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Role of Weight Lifting in other competitive sports: A comprehensive Analysis

Dr. Hukum Singh

Assistant Professor,

Department of Physical Education, Government Degree College, Khairagarh, Agra, U.P.

Email- singhhukum25@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Weightlifting (often known as Olympic weightlifting) is a competitive strength sport in which athletes compete in lifting a barbell loaded with weight plates from the ground to overhead, with the aim of successfully lifting the heaviest weights. Athletes compete in two specific ways of lifting the barbell overhead. The snatch is a wide-grip lift, in which the weighted barbell is lifted overhead in one motion. The clean and jerk is a combination lift, in which the weight is first taken from the ground to the front of the shoulders (the clean), and then from the shoulders to over the head (the jerk). The sport formerly included a third lift/event known as clean and press. Each weightlifter gets three attempts at both the snatch and the clean and jerk, with the snatch attempted first. An athlete's score is the combined total of the highest successfully-lifted weight in kilograms for each lift. Athletes compete in various weight classes, which are different for each sex and have changed over time. The sport is competed at local, national, and international levels. The sport is governed internationally by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), which runs the World Weightlifting Championships each year. Competitive sports encompass a vast range, from popular team games like Soccer (Football), Basketball and Cricket to individual pursuits like Athletics (Track & Field), Swimming, Tennis, Golf and Gymnastics, encompassing strength sports (Weightlifting), combat sports (Boxing, Wrestling, Judo, Karate), water sports (Sailing, Rowing, Surfing), winter sports (Skiing, Skating, Curling), motorsports (F1, Rally), Kabaddi and Kho-Kho.

How Weightlifting Benefits Other Sports

- Explosive Power: Olympic lifts (snatch, clean & jerk, power versions) translate directly to jumping, sprinting, and throwing power in sports like basketball, football and track.
- Strength & Stability: Core lifts (squats, deadlifts, bench press) build foundational strength and stability crucial for tackling (rugby/football), balance (hockey), and generating force in any sport.
- Injury Prevention: Stronger muscles and connective tissues, built through varied lifting, help protect athletes from common sports injuries.

Sport-Specific Adaptations: Training includes movements mimicking sport demands, like kettlebell swings for core power or plyometrics for vertical jump.

Key Words- Weight Lifting, competitive sports, Power Lifting and Weight Training.

1. Introduction

Weightlifting (often known as Olympic weightlifting) is a competitive strength sport in which athletes compete in lifting a barbell loaded with weight plates from the ground to overhead, with the aim of successfully lifting the heaviest weights. Athletes compete in two specific ways of lifting the barbell overhead. The snatch is a wide-grip lift, in which the weighted barbell is lifted overhead in one motion. The clean and jerk is a combination lift, in which the weight is first taken from the ground to the front of the shoulders (the clean), and then from the shoulders to over the head (the jerk). The sport formerly included a third lift/event known as clean and press. Each weightlifter gets three attempts at both the snatch and the clean and jerk, with the snatch attempted first. An athlete's score is the combined total of the highest successfully-lifted weight in kilograms for each lift. Athletes compete in various weight classes, which are different for each sex and have changed over time.

2. Historical Aspect

Competitions to establish who can lift the heaviest weight have been recorded throughout civilization, with the earliest known recordings including those found in Egypt, China, India, and Ancient Greece. Weightlifting is an Olympic sport, and has been contested in every Summer Olympic Games since 1920. While the sport is officially named "weightlifting", the terms "Olympic weightlifting" and "Olympic-style weightlifting" are often used to distinguish it from the other sports and events that involve the lifting of weights, such as powerlifting, weight training, and strongman events. Similarly, the snatch and the clean and jerk are known as the "Olympic lifts". While other strength sports test limit of strength, Olympic-style weightlifting also tests limits of human power (explosive strength): the Olympic lifts are executed faster, and require more mobility and a greater range of motion during their execution, than other barbell lifts. The Olympic lifts, and their variations (e.g., power snatch, power clean) as well as components of the Olympic lifts (e.g., cleans, squats) are used by elite athletes in other sports to train for both explosive strength (power) and functional strength.

3. Olympic Games 1920–1972

In 1920, weightlifting returned to the Olympics and, for the first time, as an event in its own right – and weightlifting has been contested at every (summer) Olympics Games since. The 1920 Games took place at Antwerp in Belgium; and fourteen nations competed. The competition lifts were the 'one hand' snatch, the 'one hand' clean and jerk and the 'two hands' clean and jerk. At the next Olympic Games, in Paris, in 1924, the 'two hands' press and the 'two hands' snatch were added to the program, making a total of five lifts; and weight classes were introduced for competitors, with weightlifters competing in five weight divisions.

