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# Turning Point: The 2016 Salukis

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TURNING POINT: THE 2016 SALUKIS

by

Sam McGlone

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2014

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Science

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
May 2017

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL  
TURNING POINT: THE 2016 SALUKIS

By  
Sam McGlone

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
Master of Science  
In the Field of Professional Media and Media Management

Approved by:  
Jan Thompson, Chair

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

04/02/2017

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

SAMUEL J. MCGLONE, for the Master of Science degree in PROFESSIONAL MEDIA AND MEDIA MANEGMENT presented on APRIL 2, 2017, at Southern Illinois University - Carbondale.

TITLE: TURNING POINT: THE 2016 SALUKIS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Jan Thompson

The purpose of this project was to document the journey of a football team through fall practice, but as camp ended it was clear the story was still unfolding. As a result, *Turning Point* follows the team through an entire season. *Turning Point* was borne because of a graduate student's exposure to video services and athletics. During the assignment, it became apparent that following the team would make a great story. The graduate student status provided unfettered access to the SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY sports teams and promised insight for both the reader and the researcher. The football team was and still is going through an image change with a new head coach and staff and thus a renaissance in the culture of the program. Capturing that process on film will hopefully fill a gap in the research for football teams, coaches, and filmmakers. There are out takes of the players, coaches in meeting, practices and game day activities. The footage within *Turning Point* contains scenes that most are not privileged to as an average fan. *Turning Point* was designed to tell the story off the field to supplement and help tell the story on the field. Seeing what the players and coaches go through on a day to day basis invests the viewer into being much more than a fan, making the viewer a part of the reverence of what Saluki football truly is. The complexity of this team and the multiple story lines presented made this

team the perfect final test for a thesis and the project tested all of the researcher's skills to document a diverse and compelling story.

## DEDICATION

To my Mother, for all you have done, for all you do and all you continue to do, thank you. I would never have made it this far without you.

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**PART 1**  
**TRANSCRIPTS**



### **Kraig Paulsen Transcription**

**Sam:** “Okay, first off, let’s start a little bit before the season, actually a lot before the season. Tell me your first football memory ever.”

**Paulsen:** “Oh my gosh.”

**Sam:** “The first thing you ever remember about football, whether it was playing or coaching.”

**Paulsen:** “My first memory of football is the ‘69 super bowl when the Jets upset the Colts. I was five at the time.”

**Sam:** “What made this stand out? What made that a memorable moment?”

**Paulsen:** “Well, at that point in time, there wasn’t a lot of hype prior to the game, but after the game it just exploded. I mean, obviously Nameth predicted it and then it came through. That was back in the day when we had three channels, you know? It was one of those deals where all of a sudden it was where sports was ten minutes at five and nine P. M., but it carried over into the normal part of TV where they wouldn’t normally be talking about sports.”

**Sam:** “Did that moment make you want become a player or coach?”

**Paulsen:** “I don’t know if it was necessarily that, but I just remember that was the first time I realized that wow, this is a big deal. I’m the youngest of five boys and I had an older sister so there were six of us so they were playing. When my oldest brother in that grouping of the last four of us got into junior high he was a quarter back so he needed somebody to play running back and that’s kind of where it all started.”

**Sam:** “How did you become a coach?”

**Paulsen:** “All of my older brothers, except for one of them, are coaches so I kind of thought that was what I wanted to do. As far as college, it really had to do with the two coaches I had in college. The two guys that I played for that were head coaches.”

**Sam:** “How did you come to Southern Illinois University?”

**Paulsen:** “I got to Southern Illinois University through Coach Hill because he was a quarterback when I was at the University of Montana and they came up to play us in the playoff game in 2006.”

**Sam:** “Out of all the places that you’ve been and you’ve coached, what makes the Southern Illinois University football team special or stand out from other places that you’ve been?”

**Paulsen:** “I got to be honest with you, I love the organization starting with Nick. I think he’s a great person, you know what I’m saying? Not just as a coach, I mean his X’s and O’s. He’s a great guy and that’s what I like about this group. Our group of kids here are very willing. This is important to them and I just love that part of football. It’s the idea that when you come to work you got a group that’s just dying trying. I’ve had that before obviously, [I’ve] been a part of some programs that have been very successful over the years, but that’s what makes coaching football fun.”

**Sam:** “Let’s talk about this season. In just a few short sentences, sum up the 2016 season.”

**Paulsen:** “There were moments on the defensive side where there were times in the game where we played really well and there were times where we didn’t so consistency is an issue. I think as the year went on we became more consistent and that’s not about

the effort part of how they're playing. It's about the ability to execute their assignments and I think we ended on a real positive note. Inside of that, like I said, it contributes to the guys I work with and the guys that we coach. There was never any give up, there was never any 'okay let's wait for next year.' It was this idea that they just kept fighting and clawing and scratching and kept working towards the end goal which is to win games."

**Sam:** "What's some of the things that would arise when you come into a new staff and you acquire a new team and you implement your system?"

**Paulsen:** "Well obviously there's always the language part of it because in football we all do the same things we just call them different. Each time there's a change over there may be a scheme difference but the biggest thing is communication. What we identify. What word we put to a certain type of scheme. That's always the first hurdle to get over."

**Sam:** "Tell me about camp."

**Paulsen:** "Fall camp was really good because we set an environment here where both sides are competing against each other and doing it how you should as a team. Every day getting out there working hard [and] understanding the goal isn't to play our offense. The goal is to be one team when we get ready for the opponent. But I loved it. It was spirited [and] high energy. The kids were doing everything they possibly could to get better and as a coach that's the building blocks."

**Sam:** "What's important about camp for both the coaches and players?"

**Paulsen:** “The purest part of camp is putting kids under pressure and seeing how they react to it and then doing that over and over and over again to where that becomes second nature.”

**Sam:** “You had some key position battles this year. Tell me how you and your staff came to make the decision that you did about who is starting.”

**Paulsen:** “Yeah, there were and that’s always a positive sign, football is a numbers game. One of the other parts of football is there’s always going to be injury. Hopefully less severe than more severe but it’s a fact in our game. As a result, we go through a checklist. We got to find our starters and then we got to find the next three guys, and I’m talking linebacker but it’s for every position [and then] who’s next. Then you want those guys who are next to push the guys that are in front. There are so many residual benefits of good competition and good numbers because you just don’t have any situations where anybody can sit back and say ‘hey this is mine’. With that, those create those good battles of now you can get specifically into each drill and you can start grading it because you want it that tight and that’s how you have success.”

