

READING: IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

By Robert Tilitz

Based on its contribution to winning, the jump shot is arguably by far the most important skill in basketball. The trouble is that relatively few players are very good at shooting the jump shot and nobody is good at teaching how to shoot it. But now for the first time since the inception of the jump shot decades ago there is legitimate hope for frustrated jumpshooters and failed shooting coaches. Hope has arrived in the form of my whole-body jump shot theory, which is written up for all to read.

The whole-body jump shot theory describes previously unrecognized athletic and powerful big-muscle jump shot techniques. It also explains how and why those big-muscle techniques work. The whole-body jump shot theory's detailed descriptions and explanations invite the mind as well as the body to participate in the jump shot learning process. Of course, understanding how and why the jump shot works does not guarantee success on the basketball court. But such knowledge does provide a sound basis for the practice that is necessary to gain competence shooting the jump shot.

Given the passion that young basketball players feel for their sport, it is probable that many would willingly, even enthusiastically, read a proven how-to shooting manual. On the other hand, some passionate young basketball players might not opt for reading as a jump shot problem solver because their reading skills are deficient. The hope here, however, is that the promise of a proven how-to manual would motivate at least some of those reluctant-to-read youngsters to attempt to work through their reading trepidations in pursuit of their passion for basketball. If so, the potential exists for a double reward. One is a better jump shot. The other is a newfound appreciation of reading.

But what happens to those in need who do not seek jump shot salvation through reading? It is likely that many would turn to an intermediary, such as a coach, who has done the reading. That can work. But what works best when it comes to learning sports skills, coaching or reading? The answer put forward here is that both are best when working with each other. The coach provides outside eyes to see what's going right and what's going wrong. The strength of reading, however, lies in the thought processes that it stimulates. Proficient readers can compare and contrast, criticize, reason, reflect, review, memorize, interpret, contemplate, study and so on. Then there is the practicality of reading. Readers are independent. Readers can engage whenever the inspiration strikes. And that could be crucial for the familiar basketball obsessed youngster whose moments of inspiration are typically not limited to when he or she is under supervision.

So there is a role for reading in learning how to shoot a jump shot. That's because of the nature of reading, not the text of the whole-body jump shot theory. But how about using the text of the whole-body jump theory to add relevancy and meaning to the NBA's reading programs. To date, the NBA's efforts have largely consisted of star players affirming the importance of reading. Well intentioned? Yes. Educationally sound? No. Advice is one thing, motivation is another. The idea should be to harness the energy and the work that young basketball players put into their sport and redirect it into reading. Well, the whole-body jump shot theory opens the door to that possibility.