The 110 kg division weightlifting winners at the 1980 Summer Olympics, held in Moscow

In 1928, the sport dropped the 'one hand' exercises, going forward with three 'two hand' exercises: the snatch, the clean and press, and the clean and jerk. The 1972 Olympics was the last Olympics featuring the clean and press, as difficulties in judging proper form led to it being dropped from subsequent competitions. Athletes, rather than "strictly" pressing the weight overhead with an upright torso, had been using their hips and leaning backward substantially. Some athletes were able to initiate the press with a hip thrust so rapid that judges found it difficult to determine whether or not they had utilized any knee bend to generate additional force, something strictly prohibited in the rules. Also prohibited was "excessive layback" (leaning back too much), but it was considered too difficult to determine what degree of layback constituted a rule violation. As a result, the clean and press was discontinued as a competition lift after 1972. 1973–present

Since the 1973 World Weightlifting Championships, weightlifting competitions have been biathlons of the snatch and the clean and jerk, with the 1976 Olympics being the first Olympics in this format.

4. Women's weightlifting

In 1987, women's world championship events were included for the first time in IWF's annual World Weightlifting Championships, with women such as Karyn Marshall (US) and Cai Jun (China) amongst the winners in that first year. Yet it was not until the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, that women's weightlifting was incorporated into the Olympics. China's Chen Yanqing became an early star of women's weightlifting at the Olympics—as she won Olympic gold two games in a row, in 2004 and 2008.

5. Competition

The sport is competed at local, national, and international levels. The sport is governed internationally by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), which runs the World Weightlifting Championships each year.

The snatch is a lift wherein an athlete sweeps the barbell up and overhead in one fluid action: the lifter takes a wide-grip on the bar and pulls the barbell off the floor before rapidly re-bending their knees to get themselves under the barbell (usually bringing themselves into a deep overhead squat position), so that the barbell is supported over their head with arms

outstretched. The snatch is then completed by the lifter rising to a standing position while holding the barbell overhead. The snatch demands precise balance.

The clean and jerk is a combination lift, in which the athlete gets the barbell overhead in two stages: first by lifting the barbell into support on the front of the shoulders, a position known as the front rack (the clean), and then lifting it from shoulders to overhead (the jerk). To perform the clean, the lifter takes a shoulder-width grip on the bar and pulls it off the floor, and then rapidly re-bends their knees (and bends their arms) to get their body under the barbell and "catch" the bar on the front of the shoulders (usually in a deep front squat position). The lifter finishes the clean by rising to a standing position while holding the barbell on the front of their shoulders. The lifter then uses the jerk to jump into a bent knees position (most commonly with one foot forward and the other back, a technique known as the split jerk) while pumping the barbell overhead. The jerk is completed when the lifter re-straightens the legs (bringing them together after a split jerk) so they come to a straight standing position with the barbell held overhead. A third lift, the clean and press, was also a competition lift from 1924 through 1972. It entails a clean followed by an overhead press. The overhead press is distinguished from the jerk, in that jerking movements, bending of the legs, and displacement of the feet are prohibited. It was discontinued after 1972 due to difficulties in judging proper form.

6. Weight classes

Athletes compete in a division determined by their body mass. These are the new IWF weight classes, which go into effect on August 1, 2026.

7. BODYWEIGHT CATEGORIES (Regulation)

There are eight (8) bodyweight categories for Junior men and Senior men. All competitions under IWF Technical and Competition Rules & Regulations (TCRR) must be held in the following categories and sequence:

1. 60 kg
2. 65 kg
3. 71 kg
4. 79 kg
5. 88 kg
6. 94 kg
7. 110 kg
8. +110 kg

From 01 August 2026

1. 60 kg
2. 65 kg
3. 70 kg
4. 75 kg
5. 85 kg
6. 95 kg
7. 110 kg

8. +110 kg

There are eight (8) bodyweight categories for Junior women and Senior women. All competitions under IWF TCRR must be held in the following categories and sequence:

1. 48 kg
2. 53 kg
3. 58 kg
4. 63 kg
5. 69 kg
6. 77 kg
7. 86 kg
8. +86 kg

From 01 August 2026

1. 49 kg
2. 53 kg
3. 57 kg
4. 61 kg
5. 69 kg
6. 77 kg
7. 86 kg
8. +86 kg

8. Competitive sports

Competitive sports encompass a vast range, from popular team games like Soccer (Football), Basketball, and Cricket to individual pursuits like Athletics (Track & Field), Swimming, Tennis, Golf, and Gymnastics, encompassing strength sports (Weightlifting), combat sports (Boxing, Wrestling, Judo, Karate), water sports (Sailing, Rowing, Surfing), winter sports (Skiing, Skating, Curling), motorsports (F1, Rally), Kabaddi and Kho-Kho.