**Sam:** “You had a really young defensive this year [and] if my memory serves me correct, only two senior starters?”

**Paulsen:** “Yeah there were.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about how important it is to have underclassmen step up and be leaders on the team?”

**Paulsen:** “Oh it’s huge, it’s huge. It goes back to recruiting; obviously you’re looking for kids. The difference between high school and college, even though they’re still developing, it’s not the National Football League where they are a polish product yet.

The idea is it's never how old you are, it's how good you are, so that's kind of our mentality around here. We're not going to use age as an excuse but we also know that you have to get a certain amount of reps under your belt to become experienced. I think once you put that into play it really isn't about how old you are anymore; that's the best player. When you look at it on film, film never lies so I don't care if you're a senior sitting in this room or if it's a freshman that's playing, the film tells why he's out there."

**Sam:** "Coming out of camp, what was the tone? What was the mentality like around the locker room and around the team?"

**Paulsen:** "I think they were confident; I wouldn't say that they were cocky. I think they were confident based on the work they put in and the success patterns that were starting through practice. Knowing that there's always going to be something, there's variables. That first opponent: you're not going to know everything about them. There's going to be a certain amount of things that you have a plan for, that's football. You're going to get a certain amount of things that will surprise you and you still have to be able to react and play through them."

**Sam:** "Why do Football Championship Subdivision teams go and play Football Bowl Subdivision teams each year and why is it important for them to do that?"

**Paulsen:** "It keeps a lot of programs afloat. I mean the biggest part is the pay day inside of the structure because it's an expensive sport, that's always going to be a factor. Hopefully they never take that away but that's why. Now inside of it, when you're working with the guys that are actually going to be out in the field, it's a huge plus because they always want to compare themselves to the guys that are playing upper level."

**Sam:** “We go to Florida Atlantic University, that was a close game, tell me about it.”

**Paulsen:** “Yeah it was. It was kind of one of those deals where it wasn’t about effort. That’s a huge factor in building a team, the kids are playing hard. Now you got to play smart, you got to do things well, you got to execute because obviously the opponents trying to get you to not execute, they’re going to try to out execute you. The common theme there as we went through the year was there wasn’t any give up. Everybody is excited in the first quarter, right? Every team, that’s what you do. How do you stay excited and continue to build on that momentum? By doing things right.”

**Sam:** “What’s a moment that stands out from that game to you?”

**Paulsen:** “For me, a moment was at the start of the fourth quarter where it was a situation where you have to make stops, you have to make stands. In order to get back in this game we have to do our part. That’s what I’ll always remember about the early parts, it wasn’t about a group of guys or worrying about what was going wrong, they were worried about how do we fix it.”

**Sam:** “So we come home, we played two games at home to finish out the non-conference season’s decisive victories. Tell me about them.”

**Paulsen:** I think that the kids felt like when we came back from Florida Atlantic University, there were positives to where our momentum was still going forward and they dove in to the next two opponents and the game plan and got out there and had fun and did things well. That’s what equated two victories.”

**Sam:** “As a coach, how do you keep your players focused after wins and not lose sight of the end goal?”

**Paulsen:** “Yeah that’s part of our world about stay urgent, stay hungry. I guess what I’m saying is we’re always trying to narrow their focus on looking on the film to see if they’re doing their job and how much more improvement can they make individually. So rather than the focus being how good is the next opponent, you’re watching that opponent of course for their tendencies but in the back of your mind you’re thinking what you have to do better. That’s what keeps your focus, is what do I got to do to get better.”

**Sam:** “We come into conference season and you guys lose five straight. The University of Northern Iowa game kind of got out of hand, but the rest of them were close games. How do you also keep focus after a losing skid?”

**Paulsen:** “It falls on the same premise, [which] is there’s no such thing as perfection in sports, especially when you have 11 guys out there, but you keep trying to obtain it. You’re trying to play flawless. You’re trying to grade out and execute and that’s what keeps kids going. I mean, your vision is somewhat split. You’re always looking at the opponent. You have to see what they’re going to do. There are tendencies in football that you have to be able to pick up on and be able to react to. But the idea is, keep the foot down about getting better. Get better. Get better. Keep improving. Keep working at your craft.”

**Sam:** “Would you say part of that falls on how tough the Missouri Valley is to play in?”

**Paulsen:** “Yeah, it’s a very tough conference. Both sides are trying to win of course. I know that’s a simple answer, but the reality of what we were dealing with when you go through a losing streak is you have to identify what your problems are and you have to get them fixed and you have to do that in short order. The real benefit of what we were doing is our kids were practicing hard during the week, they were battling through

injuries, a lot of them are just nagging, little things, so there's a lot on their plate that would take away from their focus. They did a good job of, 'We're going to keep going. We're going to keep going. We're going to keep working toward the goal which is to win games.' Everybody wants to win, but you have to do the things correctly in order to earn the win."

**Sam:** "The last 3 games of the season we play: home, road, home. First game is South Dakota. That's a game where you guys get back on track. Tell me about the South Dakota win."

**Paulsen:** "You got two wins early. You go five in a row, right? There's that concept of, 'Can you get over the hump?' What I'll always remember about that game is: as a defensive coach, as the time runs out, you want to be out on the field making that last stop. Boom; you look up at the scoreboard and there are zeroes on the clock and you got it done."

**Sam:** "Now that game comes with a little bit of controversy at the end of the game. Tell me about the end of the game."

**Paulsen:** "Yeah, it's one of those deals where it can be easy to get caught up in that part of it, but the reality is what our job is as assistant coaches and players is to get ready for the next play, not worry about the officials. All of a sudden there's another play that you have to get out there and defend so you can't go back in the locker room and say, 'Hey, we lost because there was an extra play and we weren't focused.' So that's what I'll always appreciate is that they were onto the next play and we got it defended and the clock ran out."



**Sam:** “You go to Youngstown. You lose a tough game. It was a close, good game, but you lose to the eventual runner-up in the Football Championship Subdivision, but you guys played a close game against them. What does that say about the team at that point?”

**Paulsen:** “I think there were measurable strides and you can see it, you can feel it and that’s where you get momentum. Like I said, there’s no moral victories, but the film shows we’re doing things right, but you have got to do it for four quarters. All the credit goes to the team that wins. They’re the same way; they’re built on the fact where you’re trying to limit big plays against you and trying to make more big plays and create disruption against their offense. It was a good 60 minute out. There were times in that game where kids just really stiffened up and made plays. We forced them to punt and, like I said, those are measurable improvements.”

**Sam:** “A lot of people would say that those two games are the turning points in your season. Is that where you say the turning point would be or did you see it come earlier in the season or later in the season?”

