WHOLE-BODY PRIMER: INTRODUCING PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES FOR PLAYERS AND A MEANS OF INSTRUCTION FOR COACHES

By Robert Tilitz

(A pictorial preview of the whole-body jump shots is on the last two pages.)
The jump shot is currently in decline. Basketball analytics cites low mid-range jump shot shooting percentages relative to other methods of scoring as proof. To deal with the decline of the jump shot basketball analytics recommends that the number of mid-range jump shots taken should be drastically reduced. No questions asked.

My whole-body jump shot theory has also noted that the jump shot is in decline. However, the response of the whole-body jump shot theory is radically different from that of basketball analytics. To begin with, the whole-body jump shot theory asks why the mid-range pull-up jump shot turned problematic after it propelled the growth and popularity of basketball from the mid-20th century onward until the present downturn? More importantly, the whole-body jump shot theory can reverse the decline of the jump shot and reverse it fast.

The whole-body jump shot theory asserts that the mid-range jump shot has declined because the NBA has all but officially endorsed an almost all wrong jump shot. Despite vague origins and no previous record of success, the nameless almost all wrong jump shot has been staunchly defended and rigidly enforced on a theoretical level by NBA executives and NBA and college coaches. But several successive generations of players all quickly learned that the NBA recommended jump shot, which the whole-body jump shot theory calls the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot after its shooting position/set point and its release, does not work.

Left to their own devices as if in a world of jump shot anarchy, many players developed their own jump shot techniques for themselves. Those player-sourced jump shots were sometimes related to and by varying degrees frequently superior to the elbow-in-strokesnap model. Because just a little bit better than the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot does not get the job done, many players have fallen by the jump shot wayside. Players who have achieved middling but still not significant improvements over the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot are probably the norm in the NBA. A few players have broken through big-time and developed for themselves their own versions of the whole-body jump shots. Overall, because of the imposition of the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot by the NBA, the jump shot has fallen into a period of decline.

As if causing the decline of the jump shot was not bad enough, the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot has hurt several of basketball's vital interests. Under the heading of fan appeal, the reduction of jump shot athleticism in basketball has predictably led to lower NBA TV ratings. Media people might dig up some new technology or trend as an alternate explanation, but athleticism is the main attraction in basketball. Under the heading of participation, the reduction of jump shot athleticism in basketball has probably made the game at least a little less appealing to action-oriented young athletes. Sport psychologists might say that the choice of a sport is subject to factors too complex to measure, but you can be sure high-caliber young athletes are not thrilled with the idea of passing the ball around the perimeter to set up long-range stationary/standing-start 3-point shots.

The collateral damage done by the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot that cuts deepest, however, might be to the culture of basketball, especially to the player-coach relationship. The problem is not that the players feel antagonism toward the coaches. Rather, it is that the players lack of confidence in the coaches when it comes to teaching how to shoot a jump shot, the most personal and the most important skill in basketball, can spill over and infect other aspects of their relationship. The problem traces back to the coaches' advocacy for the almost all wrong elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot and their failed efforts to teach it.

Basketball's apologists have instead often attributed the player-coach divide to a variety of academic-sounding causes, the usual suspects, if you will. The apologists often point to social issues, economics, politics, race, class, the individualized nature of the game and generation gaps as possible explanations for the relationship

problems that sometimes exist between players and coaches. The whole-body jump shot theory's explanation for the player-coach divide has the advantage of being immediate, tangible and relevant.

When it was left in the hands of the players after its mid-twentieth century invention, widespread jump shot progress proceeded slowly but was still beneficial to basketball. By no means were all players great jumpshooters. But many great jumpshooters did develop. It was the jump shot techniques of those great jumpshooters that the whole-body jump shot theory would later identify, analyze and adopt as its own. The majority of players were trying, with varying degrees of success, to keep up with those great jumpshooters. However, it was during that period of gradual jump shot expansion that the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot made it entry and eventually made the mess that exists today.

