

## **THE WHOLE-BODY REACHUP JUMP SHOT: THE LESS REACHBACK, THE BETTER**

*By Robert Tilitz*

The reachup jump shot is easy to execute but fragile. The easy part is the reachup release. The fragile part is the reachup release. The reachup release is easy because it mainly consists of heavy hand action that tops off an on-the-rise, fully-extended reachup. The reachup release is fragile because of the disruptive tendency to supplement its weak mechanics with 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 heavy brushing hand action. Despite the shooting shoulder's diminished direct role during the release, the shoot-on-the-rise reachup jump shot still qualifies as a whole-body shooting shoulder-centric 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 relatively 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 supplement the reachup release and avoid disrupting the vertical flow of the reachup jump shot with a reachback.

Little shooting shoulder direct 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 a 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. Just the same, disruption problems will occur if the reachup jump shot's strict strongside limitations are exceeded.

When executed properly, however, 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

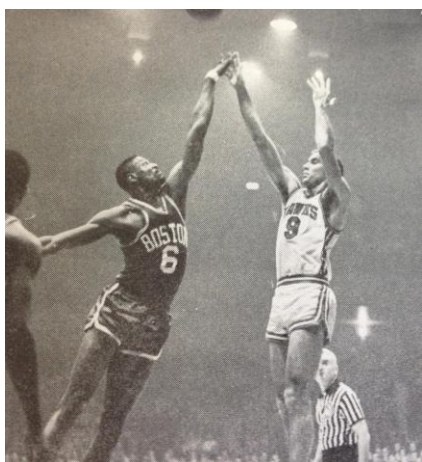


Russell Westbrook



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. A significant number of reachup jumpshooters never master its long-range skillset.

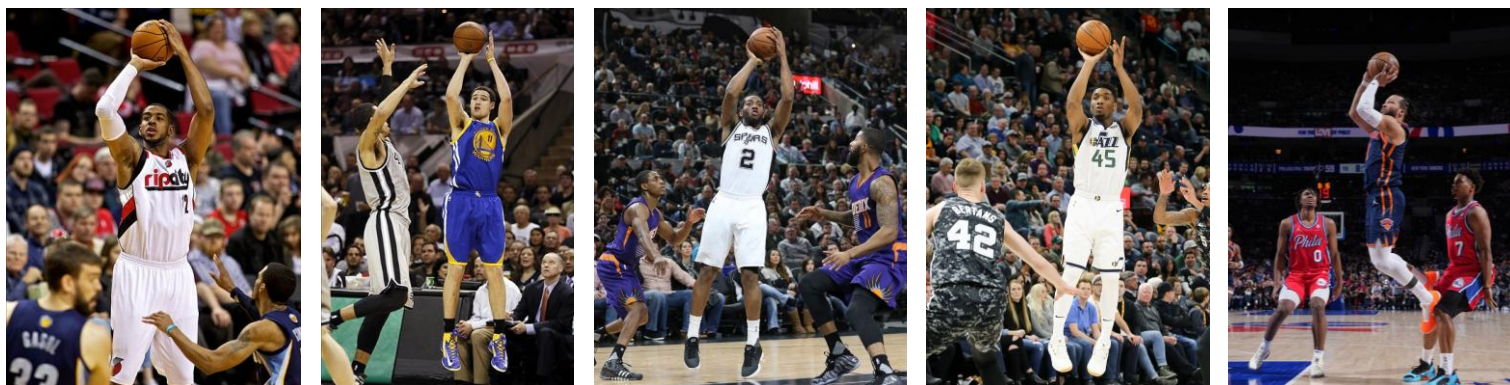


From left, Bob Pettit, Calvin Murphy, Louie Dampier and Freddie Brown

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.

Based on the roster of reachup jumpshooters listed in this article, there can be no doubt that they are among the best in the history of basketball. Nevertheless, as a jump shot type, meaning a category of jump shot with a distinct technique, the reachup jump shot kind of flies under the radar.



Elena Delle Donne

The whole-body jump shot theory's two primary full-fledged shooting shoulder-centric jump shots, the elbow-out and the reachback, are both better known than the reachup, although not for objective analytical reasons. In the not too distant past when the proscription against it was not as strong as it is today, the whole-body elbow-out jump shot counted among its number many of

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the greatest jumpshooters of all time. Nowadays, however, the whole-body elbow-out jump shot is a target of disdain and derision. Its critics always call it “chicken wing.” Based on its power alone, “eagle wing” would be more like it. Despite the criticism a few, such as Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Jalen Williams, slip through and excel.

The whole-body reachback jump shot has been spared the insults directed at the whole-body elbow-out jump shot. That is probably because of the whole-body reachback jump shot’s Jerry West to Michael Jordan to Kobe Bryant royal lineage. But besides standing back in awe of the efficiency and acrobatic beauty of the whole-body reachback jump shot, the usual suspects have little to nothing to say of substance concerning its techniques and offensive dominance, in particular its crunchtime dominance. Explain it? Teach it? Forget about it.

The whole-body reachup jump shot has stepped into the quality jump shot void created by the predominance of the widely supported but almost all wrong elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot to the extent that most of the best jumpshooters in the NBA today are reachup jumpshooters. That is not because the whole-body reachup jump shot is being explained and taught. The whole-body jump shot theory could do that, but it has been rejected by basketball’s decision makers, despite basically begging for a tryout many times. Instead, the takeover by the whole-body reachup jump shot is likely because of its structural link to the disastrous elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. The idea is simply that some of the players who are taught the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot and fail with the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot then in desperation stretch it out reaching upward and effectively invent their own whole-body reachup jump shot.

That is a possible origin story for the whole-body reachup jump shot. Of more importance is developing a reliable fix for its disruptive reachback. At present, all the whole-body jump shot theory has to offer are descriptive how-to directions, nothing surefire. It’s a tough nut to crack because the difference between those who do not reach back and those who do could be nothing more than a knack for maintaining the fluid upward flow of the reachup release.



Mikal Bridges

Current casualties of reachup release disruption by a reachback include Mikal Bridges and Cooper Flagg. Bridges is a well-rounded 3-and-D wing, whom the New York Knicks gave up five first round draft picks to acquire. But the reachback that disrupts his reachup release renders his jump shot inconsistent. Flagg arrived in the NBA as a certified beast, possessing the size, athleticism and ballhandling skills that seemed to destine him for basketball greatness. That is, provided the caliber of Flagg’s jump shot can match that of his physical attributes. So far, Flagg’s jump shot has not come close to matching his physical attributes because a reachback is disrupting his reachup release.



Cooper Flagg

When the disruptive reachback cannot be removed from the reachup release, players should instead try either the elbow-out or the reachback whole-body jump shot. Both can be learned fast by way of the whole-body jump shot theory’s surefire teaching techniques.