

HOW TO SET UP THE SHOOTING GRIP FOR STRONGSIDE PULL-UP JUMP SHOTS: THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

By Robert Tilitz

Setting up the shooting grip for strongside whole-body pull-up jump shots requires a specialized ballhandling routine. The shooting grip setup is critical to the strongside pull-up jump shot's attack capability, which in turn opens up the strongside game with all of its complementary shooting, driving and passing options. So it is not at all an exaggeration to call the strongside shooting grip setup the key to the kingdom.

The shooting grip setup for strongside pull-up jump shots is more complicated than the shooting grip setup for weakside pull-up jump shots. To set up the shooting grip for weakside pull-up jump shots, the off-hand should first grab the weakside dribble on the side of the basketball. Then the off-hand should shift the basketball across the body toward its dominant side. After the across-the-body shift locates the basketball on the dominant-side waist-high or a little lower, the dominant hand should reach down and apply a bent-back, half-hand grip on the top of the basketball. Then basketball should be raised to the shooting position for the start of the release during the jump of the weakside pull-up jump shot. Raising the basketball automatically locates the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip underneath the basketball, completing the setup of the weakside shooting grip. It is the ease and simplicity of setting up their initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip that accounts for the popularity of weakside jump shots.

The ballhandling for the setup of the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip is more complicated and therefore more difficult to learn than the ballhandling for the setup of the weakside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip. In fact, of all the whole-body jump shot theory's techniques, setting up the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip is the most difficult to learn. How difficult? It can take a few days to a few weeks to learn.

The ballhandling for the setup of the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip starts when the dominant hand grabs the strongside dribble on the side of the basketball. Then the dominant hand sweeps the basketball forward to softly slam it into the off-hand. The result should be a firm and flexible double-whole-hand grip on with the hands located on opposite sides of the basketball. After the firm and flexible double-whole-hand grip sets up, the hard part of setting up the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip begins.

The hard part of the setup for the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip takes place as the jumpshooter drops into a gather. The hard part of the setup of the strongside shooting grip consists of the ballhandling that transforms the initial oppositional firm and flexible double-whole-hand grip into a bent-back, half-hand grip on the top of the basketball. That transformation requires the shooting hand to rotate the basketball inward toward the middle of the body. The inward rotation automatically relocates the shooting hand from the side to the top of the basketball. It is crucially important to note that the relocation of the shooting hand results from the rotation, not from removing the shooting hand from its initial location on the side of the basketball to relocate it. The relocation of the shooting hand to the top of the basketball sets up the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip. Once again for emphasis, during relocation, the shooting hand must never remove itself from where it first grabbed the strongside dribble on the side of the basketball. Any separation would result in loss of control of the basketball.

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As the shooting hand rotates the basketball, relocating itself from the side to the top of the basketball to set up the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip, the off-hand should maintain its whole-hand grip on the side of the basketball. But the off-hand should also reduce the pressure of its whole-hand grip to allow the rotating basketball to slide over it. At the same time, the off-hand must apply enough pressure to prop up the basketball. Once the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip is set up, the off-hand should reapply enough pressure with its whole-hand grip to firmly secure the basketball.

Grabbing the strongside dribble with the dominant hand and forming the firm and flexible double-whole-hand grip should occur when the inside foot hits the ground and starts to brake for the pull-up, which is the first step of the strongside jump shot's required two-step stop. Setting up the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip should take place as the outside foot is stepping into the strongside jump shot, which is the second step of the two-step stop. At the same time, the jumpshooter should be dropping into the gather. The second step of the two-step stop with the outside foot, which steps into the strongside pull-up jump shot, should also partially pivot the inside foot.



Reggie Miller – Angling the shooting hand in angles the shooting elbow out.

To set up the whole-body elbow-out jump shot's initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip, the shooting hand should rotate the basketball inward toward the middle of the body. For the whole-body elbow-out jump shot, the inward rotation should angle the shooting hand in, which will angle the shooting elbow out. See Reggie Miller. For the whole-body reachback jump shot, the inward rotation can either align the shooting hand with the basket, Kobe Bryant-style, or angle the shooting hand in, Ray Allen-style. That's because the whole-body reachback jump shot works with both an angled-in and an angled-out shooting elbow. Know that the inward



Kobe Bryant – Aligning the shooting hand with the basket aligns the shooting elbow with the basket.

rotation for the elbow-out is greater than the inward rotation for the elbow-in. For right-handers, the inward rotation of the basketball is like turning the lid of a jar to open it. For left-handers, the inward rotation is like turning the lid of a jar to close it.

There is a less complicated and easier-to-learn alternative to the just described #1 recommended ballhandling routine that sets up the shooting grip for strongside pull-up jump shots. The alternative works well enough to get the job done but is not as smooth and not as fast as the #1 recommended ballhandling routine. Both start after the dominant hand grabs the strongside dribble. But the alternative ballhandling routine consists mainly of the dominant hand rotating the basketball inward as it is being swept toward the off-hand, not after a two-hand grip has been formed. On the downside, the alternative's sweep can turn into an excessive loop. On the upside, given the similarity between the two ballhandling routines, a steady dose of defensive

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pressure can force the alternative to evolve into the smoother and faster #1 recommended ballhandling routine.

The ballhandling routine that sets up the strongside pull-up jump shot's shooting grip often starts back behind or next to the dominant-side hip with a reachback by the dominant arm to grab the lateral dribble. The ballhandling routine then continues with a forward sweep of the basketball to close in front of the body on its dominant side and slightly below the waist, which is also the whole-body jump shot's triple-threat position. At the same time, the jumpshooter's body is in motion by way of the gather and the two-step stop. The separate forward flows of movement from the ballhandling and from the pull-up more or less merge into one coordinated forward flow. That dynamic merge of the technical and the physical is what whole-body jumpshooting is all about.

After the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip, with the shooting hand either angled in or aligned with the basket, the basketball should be raised to the shooting position for the start of the release. Raising the basketball to the shooting position automatically rotates it backward by half a turn and, at the same time, sets up the bent-back, half-hand, underneath shooting grip. Raising the basketball to the shooting position starts on the ground but takes place mostly in the air during the jump of the strongside pull-up jump shot. The arm action that raises the basketball to the shooting position also helps to power the jump of the strongside pull-up jump shot.

Raising the basketball to the shooting position automatically rotates the basketball and the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip backward like hands-on backspin. In the process, the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip automatically rotates from on top of the basketball to underneath the basketball. Put another way, rotating the basketball while raising it up to the shooting position turns the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip upside-down. Or put yet another way, raising the basketball flips the initial bent-back, half-hand, on-top grip. Anyway you put it, raising the basketball forms the bent-back, half-hand, underneath shooting grip.

The technical differences between the whole-body elbow-out and the whole-body reachback jump shots first show up during the gather and continue when the basketball is raised to the shooting position for the start of the release. Mostly, that's because the setup for the whole-body elbow-out jump shot's shooting grip angles the shooting hand in, which draws it close to the body, but the setup for the whole-body reachback jump shot's shooting grip aligns the shooting hand with the basket, which slightly distances it from the body. Then the respective locations of the whole-body elbow-out and the whole-body reachback shooting positions come into play. When the basketball is raised to the forehead-high-or-higher, close-in-front whole-body elbow-out shooting position, it should be drawn straight up and close in front of the body. When the basketball is raised to the forehead-high-or-higher, one-hand-length back-past-the-front-of-the-head whole-body reachback shooting position, it should be swung up and back.