**Paulsen:** “Oh, I think you still have to go by it’s a win-loss business we’re in. I think there were a lot of things where we were getting better and close, but no, until you actually get over the finish line and got one more point than the opponent, no that’s definitely a turning point for sure because there’s a certain amount of confidence that goes with finishing the job.”

**Sam:** “So you come back home [the] last game of the season. I wouldn’t call it a rivalry game, but there’s some added bonus to it that there’s an old coach on the other side of the sidelines. Tell me about the Western game.”

**Paulsen:** “Well, there were a lot of factors in it. Obviously the players that were here had a close tie to the coach that was here and that’s the way it should be. I mean, you develop relationships. What I’ll always remember about it, from our side of the football, is we came out fast, played well. It’s a good opponent. They fought back. They struck back. So, you can’t wait until Sunday to get your footing back. I thought that the kids came back out after half and we got ourselves back into a position to where, by the fourth quarter, once again, we made critical stands, created some turnovers, and [it] allowed us to pull away.”

**Sam:** “If I knew nothing about the 2016 Salukis, or even Football Championship Subdivision football at all, what would you tell me about the 2016 Salukis?”

**Paulsen:** “Here’s what I would say: It was a group of guys that fought hard, played the game hard, and as the year went on, they started to play better. Their effort was constant and now, the ability to play smart and hard at the same time really started to come through and that’s the breakthrough because when you go into the offseason, I think it’s very important that the guys that are returning, that’s what tradition is all about is knowing how to complete the job.”

**Sam:** “How have you seen that breakthrough continue and how have you seen the momentum roll toward this upcoming season?”

**Paulsen:** “Well, I think the kids look at it and say, ‘There’s another level we can get to.’ That’s the internal drive in each one of us is, ‘I’m not going to wait for somebody to call me up and say, “Where are you? You should be down here.”’ It’s the idea that they are taking the steps on their own, which is, ‘This is as important to me as it is to the coaches.’”

**Sam:** "That's all I've got. Is there anything else you'd like to say?"

**Paulsen:** "Nope. [I] Appreciate it."

**Sam:** "Cool. Thank you."

### Conner Iwema Transcription

**Sam:** “What is the first memory you have about football, either playing or watching?”

**Connor:** “My first football memory is playing with my Dad, whether it was in the yard or just watching it with him.”

**Sam:** “When did you know you could play at the Division 1 level?”

**Connor:** “I’ve been pretty serious about football since a very young age, grade school or whatever, it’s always been my dream. I think it became more of a reality when I got older and into high school. Ever since I was young it was a dream to play at schools like Miami and the schools you see on Television.”

**Sam:** “What was the recruiting process like to come here, how did you end up at Southern Illinois University?”

**Connor:** “The recruiting process was actually Zero (0), I came here as a walk on and went to tryouts. It was kind of a thing where my head coach in high school knew Coach Myer, who used to coach here, and he said if you go down there they will look at you and maybe give you a chance. So there really wasn’t a recruiting process it was more of a shot I took for Southern Illinois University.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about your time here, you’re a senior now, you’ve seen a lot come and go, player and personnel.”

**Connor:** “It’s been great as a far as living and the college experience and just being here. I know personally I would of liked to have a more winning record, but I can’t complain about anything, from the dorms to off campus and just the environment that surrounds this town, I’ve loved every second of it.”

**Sam:** “John and I got in an argument the other day because he says that you lived with Mark and Sam, because I always thought you lived with Izzy.”

**Connor:** “I lived with Mark coming into my redshirt freshmen year, he had transferred in that spring and I moved in that summer. I’ve never lived with Sam but I did live with Josh this past season.”

**Sam:** “What’s it like living with your Quarterback?”

**Connor:** “Uh, it’s great, a lot of people were making fun of me, saying I was sucking up trying to get the ball. But I mean why wouldn’t you want to live with your Quarterback? It’s a way to connect off the field. And me being the person I am with studying film, it’s great to be able to bounce ideas off the quarterback and get to know the offense a lot better when I’m away from practice.”

**Sam:** “In a few brief sentences tell me about last season.”

**Connor:** “Um, last season was pretty good, you could definitely start to feel the change and it’s almost like two season ago when we’re saying were right there if a couple points or plays went our way. But I think this year you could really see it. The culture change, the coaches, the whole atmosphere around the team.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about camp, how was camp this year?”

**Connor:** “Camp was hot, it was real hot. I know it was different to years prior because we didn’t get to use the practice field so were out on the turf every day and I can remember a couple practice where I almost went down from the heat. But there was a lot of hype going into this season and there were a lot of people with high expectations and that showed all through camp. There were a lot of seniors, especially in our room

last year with Billy, Izzy, and Kyle who had high expectation for not only themselves but our offense.”

**Sam:** “Why is camp important?”

**Connor:** “Camp is important because it not only gives you a change to come together as a team but it’s really a time where there’s nothing else besides football. We have workouts and stuff like that pre-camp where we have summer school classes. For that three or four weeks, you’re waking up and doing nothing but football. I think that’s really important for people’s football IQ and also it’s a time where things are about to get real. You do spring and you’re going back and forth between each other but all fall camp you’re thinking about who you’re playing that first Saturday.”

**Sam:** “Because you live with quarterback you have an interesting perspective, what are your thoughts on the quarterback battle this year?”

**Connor:** “It was pretty interesting. I know this year will be different, we already have a guy set but I think it was good for both quarterbacks last year because you can get lazy a bit. I’m not saying either of them wouldn’t have worked as hard as they did. It’s just more of like every day for both of them was a battle, if you slip up the next guy is there so I think it was good for both of them. I think it was really good how both of them handled the change mid-season. When they named Josh the starter, Sam didn’t miss a beat at practice and then when they switched Josh was the same way. He was as supportive as Sam was through the whole process. I think it worked really well because of the guys that were in the battle.”

**Sam:** “Let’s look at you, tell me about your season personally, what kind of season did you have?”

**Connor:** “This is kind of a weird topic for me because I feel like a lot of people would look at my stats and say I had a great season. It’s coming off a year of an injury and I’m up there in the 500 yard mark with other receivers, and I am really proud of the season but I had higher expectations for myself as well as other people on our offense. There were four or five other people with the 500 yard, and I easily think with the offense that we run and the mistakes we had this year that we could have had four people in the 700-800 yard range. I think that’s the expectation I have for the group this year and me myself personally.”

**Sam:** “Let’s talk about the non-conference season, you guys lose a tough one on the road at Florida Atlantic University and then decisive victories at home against Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State, tell me about non-conference.”

