucked in. Do not wear any clothing that covers the elbows or the knees, as this is against the rules. Also do not wear a shirt with a collar. Try to look reasonable smart!!

## Further Advice

Please contact Leo Isaac at email: [teacher@leoisaac.com](mailto:teacher@leoisaac.com)