

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES: SEEKING TRUTH, COURTING CONTROVERSY

By Robert Tiltz

The perspective underlying all JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES (JSNN) commentary is strictly derived from my whole-body jump shot theory.

Upgrades and Downgrades refer to observed jump shot improvements or deteriorations for players cited earlier in this quasi-blog article or anywhere else on the Power Shooting website.

5/31/2024 – KAT's Comfort Zone vs Winning – When the chips were down, when substance mattered more than style, when winning was on the line during the Minnesota Timberwolves 2024 playoff series against the Dallas Mavericks, Karl-Anthony Towns faced criticism like never before. Critics, including fans, media and talking heads, had finally come to understand that Towns' long-range-based offensive game did not maximize his offensive efficiency.

The criticism of Towns' offense focused on his apparent preference for long-range shooting over shooting from closer to the basket, which is where his combination of superior size and skills was likely to be most effective. It's not that Towns is a bad long-range shooter. Everybody agrees that Towns is a good stationary/standing-start 3-point shooter, maybe even the greatest long-range big man shooter of all time, as he himself has proclaimed. But despite his good stats from long-range, there is no statistic that really elevates Towns above the ever-growing crowd of competent stationary/standing-start 3-point specialists other than his height.

When the criticism crescendoed during the playoffs, Towns responded by increasing his drives to the basket and decreasing his 3-point shooting. The result was a noticeable improvement in the efficiency of Towns' offense. The critics were pleased. The Timberwolves even managed to avoid a sweep with a game four win. Problem solved? No. More changes are required.

Although Towns' shift in emphasis from shooting to driving was a step in the right direction, it still located the start of his offense on the outside. Getting to the basket saps energy and risks mistakes. The opinion here, therefore, is that Towns should cut out the middleman, so to speak, and start his offense in the low post, where his superior size and skills combo is more of an instant winner. Problem solved? No again. For Towns to maximize his offense, an even bigger and more important change still needs to be implemented.

Sorry to say, KAT fans, what needs to go is Towns' elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. The good results that Towns gets with his elbow-in-strokesnap semi-jump shot from long-range mostly depend on the absence of defensive pressure, which is common at long-range. The absence of defensive pressure is more than fundamental to the appeal of long-range shooting, it is the primary attraction. That's true for most long-range shooters, but especially true for elbow-in-strokesnap shooters because their out-front, horizontally extended and basket aligned elbow-in shooting position for the start of the release needs distance from the defender to work well, which to a great extent precludes getting off a good shot from mid-range on in.

If learning how to shoot a legitimate post-up jump shot seems like a reach too far for Towns at this advanced stage of his NBA career, it's not. The whole-body jump shots can be learned fast because they are based on easy to learn and easy to execute big-muscle shooting techniques. Plus, the whole-body jump shots' setup fundamentals generally override the resistant muscle memory of preexisting failed jump shots.

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

See later KAT upgrade.

6/1/2024 – What about Wembanyama? – If the preceding installment sounded like an argument against the stretch-4 and the stretch-5, you've got that right. The opposition, however, is not absolute. All-around shooting skills are always appreciated and useful. The opposition is actually to primary focus on long-range shooting by power forwards and centers. Yes, special circumstances could create an exception to the common sense rule of locating power forwards and centers close to the basket. For example, perhaps a small forward, such as Bernard King, is the team's best post-up player, which means space needs to be cleared for the post-up small forward to operate close to the basket. But that's the exception. Under most circumstances, building an offense around stretch-4s and stretch-5s is not optimal.

Karl-Anthony Towns is one example of a stretch-4 and the stretch-5. There are notable others. Joel Embiid, Philadelphia's process man, has stubbornly stuck to the stretch motif without much reward in the win column. The 76ers have imported a new crew to relieve Embiid of primary offensive responsibility. Can Embiid take a hint? Kristaps Porzingis used to be part of the argument for the stretch-4 and the stretch-5. Now Porzingis is part of the counter argument. When Porzingis moved his offense closer to the basket to provide offensive balance for the perimeter-oriented 2023-24 Boston Celtics, the team went on to lead the NBA in wins and then win the championship. Could it be that the tide has turned against the stretch-4 and the stretch-5? Could be if winning has anything to do with it.