**Connor:** “It was a little bit of an eye opener when we lost at Florida Atlantic University, not only in the sense of maybe we aren’t where we thought we were but it also was hey we were seven points away from winning that game you know. That’s a big time school and were right there. I think it was a bit of an eye opener where hey if we would of worked a little harder in practice that day or just don’t something a little different we would of won that game and it think that’s what really went into those Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State wins. You never want to start a season with a loss and when you do its real. You never want to go back to back losses let alone lose ever. So I think it was good and bad.”

**Sam:** “I guess looking back a little bit, what was the tone coming out of camp going towards the Florida Atlantic University game, was there an invincibility factor you guys

had because you said it was real, maybe we should have worked a bit harder maybe we aren't where we thought we were."

**Connor:** "When you go through fall camp there should be no doubt that you're going to win that first game and I think that's how a lot of people approached it. And how I was saying that camp was so hot, guys think, oh well I did so well Monday through Wednesday, and then slacks off Thursday and since you aren't playing you get a little comfortable with saying I worked hard. It was more of a thing where we didn't really know yet. We were younger and we didn't really know what it would take to win that first game, we thought we had been doing enough."

**Sam:** "How do you see your roll on this team, both on and off the field?"

**Connor:** "I like to see myself as a leader. Not so much vocally but somebody that people look at and model themselves after. I think there is plenty of leaders on the team and there are the guys that are yellers or the vocal leaders that will get you amped up. But I like to be the consistent guy that comes in and not only works hard for every single person but takes someone with me."

**Sam:** "Let's look at the conference season, you guys lose the first 5 conference games all pretty close, how hard is it to keep focus after a losing skid?"

**Connor:** "It gets pretty tough, but with a lot of the guys that we had last year and a lot of the experience we had it was almost easier because we knew always, even when we lose were right there and that was always the message that Coach Hill portrayed too. Even in the last few games when we knew there was no chance at playoffs we were going out there to win its not time to play around and slack off, now we set the tone for this upcoming season and I think there were a lot of guys that responded well to that,



we never had any guys just quit because we were losing. I think that came a lot from Billy and Chase who pushed everyone up beneath them, they were kind of the leaders offensively and defensively.”

**Sam:** “How important is it for leaders during those tough times to be vocal like that?”

**Connor:** “Extremely important because if you look at a guy like Billy, for me at least, Billy had been here and besides his freshman year hadn’t had a winning season. It would have been easy for him after the second or third loss to say oh here we go again. But the way he came in everyday and approached every practice, everyone kind of follow suit and Billy lead us. Billy was one of the best receivers to come through here in the last ten years or whatever it is, so it’s very important. It would have been a landslide if he would have come and been negative.

**Sam:** “Do you think that those tough times those 5 weeks brought you guys closer as a team?”

**Connor:** “I think so, it kind of weeded out a couple of people too because it was kind of a yeah times are bad now but if you aren’t with us now then don’t be with us. We don’t want you here when it’s good then if you are like this when it’s bad. It exposed a couple of people.”

**Sam:** “So after the five games you come home to South Dakota, big win, tell me about it.”

**Connor:** “Yeah that one was crazy, that’s one that I’ll remember for a long time. Just that last second, we stormed the field and had to go to replay and things got set back. But we get that last play and win again and storm the field again. It was kind of a roller coaster of emotions for a lot of people because we were up and down in that game. But

that's the kind of team that I want to be a part of where at no point in that game whether we were down or up did we think that we were going to lose that game. And that's how I think a lot of those close games need to be because as of the last two years we've had to many where oh its three points, oh it's just right there. And that game was the perfect example of the turning point of our team, as a culture and a unit."

**Sam:** "You mentioned it a little bit, take me though the standing on the sideline on those last two plays. That's something that not a lot of people have seen, even Coach Hill."

**Connor:** "I just remember looking up at the clock with two or three seconds left, and I was trying to look at the formation to try to guess what type of play they were running maybe try to help out the defense and call it out. I just remember him throwing that ball and it was incomplete. I remember a rush and sprinting on the field and almost immediately seeing red and no no review there is one second left on the clock. I remember rationalizing to myself that National Football League quarterbacks have a three second release there's no way that this guy at South Dakota got a play off in two(seconds). There's no way, that's outrageous. I just remember screaming and screaming and Coach Hill coming and calming us down and saying alright one more play. If we can stay strong on that last play then we have one more in us. I just remember holding my breath."

**Sam:** "You go to Youngstown, lose a game to the eventual Football Championship Subdivision runner up, and then a big win against Western at home, tell me about that."

**Connor:** "That Youngstown game was a heart breaker. I feel and a lot of people on offense feel like that was a very beatable team. I think that if a couple things go our way were beating the runner up to the national championship. That's pretty big and I think a

lot of people look at that for this upcoming season. Were that close with that team, if we make it to the playoffs were making a run. That's how it's always kind of been with the Missouri Valley Conference, people say it all the time but that's just proof. Coming off that it was more of we wanted to play the spoiler. Western Illinois, in state, why should they get to go to the playoffs if we don't. There was a lot of people motivated to send the seniors out with a win. Get a head start and start rolling into next the season. I think a lot of people took that pain and upset from Youngstown and rolled it into that next week at practice and we got the win."

**Sam:** "If I knew nothing about the 2016 Salukis, or even any Football Championship Subdivision for that, what would you tell me about the 2016 Salukis?"

**Connor:** "I would say don't believe the record. Yeah we weren't where we wanted to be but there was a lot of heart and hard work that went into that team that will get overlooked when somebody sees 4-7. I think there are people on that team, Seniors on that team that will go on to play at the next level like Chase and Billy and a few others. I think that Southern Illinois University is on its way to being back on top and there's no reason we shouldn't be."

**Sam:** "I'm calling this turning point because of the way I'm telling this story, that Western game and the last three games seemed like a turning point for you guys, how are you carrying that into next season?"

**Connor:** "We're kind of using it as fuel in a way. You don't want to be hung up all offseason on a losing record but you can't forget it. You have to take that as a point to say here's what we did, here's what we did wrong. Now let's change what we did wrong and you can see what happens. Like I just said, if we beat Youngstown, Youngstown is

in the National championship game. The last couple of years we've played close with North Dakota State, North Dakota State is one of the greatest dynasties in all of college football. It's getting people to believe that this school should be at the top and there is no reason it shouldn't be."

### Craig James Transcription

**Sam:** "What is the first thing you remember about Football?"

**Craig:** "First football memory ever is probably my bother hitting me in the funny bone. We were going head to head on a little Oklahoma type drill and boom hit my funny bone. I was a little kid back then so pain was pain I didn't really know how to handle it so it hurt pretty bad."

