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Florida Teen Winds Up with Advanced Education in Pitching From USC Coach Tom House

PHOENIX (Aug. 5, 2010) –Despite the challenges he’s had to endure because of a life-threatening medical condition, David Thompson’s wish is to become a Hall of Fame baseball pitcher.

Another wish that will help the 16-year-old Florida athlete toward that dream became reality Tuesday. The Make-A-Wish Foundation arranged for Thompson to work out under the tutelage of University of Southern California pitching coach Tom House, considered one of the leading experts on pitching mechanics and performance. House analyzed Thompson’s pitching talents during an enlightening 90-minute session at USC’s Rod Dedeaux Research and Baseball Institute (RDRBI).

"I couldn't have thought of anything better," Thompson said afterward. "This is perfect."

His wish day in Los Angeles was a boost to the 6-0 junior right-hander from Flanagan High School in Pembroke Pines, Fla. Thompson is working to get himself back on the mound for the Falcons, who won the Florida 6-A championship in the spring and were named the No. 1 team in the country by *Baseball America*. He missed part of the spring season while dealing with a bone bruise in his right elbow and a more serious diagnosis, common variable immunodeficiency, which compromises his immune system’s ability to fight harmful microorganisms.

The condition made Thompson eligible for a wish from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. After reading House’s books and watching his DVDs on pitching for several years, Thompson’s choice was simple – he wanted the former major-league pitcher and pitching coach to analyze his mechanics.

"I just want to find out what I do wrong. I want to have perfect mechanics," he said.

As it turns out, his pitching motion needed little adjustment from House during a bullpen session. House moved him on the rubber to improve his alignment with home plate, advised him to point his lead knee toward shortstop in his wind-up, and suggested adjustments to his pitch grips.

After throwing in the bullpen, Thompson headed inside the RDRBI to go through a 3-D, computer-generated biomechanical analysis. Several reflective sensors were arrayed on his body, and then he pitched surrounded by eight cameras that documented his every movement.

Breaking down the pitching motion into video ranging from 250 to 1,000 frames per second enables the player and coach to more accurately fine-tune throwing mechanics than relying solely on the human eye, according to House.

“We used to worry about stepping across the body,” he said. “We used to worry about getting on top (of the ball), shortening your stride, all of these things we had based on what our eyes told us. Once we started looking at these things at a thousand frames per second, they were meaningless.”

A quick look at the video revealed a slight tilt in Thompson’s posture, likely resulting from repeatedly breaking the same vertebrae in his back. (He now pitches with a back brace.) He will receive a complete report before heading back home to Florida, a guide to help him reach his other wish for pitching perfection.

About the Make-A-Wish Foundation

The Make-A-Wish Foundation grants the [wishes](#) of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy. Founded in 1980 when a group of caring volunteers helped a young boy fulfill his dream of becoming a police officer, the Foundation is one of the world’s leading children’s charities, with 65 [chapters](#) in the United States and its territories. With the help of generous donors and nearly 25,000 [volunteers](#), the Make-A-Wish Foundation grants a wish every 40 minutes and has granted more than 193,000 wishes in the United States since its inception. For more information about the Make-A-Wish Foundation, visit [wish.org](#) and discover how you can *share the power of a wish*[®].

That’s a pretty good little delivery everybody,” House said to Thompson’s parents, media and Make-A-Wish[®] staff who were on hand.



USC coach Tom House watches David Thompson’s delivery during the Florida teen’s wish Tuesday in Los Angeles. Thompson, a junior at Flanagan High in Pembroke Pines, Fla., wished to have House analyze his pitching mechanics.



David Thompson is outfitted with reflective sensors for a biomechanical analysis of his pitching mechanics at USC's Rod Dedeaux Research and Baseball Institute.

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