



## HOT CLOTHING

Business Venture Helps OSU Baseball Teams Win Big – Twice

Mike Thomas and Drake Miller didn't enroll at OSU thinking they would ever play a role in winning back-to-back college baseball national championships or protecting soldiers on the battlefield.

But all that changed when the students joined an Oregon startup company and began designing and fabricating heated clothing, which has applications from sports medicine to military combat. Both students were recruited by Eugene, Ore.-based Innovative Sports, Thomas as chief technical officer and Miller as engineering manager.

They were tasked with developing a heated sleeve for baseball players that would use ac-

tive heating to keep throwing muscles from tightening up during breaks in play, which can reduce injuries and boost pitching speeds by 5 mph.

Their design worked well. The OSU baseball team was the first NCAA team to use the sleeves, including during both the 2006 and 2007 College World Series, where the team's pitching staff was critical in winning back-to-back national titles.

“Innovative Sports also manufactures a heated jacket used by military personnel who perform maneuvers in cold conditions, or who sit in a stationary position for long periods of time,” says Colby Taylor, CEO of Innovative Sports. The jacket’s revolutionary power source, a high energy density lithium ion polymer battery, is also compatible with GPS devices, communications equipment, and lights. This proves extremely useful for soldiers in remote locations who, when wearing the jacket, no longer have to carry multiple batteries and chargers for every device needing power.

Thomas, an undergraduate in economics who is pursuing a master’s in computer engineering and systems integration, provides conceptual design and negotiations with key suppliers.

“Mike’s contribution to the overall system has been tremendous,” says Taylor. “He really has a keen awareness of what’s out there and has been crucial in developing and improving our products.”

Miller, a PhD candidate in electrical engineering who has expertise in noise in submicron transistors, has helped Innovative Sports develop personal climate control and power management control electronics.

“Everything that Drake’s done for us has worked perfectly even though we were all crossing our fingers, hoping this stuff would work on some level,” Taylor says. “Both of these guys have been nothing short of fantastic.”

Currently, Innovative Sports sells directly to the military and Major League Baseball, National Football League, and NCAA teams. Taylor attributes the company’s success to OSU baseball’s willingness to try a new product. “Our relationship with them has turned into a number of other elite teams wanting the product, and we now have standing back-orders,” he says.



Taylor is looking to expand his business and will soon be hiring additional students. “I plan to exclusively recruit OSU grad students or students who have graduated, because everything we’ve done with OSU students has turned out to be phenomenal,” he says.

Thomas and Miller plan to continue working with heated clothing while they’re in school and possibly longer. “We’ll see where this goes,” says Miller. “This technology is very advanced and the applications of it continue to expand, so the future is exciting.”

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*LEFT: OSU students Drake Miller (far left) and Mike Thomas (far right) pose with OSU third baseman Lonnie Lechelt and pitcher Anton Maxwell, members of OSU’s 2006 and 2007 NCAA Championship Teams. OSU Engineering faculty member Joe Tanous (second from left) helped Thomas and Miller hit their entrepreneurial stride. ABOVE: Maxwell wears the heated pitching sleeve in OSU’s Goss Stadium.*