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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Inside the Mind of Weightlifters: The Mental Preparation of Greek-Cypriot Olympic-Style Weightlifting Athletes

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## Supplementary Material: General Observation—Results and Discussion

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### Results

Some of the athletes described increased alertness during competition days. These athletes explained that the alertness has to do with the stress that is built up during competition, and they maintained that it helps increase concentration and therefore performance. Examples of this can be seen through the words of the following two athletes:

“During competition I got into a mentality that I have to concentrate. I don’t know if it was that, if it was just me, it was very difficult for me to lose concentration.” (Athlete 2)

“During competitions, you are more stressed, you have more adrenaline, either you want it or not, you are more concentrated.” (Athlete 3)

In a contrasting situation, like the following example, other athletes report better performance when stress levels during competition are low:

“At that particular competition I had no stress, there was no qualification or anything, it was a competition of minimum stress. I went very relaxed and as a result I did my two personal records which I haven’t been able to break yet.” (Athlete 7)

It is also important to mention that between the two lifts, the snatch and the clean and jerk (in Olympic-style weightlifting the athletes compete by executing two lifts: 1) the snatch, where the athlete has to lift a bar from the ground over his head in one wide gripped move, and 2) the clean and jerk, where the athlete has to lift a bar from the ground over his head in two close gripped moves), each athlete expressed one (usually the one causing more stress, with no consensus in which one) where more mental preparation was required. Below, two extracts from different athletes’ interviews present the above situation for each lift:

“At the snatch, which I know it is my move, I stress more if it will go well rather than the clean and jerk. I am more anxious when I lift a snatch, but instead I am more comfortable during the clean and jerk.” (Athlete 6)

“It is just that the clean and jerk, even if some consider it easier, I think that the snatch is easier. At the clean and jerk I need even more concentration. I need more concentration there.” (Athlete 7)

In addition, it should not be omitted that some of the weightlifters indicated that after competition (and sometimes after important training sessions), besides the fatigue, the results affected their mood. An example of this is displayed in the following

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extract:

“The competition affects me, it is not that it is done and it’s over. I think about it and if it didn’t go well I am sad, if it went well I will be happy.”  
(Athlete 5)

## Discussion

As presented above, some athletes recognised an increased arousal, which relates with the stress during competition day. Martens (1987b), explains that the importance of the event is related to the stress levels caused to an athlete (for example in Olympic-style weightlifting: a competition which a qualification to an international competition depends on, versus a competition where there is no qualification). Some athletes explain that they benefit by this arousal, while others express higher performance at competitions where stress levels were low. This observation agrees with the individualised zones of optimal functioning model suggested by Hanin (1980, 1986, 1997). This model, in brief, explains that each athlete has a different, individual level of arousal where he/she performs at the maximum of his/her capabilities. The identification of this optimal arousal level can benefit athletes to perform better, but often coaches fail to recognise the athletes’ stress levels (Hanson & Gould, 1988). The procedure of identification of these levels can be perhaps enhanced by the consultation of sport psychologists, since their expertise allows them to recognise the optimal levels of arousal, and in addition they can educate and train coaches and athletes to recognise them better.

Another observation has to do with the fact that weightlifters refer to one of the two lifts (snatch and clean and jerk) as more stressful, without reaching a consensus on which of the two causes more stress. More specifically, neither of the two lifts was identified as more stressful to the weightlifters, but as suggested by the results of the study, it differs for each weightlifter. Further exploration of this is suggested, where specific aspects regarding the difference between the two lifts will be identified. Future research will introduce knowledge to coaches and athletes of the sport, which is essential for

better training and performance.

Some of the participants commented on the effect the competition has on their mood. The qualitative data of the study show that this effect, depending on the situation, can be either positive or negative and has duration in time. It is recommended that this effect, especially the negative, is taken into consideration by the athletes and coaches, while sport psychologists should be aware that they might have to intervene in cases where the athletes are heavily affected.

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