

# **TROUBLE SHOOTING!**

## **IF HAVING TROUBLE "GETTING" THE SWISH METHOD... PLUS SOME HELPFUL ADVICE, WHETHER HAVING TROUBLE OR NOT!**

If you're not "getting" the Swish Method or just want to review things, see if this can help you pay more attention to what's needed to learn. Remember to keep it simple.

The videos clearly show what's needed and break it all down for you. Watch them over and over, looking for the clues that will help you. The examples, especially in Swish 2, will clarify and simplify things and inspire you.

**IT'S THE RELEASE!!! IT'S THE RELEASE!!!** (Remember the Spike Lee ads, "It's the Shoes!"?)

- The Release is the CRITICAL thing and tends to be the major problem, that it isn't fully learned and trusted. Once it starts to be mastered a little, and is becoming "AUTOMATIC," then your shooting will soar. Work with it until it starts to become automatic, and then work it so more so it's totally dependable.
- Learn the Release in close where, with little or no leg power, you can make shot after shot after shot. Work on developing a Release that's a pure "push-and-flop," not a throw or flip. The shot is aimed upward (call it "Medium High"), maybe 50-60 degrees up from horizontal (10:30-11 on a clock, the arm being the hour hand), taken from the Pure Release Distance. Not too high, not too low.

(GRIP: Also, if you have a question about the hand and how to hold and release the ball, just think of the "whole" hand being involved. It cradles the ball and then its only job is to keep the ball on line with wherever the arm points. Don't worry which finger touches the ball last. Shoot from the whole hand. If you think it's one finger or another, you will just complicate things and make yourself wrong if it isn't. Review the section on grip in Swish 2.)

- Then move back a little at a time and learn then to "catch" the leg drive or UpForce. That's easy. Just shoot early and quick. It makes shooting easier. (From the Pure Release Distance, the "Zero Point" in Swish, you could even start to add a bit of leg action and start to shoot higher and lower, depending on the UpForce and the distance, playing with height to learn how better to control it.)

### **ALIGNMENT IS CRITICAL! GENERATE AND "CATCH" THE INERTIA!**

- Learn to "align" ball as long as possible with eye and basket. This "setting" on line is a major factor in accuracy. Get the ball moving before the Release starts and then KEEP IT MOVING (this is the Law of Inertia in action). You could say, "Catch the UpForce, Catch the Inertia!" If you catch the ball high, then you need to "dip" it in order to generate some Inertia. If you don't have time to align and/or dip the ball,

maybe you shouldn't be shooting because Accuracy becomes more difficult. I'm realizing that this Inertia thing is a major factor in accuracy. Play with it, catching some, catching a lot, catch none, bring the ball up off line to the Set Point (no Inertia possible) and shoot that way. Then bring it up consciously on line or dip it and shoot. You'll realize how valuable it is in shooting.

- At the last instant, vary the arch to control distance. It'll become instinctive to shoot a bit higher or lower to adjust for power and the distance. It's the final adjustment, and with such control of distance plus the great accuracy you're learning, you'll start swishing shots more and more often. And hold the Follow Through for an extra half- or full-second, to complete the connection with the target.

## **A WORD ABOUT THE OPEN STANCE**

- The Open Stance is very important and powerful. As I say in my clinics, it has several advantages over the obsolete\* Squared Up stance. It's more natural, more instinctive (give a ball to a kid and tell him/her to push it upward and forward to a target with one arm, and she/he would naturally rotate the body and push/reach forward with the strong arm. The body would wind up open, of course. It's also easier to align the hand and ball with the eye from such a stance. Try it from both stances and you'll see what I mean.
- It's also more powerful to "step in" to shoot than to stay square or to jump-stop square, as so many of my competitors say to do. In a clinic awhile back, when I said it was more powerful from such a stance, a coach said, "Oh yeah, like a boxer would stand to throw jabs." If left handed, a boxer would stand with the right foot, right shoulder and right arm forward. There's more power that way. If a boxer squared up, there would be less power and much less balance. Try it both ways.