Could be if defense has anything to do with it as well. The emphasis on stretch-4s and stretch-5s has shrunk both positions because the smaller 4s and 5s were better shooters. Another reason was that coaches wanted smaller 4s and 5s to chase shooters on the perimeter. But the shrinking 4s and 5s defending the perimeter opened the floodgates for the non-shooting layup specialists of the world. That's another anti stretch-4 and stretch-5 argument.

Then along comes Victor Wembanyama. The young Frenchman could alter the stretch-4 and the stretch-5 argument in a big way. To begin with, Wembanyama shoots a whole-body elbow-out jump shot. Thus equipped, Wembanyama has a jump shot adaptable to all circumstances: long-range, mid-range, post-up, off-the-dribble strongside and weakside, straight up or falling away. So Wembanyama could pump new life into the stretch-5 while not neglecting the big man's traditional roles. That's great, but there is definite danger that the stretch-4 and the stretch-5 obsessed NBA will infect Wembanyama with long-range 3-point fever.

That would be a waste of talent. To JSNN, it is not an exaggeration to compare Wembanyama's athleticism with the stretchability of Allen Iverson. High praise because Iverson was one of basketball's all-time best athletes, but warranted. And to top it off, Wembanyama is a heads-up player, meaning he sees the court, and is also an excellent ballhandler and passer. All that adds up to at least an all-around offensive game, if not a strict emphasis on inside play.

But what if Wembanyama does go long-range crazy? Well, the dude is so great, he could probably get away with it, at least to a greater extent than the other stretch-4s and stretch-5s have done. Would championships be obtainable? Probably yes. But the reason would not be

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

Wembanyama tilting the scales with long-range shooting. The key factor would more likely be Wembanyama's anticipated overwhelming defensive prowess.

The real question then is whether Wembanyama's projected winning, domination and championships are likely more certain and more numerous if he builds his offense close to the basket instead of at long-range or even at mid-range. Not to diminish the spectacle of a seven foot plus basketball player amazing with his all-court skills and abilities, but JSNN's belief is that Wembanyama's winningest future runs through the low post.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, that is for Wembanyama not for the opposition, if the young Frenchman were to add the sky hook to his post-up arsenal. Are offers to teach Wembanyama how to shoot the sky hook piling up? Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the master of the sky hook, tried many times to teach it. But Abdul-Jabbar never succeeded in teaching the sky hook to a skill level anywhere close to his own. And outside of Abdul-Jabbar, it appears that few have even tried to teach how to shoot the sky hook.

Well, that is about to change if I get the opportunity. I've written an article that analyzes Abdul-Jabbar's sky hook techniques and unlocks the sky hook's secrets. However, as befits the discovery of dormant super weapon technology, the sky hook's performance formula is currently top secret. Once Wembanyama and/or some other worthy NBA center shows an interest, I'd be very glad to instruct based on my sky hook theories, putting them to the test.

One last word on the sky hook is in order. Although the sky hook was once the most dominant post-up weapon, its dominance depends on its use by a towering center. That's because the sky hook, although the most athletic version of the hook shot, mostly gains its advantage through positioning. For all other players, the whole-body post-up jump shots are the best available ticket to post-up domination. That's because the whole-body post-up jump shots mostly gain their advantage through athleticism.

See later Wembanyama downgrade.

7/6/2024 – 2/2025 – Mikal Bridges Trade: The Knicks Paid for More Than They Are Getting – JSNN's objection is not to the price, six #1 draft choices and some good additional players, exorbitant though it may be. If the Knicks got their man, i.e., a first rate, in-his-prime shooter-scorer, then the deal is acceptable.

