

HOW DO YOU SHOOT NOW?

(IN A CLINIC FORMAT)

(A vital prerequisite to learning a new stroke!)

From my experience, the first step in learning something new is coming to know how you shoot now. That's an important step in any learning, because if you don't know where you start from, you can learn something new but then slowly old habits can creep back in without being noticed. If you know both where you were and where you are and can feel and see the differences, then the learning is quicker and deeper.

LEARNING WHERE YOU ARE - SIMPLE DISTINCTIONS

Here are the areas you can ask the kids to look at:

- POWER
- HEIGHT (OR ARCH)
- SPIN
- STANCE
- SET POINT AND SETTING OF THE BALL
- RELEASE – ACTION OF THE ARM
- RELEASE – ACTION OF THE WRIST & HAND

--- SET UP THE AREAS OF FOCUS WITH DEMONSTRATIONS FIRST ---

First, have the group sit down between the free throw line and the top of the key. To introduce these areas of discovery, have 2 kids shoot in front of the whole group and have a conversation about what the observers see in the shooters' shots. Have one player shoot from the left and one from the right, about 15-16 feet away. If one of the demonstrators is chosen as one of the "better" shooters and one as a "less skilled" shooter, the contrasts would be helpful, but this isn't a big deal. The following are "general" awarenesses. As we proceed, we'll get more specific. Have each of the demonstrators shoot a couple shots for each question that follows.

(1) WHERE DOES POWER COME FROM?

Ask the group to notice where the majority of power for shooting comes from for each shooter. Is it more from the Upper Body, or is it from a combination (integration) of Lower and Upper Bodies (it might be 50%-50% , or maybe more upper body (75-25) or more lower body (25-75)? [NOTE: Most kids shoot more from Upper Body, some entirely, so watch to see if the observers can see that. Better shooters will be the "Integrated" type shooters.]

(2) HOW HIGH ARE THE SHOTS TYPICALLY?

Next, ask them how high each demonstrator's shots get above the rim and call out what they see. Ask them to look at the bottom of the ball relative to the rim. (The top of the backboard is a good reference point, 3 feet above the rim, and the top of the white rectangle on most baskets is about 1 1/2 feet.) Is the ball, at its highest point, 6 inches above the rim? ...1 foot? ...1 1/2 feet? ...2 feet? ...3 feet or more? Ask the demonstrators to shoot normally and not try to change their arch.

(3) OBSERVE SPIN:

Watch Spin and notice if it's backspin, sidespin, forward spin or dead in the air? It might be a combination. If it's backspin, how fast is it? ...slow? ...medium? ...fast?

(4) STANCE

With one shot (two at most), ask the group to tell you if the players' stances are "square" or "open." Square means the feet are parallel (or staggered with the lead foot pointing at the basket) and center of the chest is perpendicular to the line to the basket. Open means the body is rotated counterclockwise (for right-handers) a little or a lot. In the open stance, the front foot turns a little to the side and back foot turns more, like a boxer would stand to land jabs.

(5) SET POINT AND SETTING OF THE BALL

Observe where the demonstrators' Set Points are and how the ball gets brought there. (The Set Point is the momentary stopping point in a jump shot where the ball gets "Set" before the Release takes place. It's necessary with all the movement of a jump shot to provide a stable starting point. With a Free Throw or Set Shot there may not be a stopping point. It can be continuous.)

Is the Set Point below the eyes (the player looks over the ball at the target) or above the eyes (player looks under the ball)? Note where it is exactly.

If it's above the eyes, note where the bottom of the ball is. Is it even with the eyes, middle of forehead, top of the head or even higher? Is the back of the ball at the area of the front of the head, or is the ball brought overhead, to the middle of the head, or to the back of the head or more? Or is it out front of the head a few inches?

Look at alignment, too. Is the center of the ball in line with the shooting eye (approximately, within an inch or so), or is it in line with the ear or the shoulder? (It might even be off center toward the opposite ear.)

How is the ball brought to the Set Point? Is it brought up generally in alignment with the Set Point, or brought up the left side or the right side. It might be brought across the body, or up way outside the body. There might be what's called a "Hitch" in the motion, where the ball stops or moves left or right, which interferes with the Inertia of the shot.

(6) RELEASE AND SHOOTING ARM

Next observe how the ball is released and what happens with the shooting arm.

Is the Release ...

-- a Pushing Action?

-- a Throwing Action?

-- a Wrist Flipping action?

What happens to the shooting arm during the Release?

Does it...

-- straighten or is it short-armed?

-- stay straightened in the Follow Through or break down?

If we could imagine the person as a clock, and the shooting arm is the hour hand, what time on a clock does the arm point to in the Release?

-- (Let 9 o'clock be parallel to the ground and 12 o'clock straight up.)

-- Is the "time"

... 10 o'clock? 11 o'clock?, 10:30?, 11:30?, etc.

Does the Release continue the inertia generated by the Setting motion, or does it miss that energy and have to start the ball's movement and energy from scratch?