**Sam:** "When did you know that you could play at the Division 1 level?"

**Craig:** "I knew probably around my sophomore year of high school. I mean as a kid that's everybody's dream playing at the Division 1 level. It really hit me that I had the opportunity my sophomore year when I kind of stepped out of my brother's shadow. He was kind of like the big name at the time, his senior year. I had one game against East St. Louis that pulled me out of the shadow and I realized I had a shot."

**Sam:** "Tell me about your recruiting process, how did you end up at Southern Illinois University?"

**Craig:** "I wasn't recruited by Southern at first, I was recruited by Minnesota, Kansas, all the big schools and I ended up choosing Minnesota. Did a year and a half there, got hurt, had family issues and during that process I decided to transfer. And again, I wasn't really looking at Southern at first I was looking at Illinois State but they didn't really reply. Then I remember I had a friend who went here, Jimmy Jones, and he hit me up letting me know what was going on and I told him I was looking to transfer. Right then and their Coach Hill swooped in and instantly was on point with it."

**Sam:** "Tell me about the first time you met Coach Hill."

**Craig:** “When I first met Coach Hill you see him and see a young cat. Usually not the picture you get as a head coach. But I got a really good vibe from him and I knew he meant business.”

**Sam:** “What’s it like coming to a new school with a new system and new coaches?”

**Craig:** “It kind of hard honestly. You have to adjust again. Your freshman year when you go to college you have to adjust to new surroundings, new people, new coaches just a new environment in total. So, it was kind of easier to adjust since I already knew how to do that. But still kind of hard since it’s a whole new system, it’s a whole new town. But I’m used to it now and it helped that I knew a couple of people that were going down here and were here from the get go.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about this past season.”

**Craig:** “This past season.... obviously, it didn’t go how we wanted it to go. But there is always a little good sprinkled in the bad.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the good.”

**Craig:** “The good... we had more wins than last year. I feel like it brought us closer even though we were trying to get closer as a brotherhood. This was the staffs first year together so it let us know what we need to work on, what the staff needs to work on and how we were going to improve for next year.”

**Sam:** “Is part of that you guys just brushing off the bad and focusing on the good or is there some necessity on focusing on the bad and trying to improve on it?”

**Craig:** “I feel like you need to focus on the bad. You need to understand how you messed up, when you messed up and what you messed up on so then you can

improve on it. Yeah everyone always wants to look at the good and only focus on the good but you can't do that."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about camp, tell me about summer and fall camp this year."

**Craig:** "Fall camp this year was interesting. It was my first fall camp as an upper classman. Then I was kind of a new guy so I had to battle for a spot. I feel like I did that and I proved what I had to prove. And then it just went by just like this year is flying by. They say high school is going to be fast but college is way faster."

**Sam:** "Tell me why camp is important."

**Craig:** "Camp is important because that where you focus on the installment. You install in the spring and then you gradually get better. Camp is where you really hammer down, you have to have it by then. If you don't have it by then you aren't prepared for the season."

**Sam:** "What was the tone coming out of camp?"

**Craig:** "The tone coming out of camp and everybody's mindset is to a championship and to get a ring and that's how it should be. That's a good mindset and we need to have that mindset for this year coming out too."

**Sam:** "Tell me about your season personally."

**Craig:** "Personally my season... it could have went a little bit better. I was fighting injury here and there, shoulder, groin, and hip, whatever. I had a lot of balls called on me and I just feel like that gives me motivation. In my mind ill always want to be the best. But also, I look at myself as being the worst. When I look at myself as being the worst it gives me motivation to claw up, grind, and try to be the best. And even when I am the

best I still feel like I'm the worst. I'll always look at someone higher than me that's doing better than me so it just kind of pushes me."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about the non-conference season, tough loss at Florida Atlantic University and home wins' versus Southeastern Missouri and Murray State."

**Craig:** The Florida Atlantic University game was heartbreaking and at the same time it's exciting I guess. It was one of my first games starting at corner and the first time on the field since my injury ended my sophomore year so I was really anxious to get on the field. Unfortunately, we lost we learned from that and took it to them. We had a chip on the shoulder, and it was a good improvement on a loss."

**Sam:** "What's the mentality of the team coming into week one of conference play and going to University of Northern Iowa?"

**Craig:** "Let's kick University of Northern Iowa's butt. That's all our mentality was towards every team. Unfortunately, we lost that game but it just builds like a fire. Even though we lost those games we went through the same mindset all season, we're going to win were going to beat this team."

**Sam:** "Once conference play starts you guys go through as five game losing skid, how hard is it to keep the focus during that time?"

**Craig:** "It's so hard. Once you hit that losing streak it feels like were going to lose forever, we're not going to get back up. At the end of the day that's how life is. Life comes around hits you with something out of the ordinary and you have to fight to claw back up. That's what we did on the last game versus Western, we found a way to win. When you keep on losing you have to find what you did wrong to correct it. You have to find ways to win."



**Sam:** “During that time do you remember a turning point where the team started to come around and stop feeling sorry for yourselves and wanted to kick some ass?”

**Craig:** “The turning point was kind of late, the Western game at the end of the season which it should have happened earlier. We just didn’t give up, we kept fighting; everyone had the Eye of the Tiger.”

**Sam:** “Does that bring you guys closer as a team when you have to come together and find a way to win?”

**Craig:** “Most definitely. I felt like we were close as a team already but just that win brings you together closer. After a win, you get to celebrate with your brothers instead of crying over a loss.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the South Dakota game, a big win where most seem to think the turn started to happen.”

**Craig:** “South Dakota game wasn’t one to sit in your seats for. I’ve never seen something like that. The last play of the game everyone running off shaking hands and the next thing you know were back on the field for another play. On our side of the ball it kind of felt like we were being cheated. They don’t want us to win, but we found a way.”

**Sam:** “What’s going through your head down there on the field for the second play?”

**Craig:** “Personally, I wasn’t on the field at the time, I was injured but just being on the sideline looking at it I thought it was unbelievable. I’ve never witnessed anything like that happen in a game not even on Television. Everybody ran off the field, the refs ran off the field but now they want to bring everybody back. So I’m on the sideline praying for a stop and we finally got it.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the Western game, big win at home vs a former coach and some would say a decisive victory.”

**Craig:** “Coach Hill before the game was saying we have to do it for the seniors it’s their last go around. We already knew we weren’t going to make it to the playoffs so we had to give it everything we had. Coming out to the Western game I knew of Landon’s big brother Lance who had a pretty good year. I really wanted to get after him. As a defense and a core, I feel like we did that. That was a roller coaster too. We came up at the end, Chang had a clutch interception and then Ryan came up with another clutch interception. It was very exciting. When they both got their interceptions, I was very happy to see my brothers succeed.”