JSNN's objection is to Bridges' jump shot technique. Bridges shoots a whole-body reachup jump shot, same as many of the best jumpshooters in the NBA including Kawhi Leonard, Donovan Mitchell and Jalen Brunson. But the whole-body reachup jump shot is fragile because its relatively weak hand action release mechanism depends on an easily disrupted one-motion merge with the reachup for supplementary power. Bridges' problem is that he is too often prone to topping off the whole-body reachup jump shot's reachup with a reachback that disrupts the flow of the one-motion merge and ends up costing athleticism, power and accuracy.

JSNN's opinion is that Bridges' performance the past few years reflects an unsettled resolution of the reachup jump shot's fragility issues. As a secondary option in Phoenix, Bridges was a

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

model of consistency because catch-and-shoot did not aggravate a reachback disruption. Upon arrival in Brooklyn, 2/23, Bridges went on a roll, showing his upside potential for the remainder of the season. But the following year, Bridges' efficiency declined. JSNN's suspicion is that the volume athletic shooting asked of Bridges brought out the reachback that disrupted his reachup jump shot. As a result, you could say that Bridges shot his way out of Brooklyn.

At present with the Knicks, Bridges has rediscovered some of his Phoenix consistency. That's good. But is that what the Knicks really want and need? The price the Knicks paid for Bridges in their off-season trade would seem to say they expect more than medium production.

Aside from these criticisms and the price paid, Bridges has been far from a disaster. Medium production is not nothing. Medium production is a lot better than some of these basketball players who disappear before your eyes. Plus, the dude does play defense.

The Knicks would be in bad shape without Bridges' medium productivity. That's partly because the Knicks have carelessly traded away young and talented players who could have bolstered their undermanned bench and rotation. For example, three relatively recent rotation-type Knick castoffs, Luke Kornet, Obi Toppin and Quentin Grimes, are performing well for new teams, providing offensive production that the Knicks could certainly use. It makes the Knicks look heedless of potential and development. Plus, the Knicks did not do especially well with the players received as compensation.

As a life-long New Yorker and on-again off-again Knicks fan, my hope is that Bridges can get it together and recapture his initial Brooklyn success. What will it take? Good coaching based on informed attention to detail. We'll see if the Knicks can deliver.

10/2024 – 12/2024 – Jared McCain Separates from the Pack – In his brief, injury-shortened rookie year, Jaren McCain showed himself to be the best jumpshooter in his draft class and the best jumpshooter on his team, the Philadelphia 76ers.

Not surprisingly, McCain is a whole-body jumpshooter, specifically a whole-body reachup jumpshooter. But unlike Mikal Bridges, the subject of the immediately preceding installment, McCain's whole-body reachup jump shot is not plagued by a reachback. No, McCain's reachup is smooth as silk. In other words, McCain's reachup to the shooting position for the start of the release merges in one continuous motion with the whole-body reachup jump shot's hand action release mechanism. Furthermore, McCain is one of those whole-body reachup jumpshooters, like Klay Thompson, Kawhi Leonard and Donovan Mitchell for example, who can handle long-range jump shots with no problem.

The ability to adapt the whole-body reachup jump shot to long-range is based on the one continuous motion seamless merge of the reachup with the release. The upward arm action of the reachup provides supplementary power that reinforces the whole-body reachup jump shot's relatively weak hand action release mechanism. Long-range whole-body reachup jumpshooters also obtain more supplementary power for their release by way of shooting on the rise.

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

2024/25 – Fixing the Phoenix Suns – The plan was for a Big 3 to carry the Phoenix Suns into championship contention. So far, at about mid-season, the plan has failed. Two of the three, Kevin Durant and Devin Booker, are having good years, holding up their end of the bargain. The third member of the Big 3, Bradley Beal, is suffering on-again off-again health problems as he has in the recent past and is therefore unable to perform up to optimistic expectations.

Rather than scapegoat Beal and his injuries for the failure of the Suns, JSNN's opinion is that the Big 3 plan was seriously flawed to begin with. In hindsight, the age of the roster, the talent on the roster and the depth of the roster are all problems. But according to the opinion here, the Sun's worst problem is lack of diversified skills on the roster. In particular, the Big 3 duplicated each other's skill sets. To be more specific, the Suns lack a post-up offensive presence.

What to do? Maybe trade for Zion Williamson. Good idea. But do the Suns have the requisite players, draft choices and finances to pull off such a trade? All that is above my pay grade. I'm in the jump shot business. For fun, let me propose a jump shot solution to the Suns' post-up problem. The proposal is for Kevin Durant to be converted into a dominant post-up jumpshooter. Not Booker, not Beal. No, the 6 ft 11 in Durant is my choice.

But it is not a matter of simply snapping your fingers and instantly converting Durant into a post-up jumpshooter. There would be complications based on the optimal blend of jump shot techniques and jump shot tactics. To begin with, Durant is a whole-body elevated-elbow-in jumpshooter. True, the elevated-elbow-in is a whole-body jump shot and Durant works wonders with it at mid-range and long-range. But because the whole-body elevated-elbow-in jump shot uses less shooting shoulder involvement than the other whole-body jump shots it is the least physical in terms of athleticism and the elevation of the shooting position for the start of the release, both of which clearly benefit the post-up jump shot.

So, in order to maximize his post-up jump shot capability, it would be beholden on Durant to learn how to shoot a whole-body elbow-out jump shot or a whole-body reachback jump shot or preferably both. I am confident that Durant could easily learn the whole-body elbow-out and reachback jump shots within one week or less, but, as I said, it's a complication. Not at all an insurmountable complication, but a complication.

2/2025 – Upgrade: Jalen Green – Actually, upgrade does not do Jalen Green justice. Major upgrade is more like it. But there is still significant room for more improvement.

Until recently, Green was a poster boy for the cradlegrasp jump shot by way of this website's cradlegrasp jump shot article. That is not the case anymore. Green was removed from the cradlegrasp article because he no longer shoots a cradlegrasp jump shot. Good for Green.

First, a bit of background on the cradlegrasp jump shot, Green's in particular. The cradlegrasp jump shot is powerful, which explains why it has caught on during the 3-point era. Green's was powerful. Cradlegrasp jump shot accuracy is possible. Green's, not so much. Cradlegrasp jump shot athleticism is difficult. So much so that cradlegrasp jump shot limitations squashed Green's world-class athleticism, which is hard to do.

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

It is a different story now. Green has become a whole-body elbow-out jumpshooter. Green's transformation depended on replacing the cradle grip with the whole-body jump shot theory's standard semi-oppositional shooting grip, which locates the off-hand slightly more than halfway toward the front of the basketball. The semi-oppositional shooting grip secures the basketball during the athletic rigors of jumpshooting. Green's transformation also depended on retaining the angled-in shooting hand and the angled-out shooting elbow that the cradle grip encourages. With respect to the release of his new whole-body elbow-out jump shot, Green added a straightstroke-push release, parallel extension and brushing hand action toward the end of the shooting arm's straightstroke-push. Whether Green's transformation into a whole-body elbow-out jumpshooter was by design or by evolution is unknown here.

At present, mid-season 2024/25, despite significantly improved jump shot athleticism and accuracy, Green continues to shoot the same high number of long-range 3-pointers as before his transformation. Mentality probably plays a role. That is to say, Green has probably not yet broken completely free of his cradle grip tendency to shoot a preponderance of long-range 3-point shots. But Green's high number of long-range 3-point shots also results from a technical issue. To be specific, Green's straightstroke-push release heads out and up, which is a release technique best suited for long-range 3-point shots. If Green were to add an up-and-out straightstroke-push release to his whole-body elbow-out toolbox, he would acquire the capability to shoot over defenders in close quarters at mid-range and on the inside. JSNN's thinking is that once Green gets a taste of the dominance he could exert at mid-range and closer to the basket with pull-ups and post-ups, he would more frequently opt for that mode of attack.

