

## Throwing Motion Assessment Lab to Service the Nation

*The following is an interview with John Pinkman. In addition to the Virginia Throwing Motion Laboratory, John and his two left-handed pitching sons Jeff (University of Delaware '99) and Pat (a junior pro prospect at Virginia Tech) operate Pinkman Pitching and Battery Park Baseball School. The school is located next to the nation's Capital. John is also a contributing writer to CB.*

**CB:** John, you have been involved with teaching pitching for quite a while now. What is this project about?

**Pinkman:** We have been doing throwing assessments for over five years now. It is an important part of our training program. During those years I've have seen consistent and significant successful results in our Northern Virginia area students over a very short period of time. Now, we want to offer that service to players in other parts of the country.

**CB:** Exactly what is a throwing assessment?

**Pinkman:** We take high-speed video tape recordings from 4 angles simultaneously and look for those physical motions that are currently causing problems.

**CB:** Well, what if someone, let's say in Kansas, can't get to Virginia?

**Pinkman:** That's the whole point of this project. They don't have to. They simply send us a video of their throwing motion and we do the rest. We have directions on our web site, [www.pinkmanpitching.com](http://www.pinkmanpitching.com), detailing exactly how to shoot the analytical video with a home camera. We analyze their motion here in Virginia. We create and return to the player individual custom video that details the cause, the effect, and the solution to his problem. We show him drills that specifically address solutions to his problem.

**CB:** Wait a minute, with all the superb instructional videos on the market, why does anyone need this service?

**Pinkman:** There are some great videos produced by very talented men who have studied and made use of dramatic new technology. Tom House, Bill Thurston, Dick Mills, Rick Petersen, and the American Sports Medicine Institute all have produced excellent videos. BUY THEM! We add a vital part - the link between

the best information and the individual's specific needs. We are geared to do that and we want to provide that service with a quick turn around.

**CB:** What problems are you typically asked to solve?

**Pinkman:** Well, you might call it the big three: accuracy, pain, and velocity. In my estimation, accuracy and pain come first and probably are most important to the majority of parents of young pitchers, catchers, and fielders. Velocity is important to players, but if you are throwing in pain or continually hitting the lady in the concession stand, or you need an air traffic controller to guide your throw into a base, it doesn't matter if you add 3MPH on the gun. Often, lack of velocity can be a mental issue, not physical. Then again, it's similar to the physical skills of learning, like riding a bike. Once you have dealt with balance and braking issues, then deal with speed.

**CB:** Would you expand on the pain portion a bit more.

**Pinkman:** Actually that's how this project started. For many years, we saw players go to doctors with sore arms. The doctor would shut them down for 2 weeks, prescribe anti-inflammatory medication, and the pain would stop. This usually happened at the end of the season. But the pain would begin again next season and the whole process would repeat. We were confident that if we could diagnose the biomechanics, we could end the cycle. We wanted to help.

I went to an ASMI Injuries in Baseball Conference several years ago to study and meet with some orthopedic surgeons who were also attending. By the way, if your readers haven't been to one of these seminars, they should make the effort to go. It is the finest education available. It's information you must have if you are a coach.

Anyway, in our discussions they told me that it would be of great assistance to know if their patient's throwing motion was a factor. The reason they attended the conference was to learn more about throwing biomechanics. But how could they diagnose that from the office? Now after years of working with medical professionals, we can identify and predict motion likely to cause a sore arm or relate the pain a player is currently experiencing. After physical therapy or surgery, we reprogram his motion to keep the pain from recurring.

In some cases, by eliminating the biomechanical cause of the player's pain prior to the medical appointment, the doctors can focus more quickly on the physiological problems and solutions. With the recent advances in surgical procedures, the sports medicine industry is much more aggressive in treating athletes.

**CB:** Is there any new technology available to baseball?

**Pinkman:** Yes, but will baseball use it? The game should be no different than the rest of society in the acceptance of high-tech problem solving. But the baseball business is more interested in using technology for gimmicks that inherently change the game like aluminum/steroid bats and home run ball physics. Baseball is still struggling with the idea that high tech is helmet cams and exploding scoreboards.

Baseball should, like Olympians have, acquire and develop technology that helps the human body learn more in a shorter time, maintain natural health, and increase strength, both physically and mentally.

I can promise you that we will continue to acquire and offer advanced technology because it works. It's expensive and it's hard to find people to help you integrate it into you program. But we are committed.

**CB:** How can you tell if it really works?

**Pinkman:** Results.

Results for me as a teaching pro are not revealed buy the player having a good time, enjoying himself and being entertained while he was there. Yes, baseball needs to be fun. But when folks pay you for your expertise they should expect value. We define successful results when the players game performance improves and he is free of pain. Period. His age or level of competition doesn't matter to us. And by the way, for a small school, we have a very high number of pitchers who move on to college.

There are two reasons that we get successful results. One is because the video reveals exactly what's wrong and we quickly begin instruction to solve the specific problem. We don't guess, assume, or take time to try a multitude of solutions hoping to bump into a fix.

Second and perhaps most important, is that baseball players are visual learners. By viewing themselves on precise video, the players quickly identify and agree that there is a problem. I've seen coaches and dads argue all season with a player about how to fix a problem that the player doesn't believe he has! The video independently forces the player to come face to face with his problem without you screaming in his ear. At that point, he can't hide in pride, denial, or stubbornness. When he accepts the fact that he does indeed have a problem, and he trusts you to help him solve it, you'll be surprised at how fast he will improve.

If you are interested in further information from Coach Pinkman, call (703) 661-8586 or visit their web site at [www.pinkmanpitching.com](http://www.pinkmanpitching.com)