(7) FOLLOW THROUGH: SHOOTING WRIST AND HAND

Is the Follow Through held for a second or two?

Are the wrist and hand... -- tense? -- or relaxed?

Does the hand bounce during the Release?

Does it stay pointed in the direction of the basket?

... -- or does it turn one way or another?

These general distinctions will help the kids start to understand shooting better, both as observers of others and as observers of themselves.

DISCOVER HOW YOU SHOOT NOW IN PAIRS

Now it's time to break up in pairs and go to a basket and observe these same aspects in their shooting. If you're alone, it would be helpful to do some of these awareness discoveries at a Wall. Before they break, explain that they are to do just a few shots for each area of discovery, and ask them to please make it about what they are noticing, not whether or not they make the shot. (STRESS THIS VERY STRONGLY -- THE KEY THING HERE IS AWARENESS, NOT PERFORMANCE!)

Set up the first three awarenesses (Power, height & spin) and have them go off and examine how they shoot. With one partner shooting and one rebounding (if

pairs), tell them to take only 2-3 shots for each area, do all three areas, and then switch with their partner.

FEEDBACK FROM AN OBSERVER IS POWERFUL

Ask them to observe their partner's shots and help the shooter to define and clarify their experiences. After each distinction (~2 shots for each), have the partners get together briefly to state what they saw. The shooter speaks first, then the observer, else the observer's comments would "muddy the water" of the shooter's experience. (If you have a mature bunch of kids, you might even tell them they are to report on their partner AND themselves and be able to point out differences.)

In this first phase, there are three distinctions and about six shots total per person. Two shots, feedback, two more shots, feedback, etc. After the three distinctions and six shots, switch roles. As soon as both partners have shot, return to the gathering spot.

<<< Break for shooting in pairs - for about 5 minutes max >>>

Then gather and discuss quickly what they discovered. To save time, ask for a raise of hands for each area of focus (if you have time, you might ask individuals to describe what they saw in their shooting):

POWER

- How many saw they used mostly Upper Body power to shoot from? (... perhaps a percentage ratio of 60-40 or 75-25)
- How many saw their shots were more Integrated (50-50)?

HEIGHT

- How many had a "Low" arch, 6 inches to 1 1/2 feet above the rim, in the area of the lower half of the backboard?
- How many had a "Medium" arch, 1 1/2 to 3 feet above the rim, the upper half of the backboard?
- How many had a "High" arch, higher than the backboard, 3+, 4 or 5 feet above the rim or more?

SPIN

- How many had Backspin?
- How many had Sidespin?
- How many had Forward Spin?
- How many had a combination of Backspin and Sidespin?
- If Backspin, how many had a Slow rate of Backspin?
- If Backspin, how many had a Medium rate of Backspin?
- If Backspin, how many had a Fast rate of Backspin?

Then set up the last four areas with the same two demonstrators: Stance, Set Point & Setting, Release and Follow Through.

<<< Break for shooting in pairs - 5 minutes max! >>>

STANCE (This can probably only take one shot, as it's so obvious from looking at the position of the feet and the shoulders.)

-- Square or Open?

-- If Open, how much? (roughly 15 degrees, 20, 30, 45 degrees?

More than 45 degrees would be too much)

SET POINT & SETTING

-- Above eyes or below?

-- If above, is bottom of ball even with eyes, middle of forehead, or at the top of the head or higher?

-- Is back of ball even with front of head, overhead a bit, overhead a lot? -- Is it held out front of the head?

-- Is the center of the ball aligned with the shooting eye, or is it right or left? How much?

-- Describe how the ball is moved up to the Set Point. Is it in alignment with your eye or not, is the ball motion accelerating into the Release or do you pause or slow it down or have sideways movement that sabotages the ball's inertia?

RELEASE & ARM

-- How many saw they saw they THREW the ball toward the basket?

-- How many FLIPPED the ball with their wrists?

-- How many used an upward PUSHING action to send the ball toward the basket?

-- Or was is some combination of the above choices?

-- How many saw they locked the elbow, or was it a "short arm" action, without the full extension?

-- Was the elbow-locking strong and sure, or more soft and unsure?

FOLLOW THROUGH AND WRIST/HAND

-- How many held their Follow Through?

-- How many saw they pull back?

-- How many saw they saw their hands were tense?

-- How many saw they saw their hands were relaxed?

-- Did anyone see that their hand actually bounced, it was so relaxed?

-- How many saw they saw their hand stayed pointed in the direction of the basket?

-- How many saw they saw their hand moved to one side or the other or pulled back?

If done in a spirit of discovery and curiosity, the team/group will come to powerful understandings of how to look at shooting and how they themselves shoot. Tell them there are no "rights" or "wrongs" in this; just different ways to do things. You'll guide them later into recommended ways to shoot that will make sense and work to a high degree. The awareness developed in the "How Now" stuff enhances the student's ability to learn and self coach.

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