

Frederick student an Internet star after incredible basketball shot

By Matt Palmer

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Maciah Thomas wants to be a stunt man in the movies. For now, he'll have to settle for being an Internet star.

Thomas, a sophomore at St. John's Catholic Prep in Frederick, has become a phenomenon in recent weeks thanks to a video of him doing a frontward flip before throwing, midair, a basketball 80 feet into a hoop. His friend and classmate, Jon Mahalchick, shot the video in his backyard on Holy Thursday, April 7.

As the ball banks off the backboard and into the hoop, Mahalchick can be heard off camera saying, "Are you serious?"

A clearly stunned Thomas laughs and says "I can't even make a real shot," before nailing one from three-point range.

In the age of the Internet, YouTube was the natural place for the video, where it has gone viral. Thus far, it has amassed more than 560,000 views.

It didn't happen overnight, however.

Mahalchick's YouTube channel, which mostly revolves around video games, has more than four million views.

"He has a pretty good fan base, so most of the videos he posts get 20,000 views," Thomas said. "One night I just Google searched my name for some reason and I saw that it popped up on MSN.com. That's when I knew it got a lot of attention, but it still had 30,000 views. It died down for a week."

One of Thomas' teachers sent it to ESPN, which showed it on its flagship show, SportsCenter.

"When I woke up the next morning, it had 300,000 views," Thomas said.

The video has been aired on the Ellen DeGeneres Show. Local television stations have shown up to Mahalchick's home to do stories.

"It's been a good blessing for me to have all this publicity for the shot I made," said Thomas, 15. "It's pretty fun."

It's not the first or last time Thomas has made the long distance flip shot. He says he did it inside St. John's gymnasium once and recently did it on camera for a television report. Like the original YouTube hit video, it took about 20 tries before the ball went into the hoop.

To make the story all the more humorous, he's on the baseball team and doesn't play basketball.

The last few weeks have been filled with attention and, for right now, Thomas is handling it well. More people are coming up to him in the hallways than ever before, but he knows Internet fame can be fleeting. Like any good showman, he has to top his first act.

"We've been thinking that eventually it's all going to die down soon," Thomas said. "We don't want to fall off the map, I guess. We've been thinking about other things we could do, other trick shots."

Nothing is planned yet, but Thomas said the first shot came to him in a dream.

The video's success has Thomas is thinking about the future in other ways, too.

"It's given me a lot of publicity for my career," Thomas said, sounding like a 15-year-old with his life planned out.

His interest in stunt work has been a couple of years in the making. The interest in acrobatics came when he attended a Karate tournament and saw some flip maneuvers he wanted to emulate. During the last year, in particular, he's invested

energy in Parkour, also known as aggressive running. The sport is built around nimble movement around obstacles. It involves jumping, flipping and vaulting and he's trained himself mostly by watching online tutorial videos.

"It didn't really come naturally, but I practiced a lot," Thomas said. "I kept doing it until the muscle memory came, until I got every move perfect. A lot of it is repetition."

Beyond his hopes of getting an athletic wear company to sponsor his Parkour, Thomas has his mind on Hollywood.

"I hear it's a really good industry to get into and pretty much what I've aspired to for the last year," he said. "I want to get on some movie sets. That's pretty much my long term goal."

Given his recent Internet fame, it's a good bet that he won't be camera shy.

"It's kind of awesome and cool to have everyone know your name, even outside the school and around the world now," Thomas said. "It's still hasn't settled in yet that a lot of people have seen my shot."

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Watch the famous shot here:

Watch Thomas in Parkour action: