

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

*By Robert Tilitz*

The winggrip jump shot was probably developed in response to difficulties shooting what my whole-body jump shot theory calls 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 angled-out shooting hand, which is its most important technique, solves many elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot problems, but also causes a few problems of its own.

The winggrip jump shot probably initially stemmed from the recognition that the widely supported, all but officially endorsed by the NBA aligned for accuracy elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot was easier to set up with an angled-out shooting hand than with an aligned shooting hand. That's because an angled-out shooting hand, the wing of the winggrip, eliminates the awkward and difficult external rotation of the shooting hand necessary to align it with the shooting elbow and the basket. Further recognition that the flexible angled-out winggrip did not hurt accuracy ensured that the winggrip jump shot would have a following.



Peja Stojakovic



Anthony Edwards

Peja Stojakovic in the 2000s and Anthony Edwards in the present are two of the most prominent winggrip jumpshooters. The angled-out winggrip is the defining technique of the winggrip jump shot. The winggrip is not just a look. The winggrip impacts function big-time. The ease and flexibility that the winggrip brings to the setup of the release and the release itself are two of the winggrip jump shot's main attractions. After setup, the winggrip encourages shooting hand control of the release by way of brushing hand action that fine-tunes distance and direction, generates backspin for touch, slows velocity and adds secondary power when needed. Shooting hand control of the release is also a staple whole-body jump shot technique.

The winggrip's impact does not end with the release. For example, the winggrip is an indirect determinant of the winggrip jump shot's semi-sideways shooting stance. By removing itself from alignment with the angled-in shooting elbow and the basket, the winggrip, along with a continued belief in alignment for accuracy, encourages the setup of a semi-sideways shooting stance. The idea is that the semi-sideways shooting stance will replace, and perhaps even improve upon, the shooting hand as an alignment piece to reinforce accuracy.

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Although it was formed in pursuit of aligned accuracy, the semi-sideways shooting stance, just like the winggrip, has an impact on the winggrip jump shot beyond its original purpose. One example is that the semi-sideways shooting stance rolls the shooting shoulder back, which ends up adding whole-body power to the release by way of shooting shoulder involvement. The rollback occurs during setup because without it the shooting position would locate way too far outside the scope of the body. Another example is that the semi-sideways shooting stance largely accounts for winggrip jumpshooters' preference for weakside pull-ups and aversion to strongside pull-ups. The weakside tendency occurs because it is easy and because going strongside is hard. The problem with pulling up in a semi-sideways shooting stance after going strongside is that it would often require an impossibly long square-in-the-air rotation.

Although it is easy and natural to pull up in a semi-sideways shooting stance off a weakside move or run-up, the maneuver causes its own problems. Chief among the problems that afflict the weakside semi-sideways shooting stance setup is exposure of the basketball, which is a problem for all weakside jump shots. The standard solutions are either a stepback jump shot, which could be the most popular move in basketball today because of the high usage rate of weakside jump shots, or a fallaway jump shot, which is a low-percentage shot because its weakside iteration is always off-balance and therefore difficult.

Now, back to the winggrip's impact. The winggrip's flexibility encourages a whole-body-style forehead-high or higher setup of shooting position for the start of the release. That's a good start toward implementing the brushing hand action that makes the winggrip jump shot work fairly well. But the trouble is that the setup of the forehead-high or higher winggrip shooting position leads to exclusion of the shooting shoulder from the release of winggrip pull-up jump shots, though not so much for long-range standing-start winggrip semi-jump shots.

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. That straight-up setup is very similar to that of the whole-body reachup jump shot. The straight-up setup precludes a shooting shoulder rollback. Without shooting shoulder rollback, neither the winggrip jump shot nor the whole-body reachup jump shot involve the shooting shoulder in the release. Neither the winggrip jump shot nor the whole-body reachup jump shot suffer much of a related power shortage because they convert the raising of the basketball to supplementary one-continuous-motion release power. In addition, both the winggrip and the whole-body reachup jump shots source hand action for a heavy dose of release power.

The winggrip shooting grip does, however, add a problematic complication to the release. The problematic complication results from the borderline outside the scope of the body location of the winggrip shooting position. As a consequence, the winggrip release does not have complete access to the body, especially the shooting shoulder, for athleticism and power. To compensate, there are two main options that often work together. One involves pulling up off weakside moves or run-ups with a momentum driven lean that locates the jumpshooter's body underneath the winggrip shooting position. The other involves the winggrip revving up its brushing hand action to increase secondary power production. A curious byproduct of winggrip brushing hand action is its sometimes cross between backspin and sidespin.

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So how did Stojakovic and how does Edwards fare with the winggrip jump shot, with its strengths and its limitations? The obvious answer is quite well. It is important to note, however, that Stojakovic used the winggrip jump shot in a different way than Edwards uses it.

Stojakovic was a state-of-the-art small forward with the size and athleticism required for NBA dominance at his position. That is, provided his jump shot could hold up its end of the bargain. Well, it could, and then some. Stojakovic worked the winggrip jump shot's weakside-only, semi-sideways off-the-dribble sweet spot. When going weakside at mid-range the semi-sideways off-the-dribble winggrip jump shot all of a sudden turns very athletic, often in a stepback or a fallway mode. 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 adds a 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. When it comes to standing-start 3-point shooting, Stojakovic ranks among the very best of all time.

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 can hold up its end of the bargain. Unfortunately, Edwards' winggrip jump shot has not yet held up its end of the bargain. That is despite the fact that Edwards has shown he has the hands, the eye and the athleticism needed for great jumpshooting. Edwards' winggrip jump shot is soft and accurate by way of brushing hand action that fine-tunes distance and direction, generates backspin for touch, slows velocity and adds secondary power when needed. Therefore, it could be that what precedes the jump shot, the moves and run-ups to create space to shoot, are the cause Edwards' jump shot problems.

Where Stojakovic had a defined and disciplined jumpshooting game built around a reliable package of weakside go-to moves, it appears that Edwards' supreme athleticism has driven him to test the limitations of the winggrip jump shot. Every now and then Edwards' expanded straight-ahead and strongside approach has paid off. But too often Edwards' attempts to bust out of the weakside confines of the winggrip jump shot have backfired. As a result, the reluctant recommendation here is that perhaps Edwards should narrow his approach and attempt to carve out his own reliable package of weakside go-to moves in deference to the winggrip jump shot's limitations. The recommendation is reluctant because it runs counter to the whole-body jump theory's tactical ideal of athletic, powerful and protected strongside jumpshooting.

Parenthetically, an elbow-out shooting position could solve all of Edwards' winggrip jump shot problems and solve them fast. 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.