

REDEFINING SUCCESS ON THE MOUND

BLAKE HAWKSWORTH

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Stories by Bill Woten
Photos by Christopher A. Stone

Blake Hawksworth and Andy Sisco will both be seniors this fall at Eastlake High School. They also are two of the top pitching prospects in the country. This weekend they leave for

California to attend a showcase for the best players, a magnet for professional and college baseball scouts. The weekend kicks off the recruiting zoo — a blizzard of phone calls, visits and letters from coaches which lasts until

next June, when they're both expected to be top picks in next year's draft. The potential is there to be stars, or superstars, and also millionaires.

High school baseball reporter Bill Woten interviewed both

Hawksworth and Sisco, two friends, yet very different. Hawksworth is quiet, Sisco sociable. Hawksworth is 6-foot-3, right-handed and studies baseball. Sisco is 6-foot-9, left-handed and studies himself.

High school pitcher can't hide from scouts

SAHALEE — The baseball cap may have done the job in junior high, but it isn't a sufficient disguise anymore.

No matter how low he pulls the hat on his forehead and curls the bill just right to cover his eyes, Blake Hawksworth can't hide.

He's already been discovered. Major League Baseball scouts know who he is, what he can do. Opponents know, too.

And Hawksworth, 17, has heard the crack from friends, "Hey, don't hurt the million-dollar arm."

His right arm has always been trouble.

As a Little Leaguer in California, his first pitch in the back yard cleared both his father Mark's reach and the fence, and broke a neighbor's window.

And Hawksworth laughs, recalling the time at his grandfather's farm when he tossed empty glass bottles into a man-made pond, ruining the decorative stone and killing the fish.

"We liked the way it sounded when the glass hit the stones," he says.

Opponents are thankful Hawksworth has learned to harness his potent arm. He doesn't hit, them too often.

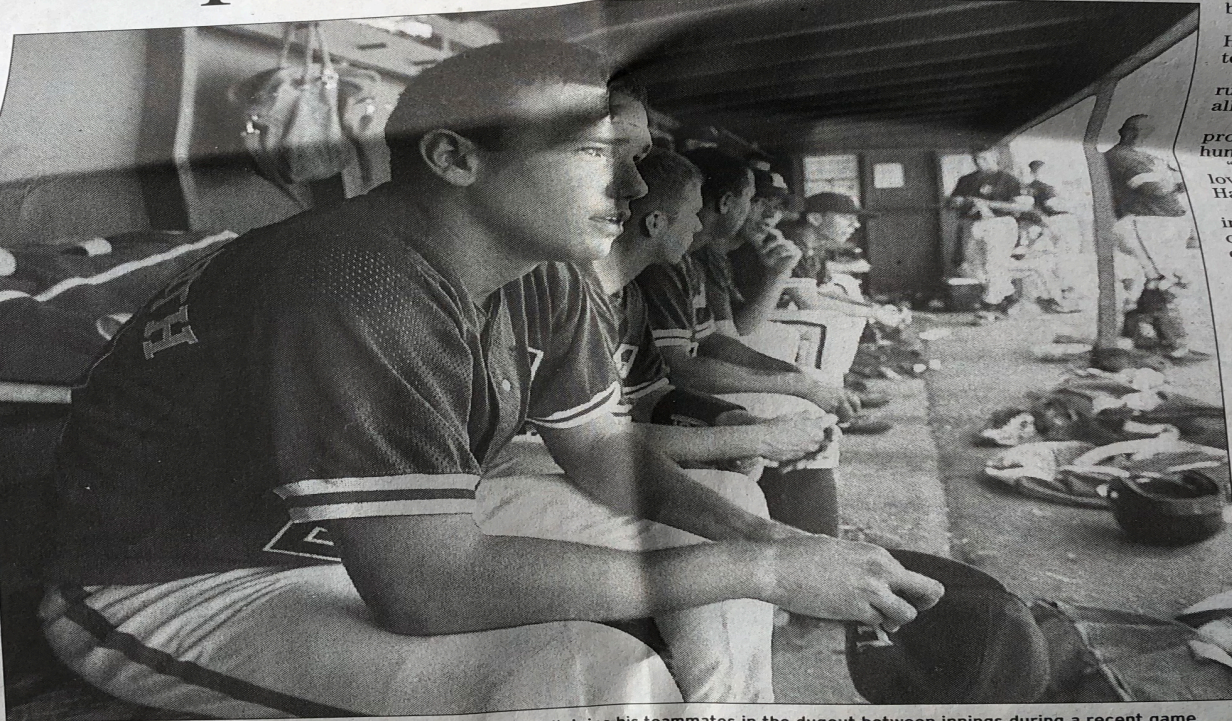
His life is centered around baseball and he wouldn't have it any other way.