**Sam:** “Describe the atmosphere on the field after the game, and the locker room.

**Craig:** “It was wild. Everybody screaming, yelling, happy. Turned on the tunes jammed out a little bit. It was just joyful to end a season with a win. We’re not hanging our heads and were using this for motivation for next year, we can do this.”

**Sam:** “If I didn’t know anything about the Saluki football team or Football Championship Subdivision, what would you tell me about the 2016 Salukis?”

**Craig:** “2016 Salukis. We fought to the very end no matter what. You’ve seen the scores, every last one of them to the wire. Like Youngstown, they went on the national championship and we fought them down to the wire. Last drive, last play all of that.

**Sam:** “You guys hit that turning point there at the end of the season, how are you carrying that turning point using that momentum to take it into this season?”

**Craig:** “We are as upperclassmen coming together. Kind of being more strict, kind of being more motivated. Everybody has that ring mindset and this is the last go around.

I've been in college four years, been here and I'm seeing the end of the tunnel. College is almost over for me so I'm trying to get out there and get everybody's all and trying to give my all and get to it."

### Darrell James Transcription

**Sam:** “Before we start talking about your season, I want to know the very first memory you have of playing football.”

**Darrell:** “When I was in little league, it was the championship game and we were going against the packers and they had two really big kids on the defensive line. They were just the kids that grew up faster than most and hit puberty faster. I ended up getting tackled on the sideline by both of them and it hurt so bad. I was a kid so my feelings were hurt and I was just kind of embarrassed. Then my dad came up to me on the sideline and was like you better not show any weakness, you better get up. And I got up, I was in pain but I finished the game. It showed me a lot about my true character and football itself and life.”

**Sam:** “When did you start playing football?”

**Darrell:** “I’ve been playing football since birth. First grade you play flag football, then second and third you play tackle, and fourth and fifth you play tackle at the second level.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about playing high school football”

**Darrell:** “High school football in the state of Texas, what is there to say? It’s an honor to represent the state of Texas. I don’t think people understand how serious football is and how advanced it is until you really spend time out there. Like I said it was a blessing to do my high school in Texas and I got to play with some outstanding coaches and outstanding players.”

**Sam:** “When in high school did you know you could play at the next level?”

**Darrell:** “It was actually my freshman year, or eighth grade year actually; my coach came up to me and said you have a lot of talent a lot of natural, god given ability. He was like with the right coaching and the right timing you have unbelievable options and opportunity. That’s kind of what I’ve prided myself on, no matter where you come from, your background or athleticism, there are so many opportunities in this world, if you put your mind to it and you stay committed, you’re going to succeed.”

**Sam:** “How did you get to Southern Illinois University?”

**Darrell:** “It’s actually a funny story, Jim Jackson I don’t know if you’re familiar with him. He was my recruiting coach at first, and when he transferred to San Diego State. Coach David Elsen took over. At first I didn’t really know anything about Southern Illinois University; I wasn’t really familiar with the whole Midwest as a whole. Coach Jackson stayed persistent and stayed communicating with me and he just showed that he cared. My high school was like you want to go somewhere you feel wanted and somewhere that cares about your well-being and not just your ability on the field. So I came here on unofficial and it was a blast. They treated my parents and family with the upmost respect and when we were leaving, it actually wasn’t my decision, but my mom came up to me and said I want you to commit here. I was like I think I’m going to and she said no I’m telling you I want you to commit here. I was like alright, I’m a momma’s boy at heart so I had to listen to what she said.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the first time you met Nick.”

**Darrell:** “Coach Hill, the first time I met him was actually when I got here on my official. I met him and that was like his first or second year. He kind of talked to me about my ability in the passing game and what he saw for me. That was back when he was the

quarterback coach so he had a little more control of the offense I guess you could say. They were still in the process of finding a receivers coach, so Coach Hill was kind of the one that the offense talked to the most, him and coach Elsen because he was kind of my recruiting coach that took over. So a lot of offense and a lot of Southern Illinois University as a whole I learned from him. I mentioned the fact he grew up right down the street so he told a few stories of back in the day and things that only you could know if you grew up here.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about this season in a few sentences.”

**Darrell:** “This past season I definitely feel like there were ups and downs and a misunderstanding. I don’t know what word I want to use to describe it, but we worked so hard and we did so much and to come up short, anything less than a championship is coming up short in our eyes. That’s because we know we have the athletes, we know we have the coaches and ability to do just that. It’s one of those things of playing for the conference we play for, playing for the school we play for we just feel entitled to bring home a championship. We deserve it, we haven’t put up a banner in so long in that stadium. Our community helped us get this wonderful stadium and 4-7 doesn’t show our true character and who we really are. And I feel like that’s what we took into the offseason. You look at how we finished that season, that’s our true character. A team that can come from 21 down and have a chance to fight to win at the end. A team that can come out and hit you right in the mouth and keep it on the gas. A team that can come back against Western in the final seconds of the game. You look at our season and there’s no team that really beat us, we beat ourselves from the little things. That’s one thing we also focused on was being more disciplined. Playing four quarters and

really playing those four quarters and not just going through the motions and not having a lapse of focus or anything.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about camp”

**Darrell:** “Fall camp is my favorite actually. I think it’s because the season, you just feel that it’s there. Fall camp is the last chance to go against your brother and just compete and get you mentally and physically ready for the season. Everyone’s there so everyone wants to be at their best, top tier shape top tier mental and physical toughness. And it’s hot. It’s very hot. I’m from Texas and I’m telling you it’s hot. The humidity here really takes a toll on us at practice, and I think that’s one more thing we should be thankful for, that we have that adverse situation to go through during fall camp.”

**Sam:** “How was camp different this year from other years?”

**Darrell:** “It definitely was a lot more spread out, we had more rest opportunities. We kind of joked around and said this was the easiest camp we’ve had but it also was the most beneficial camp especially having a new coaching staff come in. Not only do we have to earn the trust of the players, we have to learn the trust of the coaches and everything of that nature. And just being able to bond, I felt like we had a more cohesive bond with one another, as opposed to previous years. The focus was definitely there and I feel like fall camp was more beneficial than the past.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the new coaching staff, you guys kind of got a taste of them in Spring Ball, then you get out here in Fall and your with them for the next 16 or 17 weeks, tell me about the new coaching staff and getting to know them.”

