THE ELEVATED-SHOOTING-SHOULDERLESS JUMP SHOT: CAPABLE OF GOOD WORK DESPITE BUILT-IN ATHLETIC LIMITATIONS

By Robert Tilitz

The elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot is a definite improvement over the NBA's favorite and therefore the prevailing but nevertheless almost all wrong elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot. In terms of jump shot technique, the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot is similar to the standard-issue elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot except for its whole-body-style elevated shooting position, which is the main reason it works fairly well and it is relatively popular.

The shooting position of the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot sets up forehead-high or higher and close-in-front or overhead. By comparison, the shooting position of the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot sets up out-front, horizontally-extended and basket-aligned. Its horizontal extension determines its face-high height, which, especially in combination with its out-front location, dooms the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot to failure before it even gets started.

The forehead-high or higher and close-in-front or overhead shooting position of the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot groups it with most of the whole-body jump shots and a few of the player-sourced jump shots. Reminder: The whole-body jump shots are player-sourced jump shots that have been selected out by the whole-body jump shot theory for their excellence. With respect to the height of the shooting position, the whole-body reachup jump shot's is the highest.

The players who shoot the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot might not be great jumpshooters, but many are respectable jumpshooters. And a respectable jump shot is often sufficient for an otherwise qualified basketball player to be competitive at the highest levels. The whole-body jump shot theory counts Rashard Lewis, Julius Randle, Lauri Markkanen and Dylan Harper as respectable elevated-shooting-shoulderless jumpshooters.

Left to right, Rashard Lewis, Julius Randle, Lauri Markkanen and Dylan Harper

At first glance, the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot's prospects for a whole-body-type merge of the jump of the jump shot and the release of the jump shot appear to be good. That's because the necessary and somewhat difficult to attain forehead-high or higher and close-in-front or overhead shooting position for the start of the release is in place. But the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot is instead rather tame with not much going on that is exciting in the off-the-dribble and the jump of the jump shot departments.

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Jump shot specific scouting profiles of the above listed elevated-shooting-shoulderless jumpshooters are more than adequate vehicles for detailing the strengths and weaknesses of the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot. Rashard Lewis was/is perhaps the most jump shot oriented of the four listed elevated-shooting-shoulderless jumpshooters in the sense that he focused more on shooting jump shots and less on driving and passing. Lewis had a slight touch problem at long-range because minus shooting shoulder involvement in the release, he had to speed up the release for power. As a corrective, Lewis employed brushing hand-action to slow velocity and thereby reduce the touch problem. Despite his 6-10 size, Lewis was an effective jumpshooter at long-range, mid-range and short-range. Maybe even better at long-range than at short-range. Lewis did not shoot off the dribble very often, but when he did it was mainly weakside fallaways and stepbacks. Unlike many, Lewis's weakside form stayed on balance, probably because he seldom overtaxed his distinctive release. Lewis's cradlegrip shooting grip probably contributed at least as much to his off-the-dribble limitations as his elevated-shooting-shoulderless shooting position and release.

Julius Randle is one of those players who refuses to play to his strengths. Instead of taking a page out of Zach Randolph's same height same weight book and dominating with his big body, Randle instead favors a finesse game. Make no mistake about it, Randolph also featured a very good whole-body reachback jump shot, but big-body forceful bullying of the defense was his first order of business. Randle's elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot is actually soft and accurate when he is on balance. But Randle's poor shot selection by way of his preference for off-balance weakside fallaways and stepbacks works against stabilizing his release. If Randle shot a shooting-shoulder-centric whole-body jump shot, it might be different story. That's because shooting shoulder involvement in the release channels the athleticism and the power of the jump into the release, which accounts for the whole-body jump shot theory's merge of the jump of the jump shot and the release of the jump shot. Unfortunately for Randle, his elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot exacerbates rather than corrects the balance problem resulting from his weakside jump shot tendencies.

Lauri Markkanen, like Randle, seems determined not to take full advantage of his superior size and strength and, in Markkanen's case, athleticism. Although statistics say that he is an effective offensive player, the opinion here is that Markkanen leaves a great deal of his potential offensive dominance on the shelf. It's not that Markkanen never uses his size and power. Markkanen has filled highlight reels with slashing drives leading to slams that register on the Richter scale. But the opportunities for such plays are few and far between by comparison to the steady beatdown that mid-range and post-up jumpshooters can inflict on the defense. The Markkanen mystery is all about untapped physical potential. The argument here is that Markkanen's elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot is squashing his awesome 7-1, 240 pound, highly athletic, run-jump potential to dominate the defense? Yes, Markkanen's elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot looks OK. But close inspection reveals little elevation and not much happening off the dribble. And because both elevation and off the dribble capability are directly linked to the shooting shoulder by way of channeling the athleticism and the power of the jump into the release, well, the urgent call here is for a whole-body makeover of Mister Markkanen's jump shot.

Dylan Harper favorably introduced himself to many basketball fans worldwide during the 2026 NBA Finals, playing the type of physically imposing basketball that distinguished his entire

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rookie season. Nevertheless, the opinion here is that Harper must expand his offensive repertoire if he is to sustain and improve his performance as NBA defenses adjust, as they surely will, to his largely one-dimensional driving game. As a mid-sized player, that means Harper must improve his off-the-dribble mid-range jump shot, which is precisely the area where his elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot can turn more liability than asset. Harper's version of the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot – which sets up with a pinched shooting grip, locates the shooting position forehead-high but out front and, because of the pinched shooting grip and the out-front shooting position, overemphasizes the brushing hand-action phase of the release – has so far not worked very well on his infrequent mid-range pull-up jump shot attempts. Shooting shoulder involvement in the release is necessary to channel the athleticism and the power of the jump into the release, which is essential both for the transition from preceding moves and run-ups to the jump of the jump shot and for the elevation of the jump shot. On the plus side, if Harper learns how to shoot one of the whole-body jump shots, which are easy to learn and easy to execute, he can then extend his physically imposing style of play to his jumpshooting game.

Well, so much for judging the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot on the basis of the look that it gets from its elevated shooting position. The four deep dives just conducted on the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump clearly show that there is more to it than meets the eye. However, the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot's elevated shooting position was not totally misleading. Lewis got a lot done with his elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot in the recent past. And Randle, Markkanen and Harper are achieving admirable levels of success with the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot at the present time. The objection here is that in each instance all four players could have been or could be even better with a whole-body jump shot in place of their elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shots.

This analysis of the elevated-shooting-shoulderless jump shot has exact parallels in the preceding analyses of the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot and the reachback-strokesnap jump shot, both of which are also listed as player-sourced jump shots. Both analyses describe jump shots that set up with either a whole-body elbow-out or a whole-body reachback shooting position but end up excluding the shooting shoulder from the release. How to know that the exclusion took place? There is very little visual evidence. The conclusion is based mainly on performance.

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