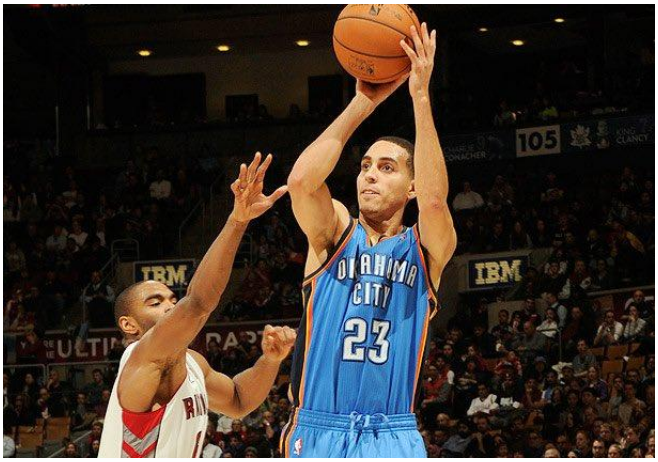
THE WRONGSIDE JUMP SHOT: MODEST BENEFITS, MAJOR DEFECTS

By Robert Tilitz

The shooting position for the wrongside jump shot sets up on the nondominant or wrongside of the body. You can be sure that setting up the shooting position for the start of the release on the nondominant side of the body is the wrong side because it blocks access to the strongside pull-up jump shot. Still, the wrongside jump shot is not without a few redeeming features. It's got decent power and very good accuracy and touch on weakside jump shots and stationary shots. That's enough for quite a few notable NBA players, such as Kevin Martin and Thaddeus Young, to shoot the wrongside jump shot.



Kevin Martin, above and right

Thaddeus Young, above and right

Strange to say, but the wrongside jump shot's wrongside shooting stance imposes some shooting techniques that actually work fairly well. That's because the wrongside jump shot's setup reach across the body by the shooting arm results in a shooting stance somewhat similar, lopsided though it may be, to the whole-body elbow-out jump shot's shooting stance. The whole-body elbow-out-like structural elements that make the wrongside jump shot's shooting stance work are the angled-in shooting hand and the outside-the-shooting-hand, but not angled-out, shooting elbow.

The wrongside jump shot's setup reach across the body by the shooting arm determines many of its shooting techniques. For one, it turns the wrongside jump shot's shooting stance semi-

sideways. But the wrongside setup blocks the square and the rollback of the shooting shoulder that define true semi-sideways jump shots. No square and no rollback means no activation of the shooting shoulder by way of engagement with the release mechanism. Denied whole-body athleticism and whole-body power from an activated shooting shoulder, the wrongside jump shot's straightstroke-push release compensates with up-and-out full extension of the shooting arm including a stretched-out forearm stroke. The angled-in shooting hand takes control of the wrongside jump shot through hand action, not a wrist snap, by brushing the basketball during the release to fine-tune distance and direction, generate backspin for touch, slow velocity and add secondary power when needed. The wrongside jump shot gets good results going weakside and on stationary shots, such as 3-pointers and free throws, but poor results going strongside. Although its attack capabilities are limited to weakside fallaways and stepbacks because of basketball exposure problems, defenders cannot slack off against the wrongside jump shot.

The wrongside jump shot's setup reach across the body by the shooting arm also benefits athleticism and protection to a certain degree, at least within the context of the weakside game. Athleticism benefits because the reach across the body locates the shooting position close to body, which streamlines the shooting stance. Protection, which is in overall bad shape because of exposure of the basketball as it is being raised to the shooting position during the jump of the wrongside jump shot, does benefit some because locating the shooting position close the body distances it from the defender.

The wrongside jump shot's setup reach across to the body by the shooting arm does, however, cause technical and performance problems. One is that the reach across the body by the shooting arm removes the shooting shoulder from the wrongside jump shot's release. That's because the reach across the body by the shooting arm creates backward momentum that the shooting shoulder cannot reverse within the dynamic of the release. Another is that the wrongside jump shot's relatively low shooting position leads to a low start and a low finish for the wrongside jump shot's release. Yet another is that the wrongside jump shot's relatively low shooting position holds down the jump of the jump shot. That's because the low shooting position cuts short the arm action that helps to power the jump of the jump shot while it raises the basketball to the shooting position.