The 6-foot-3 pitcher absorbs everything his game has to offer.

Hawksworth watches professional games on television with an investigative eye, charting pitches, noting details.

He's just as comfortable playing the sport as he is watching a game while sitting on a bucket of balls outside the dugout, chattering at teammates.

He's learning how to manicure the field, rake the infield and talk the game with jovial coach and mentor, former Major Leaguer Bill Caudill, who works with Hawksworth during the summer.



Blake Hawksworth, who will be a senior at Eastlake High this fall, joins his teammates in the dugout between innings during a recent game.

of the intangible things."

Makeup is something all scouts look for in young players. It's an attitude, an aura, a way of carrying oneself, attributes that extend beyond the skills of hitting, throwing or running.

"With his ability and makeup

Hawksworth says.

Dissecting the game with Caudill, a successful Major Leaguer and All-Star with the Oakland Athletics in 1984, Hawksworth continues to learn.

"I'm learning the little things like how to set up hitters," Hawksworth

Hawksworth is learning to recognize a hitter's adjustments, moving up or sliding back in the batter's box, pulling his hands in or leaning out.

Hawksworth can counter each movement.

Caudill is impressed with his stu-

be in you."

A bucket of baseballs sits in Hawksworth's garage. He used to go to fields looking for baseballs.

"Then we would go to have home-run hitting contests and lose them all," Hawksworth says.

Friend and fellow pitching prospect Andy Sisco didn't enjoy the hunting and gathering as much.

"I would get tired of it, but he loved collecting them," Sisco says of Hawksworth.

Hawksworth's skills are imposing. His delivery is compact. He has command of three pitches, the best of which is a fastball that moves away from a hitter just before it reaches him.

"Late movement," scouts say.

Hawksworth also displays composure beyond his years.

He keeps his emotions hidden, making it difficult to determine if he is winning or losing.

"I try and keep my poker face on and not let them know what I'm thinking," he says.

Hawksworth is quiet, polite, attentive.

But for all of his attributes, talk often centers around his golden arm.

"The most impressive tool he has is his quick arm, great arm strength," D'Amico says. "He has an idea of how to pitch and throw to both sides of the plate."

Caudill remembers walking to the mound two summers ago to talk to Hawksworth at the World Series for 15-year-olds in Crystal Lake, Fla.

"I wanted to see what he was made of," says Caudill, recalling the situation, at a key moment late in the game with the potential game-tying runs on base.

"I told him, 'Just smell this tension. Feel this moment. This is what it's all about.' He smiled and was really enjoying it. A lot of kids can't enjoy the moment until it's gone.

That moment was when I knew Blake was something special."

Hawksworth still is.

POOR OUTING DOES \neq POOR MECHANICS

DEFINING THE WORD “APPROACH”

GIVING EVERYTHING YOU HAVE FOR EACH PITCH

VISUALIZE THE LAST 10-15 FT OF THE PITCH



HOW DO WE COACH IT?

- DEFINE WHAT MATTERS MOST
- PERMISSION TO MISS GIVES PERMISSION TO PURSUE
- IDENTIFY WHAT TRIPS THEM UP


WHAT HOLDS THEM BACK

- LACK OF AWARENESS
- LOW LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE
- EGO
- IT'S TOO SIMPLE



"I throw the ball as hard as I can to the glove."



2005 AAA 4.40 ERA 

2006 MLB 3.12 ERA 

WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING WELL...

“ALL THE NEGATIVE RESULTS HAPPENING”

“UNCONTROLLABLES”

“I TEND TO OVERTHINK THINGS AND THAT CAN SPIRAL”

“I’M THINKING ABOUT MECHANICS MAYBE TOO MANY THINGS AT ONCE”

“I GET FOCUSED ON 2 THINGS 1. MY MECHANICS. 2. OVERTHINK MY PITCH GRIPS”

“TRYING TO BE TOO PERFECT WITH MY SPOTS”

“BEING TOO PERFECT”

“MECHANICS”

WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL...

“NOTHING.. JUST BEING IN THE ZONE.”

