

## SPORT



Above: Boomerang-Pro in action  
Right: Phil Shelley at the Boomerang Factory.

# Boomerang Basketball

By Mike Jungwirth

WHEN Phil Shelley starts talking about his various involvements in basketball, you feel the passion in his voice, so even when the conversation momentarily heads off on a different tangent, it is never too long before it returns to his favourite subject.

Anecdotes about his own playing career are interspersed with an effusive commentary about the achievements of son, Luke, who is currently on a basketball scholarship, playing with Kentucky Wesleyan College, in the competitive NCAA collegiate system in the USA, and enthusiastic recollections about the many colourful characters he has met during his thirty year love affair with the sport.

However, it is when discussion turns to his latest venture that his excitement really bubbles over, for if the cards fall kindly in the coming months, the Moe born and bred inventor's lifelong passion could be transformed into a very profitable business enterprise.

An ingenious training aid, designed by Phil and aptly named the Boomerang Basketball Return System, has recently been launched onto the potentially lucrative American market and based upon the early feedback, Phil has every reason to feel confident of success.

The product incorporates a large catching net that is set up and wheeled under the basketball ring to catch the balls that are being thrown by the shooter. The balls drop out of the catching net and are returned on a chute via gravity to the player. The Boomerang catches both missed and made shots and rapidly returns the basketballs to the shooter, doing away with the need to chase down and retrieve basketballs.

Phil says that the system is simple to set up and use and has been specifically designed to enhance the effectiveness of shooting practice. According to Phil, the system enables players to practice in a way that guarantees improvement.

"Practice makes permanent; but only perfect practice makes perfect" says Shelley, who has drawn upon his vast experience as a player, coach, sports science lecturer and consultant, strength & conditioning coach and specialist shooting coach/biomechanist to design and develop the product.

He begins to document his

journey, emphasising the fact that each experience has played a part in helping him formulate his prototype.

Phil was a more than handy basketballer, representing Country Victoria in Under 18 National Championships in the early 80's before playing with St Kilda in the Victorian Basketball Association (VBA). He was offered the opportunity to play in the National Basketball League with Hobart and St Kilda, but opted to return to the Latrobe Valley and play for the inaugural Gippsland Lakers team where he remained for 11 seasons (five as team captain).

After his playing career ended, Phil was obviously keen to explore other ways of maintaining his association with the sport he loved, by completing coaching accreditation courses and learning more about strength & conditioning training.

He later moved into teaching sports science, sports coaching and administration for many years in colleges and universities before the urge to work full time in basketball became too much to ignore. After a four year self-imposed apprenticeship, tapping into the resources of the National Sports Information Centre at the AIS in Canberra and the internet, and studying and practising everything and anything relating to basketball shooting and biomechanics, he formulated his own philosophies on shooting and established his specialist shooting coaching and consultancy business 'Shoot'n Hoops'.

Phil said what sets Shoot'n Hoops apart from other more traditional coaching approaches is the vast research and testing which has gone into the philosophy and coaching methods employed. Also the application of technology through an innovative use of state of the art video analysis software and the internet to also provide a 'remote' online specialist shooting coaching service to clients anywhere in the world who are unable to access Phil's coaching live (in person).

"I have 'remote' clients capture and save video footage of themselves shooting from specified angles and then upload the files to me; I can then download and study the vision provided, and analyse their techniques for flaws.

"I upload the video lessons back to my clients who are then able to download, view and listen to them, take on board my instructions and



American NBA star Dwight Howard using the Boomerang under the guidance of Australian basketball legend Eddie Palubinskas

then go out and practice 'the right way'."

Phil also travels around to schools and basketball clubs and associations throughout Australia providing video analysis services 'live', and conducts shooting coaching clinics and coach development workshops.

Shelley says the idea for his Boomerang basketball return system grew from years of watching and analysing the biomechanical flaws in player's shooting techniques (particularly the 'arc' or 'trajectory' of the shot) and the need to better utilise practice time in order to get up more repetitions and develop muscle memory.

"The Boomerang net design particularly had to be very specific in order to force or encourage the correct techniques. It was about developing a training aid that improved both the quality and quantity of the practice being undertaken. When practising shooting (or any other motor skill), providing 'repetition' of practice, and minimising the time delay between shot attempts greatly improves the effectiveness of practice, and accelerates the skill development process. Being able to take a shot, learn from the feedback, make the necessary adjustments and immediately take another shot (whilst the mental picture is still strong) is absolutely essential in skill development and this is the basic underlying principle of what makes the Boomerang so effective.

"I built the original prototypes of the system myself in my home garage and obviously did quite a bit of tinkering and testing before I was satisfied that it was a really effective and marketable product."

Phil toughed it out for several years funding the Boomerang project himself before opening it up to outside investors. He has now attracted the support of Australia's leading manufacturer of institutional basketball backboards and rings 'Basketball Ringleader' and other minor investors which have assisted in filing and securing international patents for the Boomerang and made it possible to set up a factory in Dandenong and manufacture and send a first export shipment of Boomerangs to the USA.

The first shipment was sent to the USA in September with Florida being the test market. "Florida's population alone is greater than Australia's and given that there are around 18,000 high schools in the States that run high performance basketball programs, it was obvious that we had to try and make our mark there first and then aim to eventually expand into Europe" he said.

Unique benefits of the Boomerang design are its simplicity and its versatility. The product is completely 'modular' and is available in three main models. The 'Boomerang' which is the base model suitable for domestic use in the driveway or backyard; the 'Boomerang Plus' which is a single ramp version and a most effective individual basketball training aid; and the 'Boomerang Pro' which is the dual ramp model with a Passback feature suitable for elite clubs and schools. It's the most versatile basketball training aid in the world.

"We are starting off initially marketing predominantly to the clubs and schools to get the product out there," Phil said. "However the Boomerang, as well as being an

elite training aid, is also just a lot of fun and has grass roots appeal and we feel that ultimately it will be the driveway and backyard market that has the greatest potential world-wide for the product".

The Boomerang is already used by most of the leading basketball associations in Melbourne and many other clubs, associations and schools throughout Australia; but Phil's company has been conducting market research in the USA with trial Boomerangs in some very high profile locations.

"During the past few weeks we have had NBA All-Star Dwight Howard do a complete workout using the Boomerang under the guidance of his Australian specialist shooting coach Ed Palubinskas (who has been a 99% free throw shooter for the past 20 years). We also had Kobe Bryant's personal coach Ganon Baker test the Boomerang and the equipment has been on trial at the world famous IMG Basketball Academy in Florida and in Coach Marvin Harvey's shooting lab also in Florida."

He said the response from the USA from some very big names in the basketball industry has been very pleasing.

"Seeing Dwight Howard, who makes around \$16 million a year from playing basketball, using something that I thought up in my head and built in my shed, makes me feel very proud. However, there are no guarantees in life, and there is a long way to go yet to have the Boomerang achieve its full potential, so I'm trying to keep a rein on my emotions, but it's not easy."

"With the launch of the product in the USA, I am feeling excited, energised, hopeful but also a little nervous. I feel like I've designed a rocket that's ready and waiting to be launched. The last minute checks have been made and we're on the final countdown. I am just hoping that when it's launched it will fly us to the moon."

For more information about Shoot'n Hoops visit: [www.shootnthoops.com](http://www.shootnthoops.com) or Boomerang Basketball visit: [www.boomerangbasketball.com](http://www.boomerangbasketball.com)