THE WINGGRIP JUMP SHOT: ELIMINATES EXTERNAL ROTATION OF THE SHOOTING HAND DURING SETUP

By Robert Tilitz

The winggrip jump shot is a player-sourced invention probably developed in response to difficulties shooting the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. Whether the invention was by design or by chance is unimportant. What matters most is that the winggrip jump shot is a medium improvement over the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. But the technique most responsible for the improvement, the winggrip's angled-out shooting hand, does not solve every elbow-in-strokesnap problem and in fact creates a few problems of its own.

Two of the most prominent winggrip jumpshooters are Peja Stojakovic and Anthony Edwards. To shoot the winggrip jump shot, Stojakovic in the 2000s preferred and Edwards at the present time prefers shooting from a semi-sideways shooting stance, which encourages and enhances weakside jumpshooting but discourages and limits strongside jumpshooting. Even so, their respective versions of the winggrip reachback jump shot are different from one another. The differences are greater at the start during the setup and smaller at the conclusion during the release. Explanations for the similarities and differences follow.

Peja Stojakovic

Anthony Edwards

Winggrip jumpshooters probably first angled out the shooting hand because it made it easier to set up the elbow-in, aligned-with-the-basket shooting position, which is widely recommended in the NBA. The winggrip works because it eliminates the need for an awkward external rotation of the shooting hand during setup in order to align it with the shooting elbow and the basket, which is also widely recommended in the NBA. The external rotation of the shooting hand also adds more stiffness to the already stiff elbow-in shooting position, tying tighter the straitjacket. Instead, winggrip jumpshooters replace the awkward external rotation of the shooting hand with an angled out shooting hand in order to ease the setup of an elbow-in shooting position.

The winggrip jump shot is also easier and more comfortable to shoot than the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. The ease and comfort starts with the aforementioned setup of the winggrip jump shot's shooting position for the start of the release. Absent the awkward external rotation of the shooting hand to set up a totally aligned shooting position for the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot, which the winggrip's angled-out shooting hand avoids, the big payoff for the winggrip jump shot's release is overall improved flexibility.

THE WINGGRIP JUMP SHOT

The best winggrip jumpshooters use the winggrip derived overall improved flexibility to partially implement several whole-body jump shot techniques. The winggrip jump shot's flexibility-enabled partial implementation of whole-body jump shot techniques starts with a forehead-high or higher setup of the winggrip jump shot's shooting position. From there, the winggrip's angled-out shooting grip discourages a strokesnap release. Instead, the best winggrip jumpshooters usually build their release around hand action that brushes the basketball, producing the winggrip's signature cross between backspin and sidespin. What's mostly missing from the winggrip jump shot's pared down version of the whole-body release is inclusion of the shooting shoulder, which of course is a major excision.

The main reason that the winggrip jump shot excludes the shooting shoulder from its release is the winggrip shooting grip itself. That's because the angled-out winggrip shortens and splays the shooting position for the start of the release, distancing it from the jumpshooter's body both frontally and laterally. Yes, the winggrip bends back, but the angle of the bend is out to the side, not in alignment with the shooting elbow and the basket. By locating very nearly outside the scope of the jumpshooter's body, the angled-out winggrip very much limits the rollback of the shooting shoulder, which mostly precludes its forward rotation during the release.

Without forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release, which is a crucial whole-body jump shot technique, the winggrip jump shot loses a direct power source for the release and the ability to channel the athleticism and power of the jump of the jump shot into the release. Without forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release, the winggrip jump shot also loses the primary power source for the rotation of the square-in-the-air part of the jump that many strongside pull-up jump shots require and all could use. No shooting shoulder involvement in the winggrip release therefore costs not only athleticism and power but also, by way of strongside limitations: body-wedge protection of the basketball, gun-turret adjustability and the strongside game's complementary shooting, driving and passing options.

The winggrip jump shot does have a weakside-only, semi-sideways, off-the-dribble sweet spot. At mid-range, the weakside, semi-sideways, off-the-dribble winggrip jump shot all of a sudden turns fairly athletic. The semi-sideways posture at the conclusion of a weakside move or run-up quickly evolves into a semi-sideways shooting stance with a weakside momentum driven lean, which locates the jumpshooter's body underneath the winggrip shooting position for the start of the release. The weakside lean adds a much-needed physical foundation to the winggrip jump shot's otherwise outside-the-scope-of-the-body shooting position and whichever modified winggrip release is being used. From there, it's all systems go for the always easy to set up and easy to shoot weakside semi-sideways jump shot. In fact, the weakside sweet spot does pave the way for a degree of physical domination with the winggrip jump shot. Weakside physical domination with the jump shot lacks the degree of athleticism and power and it totally lacks the protection and the gun-turret adjustability of strongside physical domination with the jump shot, , but physical domination with the weakside jump shot is nonetheless viable and popular.

Peja Stojakovic's winggrip reachback jump shot starts with a setup reachback to a forehead-high or slightly higher reachback shooting position. In other words, it's a direct up-and-back swing of the basketball to a reachback shooting position. The problem is, however, that the angled-out winggrip blocks Stojakovic's setup reachback from setting up one hand length back past the

front of the head whole-body style. Instead, because of the winggrip block, Stojakovic's reachback is shortened, locating the shooting position just in front of the head and a bit out to the side. As a result, of the shortened reachback, the shooting shoulder is very much excluded from the release of Stojakovic's winggrip reachback jump shot.