## **FEEL THE POWER FROM THE WHOLE BODY!**

- The Open Stance has an added benefit I realized recently: a great feeling of WHOLE BODY action can occur! From such a stance, there can be a feeling of the shot coming from the feet and legs, up through the upper body and out the arm, hand and fingers. It's a neat feeling, strong and stable. But if you are Squared Up, all it seems to feel like is the upper body, mostly arm and hand, doing the work, less powerful, less stable. Try it, again, both ways and see what you find. Who would want to shoot like that?

(\*I say obsolete because it's appropriate for two-handed shooting, which I did occasionally in high school, plus underhand free throws, which I also did in high school for awhile ... and hated the technique... but nobody takes those shots any more.)

## **WORK IN CLOSE AND SMALL!**

- An important thing about working to change something is to "Slow it down." Move

in close and slow it down so you can feel and see what's happening. Don't move faster or shoot more quickly than you can feel! This allows Awareness to work more readily and easily. Only when you're able to do it well slowly should you move back and speed things up. If you complicate it too soon, performance and learning will suffer.

## **EXAGGERATION AND EXTREMES**

- It's also a powerful way to practice to exaggerate things for the purpose of more fully distinguishing them. Take the ball way overhead, for example, to learn more about where the Set Point should be. Shoot off your shoulder on purpose, then in line with your ear, then the strong eye. Which seems more accurate? Play with height and spins, different stances. Take it too high, too low, then in the middle. Just play with different possibilities. This gives your body more latitude to play and learn in. Shoot with your opposite hand, too. That's a great way to further distinguish the "distinctions" of shooting.

## **WHATEVER THE PROBLEM IS, FOCUS AWARENESS ON IT!**

- Whether you have a problem with direction, distance, footwork, stance, grip, the Release, Follow Through, or whatever, you can become your own coach. Focus your awareness on the problem, really get to know it, then you can start to change it. If it's inconsistent direction, for example, observe what's "real" about the direction of your shots and find out exactly how the poor direction or the inconsistency happens. Is your hand rotating out to the side (pronating, some call it), or is it turning left or just stopping, tense and anxious? Once you know what's happening, then your body will start to change it. When you point the light of awareness on something you don't want, change is possible.

## **BECOME A LEARNER!!!**

- It's important that you pay attention and learn these simple things. Learn from each shot. Don't just shoot, miss, and then get frustrated. Figure out what didn't work and then change what you do (Self-coach!). That way you can take on anything and start to reach your potential more and more.

## **IF YOU'RE NOT GETTING IT, DON'T GIVE UP!**

- If it seems you're not getting this enough to suit you, don't blame yourself or blame the Method. Just re-apply yourself. See if you can become a "World Class Learner." Watch the videos again. Work with a friend or against the wall again, slowing things down, making them smaller, simpler. Learn it only as fast as you can feel and see things. Once you "get" it in some area, then increase the difficulty, move back a bit, move more quickly. If it breaks down, go back to the beginning.

## **THIS IS SIMPLE STUFF -- DON'T OVER-COMPLICATE IT!!!**

- Watch the videos over and over. Note the pure Releases of the kids in the videos (at the end for "Swish," and all the way through for "Swish 2"). Note the relaxed, bouncing shooting hands, note how UpForce is being used, how "moving" Inertia is being generated and used. We all instinctively know Inertia helps if it's moving before the Release, but some coaches are saying not to "dip" the ball when you receive the ball high, thus killing any chance of helpful Inertia. (If you stop your shot motion [hesitate] after the ball reaches the Set Point, then Inertia is hurting you because you have to create movement and direction [moving inertia] from scratch.)
- You can coach yourself now. It's all right there. It's clearly discussed and demonstrated. Again, stay in close while you learn the basics. Then add distance and speed and various footwork and the shot, hopefully, won't break down. If it does, no problem. Expect it. Just return in close and rebuild it ... again, and again, and again.
- Keep notes as you study and work with this and learn to shoot more and more effectively. Think of it as a "story" you can share with others, how you overcame difficulties, misunderstandings, misconceptions and how you coached yourself to a new you, to becoming a "Shooter!" Then write it up for me to post on my website and in my Newsletters. Thanks.

