

# HOW DO YOU SHOOT NOW?

## (for self coaching)

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.

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### LEARNING WHERE YOU ARE -- SIMPLE DISTINCTIONS

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

POWER

HEIGHT (OR ARCH)

SPIN

STANCE

SET POINT

RELEASE – ACTION OF THE ARM

RELEASE – ACTION OF THE WRIST & HAND

#### (1) WHERE DOES POWER COME FROM?

Ask yourself where the majority of power for shooting comes. 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?

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 player's Set Point is 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 won't be a stopping point. It will be a continuous flow, accelerating in speed.)

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.

#### (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.

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#### GO TO A COURT AND DISCOVER HOW YOU SHOOT NOW

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Now go to a basket and observe these same aspects in your shooting. Do just a few shots for each area of discovery, and please make it about what you're noticing, not whether or not you make the shot. (THIS IS IMPORTANT -- THE KEY THING HERE IS AWARENESS, NOT PERFORMANCE!)

Look at the first three awarenesses (Power, Height & Spin).

Ask yourself these questions:

#### POWER

-- Did you use mostly Upper Body power to shoot from?

-- Did you see your shots were more *integrated* (50-50 upper to lower, or slightly more upper, say 55-45, or 60-40, etc.)?

#### HEIGHT

-- Did you have "Low" arch, 6 inches to 1 1/2 feet above the rim, in the area of the lower half of the backboard?

-- Did you have "Medium" arch, 1 1/2 to 3 feet above the rim, the upper half of the backboard?

-- Did you have "High" arch, higher than the backboard, 3+, 4 or 5 feet above the rim or more?

#### SPIN

-- Did you have Backspin?

-- Did you have Sidespin?

-- Did you have Forward Spin?

- Did you have a combination of Backspin and Sidespin?
- If Backspin, did you have a Slow rate of Backspin?
- If Backspin, did you have a Medium rate of Backspin?
- If Backspin, did you have a Fast rate of Backspin?

Then look at the last four areas: Stance, Set Point & Setting, Release and Follow Through.

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 AND SETTING OF THE BALL

- Is your Set Point 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, ear, shoulder, where?
- 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

- Did you see you THREW the ball toward the basket?
- Did you see you FLIPPED the ball with your wrists?
- Did you use an upward PUSHING action to send the ball toward the basket?
- Or was is some combination of the above choices?
- Did you lock 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

- Did you hold your Follow Through?
- Or did you pull it back quickly?
- Were your wrist and hand tense, or were they relaxed?
- Did you have a hand that actually bounced, it was so relaxed?
- Did your hand stayed pointed in the direction of the basket?
- Or did you see your hand move to one side or the other or pull back?

If the above is done in a spirit of discovery and curiosity, you will come to a powerful understanding of how to look at shooting and how you yourself shoot. Note there are no "rights"

or "wrongs" in this; just different ways to do things. I'll show you great technique that you can adopt, if you like it, but this is the starting point.

In doing these exercises, you'll see all kinds of learning happening. Some players will make extraordinary strides just from the new awarenesses. Others will be confused. But I think a large majority will begin a process of exploration and discovery that will alter the way they look at shooting forever. After working with the Swish way of shooting, they'll understand shooting better, and realize they, too, can shoot well. And they'll begin to see how they can coach themselves in this skill.

Great Shooting is not rocket science. It's really very simple Bio-Mechanics. If you "do" this, the ball "does" that ... every time. You'll find it's more mechanical, less mysterious. Once kids "get" these principles, they'll see them (or the absence of them) everywhere. Keep the conversation about shooting going!

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Email me ([Tom@swish22.com](mailto:Tom@swish22.com)) if you have questions and keep me informed as to how these suggestions work for you. My experience shows me that people learn when they increase awareness ... awareness of where they are, and awareness of where they want to go (the goal). The tricky part is to be aware of the gap between those two states and then NOT try to fix it. If they can just keep on observing without trying to change it, their incredible body / brain systems solve the puzzle ... naturally. It's called Learning. AWARENESS IS TRULY DEVELOPMENTAL! Any encouragement you can give them to do these exercises with full attention will help, whether in groups or alone.

Tom Nordland

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