**Darrell:** “They came in very strong and it was kind of exciting because they had a motto, you go we go. I believe they really stuck to it. Not only that but the passion that they brought. We had a lot of new coaches that were younger and even our older coaches are passionate about the game and just so passionate of us as a team. They saw so much potential in us and at times they saw more than we saw in ourselves. That’s something that I will always be grateful for, you have a coach that no matter what you do, no matter what you’ve done in your past he still believes in you and still has the utmost confidence in you to go out there and perform that task. That’s one thing I will say about our coaches, I just love how upbeat and positive they are. Even when we lost to UNI which was our worst loss of the season, Coach Hill came to us after the game and he didn’t yell at us about effort or anything of that nature, it was more of guy we beat ourselves. He kept it 100 percent honest with us, we beat ourselves. He didn’t over stress anything, he just stuck to what we believed in and stuck to the process. That’s one thing I will say when you have a coach that’s calm and collective like that it really helps as a player.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about your season that you had.”

**Darrell:** “It was horrible in my eyes. People say oh you have a great season, you made some big plays. It doesn’t meet my standards. I’m not going to lie my whole life I’ve set really high goals. And I was always told if you don’t set those expectations and goals so high that people look at you and laughed or thought this guy is crazy then your goals aren’t high enough. With that being said I’ll give you a rundown of my preseason goals that I wanted- Over 100 yards, the main thing was just win, that’s top of my board. Whether that means me making 10 blocks in the game to help us win, that’s what I



want to do. If it's going to be me catching 10 passes for over 100 yards, that's what I'm going to do. Whatever it takes for us to win, and that's the ultimate goal. But individual goals I had a lot of them. Each game I wanted to try to break 100 yards, each game I wanted to score a touchdown, just to be a factor that's the main thing. All my goals revolve around just being a factor in the game and staying positive. My season though... I broke over 500 yards, I had a great yards per catch. But I had so many drops on 3<sup>rd</sup> down, that's kind of where I feel I let my teammates down. I do a lot of talked as most people know, whether that's trash talking or just talking in general. And often times when you do that you label yourself and kind of stick out. And with that comes playmaking. So if you don't make your plays that you talk about or constantly make or ask for, it definitely affects the team and yourself as a whole. That's one thing I wanted to improve on in this offseason was being more consistent. Me and our former coach, (Coach Akins?) we talked about that. If I can just become more consistent as a complete receiver, meaning my shallow routes, my deep routes, my out routes, and just catching the ball as a whole, I'll have what it takes to go to the next level. The main thing I focus on is just the next play. Focus on the play and when it's over the next play. I can't continue to live in the past. Dropping the ball was no something I was used to. When I was in high school I actually played running back, so I'm used to just getting those handoffs. And my senior year when I switched to receiver full time it came so naturally that when I dropped a pass in college I didn't know how to respond. It was a great learning lesson for me and I'm very grateful for where my season went. I was healthy, I was able to contribute all games and that is a blessing."

**Sam:** “Let’s talk about nonconference season, you guys go 2-1 in nonconference. Go against a tough Football Bowl Subdivision opponent and are a stone’s throw away from beating them and then decisively win over Murray State and Southeastern Missouri State, tell me about those.”

**Darrell:** “Our pre-conference schedule was great for us. We had a good enough opponent the first week at Florida Atlantic University that allowed us to see where we stood. Then coming back against Murray State, not to talk down on any opponent, but that’s a game we knew we had to win. We have better athletes, better coaches, and overall it’s just a better atmosphere here and we had something to prove. Then going against Southeastern Missouri State, those are our rivals. That was a great game for us to win especially given what happened the previous years. It was great for us to comeback and handle business there. But our preseason, our preconference... that doesn’t compete with the Missouri Valley. Florida Atlantic University may be a Division 1A school but they don’t compete with the competition were going to see in the Missouri Valley. I think a lot of times it’s not even about athleticism, it’s about discipline, it’s about heart, and it’s about mentality. I always tell people that your mentality, your mental state and your heart will beat athleticism any day. And that’s one things that this conference has, we have a lot of guys, not just on our team, that are committed and are 100 percent about making that play and 100 percent about that rep and 100 percent about being the guy for their team that they need to be.”

**Sam:** “What’s the mentality and tone like those first three games, what was it like in the locker room?”

**Darrell:** “Oh it was great. It was great just being able to come in with the guys and celebrate. The coaches know that everything is working the way to want. Were kind of having our way with people, and even at Florida Atlantic University you watch the film and we lost that game, we lost that game, they didn’t beat us. That’s something you can always be proud of as a coach know that your players came our confident and attacked it and just stuck to the process. Heading into conference I think we were kind of too high. I think we kind of expected teams to roll over, and not just roll over and let us win, but we expected teams to be scared of us and respect us. That’s something that we have to remember each and every game, that regardless of who the opponent is, they don’t respect us. Regardless of who the opponent is, they aren’t scared of us. That’s something that were continually trying to work on. And remind teams that every single game we play were going to play until the whistle blows and were going to get back up were going to line up and were going to continue to do it. We’re going to beat you every single play. That’s a culture were starting here and it kicked it towards the end of the season, teams started to get more nervous. Our offense is kicking, our defense is flying around. At one point I didn’t even know who I was watching out there (our defensive players) I’m going more crazy for defense than I was for offense. I’m celebrating watching our guys fly around and we had some young guys in the secondary that made some big plays for us. It was an honor to sit back and have a defense that was clicking towards the end of the season and I’m excited to see what they bring this offseason.”

**Sam:** “We came strong in non-con and then hit a 5 game losing streak to start conference season, how as a player and teammate do you keep up the morale, focus, and mentality? How as a football player do you do that?”

**Darrell:** “I think that’s where you have to come together especially as a team and as a family. No one likes losing obviously, we put in so much work and so much effort and everyone is so passionate about the game. Our record kind of solidifies what our season was like I guess you could say and we knew we were better than 4-7. There wasn’t a team we played that we felt was more athletic or better off all the way around. We didn’t feel like they had better coaches, they just found a way to win.”

**Sam:** “How do you keep mentality up after a losing streak?”(Same question as before)

**Darrell:** “It became more of a pride things, our coaches started to tell us that towards the end of the season. We may not make it to playoffs, but we can make sure they don’t as well. Our season was ended at 11 games, we going to try to end everyone else’s at 11 games too. That was the mentality we had, we may not be able to go to playoffs, but we can definitely end some season and go out on top. More of a mental and spiritual thing.”

**Sam:** “A lot of times during those tough times players find their roles on the team, what was your role on the team this year?”

