

Boxers have cornermen; golfers have caddies, Batman has Robin. When it comes down to the actual competition, the boxer, golfer, and the Caped Crusader have to come through on their own, but their assistants play a key role in their success. The

powerlifter is out on the platform alone and that's all between the lifter, the weight, and gravity, but for best results at a meet, each lifter needs some specialized and dedicated support and that comes from his meet assistant. This support extends far beyond just yelling encouragement to the lifter on the platform. This is where an individual sport gets some team flavor.

In past articles I presented several checklists for lifters to review before and after a meet. The goal of those checklists was to help ensure a lifter was prepared for all items leading up to a meet as well as to learn from each meet's successes and failures. This checklist will lay out the job description of the meet assistant. To do this, I have broken out the checklist by categories: pre-meet, each lift, and miscellaneous.

STARTIN' OUT

A special section
dedicated to the
beginning lifter

ASSISTING AT THE MEET

as told to Powerlifting USA by Doug Daniels

Pre-Meet

1. Submitting opening attempts
2. Weigh-in assistance
3. Get understanding of meet rules
4. Ensure all lifting gear, etc., is good-to-go

Squat

1. Bar height and rack in/out setting for each attempt
2. Assist putting on squat suit for each attempt
3. Belt tightening
4. Knee wrapping
5. Knee wrap re-rolling after attempts
6. Assist loosening equipment between attempts
7. Chalk and powder application on lifter

Bench press

1. Assist putting on and removing bench shirt
2. Adjust bench shirt between attempts

3. Chalk application on lifter
4. Belt tightening
5. Foot platform location (if needed)
6. Hand off, if allowed

Deadlift

1. Assist in putting and removing lifting gear
2. Belt tightening
3. Powder application to lifter's legs

Miscellaneous

1. Warm-up room help
2. Keeping track of lifting order
3. Location of lifting gear
4. Assist in determining next attempts
5. Communicating next attempts to scorer's table
6. Quick check if bar is at least symmetrically loaded for attempt
7. Ask for spotters to clean excess chalk, etc., from platform and bar
8. Check lifter's standing during meet
9. Food and beverages
10. Critique lifting technique

11. Taking meet photos or videos

As you can see, the assistant's job description is substantial. I'm sure there are other duties you could add through brainstorming, so this list could easily grow. On the occasions when I was an assistant, I've felt as exhausted as the lifter I was helping. You cannot underestimate the value of a competent aide at a meet. I've seen lifters not even take the platform for an attempt because they were not aware it was their turn to lift. That's a costly and unnecessary mistake. This should never happen with competent meet support.

The combination of critiquing lifting technique, realistic attempt selection, proper and timely lifting gear application, and paying attention to what's going on at the meet can mean the difference between a successful meet and a disaster. Without good meet assistance, lots of hard work can go right down the drain. Of course, shouting encouragement to your lifter is just as critical as any item on the list above. An effective meet assistant can make an individual sport a successful team event.

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WPO President Kieran Kidder assisted James Hoskinson with his lifts at the WPC World PL/BP Championships in Fresno, California. (photograph by Mike Lambert)