For its exclusion of the shooting shoulder from the release, Stojakovic's winggrip reachback jump shot pays a high price athletically. Unlike the whole-body reachback jump shot, the winggrip reachback jump shot operates mostly without a fallaway jump, square-in-the-air capability and strongside lateral pull-up capability. The loss of all that strongside athleticism is because of the near total exclusion of the shooting shoulder from the winggrip reachback release.

It's a different story in the power department for Stojakovic's winggrip reachback jump shot. That's because the winggrip reachback jump shot's reachback, although not far enough back for a shooting shoulder rollback and activation, does set up far enough back to allow for a full extension of the shooting arm and a stretched-out forearm stroke during the release. Together the full extension of the shooting arm and a stretched-out forearm stroke add up to sufficient big-muscle power production capability for Stojakovic to easily and comfortably shoot his weakside, semi-sideways, off-the-dribble jump shots and long-range standing-start/stationary 3-pointers.

Anthony Edwards' winggrip reachup jump shot starts with a setup reachup to a nearly fully extended reachup shooting position. But the angled-out winggrip locates the setup reachup and the reachup shooting position too far out front and too far out to the side for a viable connection with the shooting shoulder, which causes a power problem. To compensate for the power shortfall of his reachup release, Edwards either taps into the power of the jump of the jump shot to supplement the power of the release or adds a reachback to enhance the power of the release or both. In the end, Edwards achieves mixed results with his compensatory techniques.

Edwards frequently succeeds when attempting to make the jump of the jump shot work as a supplementary power source for the winggrip reachup jump shot, but not always. Because the winggrip jump shot excludes the shooting shoulder from the release, Edwards cannot channel the power of the jump internally through the upward rotation of the shooting shoulder whole-body style. Instead, Edwards must time the one-motion, on-the-rise reachup release with the jump for an external power boost. It can work, but it's not as efficient as the whole-body internal channel. When breakdowns occur, it's usually because Edwards is unable to attain the max jump necessary for maximum supplemental power. Edwards unable to attain a max jump? Given Edwards' Jordaneque athleticism, some might say no way. But because NBA defenses, both individual and team, are the best, they are certainly capable of causing problems for any and every offensive player. Now, if Edwards had access to the shooting shoulder, he could add more power when needed regardless of his ability to implement a max jump.

When Edwards attempts to tap the jump of the jump shot for power to supplement the power of his winggrip reachup release do fail, they fail most conspicuously on strongside pull-up jump shots. The whole-body jump shot theory's breakthrough finding that a primary function of the jump of the jump shot is to harness the momentum of a move or run-up, most importantly a strongside move or run-up, by redirecting it upward is central to the explanation. The harness-to-redirect jump enables getting off a good shot upon gaining separation from the defender after

a strongside move or run-up. As such, the harness-to-redirect jump is more about speed than power. Thus, if a particular strongside pull-up jump shot requires a supplementary power boost as well as speed from its jump, there is a definite possibility that the harness-to-redirect jump will come up short, providing less power than needed. Fallaway jumps are even more problematic than harness-to-redirect jumps as supplementary power sources for the release. That's because the momentum power of the fallaway jump heads up and back while the power of the release heads up and out. Can you say clash? Or how about diametrically opposed?

The uneven performance of the jump of the winggrip reachup jump shot as a supplementary power source remedy for the chronic power shortfall of its release leads Edwards to regularly resort to a reachback to enhance the power of the release. But the reachback, which is fundamental to the setup of the whole-body reachback jump shot's ultra-powerful release mechanism, can be more of a disruptive force within the context of the fragile reachup jump shot, whether whole-body or winggrip style. Yes, sometimes Edwards' winggrip reachup jump shot works wonderfully well with a reachback. But overall the reachup's reachback problems outweigh its benefits. The worst of the reachup's reachback problems is disruption of the one-continuous-motion, on-the-rise and very fragile merge of the nearly full vertical extension reachup setup with the reachup release. Successful whole-body reachup jumpshooters, who have always been among the best in basketball, generally resist using the reachback as a release enhancement technique because it disrupts the one-motion, on-the-rise setup, which is the reachup jump shot's primary supplementary power production technique.

When the reachup-to-reachback combination works well, shifting from reachup mode to reachback mode in midair, Edwards' winggrip reachup/reachback jump shot looks good. But the reachup-to-reachback combination is complicated and time-consuming, which makes it difficult to duplicate repeatedly. The reachup-to-reachback combination also puts extreme pressure on Edwards to attain a max jump, which is difficult to attain repeatedly. Yet another reachup-to-reachback problem occurs because the reachback is actually no more than a minireachback and therefore barely worth the effort, especially given the disruption it creates. By comparison, whole-body reachback jumpshooters swing the basketball up and back directly to the reachback shooting position, generating a fallaway jump for protection and setting up a body leverage sequence for supplementary power at the same time.

Parenthetically, an elbow-out shooting position solves all of the winggrip jump shot's problems in one fell swoop. The angled-out winggrip would be no more. Instead, the shooting hand would align with the basket, which is much better for accuracy. Plus, an aligned shooting hand would no longer block the rollback of the shooting shoulder. Stojakovic's winggrip reachback jump shot would transform into a whole-body elbow-out reachback jump shot. Edwards' winggrip reachup jump shot would transform into a whole-body elbow-out jump shot. Some technical modifications would be in order, but it's close to a done deal. The benefits of the changeover to elbow-out whole-body jumpshooting would include maximized athleticism and maximized power along with access to the strongside game with its protection and its complementary shooting, driving and passing options.