

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 significant improvement over the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. The winggrip jump shot's signature out-angled shooting hand, which is its most important technique, solves many elbow-in-strokesnap problems, but also creates a few problems of its own.

Winggrip jumpshooters probably first out-angled the shooting hand, ergo wing, because it eliminated the need for an awkward and difficult external rotation of the shooting hand in order to align it with the shooting elbow as it points at the basket. Alignment is the underpinning of the jump shot theory that predominates in the NBA and throughout the basketball world. However, the outgrowth of that predominant jump shot theory is a jump shot, called by my whole-body jump shot theory the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot, that does not work very well. So some players, probably in the process of modifying the all but NBA endorsed but almost all wrong elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot, developed for themselves the winggrip jump shot.



Peja Stojakovic



Anthony Edwards

Two of the most prominent winggrip jumpshooters are Peja Stojakovic in the 2000s and Anthony Edwards in the present. The freedom of movement that the winggrip brings to the jump shot during its setup and release led to Stojakovic and Edwards sharing certain techniques. Besides the out-angled winggrip itself, frequent use of a semi-sideways shooting stance was one of those techniques. The semi-sideways shooting stance largely accounts for winggrip jumpshooter's preference for weakside pull-ups and aversion to strongside pull-ups. The semi-sideways shooting stance also rolls the shooting shoulder back, especially on long-range standing-start semi-jump shots, which adds whole-body power to the winggrip release.

Freedom of movement also makes the winggrip jump shot easier and more comfortable to shoot than the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. Absent the awkward and difficult 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 out-angled shooting hand avoids, overall improved flexibility is another big payoff for the winggrip jump shot's release.

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The winggrip jump shot's flexibility that enables partial implementation of whole-body jump shot techniques starts with a forehead-high or higher setup of shooting position for the start of the release for winggrip pull-up jump shots. From there, the best winggrip jumpshooters usually build their release around hand action that brushes the basketball, sometimes producing the winggrip's signature cross between backspin and sidespin. What's mostly missing from the winggrip pull-up jump shot's pared down version of a whole-body release is inclusion of the shooting shoulder, which is not a minor exclusion.

The main reason that the winggrip pull-up jump shot excludes the shooting shoulder from its release is the straight-up setup of the winggrip shooting position for the start of the release. That straight-up setup is very similar to that of the whole-body reachup jump shot. Neither the winggrip or the whole-body reachup jump shots roll the shooting shoulder back for involvement in the release during the setup of the shooting position because roll of the shooting shoulder is upward, not backward. Still, the winggrip jump shot, just like the whole-body reachup jump shot, does not suffer a resulting power shortage because both convert the raising of the basketball to one-motion supplementary release power. In addition, again just like the whole-body reachup jump shot, the winggrip jump shot sources hand action for a heavy dose of release power.

The winggrip shooting grip, however, also adds a problematic complication to the release that the whole-body reachup jump shot does not have to deal with. The problematic complication results from the borderline outside the scope of the body location of the winggrip shooting position. The problematic complication originates with the straight-up setup of the winggrip shooting position. That's the same straight-up setup that works so well for the whole-body reachup jump shot. The difference between the two, the problematic complication, is the winggrip itself that locates on the outside edge of the scope of the body to the extent that athletic performance is affected. Most notably, the speed and the power of the jump of the jump shot takes a hit. When combined with lack of shooting shoulder rollback resulting from the straight-up setup, that does not eliminate but limits the rotation of a square-in-the-air jump, well you're talking significant constraint on strongside pull-up jump shot capability.

Another consequence of the borderline outside the scope of the-body setup of the winggrip jump shot's shooting position is less access to the body for athleticism and power. For that problem, winggrip jumpshooters turn to its cause for the solution. The out-angled winggrip shooting grip responsible for the borderline outside the scope of the body location of the winggrip shooting position transforms by way of revved up brushing hand action to compensate for the winggrip jump shot's reduced access mostly to the shooting shoulder. Altogether, that's not a bad idea. The shooting hand by way of brushing hand action is of course a staple whole-body jump shot technique. And part of the beauty of brushing hand action is that it can be revved up.

So how do Stojakovic and Edwards fare with their winggrip jump shots, with its strengths and its limitations? The obvious answer is quite well. Not only do both fare quite well, but they get the job done in different ways, which speaks to what the winggrip jump shot can and cannot do.

Stojakovic was a state of art small forward with all the size and athleticism required for NBA dominance at his position. That is, provided his jump shot and the rest of his skill package could hold up their end of the bargain. Well, they could. Stojakovic worked the winggrip jump shot's

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weaksides-only, semi-sideways, off-the-dribble sweet spot. Going weakside at mid-range the semi-sideways, off-the-dribble winggrip jump shot all of a sudden turns very 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 that 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 borderline outside the scope of the body shooting position. From there, it's all systems go for Stojakovic and the easy to set up and easy to shoot weakside semi-sideways winggrip jump shot. In fact, the weakside sweet spot paves 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 totally lacks the protection and the gun-turret adjustability of strongside physical domination with the jump shot, but Stojakovic's physical domination with the weakside winggrip jump shot was a very real fact of NBA life.

Change the subject to 3-point shooting and Stojakovic's rating climbs even higher. It is hard to find better 3-point shooters than Stojakovic, winggrip jump shot or not.

Edwards has the size and more than enough of the athleticism required for NBA dominance at his shooting guard position. That is, provided his jump shot and the rest of his skill package can hold up their end of the bargain. In the case of Edward's winggrip jump shot, however, holding up its end of the bargain is not a done deal. That is despite the fact that Edwards has shown he has the hands and the eye of a great jumpshooter. The proof being that Edwards shoots a soft and accurate ball by way of brushing hand action that fine-tunes distance and direction, generates backspin for touch, slows down velocity and adds secondary power when needed. Yet somehow Edwards is plagued by inconsistent jump shot performance.

Where Stojakovic had a defined and disciplined jumpshooting game built around an assortment of weakside go-to moves, Edwards' supreme athleticism has pushed him to push his jumpshooting envelope beyond the weakside limits of the winggrip jump shot. But Edwards' attempts to bust out of the weakside confines of the winggrip jump shot have sometimes backfired. The question then becomes: Where does the blame lie, with the winggrip jump shot or with Edwards? The opinion here is that even though the winggrip jump shot has a record of success in the hands of Stojakovic, in the hands of Edwards it is the culprit because of its limitations. As a super athlete, Edwards would be selling himself short if he did not open up his jumpshooting game in pursuit of being the best. That approach is more challenging and more mistake prone but potentially more rewarding and productive than Stojakovic's more conservative approach.

Parenthetically, an elbow-out shooting position solves all of Edwards' winggrip jump shot problems in one fell swoop. The solution merely requires angling the shooting hand in instead of out. That would angle the shooting elbow out and, with a few technical modifications, bring all the benefits of the whole-body elbow-out jump shot, which include access to the strongside game with its protection and its complementary shooting, driving and passing options.