There is also a larger scale technical change to Green's jumpshooting game that would add another level and great improvement. I call it jump shot diversity embodies the highest level of jump shot skill and also the rarest. I am confident that Green could reach it. And I am confident that I can teach it to Green. Plus, I could teach it fast, like within one week.

Jump shot diversity as a concept exists only within the context of the whole-body jump shot theory. Jump shot diversity consists of the use of two or more different whole-body jump shots with different specialties by way of their different techniques that are tactically complementary and therefore provide multi-pronged attack capability that covers most jumpshooting contingencies. For jump shot diversity to work, the jumpshooter must master two or more whole-body jump shots. See Kyrie Irving.

In practical terms, for Green to acquire jump shot diversity, he must learn how to shoot a whole-body reachback jump shot. Green's recently developed whole-body elbow-out jump shot would handle to-the-basket and moderately angled strongside pull-ups. A newly developed whole-body reachback jump shot would give Green strongside lateral capability at moderate and extreme angles. By means of the two tactically complementary strongside attack-capable whole-body jump shots Green would almost always have the upper hand against the defense. Strongside is vital to the pull-up jump shot equation because it enables the athleticism and provides the protection that are necessary to attack the defense with the jump shot.

2/2025 – Upgrade: Karl-Anthony Towns – The first installment of JSNN took Karl-Anthony Towns to task for shooting too many long-range 3-point shots during the 2024 playoffs. At that

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

point, JSNN was not a lone voice in the wilderness. The fans, media and talking heads were all piling on Towns for not doing more to capitalize on his size and athleticism.

To his credit, Towns did not pout or shirk responsibility. Instead, Towns reversed his offensive game on a dime. Tactically, that meant Towns started driving to the basket more often. The change brought about improved offensive performance by Towns and his team the Minnesota Timberwolves, which salvaged a win, avoiding a sweep.

During the off-season, Towns was traded to the New York Knicks. The good news for the Knicks and their fans is that Towns has not reverted to the long-range 3-point heavy offensive game he featured prior to last year's playoff awakening. Quite the opposite, if anything Towns has stepped up the aggressive style of play that elevated his post-epiphany production in the playoffs last year. His 3-point shots are down and his scoring is up. His rebounds are at a career high. Plus, Towns has shown himself to be an outstanding ballhandler and an exceptional passer. Along with his multifaceted skills, Towns has added physical strength to the Knicks.

The just described upgrades to Towns' offensive game have more to do with jump shot tactics than jump shot techniques. In fact, JSNN sees no upgrade in Towns' jump shot techniques. But JSNN does see the need for an upgrade of Towns' jump shot techniques.

It's not that Towns' hole card, which is his stationary/standing-start long-range 3-point shot, is not holding its own. To the contrary, shooting fewer 3-point shots has paid off in the highest 3-point shooting percentage of Towns' career. You see, number of 3-point shot attempts aside, stationary/standing-start 3-point shots are something that Towns' elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot technique can handle. That's not the case when it comes to off-the-dribble mid-range and post-up jump shots. The problem is that the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's out-front, horizontally extended and basket aligned elbow-in shooting position is anti-athletic and poorly protected.

In response to his off-the-dribble mid-range and post-up shortcomings, Towns tends to shoot too many weakside fallaways and weakside stepbacks, which are frequently the last resort for poor jumpshooters. Because there are so many elbow-in-strokesnap poor jumpshooters, the weakside fallaway and especially the weakside stepback are popular jump shots. But Towns and all the others are dealing from weakness, not strength. To make matters worse, the weakside fallaway and the weakside stepback are off-balance, low-percentage jump shots. In addition, any and all weakside moves substantially shut down the passing game, which Towns excels at.

The elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's athleticism problem occurs because its elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's out-front, horizontally extended and basket aligned elbow-in shooting position distances disconnects by distance the strokesnap release from the jumpshooter's body, which, of course, is the source of athleticism. The elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's protection problem occurs because its elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's out-front, horizontally extended and basket aligned elbow-in shooting position is very vulnerable to reach-in defenses.

So, despite his many outstanding attributes, which include athleticism, size, strength, great hands and top-of-the-line ballhandling and passing skills, Towns does not have much of a mid-range pull-up or post-up jumpshooting game. Towns is therefore like an elegant and sumptuous dinner

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

served with everything but the main course. Fortunately, the remedy is fast and easy. The whole-body jump shots, which excel at mid-range pull-up and post-up jump shots, can be learned fast because they are based on easy to learn and easy to execute big-muscle shooting techniques. Plus, the whole-body jump shots' setup fundamentals generally override the resistant muscle memory of preexisting failed jump shots.

2/2025 – Downgrade: Victor Wembanyama – JSNN admits to a bias against what appears to be the evolution or perhaps the intentional change of Wembanyama's jump shot away from a whole-body elbow-out technique, which is the basis for the downgrade. Furthermore, JSNN admits that its downgrade of Wembanyama's jump shot flies in the face of standard measures of performance in the NBA, which actually call for an upgrade. And JSNN further admits that even if Wembanyama's jump shot continues to move away from its earlier whole-body elbow-out technique and toward the whole-body elevated-elbow-in technique or much worse toward the prevailing elbow-in-strokesnap technique, the young Frenchman will still probably end up being one of basketball's all-time great players, no problem.

Parenthetically, JSNN does not concede that Wembanyama's improved second year offensive statistics are proof or even an indication that his newly changed jump shot is better than his previous whole-body elbow-out jump shot. To JSNN, the much more likely explanations for Wembanyama's improved second year offensive statistics are physical maturation and the experiential lessons learned from his first year of NBA competition.

But there is no denying that Wembanyama's second year offensive statistics are better than those of his first year. Sophomore slump? No way. Also, the Spur's win-loss record this year is better than last year's at the same stage of the season. So, what then is the problem JSNN?

The problem is twofold. One part hurts me. The other part hurts Wembanyama. The part of the problem resulting from the change of Wembanyama's jump shot away from the whole-body elbow-out technique that hurts me resulted from the young Frenchman's removal from my unofficial roster of whole-body elbow-out jumpshooters. You can be sure that for me it had been exhilarating when I first saw the pictures and tapes that indicated Wembanyama was a whole-body elbow-out jumpshooter. The reason is that the whole-body elbow-out jump shot is the star of my whole-body jump shot theory based on technical and tactical considerations. What owner would not want potentially the world's greatest representing his team? But when subsequent pictures and tapes indicated that Wembanyama's jump shot technique was moving away from the whole-body elbow-out jump shot, intellectual integrity demanded cancelation of the connection. Bye-bye bragging rights.

The part of the problem resulting from the change of Wembanyama's jump shot away from the whole-body elbow-out technique that hurts that hurts the young Frenchman is the loss of a definite degree of jump shot capability. It probably will not be a major loss of jump shot capability if Wembanyama settles in as a whole-body elevated-elbow-in jumpshooter. But if for some reason Wembanyama becomes an elbow-in-strokesnap jumpshooter, then some serious problems will certainly start to materialize.

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

At this point, 2/2025, Wembanyama is still a whole-body jumpshooter by way of the whole-body elevated-elbow-in jump shot. But because the whole-body elevated-elbow-in jump shot uses less shooting shoulder involvement than the whole-body elbow-out jump shot, its capability drops off in every jump shot performance category. Most importantly, replacing the whole-body elbow-out jump shot with the whole-body elevated-elbow-in jump shot will cost Wembanyama athleticism and protection. However, if Wembanyama's evolution away from the whole-body elbow-out jump shot is not natural but ideological, that is in pursuit of the prevailing but mostly all wrong elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot backed by most coaches and players too in the NBA, then his performance could deteriorate considerably.

