

THE REACHUP JUMP SHOT: THE LESS REACHBACK, THE BETTER

By Robert Tiltz

The reachup jump shot is easy to execute but fragile. The easy part is the on-the-rise reachup to close to full extension and then shooting with an abbreviated, heavy-on-hand-action release. The fragile part is the disruptive tendency to attempt reinforcement of the relatively weak hand action release with a forearm stroke by way of a reachback. There are ways to supplement the reachup release, but a reachback is not one of them.

The reachup jump shot's release starts at near full extension and consists of an upward rotation of the shooting shoulder, a short up-and-out straightstroke-push by the shooting arm and brushing hand action. Despite the shooting shoulder's sometimes minor role during the release, the shoot-on-the-rise reachup jump shot still qualifies as a whole-body jump shot. That's because the upward rotation of the shooting shoulder channels the athleticism and the power of the jump of the reachup jump shot into the release.

The reachup jump shot's weak release partly results from its near total elimination of forward rotation of the shooting shoulder. The reachup jump shot's upward rotation of the shooting shoulder prior to and during the release rules out forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release. Whole-body supplemental power production techniques like merging the arm action that raises the basketball to the shooting position for the start of the release with the release both reinforce the reachup release and avoid disrupting the vertical flow of the reachup jump shot with a reachback.

Little shooting shoulder involvement in the reachup release also limits the reachup jump shot's strongside pull-up capability. That's because the forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release is the primary power source for the rotation of the square-in-the-air jump that many strongside pull-up jump shots require and all could use. Still, the reachup jump shot does have some degree of strongside capability. Disruption problems will occur, however, if the reachup jump shot's strict strongside limits are exceeded.

But when used properly, the reachup jump shot has a major plus side. Alex English killed with his at shallow mid-range. Patrick Ewing used his to shoot over defenders on the inside. Richard Hamilton attacked the defense with his at medium mid-range.



Alex English



Patrick Ewing



Richard Hamilton

Dwyane Wade, Russell Westbrook, and James Harden are good but not great reachup jumpshooters. Wade's reachup jump shot often includes a reachback, which hurts control.

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Westbrook occasionally shoots a very nice reachup pull-up jump shot, but he is too often prone to recklessly exceeding the reachup jump shot's built-in long-range and strongside limitations, which disrupts his reachup release. While Harden shoots plenty of long-range 3-point reachup semi-jump shots and shoots them well, he seldom pulls up with his athletically dynamic, fully extended reachup jump shot off his signature strongside drives to the basket.



Dwyane Wade



Russell Westbrook



James Harden

Earlier reachup jumpshooters were every bit as great as those that followed. Bob Pettit used his length, athleticism and fully extended reachup release to shoot over any and every defender. Calvin Murphy used his strength, quickness and fully extended reachup release to excel from mid-range. Louie Dampier and Fred Brown were effective at mid-range, but both were better known for their long-range shooting, which relied on whole-body supplementary power production techniques such as shooting on the rise and a one motion release. Most reachup jumpshooters never master its long-range skillset.



From left, Bob Pettit, Calvin Murphy, Louie Dampier and Freddie Brown

LaMarcus Aldridge, Klay Thompson, Kawhi Leonard, Donovan Mitchell and Jalen Brunson are present-day elite reachup jumpshooters. The last four have long-range capabilities because of their mastery of the reachup jump shot's supplementary power production techniques. Aldridge usually shot a variety of pull-up and fallaway reachup jump shots from within a two or three step

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radius of his preferred starting points at shallow and medium mid-range. But Aldridge was an infrequent 3-point shooter, which was probably because he never mastered the reachup jump shot's supplementary power production techniques. Thompson is dynamic and deadly with the reachup jump shot from all distances. Yet Thompson was for a time the third offensive option behind two superstar teammates, which led him to keep a good deal of his own offense under wraps. Leonard shoots the reachup jump shot with perfect form from all distances. But because he often faces defenses stacked against the to-the-basket pull-up moves that best suit the reachup jump shot, Leonard should counter by adding the strongside-laterally-oriented whole-body reachback jump shot to his offensive repertoire. Mitchell squeezes as much strongside pull-up capability out of the reachup jump shot as possible in pursuit of unstoppable strongside shoot-drive offensive balance, which he completes with relentless stop-and-go strongside drives. Still, if Mitchell added jump shot diversity with a whole-body reachback jump shot, he would expand his strongside lateral options, athleticize his post-up jumpshooting and add the #1 crunchtime weapon to his game. Brunson builds his point guard game around the strongside reachup pull-up jump shot and strongside stop-and-go drives with their body-wedge protection doing double duty as a battering ram to help create space to shoot and to pass. As a result, Brunson is able to implement the point guard ideal of operating in and dominating from the middle of the defense.



L to R, LaMarcus Aldridge, Klay Thompson, Kawhi Leonard, Donovan Mitchell, Jalen Brunson

In the WNBA, Elena Delle Donne shoots an outstanding reachup jump shot from short-, mid- and long-range. Just like Aldridge, Thompson, Leonard, Mitchell and Brunson, Delle Donne maintains her form by minimizing the reachback of the reachup jump shot. And just like Aldridge, Thompson, Leonard, Mitchell and Brunson, Delle Donne dominates the opposition at all distances with the reachup jump shot.



Elena Delle Donne