

## **Myth: Olympic lifts are dangerous and may hurt my Athletes**

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Have you ever heard someone state that the Olympic lifts (snatch and clean & jerk) are dangerous? Have you wondered how they arrived at that opinion? Interestingly, we have research data that examines this phenomenon precisely.

Hamill et al. (1994), examined the number of injuries occurring in various sports per 100 hours of participation. They sent surveys to coaches who supervised athletes of ages 13-16. Their results showed that the weightlifting had the lowest rates of injury (0.0017 injuries per 100 hours, including 168,551 hours of participation). That was lower than 21 other activities, including normal weight training!

Another study by Byrd et al. noted a very low incidence of injury in youth weightlifters. The lack of injury in training and in 534 competitive lifts was discussed, none of which required medical attention or loss of training time.

Yet another study (Raske et al. 2002) showed a low rate of only 2.6 injuries per 1000 hours of activity. This type of data was summarized as far back as 1994 when Stone et al. came to the same conclusion.

So why do you think that public perceptions differ so vastly from the data? It probably has to do with the knowledge and experience of the coaches that work with these athletes in these studies. Their high level of coaching likely prevents athletes from putting themselves in situations that lead to injury.

The data suggests that those who believe that the Olympic lifts and their variations are dangerous may only need to further educate themselves on the technique and programming of such training to get the benefits of the Olympic lifts with the lowest potential of injury to their athletes! Broad sweeping statements on the injury rates don't seem to be supported by the data, and also do not lead to the discourse that might determine how we can use these lifts to improve sports performance.

Byrd R, Pierce K, Rielly L, Brady J. 2003. Young weightlifters' performance across time. *Sports Biomechanics* 2:133-40.

Hamill, BP. 1994: Relative Safety of Weightlifting and Weight Training. *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 8:53-57.

Pierce KC, Byrd R, Stone MH. Position statement and literature review: youth weightlifting. USOC Olympic Coach E-magazine, Fall 2006. <http://coaching.usolympicteam.com/>

Raske A, Norlin, R. 2002. Injury Incidence and Prevalence among Elite Weight and Power Lifters *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* 30:248-256.

Stone MH, Fry AC, Ritchie M, Stoesel-Ross L, Marsit JL. 1994. Injury Potential and Safety Aspects of Weightlifting Movements. *Strength and Conditioning* 16:15-21.