Cheers,  
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## **APPENDIX**

### **SYMPTOMS OF POOR SHOOTING WITH SUGGESTIONS TO CORRECT:**

- Always Short  
 You're either underpowered (need more UpForce or need to shoot earlier to catch more of that energy) or you are shooting too high for the available body energy.
- Always Long  
 You're not shooting high enough. At the moment of Release, be ready to vary the arch up or down to accommodate the power and distance.
- Missing left and right  
 Your wrist and hand are surely causing this. Observe what's happening and then learn to relax them so direction is created by the direction of the arm extension, nothing more.
- Shots are always flat  
 You're probably using too much upper body action and not enough lower body energy (UpForce). If you "wrist flip" the shot, this is the trajectory you will get. Shoot quicker, rely more on the big muscles of the body rather than the upper body.
- Spin is funny or inconsistent (or a "Dead Ball")  
 Your wrist, hand and fingers must be active, thus interfering with the beautiful,

natural, medium backspin you will get with a Swish Release. Relax them. The only job of the wrist and hand is to cradle the ball and keep it on line with wherever the arm action points. Maybe your off hand is getting involved. Solve that by pure awareness (find out when and how it's happening and observe it, quantify it, exaggerate it, etc.) -- then it will start to diminish its role. You could also change your grip so the off hand/thumb cannot interfere.

- Shots are often blocked

You're shooting without enough separation, or you might have too slow a setting and Release, or you're shooting too flat. Work on footwork to prepare the body for a quick, upward, high Release (as high as determined by the power you're generating), and learn to set and release in one motion, very quickly.

REMEMBER: ALL OF THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS/ANSWERS ARE THINGS YOU CAN FIGURE OUT YOURSELF BY OBSERVATION AND AWARENESS. YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO NOW.

## **A FINAL WORD -- EXPLORE THE VARIOUS "DISTINCTIONS" OF SHOOTING!**

Whenever you go to a court you have the opportunity to explore the act of shooting and develop more and more the "Distinctions" of shooting. One definition of a Distinction is "a quality or feature that differentiates." Distinctions are the things that define the act or motion. With a basketball shot, here are some of the key distinctions: power, stance, setting the ball and the set point, alignment, how you release the ball (throw, flip or push), height, spin, the action of the arm, the action of the wrist and hand, and the follow through.

When you go to a court, spend time playing with (exploring) these Distinctions (and others you discover), particularly the ones that interest you, but all of them eventually. Spend a few minutes here, a few minutes there, one at a time. Over time you'll learn a lot of things and begin what could be called "mastery." For example, stance: As you may or may not know, I advocate strongly an "open" stance, and the idea of "stepping in" to shoot. Other people think that "jump-stopping square" is the way to do it. You can find out what works best for you.

EXPLORE, EXPERIMENT, EXAGGERATE: Try different stances, square, open a little, open a lot, open too much, try a "closed" stance, turning the opposite way (it will seem weird to you, I think, but worth trying). Jump-stop going to the right, jump-stop going left. See if shooting from such a stance and movement is easy or difficult.

As you set the ball, do you align it with your eye (alignment is an important Distinction). I think it's most effective that the ball be aligned with the strong eye. Some coaches believe the forearm needs to be vertical (and the elbow under the ball), so they advocate aligning the ball with the shoulder to allow for that relationship. Try it and see what it does (or doesn't) do for you.

YOU BE THE BOSS HERE: Be a Learner and you'll get better and better at

distinguishing shooting and performing it. Our bodies are amazing learning machines, but we need to experience what's going on and then "let" the body learn and do its thing. Awareness can't be over-stressed. It's how we learn. Enhance your awareness, and then take the "Responsibility" to observe and make changes -- sometimes subtle, sometimes gross -- and who knows what's possible?

**YOU ARE CAPABLE!** In the end, you'll see you are a capable learner and performer. You're in possession of an amazing physical body! Trust it to learn and perform and it will. When you start to become masterful at shooting, the game of basketball (or any sport or action) can become a thrilling thing, showing us how remarkable our bodies are. I say shooting a basketball can be a very simple, easy thing. Find out if that's true for you. Good luck.