“THERE’S NOT NECESSARILY ONE SPECIFIC THING I HAVE A FOCUS ON, IT ALL JUST COMES TOGETHER”

“COMPETING”

“I’M FOCUSED ON THE PITCH I’M THROWING AND NOT THINKING ABOUT ANYTHING”

“WHEN I AM PITCHING THE WAY THAT I WANT I SEE THE SHAPE OF THE PITCH AND I AM ZONED IN COMPLETELY ON THE GLOVE”

“I’M FOCUSED ON ATTACKING”

“NOTHING”

THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD APPROACH

- FUTURE IS NOT FOR US TO KNOW
- REALLY CLEAR ON WHAT THE OBJECTIVE IS
- ACCEPTANCE

ACCEPTANCE

“ACCEPTANCE IS RECEIVING OUR PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE EXPERIENCE WITHOUT PREFERENCE” – DR. RAYMOND PRIOR

- I DON'T NEED TO BE COMFORTABLE TO GO AFTER A PITCH
- NOT ASKING THEM TO LIKE IT, OR NOT TO CARE
- CUTS THROUGH WHAT'S NOT RELEVANT
- GRANTS YOU ACCESS TO THE PRESENT MOMENT

LOW LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE = AVOIDANCE

- BRAIN ACTIVITY CHANGES
- BRAIN ISN'T CLEAR ON WHAT YOU WANT IT TO DO
- WILL DEFAULT TO SAFETY
- BAD MULTITASKING
- HOPE IS DEADLY

PERSPECTIVE

WHAT'S THE WORSE THING THAT COULD HAPPEN?

GIVE UP RUNS?

WALK GUYS?

KICKED OFF THE TEAM?

PARENTS DISOWN YOU?

FRIENDS TURN THEIR BACK ON YOU?

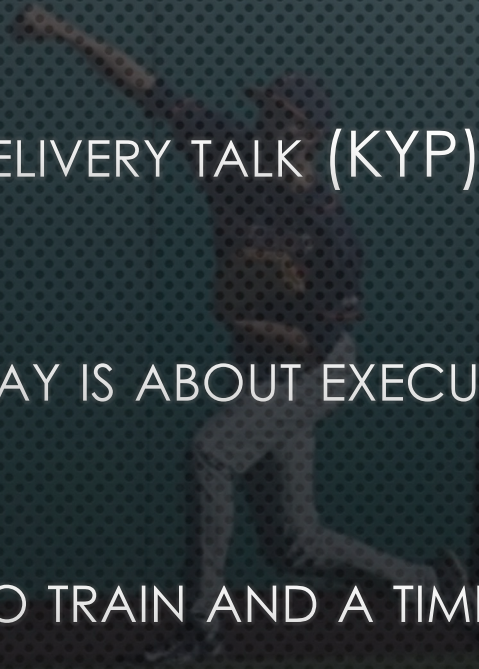
BRINGING THIS TO LIFE AT PRACTICE

- SEGMENTING YOUR PENS
 - FIRST 15 PITCHES ON ONE MECHANICAL THING
 - SECOND SET IS EXCLUSIVELY APPROACH

GAME DAY

GETTING LOST IN THE PROCESS OF GOING AFTER PITCHES

- BE WITH YOUR GUY
- NO DELIVERY TALK (KYP)
- THIS DAY IS ABOUT EXECUTING AN UNBELIEVABLE APPROACH
- TIME TO TRAIN AND A TIME TO TRUST



WHEN THEY FAIL

YOU CANNOT WRITE THE SCRIPT, BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS
CHOOSE HOW YOU RESPOND TO IT

THIS PROCESS TAKES TIME

- COMPETITION WILL EXPOSE WHAT'S GOING ON INTERNALLY
- SAME GOES FOR US AS COACHES – TRUST IS AT STAKE
- THEY'RE ALWAYS WATCHING

BUILDING TRUST WITH YOUR GUYS

*“TRUST IS FREEING... IT ALLOWS THE ATHLETE TO FOCUS ON PERFORMING TO HIS/HER BEST AND NOT ON THE POSSIBLE REACTION OF THE COACH.” –
BRUCE BROWN*

THREE WAYS TO BUILD THE SKILL OF TRUST

1. DO THEY TRUST YOU HAVE THE LOGIC, SKILL AND TALENT TO MOVE THE MISSION FORWARD?
2. DO YOU HOLD UP UNDER DURESS - OR DO YOU FLIP ON THEM WHEN THINGS GO SOUTH?
3. DO THEY HAVE A FELT SENSE THAT YOU ARE IN IT FOR THEM?

**HOW DO YOU WANT TO FEEL AFTER THE
OUTING?**