

## *Starting Strength*

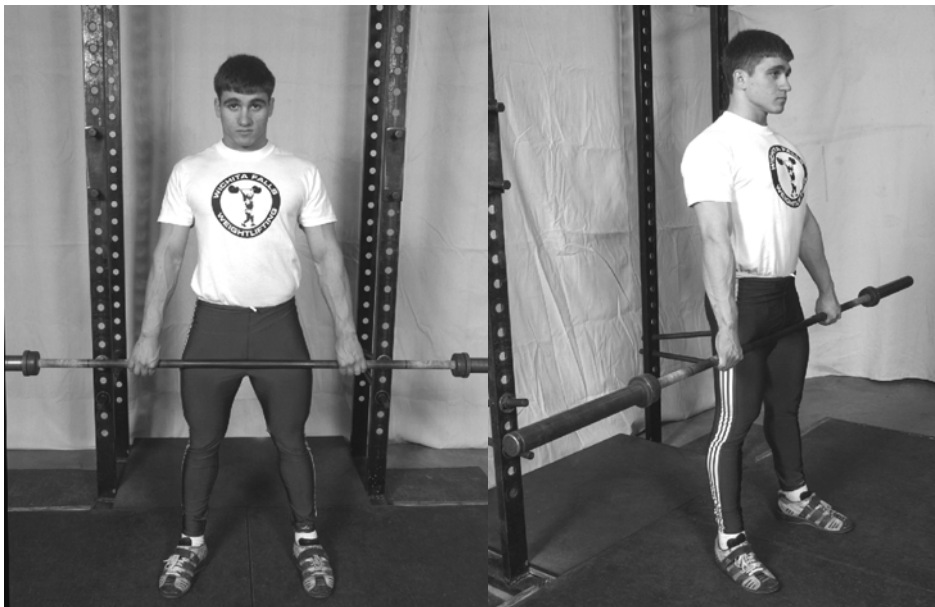
fastest speed trained on down. This is why the power clean makes the deadlift go up and the deadlift contributes to the power clean.

The weight that can be used for a heavy power clean, for most athletes, is the correct weight to use to improve force production. It is heavy enough to have to pull hard and by its very nature cannot be done without explosion. Unless it is moving fast at the top, it will not even rack on the shoulders. Its only drawback is that it is a very technique-dependent exercise. And that is why we are here. Let's learn to do it, and coach it.

### *Teaching the Power Clean*

The power clean is best taught from the top down. This means that the mechanics of catching, or “racking” the bar on the shoulders is taught first, and the emphasis in the trainee's mind is on the rack position from the beginning. It is important for him to learn that in the power clean speed becomes important at the top of the pull, not off the floor. The first part of the pull, from the floor to the mid-thigh, serves to get the bar in the correct position for the explosive movement that racks the bar, and it is done *correctly*, not quickly. From the mid-thigh on up the movement must get faster, but it cannot be done correctly if it has not started from the right place. By teaching the top of the power clean first, and only then worrying about getting it down to the floor, the coach assigns the correct priority to the most important part of the pull, as will the athlete. After all, the first part of the power clean is essentially a deadlift, which we already know how to do. When the top of the pull has been learned, we will slide down a little at a time into a deadlift, making the transition from half a movement to the whole thing.

First, the position at the top, with the bar in the hands at arms length, with straight elbows, straight knees, and chest up is referred to as the **Hang Position**. A power clean done from this starting point is referred to as a “hang power clean” (figure 3). This position is



**Figure 3.** The “hang” position.