Too sparse on details and explanations to be called a theory, the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot was simply a combination of a few techniques, like aligning everything from the shooting stance to the release with the basket, intended mainly to enhance accuracy. Why the emphasis on accuracy? Perhaps the thinking was that the transition from two-hand shooting to one-hand shooting did not alter the necessity of lining up the shot with the basket that characterized the two-hand set shot. It was the preoccupation with accuracy to the neglect of athleticism, power and protection that led to the decline of the jump shot.

By contrast, the whole-body jump shot theory is all about athleticism. Indeed, the whole-body jump shot theory contends that a well-executed whole-body jump shot is basketball's best advertisement for athleticism. Jump shot athleticism is distinguished by its integration of skills with running and jumping. But because of widespread skill deficiencies high-level jumpshooting is relatively rare. The jump shot has, therefore, dropped off the radar of many players and fans.

The purpose of the whole-body jump shot theory is to explain how the best jump shots work. By being the first jump shot theory to get it right, the whole-body jump shot theory makes the jump shot teachable and learnable. At this point, the whole-body jump shot theory has not yet taken over and revolutionized basketball and perhaps it never will. There are significant financial and cultural barriers standing in the way of such a takeover and revolution. But the barriers standing in the way of the acceptance and implementation of the whole-body jump shot theory cannot prevent a brief presentation of its ideas in our land of free speech, so here goes.

Besides being built around the jump shots of the all-time best jumpshooters, the whole-body jump shot theory explores the relationship between jump shot techniques and jump shot tactics. In doing so, the whole-body jump shot theory builds the case for the strongside game and the jump shot techniques that support it. In addition, it is argued that the physical demands of strongside to-the-basket and strongside lateral pull-up jump shots are so different that each requires or at least works best with a different set of whole-body jump shot techniques, that is, a different whole-body jump shot. Still, both of the different whole-body jump shots work very well off moderately angled strongside lateral moves and run-ups, meaning there is a significant degree of overlap in their capabilities. Both of the different whole-body jump shots adapt very well to post-up play, 3-point shooting and free throws.

As to why the whole-body jump shot theory emphasizes strongside pull-up jump shots, it's about their attack capability. Whole-body strongside pull-up jump shots are easily the best attack jump shots. Yes, the whole-body strongside pull-up jump shots are theoretically more physically demanding than weakside jump shots. True, but not for the whole-body jump shots, which actually gain athleticism and power from the strongside physical forces that are detrimental to most other jump shots. The whole-body strongside pull-up jump shots' attack capability and the accompanying access to the strongside game with all of its shooting, driving and passing options make the ability to stand up to strongside physical forces the ultimate difference maker for offensive basketball in general and the jumpshooting game in particular.

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Although the physical demands of strongside pull-up jump shots exceed those of weakside pull-up jump shots, they do not require extreme physical capabilities. But don't take my word for it, judge for yourself. For athleticism, the strongside pull-up jump shot requires first of all a preceding move or run-up to build up sufficient momentum to help power the jump of the jump shot. Second, the horizontal buildup of momentum from the move or the run-up must be harnessed. That's the job of the jump of the strongside pull-up jump shot, which redirects the horizontal momentum upward. Third, the strongside pull-up jump shot requires forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release, which is a fundamental whole-body technique, to partly power the release and to largely power the rotation of the square-in-the-air jump that many strongside pull-up jump shots require and all could use. That's it. There's no extreme athleticism involved there, right?

The whole-body jump shot for to-the-basket and moderately angled strongside pull-ups is called the elbow-out jump shot. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is a leading example. The whole-body jump shot for strongside lateral pull-ups at both moderate and extreme angles, which works with the shooting elbow angled either in or out, is called the reachback jump shot. Brandon Ingram is a leading example. Since most players' offense heads forward, their primary jump shot should be the whole-body elbow-out jump shot. As to whether the whole-body jump shot theory gets it right, the precise parallels between the whole-body techniques and those of Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Brandon Ingram is proof positive.