How much of a drop-off in jump shot capability will Wembanyama experience as a result of evolution away from the whole-body elbow-out jump shot and toward the whole-body elevated-elbow-in jump shot? Not a lot. The fact that Kevin Durant is a whole-body elevated-elbow-in jumpshooter more or less provides an answer to the question. Just the same, in the estimation of JSNN, Durant would be a better jumpshooter if he used the whole-body elbow-out jump shot, most particularly a better post-up jumpshooter. How crucial, especially when it comes to great basketball players, are these distinctions? Well, despite his awesome physical gifts, i.e., six foot movement and coordination in a seven foot body, and his superb ballhandling skills, Durant has won only two NBA championships. True, many great whole-body elbow-out jumpshooters have won zero NBA championships. These factors are obviously hard to figure. But JSNN figures it's always best to maximize chances, which means that Wembanyama's winning prospects would absolutely be best off with a whole-body elbow-out jump shot.

There is also the issue, admittedly maybe only in the opinion of JSNN, of the stewardship of Wembanyama's offensive development by the San Antonio Spurs. JSNN believes that the Spurs badly botched the great Tim Duncan's offensive development. To be clear, the reference is not to character and not to professionalism. Duncan brought a lot to the table in those areas and the Spurs' culture fit well in combination. But the fact is that Duncan also brought a lot to the table in terms of athleticism and hand skills too, if his ballhandling is used as a measure. Yet Duncan never developed a respectable, much less dynamic post-up jumpshooting game during his long-term tutelage by the Spurs. Even Duncan's free throw, which always looked rushed and hard, that is not soft, to JSNN, was a bit of a career-long mess. So JSNN has no confidence in the Spurs being anywhere close to Wembanyama's jump shot development.

2/2025 – NaLyssa Smith: Potential vs Problems – Because the minimum standard for acceptable behavior in men's and women's professional basketball is quite low, JSNN's guess is that Nalyssa Smith's infractions were probably fairly serious. Why else would the Indiana Fever trade a young player who was a high draft choice and is considered to have considerable potential like Smith? That said, the question becomes did the Fever throw the towel in too early without doing all they could have done to salvage Smith.

From the outside looking in, it appears that the Fever in the person of President Kelly Krauskopf probably did the right thing. Routine internet research had Smith skating on thin ice based on performance and behavior. Something needed to be done.

JUMP SHOT NEWS AND NOTES

At least one in-house solution was considered and rejected by the Fever. JSNN knows this because by coincidence it had applied to the Fever for permission to fix Smith's performance problems prior to the trade. JSNN had an interest in Smith's situation by way of its Caitlin Clark appraisal. See the related article on this website.

Unaware of the tensions arising from Smith's behavior, JSNN had submitted a possible Smith performance/jump shot solution prior to the trade as part of its Caitlin Clark proposal. Very briefly, the Clark proposal was about adding the whole-body elbow-out jump shot to her repertoire in order to enable disruptive strongside pull-ups in the middle of the defense that set up premium passes to open teammates on the inside and at mid-range. The proposal added that to make the Clark tactic work, Smith and Aliyah Boston would need to improve their jump shots. The comment on Smith was that her reachback jump shot was awful but that the whole-body reachback jump shot techniques could probably fix it fast. Fix the free throw too.

Knowing something now about the nature and the degree of Smith's unhappiness in Indiana, JSNN has no quarrel with the Fever's decision to cut ties with the young power forward. On the other hand, if the Fever had given my whole-body jump shot theory solution a chance to work, and I am confident it would have, it is possible that Smith would still be with the Fever.

Here's how. It is well-known that in basketball and in all sports and in life that frustration can result when hopeful expectations are unmet, both the individual's and other's. Therefore, JSNN thinks it possible that a solid jump shot fix could have soothed Smith's unhappiness and made her a good player and a good teammate. No guarantees of course. But worth a try.