

Problem: Pulling with a rounded back

Possible Solutions

1. Tell the athlete to stick his/her chest out
2. Pull with a more upright torso with respect to the platform and have the athlete bend his/her knees more in the starting position
3. Teach proper back and front squatting form
4. Strengthen the back musculature

Problem: Too much separation between the barbell and the lifter during the pull

Possible Solutions:

1. Tell the athlete to keep the bar closer to his/her body
2. Make sure the athlete's shoulders are over the barbell (and not behind it) in the starting position
3. Make sure the athlete is balanced on his/her feet in the starting position
4. Slow down the first pull, having the athlete keep his/her butt down, torso incline the same, and his/her shoulders over the bar
5. Work on clean pulls, being sure to work on the clean at the same time

Problem: Losing grip on the barbell

Possible Solutions:

1. Use the hook grip
2. Improve the lifter's grip strength
3. Use chalk
4. Use straps from time to time when grip strength is interfering with strength training (such as pull training above one's maximum) or performance

Problem: Missing the catch in front of the lifter

Possible Solutions

1. Timing error (pulling too long) – encourage the lifter to get under the barbell as soon as the second pull is completed as **FAST** as possible
2. Work on dead hang cleans (start in a standing position with the bar near the waist and pull the body into a full front squat) being sure to work on the clean at the same time
3. Correct the problem of too much separation between the barbell and the lifter

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Common Mistakes and Coaching Points for the Clean

Problem: Pulling with bent arms

Possible Solutions

1. Work on clean pulls, being sure to work on the clean at the same time
2. Make sure the lifter finishes the pull prior to starting the squat under, as bending the arms may be a sign of rushing the pull
3. Encourage the lifter to pull with the legs using the arms as mere “chains” attached to the bar
4. Strengthen the legs and back to improve confidence in pulling with straight arms

Problem: Trouble racking the bar on the shoulders, complaints of wrist inflexibility

Possible Solutions

1. Usually the problem lies in a lack of adequately externally rotating the arm at the shoulder joint – encourage the athlete to squeeze the elbows together and lift them as high as possible
2. Tell the athlete to “wrap their body around the bar” which means pulling the body down to meet the bar, whip the elbows as fast as possible, and place the bar on the shoulders instead of supporting it merely with the wrists
3. Have the athlete assume the lowest position in a front squat and raise their elbows up and together so as to stretch the muscles involved and teach them the proper catch position
4. Use front squats to reinforce proper bar positioning on the shoulders, being sure to practice cleans at the same time

Problem: Rounding the back and drooping the elbows during the recovery

Possible Solutions:

1. Strengthen the back, an especially useful exercise for this problem is the front squat
2. Tell the athlete to look upward and push their elbows “to the sky” when recovering from the low position
3. Make sure the squat under is performed correctly, with the feet placed around shoulder-width apart. A wide-stance squat under can require the back to support the barbell to a greater extent than a traditional squat under, which might cause the elbows to drop and the back to round – use of a properly performed front squat can reinforce this concept.

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Problem: Poor timing, missing parts, slow movement, frustration, general lack of performance

Possible Solutions:

1. STOP OVER COACHING!

Simply by using too many coaching cues too often, an athlete can experience “paralysis by analysis”. Try using one cue at a time, and let the athlete figure some things out by his or herself.

2. Allow them to make mistakes, because without those experiences, they will not learn

For more information regarding different teaching approaches for the clean, please refer to the articles on XL Athlete linked below:

[Different Approaches To Teaching The Clean Part I](#)

[Different Approaches To Teaching The Clean Part II](#)

[Different Approaches To Teaching The Clean Part III](#)

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