9. Popular Team & Ball Sports

- Soccer / Football (Association Football)
- Basketball & 3x3 Basketball
- Cricket
- Volleyball & Beach Volleyball
- Baseball & Softball
- Rugby (Union & League)
- Handball & Beach Handball
- Hockey (Field & Ice)

- Netball

Individual & Racquet Sports

- Athletics (Track & Field, Running, Jumping, Throwing)
- Tennis, Table Tennis, Badminton, Squash
- Swimming, Diving, Water Polo
- Cycling (Road, Track)
- Golf
- Gymnastics (Artistic, Rhythmic, Trampoline)
- Skateboarding & Surfing

Combat Sports & Martial Arts

- Boxing, Kickboxing
- Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)
- Judo, Karate, Taekwondo, Wrestling (Freestyle/Greco-Roman)
- Fencing

Strength & Endurance Sports

- Weightlifting, Powerlifting, Bodybuilding
- Triathlon

How Weightlifting Benefits Other Sports:

- Explosive Power: Olympic lifts (snatch, clean & jerk, power versions) translate directly to jumping, sprinting, and throwing power in sports like basketball, football and track.
- Strength & Stability: Core lifts (squats, deadlifts, bench press) build foundational strength and stability crucial for tackling (rugby/football) balance (hockey) and generating force in any sport.
- Injury Prevention: Stronger muscles and connective tissues, built through varied lifting, help protect athletes from common sports injuries.
- Sport-Specific Adaptations: Training includes movements mimicking sport demands, like kettlebell swings for core power or plyometrics for vertical jump.
- Examples in Other Sports:
- Gymnastics: Olympic lifts improve upper body power for routines.
- Hockey: Improves balance, stability, and quick turns.

- Rugby/Football: Builds tackling strength and explosive power.
- Martial Arts/Wrestling: Enhances grappling strength, power generation, and endurance.
- Track & Field: Boosts throwing power (shot put, discus) and explosive leg drive.
- Types of Lifts Used:
 - Olympic Lifts: Snatch, Clean & Jerk, Power Cleans, Jerks.
 - Powerlifting Lifts: Squat, Bench Press, Deadlift (often integrated).
 - Accessory Lifts: Kettlebell swings, overhead presses, rows and core work.

In addition to Olympic weightlifting, other competitive sports that are fundamentally based on lifting weights include powerlifting and strongman competitions. Bodybuilding also heavily involves weightlifting as part of its training regimen, as do various strength athletics disciplines.

Competitive Strength Sports

- Powerlifting: This sport focuses on lifting the heaviest possible weight for a single repetition in three specific barbell lifts:
 - The squat
 - The bench press
 - The dead lift Competitions total the highest successful lift in each category to determine the winner within specific weight divisions. The international governing body is the International Powerlifting Federation (IPF).
- Strongman: Strongman competitions feature diverse events that test overall functional strength, speed and endurance using unconventional objects. Common events include:
 - Atlas Stones (lifting heavy spherical stones onto platforms)
 - Farmer's walks (carrying heavy implements for distance or time)
 - Truck pulls
 - Axle presses (lifting a thick-bar barbell overhead)
 - Deadlifts (often with non-standard equipment like tires)
- Bodybuilding: While bodybuilding involves extensive weightlifting, the competition criteria differ significantly from powerlifting or Olympic weightlifting. The primary goal is developing a muscular and symmetrical physique, with judging based on muscle size, definition, and aesthetics rather than the maximum weight lifted in a single attempt.
- Kettlebell Lifting (Girevoy Sport): This is a lesser-known but dedicated sport centered on specific lifts with kettlebells, focusing on endurance and strength.

- Para Powerlifting: The weightlifting sport at the Paralympic Games, where athletes compete to bench press the heaviest weight.

Weightlifting as Supplemental Training in Other Sports

Many other sports incorporate weightlifting, specifically the Olympic lifts or variations like the power clean, into their training regimens to develop explosive power, speed and overall strength. Examples include:

1. Track and Field (especially throwing events like shot put and discus, and sprinters)
2. Rugby and American Football
3. Combat Sports (boxing and wrestling)
4. Swimming and Ice Hockey (for explosive power and agility)

10. Weight Lifting Sports

1. Olympic Weightlifting — competitors attempt to lift weights mounted on barbells to above the head.
2. Power Lifting — tests of strength on three lifts: dead lift, bench press and squat.
3. Strongman — a sport that tests competitors' strength in a variety of different events.
4. Hammer throw — an Olympic track and field event in which a heavy weight at the end of a wire is thrown for distance.
5. Stone Lift or Carry — involves moving stones as a test of strength.
6. Bodybuilding — participants show their developed muscular build through poses, and are judged based on muscularity, conditioning and symmetry.
7. Kettlebell Lifting — a weight lifting sport performed with kettlebells, which are heavy weights that resemble a cannonball with a handle.

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