THE SQUAT SHOT: GOOD POWER, POOR ATHLETICISM

By Robert Tilitz

The squat shot is named after its shooting stance. The squat shot shooting stance features a head-high shooting position for the start of the release, firmly and widely planted feet and a semi-squat posture. The squat shot shooting stance is not athletic. It is difficult to set up the squat shot shooting stance from off the dribble. And it is difficult to jump out of the squat shot shooting stance. As a result, the squat shot is mainly a stationary standing-start shot.

Jerry Lucas

Magic Johnson

Old-fashioned is an apt description of the squat shot. Still, two of the greatest basketball players of all time, Jerry Lucas and Magic Johnson shot the squat shot. To reference concepts developed later in *Power Shooting's* player-sourced section, Lucas shot his squat shot with a sliding roofgrip and Johnson shot his squat shot with a cradlegrip. Both Lucas and Johnson made the most of the squat shot in terms of power, accuracy and touch. But the squat shot squashed their athleticism and their potential to develop a jump shot. Then along comes the 3-point era and it's got a second life. The roundball world keeps going round.

The squat shot does get off the ground, but not with a jump. The squat shot's elevation mainly results from the overall upward effort that goes into shooting it. That effort consists of a push off the ground by the legs combined with a straightstroke-push release. The leg power used to push off the ground supplements and on occasion exceeds the power of the squat shot's release.

One reason that the squat shot has no jump is that the length of the arm action that raises the basketball to its head-high shooting position is so short that it does not build up enough upward momentum to help power a jump. If the shooting position was higher, then the arm action that raises the basketball would be longer and very possibly could then build up enough momentum to help power the jump of a jump shot.

The squat shot's up-and-out straightstroke-push release consists of a full extension by the shooting arm including a stretched-out forearm stroke and, toward the end of the extension of the shooting arm, hand action that brushes the basketball. Brushing hand action is the primary means by which the shooting hand controls the squat shot. Brushing hand action fine-tunes distance and direction, generates backspin for touch, slows velocity and adds secondary power. The wrist snap is a poor second choice to brushing hand action. The wrist snap, which is

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intended to be a primary source of both power and control, does not work well with and actually disrupts the more physical shoulder and arm-based whole-body release techniques. In fact, the wrist snap does not even work well in combination with the strokesnap release.

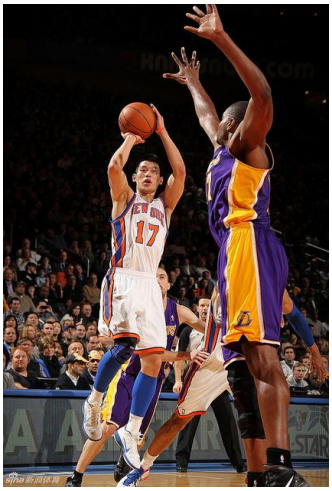
The squat shot's low-starting, head-high release has good power and, with hand action, good accuracy and good touch. The squat shot's low-starting, head-high release works well for free throws and stationary open shots from mid-range and long-range. But the squat shot's low-starting, head-high release is vulnerable to defensive pressure. And because the squat shot's low-starting, head-high release results in little to no jump of the jump shot, shooting off the dribble is difficult if not impossible. That's because the jump of the jump shot is necessary for harnessing the horizontal momentum of pre-jump shot moves and run-ups by redirecting it upward.

The squat shot has been compared to shot putting. But the comparison is only partly accurate. It is true that both the squat shot and the shot put set up and push off from a stance with firmly and widely planted feet. The greatest similarities, however, are supposed to be between the squat shot's release and the shot put's toss. But take a close look and you'll see that the comparison is weak. To be specific, the squat shot has a shoulder-aligned shooting position for the start of the release with the elbow and the hand pointed outward at the basket, while the shot put has an elbow-out setup with the hand angled in. And those differences are just the beginning.

Probably the greatest difference between the squat shot and the shot put is in their overall exertion. The squat shot relies for power on its push-off and its release, which consists of a full push-extension of the shooting arm including a stretched-out forearm stroke release and hand action. That's not a bad power package for a standing-start shot. But especially without a run-up and a jump, the squat shot is rather reserved or low key in terms of exertion.

By contrast, the shot put fully exerts to extract every ounce of power the human body can produce. The shot put starts from a crouch that transitions to wheeling footwork that explodes with a push-off timed to gain supplemental power from the wheeling rotation added to all the power from the upward surge of the push-off and the toss. It is certainly not an exaggeration to say that the shot put is many times more dynamic, athletic and powerful than the squat shot.

Jeremy Lin shot a partially athleticized version of the squat shot. Lin once brought a momentary spark of life called Linsanity to what had been a dysfunctional New York Knicks franchise. But over the course of time, Lin's stock dropped because his partially athleticized squat shot was a second-rate jump shot that could not keep up with his dynamic floor game. Still, give Lin credit for squeezing some jump out of the squat shot. The big problem with Lin's partially athleticized squat shot was that its shooting-shoulderless release did not merge with its meager jump. That meant Lin's partially athleticized squat shot had to overwork the shooting arm for release power. In the process, Lin's partially athleticized squat shot sacrificed the groundbased squat shot's easy power, accuracy and touch for a little bit of jump.


Jeremy Lin

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