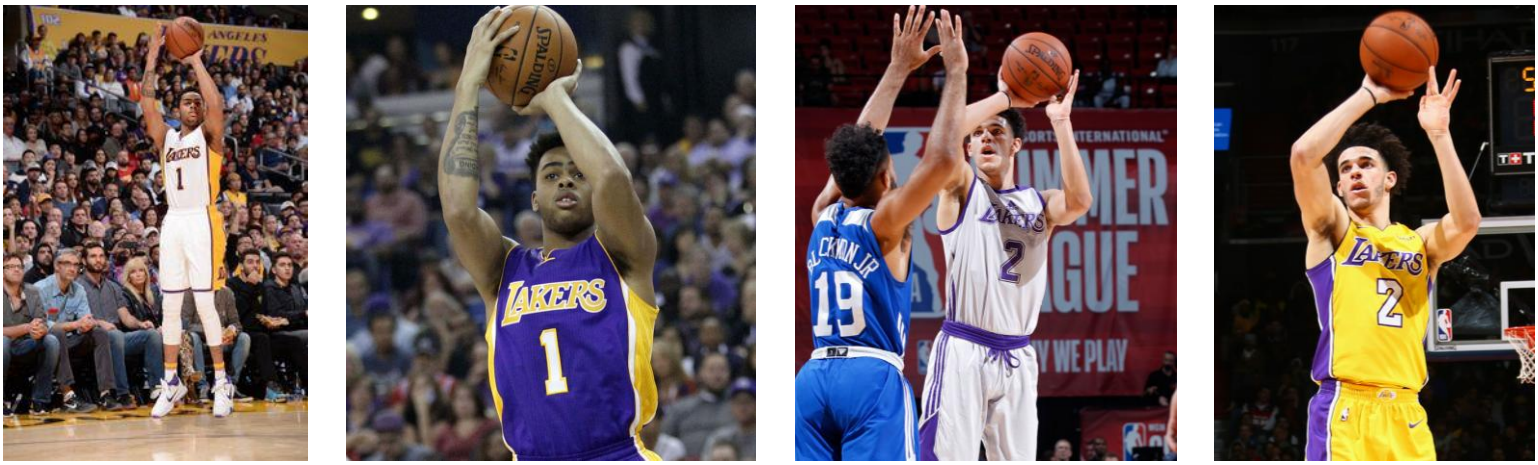
The wrongside jump shot's worst performance problem caused by the setup reach across the body by the shooting arm is incompatibility with strongside pull-up jump shots. The problem starts with the reach across the body by the shooting arm that turns the wrongside shooting stance semi-sideways. The incompatibility between the wrongside semi-sideways shooting stance and strongside pull-up jump shots derives mostly from the fact that the rotational length and the duration of the jump that would be required to set up and shoot an airborne wrongside semi-sideways jump shot off a strongside move or run-up is close to physically impossible. The jump would have to rotate beyond a point where it's squared in the air in order to line up the wrongside semi-sideways shooting stance. Then more time would be required for the release. It ain't no way.

The incompatibility between the wrongside semi-sideways shooting stance and strongside pull-up jump shots leaves wrongside jumpshooters with only one half of a jumpshooting game. To make matters worse, based on standard athleticism, power and protection criteria, the weakside

jumpshooting game is absolutely the inferior half when compared with the strongside jumpshooting game.

The ability to shoot strongside pull-up jump shots is particularly important for point guards, whose job description calls for them to attack the middle of the defense. Only strongside pull-up jump shots provide the body-wedge protection of the basketball from the dribble through the release that is necessary to operate in the middle of the defense.

Now, it just so happens that there are currently two highly rated point guard prospects, D'Angelo Russell* and Lonzo Ball,* who both shoot wrongside jump shots and are therefore largely unable to shoot strongside penetration pull-up jump shots. To date, Russell every now and then actually shoots a strongside pull-up jump shot. But it's infrequent and labored, not dynamic and not physically dominant. To date, Ball, despite impressive point-guard-type passing skills and savvy, does not seem to have made much progress toward being able to shoot a strongside pull-up jump shot. So far, Russell's and Ball's continued reliance on the wrongside jump shot has not only impeded their development as point guards but also hurt their teams.



D'Angelo Russell, two on left, and Lonzo Ball, two on right, both shoot the wrongside jump shot. As a result, neither Russell nor Ball can shoot a strongside pull-up jump shot.

One last problem with the wrongside jump shot is its resistance to correction, which is greater than that of any other common jump shot pathology. Still, it can be corrected. In fact, if the whole-body jump shot theory's elbow-out jump shot is the replacement model, then it's possible to achieve a reasonably fast and reliably permanent correction. The correction starts with the initial setup of the shooting stance. Once the new setup fundamentals are in place, the rest of the correction is more or less manageable. That's partly because the similarities between some of the fundamental techniques of the wrongside jump shot and of the whole-body elbow-out jump shot make the post-setup part of the correction at least a little easier to implement.

*Duly noted that D'Angelo Russell and Lonzo Ball have largely abandoned their wrongside jump shots and shifted to more conventional though still not whole-body techniques. Russell gets better, more athletic results with more push in his new release. Ball changed his form but still has difficulty shooting the strongside mid-range pull-up that makes the point guard game go.