The release of the whole-body jump shots depends on the shooting shoulder first rolling back to activate as a source of whole-body athleticism and whole-body power. The release for the whole-body elbow-out jump shot is a straightstroke-push. Angling the shooting elbow out rolls the shooting shoulder back. The release for the whole-body reachback jump shot is a leveraged straightstroke-pull. The reachback rolls the shooting shoulder back. Both types of whole-body release merge with the jump of the jump shot, which maximizes their athleticism and power. The merge of the jump and the release of the whole-body jump shots is dependent on coordinated big-muscle action. The shooting shoulder is at the center of it all. The forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release channels the athleticism and the power of the jump of the jump shot into the release of the jump shot. And because both types of whole-body release are based on big-muscle action, they are relatively easy to learn and relatively easy to execute.

With athleticism and power derived from the shooting-shoulder-centric release and the big-muscle units, the whole-body jump shot theory eliminates the wrist snap. That frees up the shooting hand to control the whole-body jump shots, with secondary power production duties thrown in. After leading the whole-body jump shot's release straight into the arc of the jump shot, the shooting hand takes ultimate and decisive control of the whole-body jump shots toward the end of the straightstroke extension of the shooting arm by brushing the basketball as the off-hand separated from the basketball. Brushing hand action looks like a super smooth wrist snap but is in fact the whole-body jump shot theory's replacement for the wrist snap. Brushing hand action fine-tunes distance and direction, generates backspin for touch, slows velocity and adds secondary power when needed.

Several surefire teaching techniques practically guarantee that the resistant muscle memory of any preexisting failed jump shot can be overcome so as not to block learning how to shoot the whole-body jump shots. The whole-body jump shot theory's surefire teaching techniques overcome resistant muscle memory. These surefire teaching techniques largely consist of the setup fundamentals for the whole-body jump shots. That means the elbow-out and the reachback whole-body jump shots, because of their different structures, have different surefire teaching techniques. In both cases, however, the whole-body jump shot theory's setup fundamentals go a long way toward establishing the shooting stance and determining the release. As a result, learning how to shoot either the elbow-out or the reachback whole-body jump shots is exceptionally fast and easy.

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The Whole-Body Elbow-Out Jump Shot


Lou Hudson

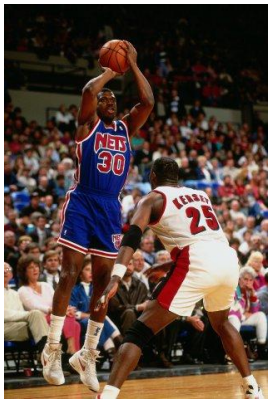

Earl Monroe


Bob McAdoo


David Thompson


Gus Williams


Robert Parish


Bernard King


Ricky Pierce


Hakeem Olajuwon


Karl Malone

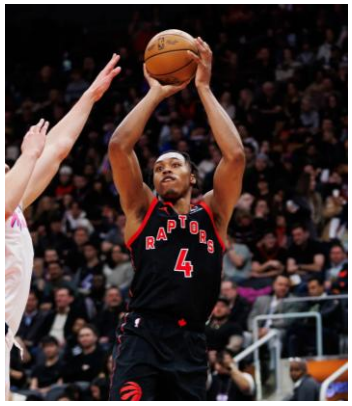

Reggie Miller


Sheryl Swoopes


Allen Iverson


Stephon Marbury


Shai Gilgeous-Alexander


Scottie Barnes

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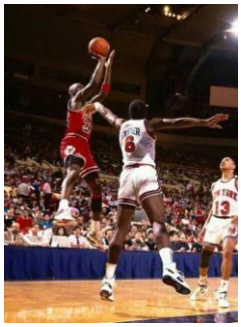
The Whole-Body Elbow-In Reachback Jump Shot


Jerry West


Larry Bird


Michael Jordan


Kobe Bryant


Tracy McGrady

The Whole-Body Elbow-Out Reachback Jump Shot


Mark Aguirre


Ray Allen


Tim Hardaway


Jason Terry


Michael Redd

The Whole-Body Reachup Jump Shot


Klay Thompson


Kawhi Leonard


Elena Delle Donne


Donovan Mitchell


Jalen Brunson

The Whole-Body Elevated-Elbow-In Jump Shot


Rick Barry


Kevin Durant


Devin Booker


Jaylen Brown

(For analyses of the whole-body jump shots, go to www.powershooting.com.)

Stephen Curry's One-of-a-Kind Whole-Body Sidegrip Jump Shot