**Darrell:** “My role was definitely to make plays down the field. As a receiver, there’s a lot of different types of receivers. We’re thankful, were blessed to have so many different types of receivers. It’s so diverse in our receiver room, we have guys from all different heights, all different speeds, all different routes, all different abilities. I feel like one thing I bring to the room is spreading out the defense. I can’t tell you the amount of times that a defender told me I’m just waiting on the post to come, I’m just waiting for them to throw a fade. The fact that I have the defender in that mindset really opens it up for the guy next to me. Because now he’s so worried about the post that if I run a post

and he's not going to be worried about the over coming around or the corner coming out. I feel like that was always my thing, was to spread the defense out."

**Sam:** "How important was the win against South Dakota?"

**Darrell:** "The win against South Dakota. One it was so important for us because it was at home, it was for our fans. I don't want to say it because we were going against Coach O'Boyle? That's one of my favorite coaches I've had here as well. That was a game last year that we thought we should have won, and I don't know if you remember but that was the game that kind of turned the tide for me. I was injured that week before the game and wasn't supposed to play but our receiver room hit the injury bug and we lost three receivers if not mistake that game last year. So I asked the coaches and they let me play, and I had the opportunity to make a play at third down. And that's where the drop came, that first drop, and I'm not going to lie I did kind of get ate up by that. It stuck with me just because I thought I let the team down. It was one of those things like, although I was hurt I was still ready to go. One thing I always said was if I'm able to go I'm going to go. I feel like I went and mentally I wasn't locked in all the way and I cost the team I feel. So this year at home against South Dakota. We hadn't won a Missouri Valley game yet and were going against Coach O'Boyle like I said. For the team I wanted to make sure we did whatever just to win that game. It was so important to me. I felt we were a better overall team, we wanted it more and we were willing to do whatever it took to win that game. That's a team when we played them that had three conference wins, maybe two, but they had a chance to go to the playoffs. They kind of didn't respect us, they kind of went in thinking were just going to roll over and let them

win since our season was over. But it was just a great team win. And the fact that the refs tried to take it away from us.”

**Sam:** “That was my next question, tell me about you on the sidelines, what you saw and what was going through your head at the end of the game.”

**Darrell:** “Oh man I’ve never seen anything like it. I’ve been playing football for let’s say 16 years, and I’ve been studying the game of football for that long as well. I’ve never seen that in my life, the fact that they called the ball game, the refs are running off the field, they get right here and they circle up in the end zone. I’m going crazy with my guys but I’m a man of vibes and I get this weird vibe. I start looking around and I’m just like somethings not right. And the ref comes running back out, blowing his whistle saying they want to review the play. I’m just like no you’re kidding me. Were at home, you called the game, we had a goal line stand. Probably one of the best plays of our season. The best play I’ve seen in my career here. For us to win the game and no go 0 for in the Missouri Valley. Just to bring our team back to life and let us know that this is still possible, this is still capable of happening, us winning out. Coach Hill always told us that we may not have a winning record but 5-6 sound a lot better than 3-8 or 4-7, things of that nature. Then seeing the defense go back out there and having to bring their emotions down to game ready mode and focus back in and dial it back in for one more play. It was just amazing the fact that they went out there and did it again. That’s definitely one of the best memories and my favorite plays of my career here at Southern Illinois University and I didn’t even have a part in it, I was on the sideline holding my breath praying to god that it worked out in our favor. It was unreal though, I will say the second time we won felt a lot better than the first time. The first time I saw the play but I

kind of turned away at the last second and missed it. Then I heard all the screaming and I was like we won okay cool. The second play, I was just staring it down, had my arms crossed like let us not win this game, I swear to you. I was like that's going to go on ESPN, when they do that "come on man." We're going to have to send that one in."

**Sam:** "That's really the turning point of your season there, Sam Straub starts his second game at Quarterback at Youngstown, Youngstown is the eventual runner up in the Football Championship Subdivision championship, you guys play a tough game there. Then you come home and you guys flourish with a win versus Western, what was that win vs Western like?"

**Darrell:** "Once again were going against a former coach, Dave Elson, and that was a really personal game for me and I know it was for a couple other players as well, just because they're in state. Not to mention the Lanoir brothers, we had them here, and Western needed to win that game. Coach talked to us a couple days before the game and he was like I don't think we all understand the opportunity we have on our hands. Right now Western is not guaranteed a playoffs spot, and he kept reiterating that they aren't guaranteed a playoff spot so you're going to get their best. They're not going to come out here and conserve anything, they aren't going to think anything less of this game, you're going to get their absolute best. Coach was like well they're going to get our absolute best, its senior night and we deserve to send our seniors out with a bang. That whole week was emotional. I had three receivers in my receiver room that were graduating and that was my last game I had with them. Those are the guys I came in with and you look at our receiver room, up until this past season we hadn't lost anyone really. My redshirt freshman year we lost Tea and LA, two former great players for us in

the receiver room. But I didn't really know them. Billy, Izzy, Kyle I really knew they, they kind of helped raise me as a saluki receiver. Helped me into the scheme, helped me understand routes, and helped me understand the whole football IQ, they helped out a lot. To see them play that last game, they deserved it. The way we went out was just amazing."

**Sam:** "Tell me what was special about this season."

**Darrell:** "I think the most special part about this season was that we didn't quit. We finished, and we really believed that regardless of playoffs or not, it's a pride thing it's a self-respect thing and it's a family thing. We owed it to our seniors, we owed it to one another. After all the 350's, after all the days of waking up for lake runs, we owed it to one another just to go out there and show people what we were really capable of. One thing I want people to take away from our season was if you look at all the adversity we went through before the season, during the season, and even still to this day after the season. Nothing ever came easy to us, we faced a lot of adverse moments that a lot of teams would have started pointing the finger, a lot of teams would have thrown in the towel and just said screw it's over with. But we didn't. We never had a practice where coach had to get on us, asking what's going on, why aren't you guys flying around with good effort. We continued to work hard and we continued to believe. That's something I think starts with the coaches and the character they're building here and the culture. It really was heartwarming to know that we were able to finish strong for our seniors and send them out with some great memories."

**Sam:** "How do you guys carry this moment in the next season?"



**Darrell:** “Until the season next year we have to know that were capable of doing what we want. Were capable of winning every single game. Were capable of going out there and dominating, not just winning, but dominating every single game. And it’s a mindset that’s really starting to kick in. I think I want to say around the time that Sam took over at Quarterback. He brought a lot of passion at the spot and a lot of players on the team really believed in Sam since he first got here. I think that was a big thing for us. You look at this offseason. Man I haven’t seen an offseason like this, we’ve been grinding. There hasn’t been any complaining, there hasn’t been any bickering or fussing. You look at people coming late, things of that nature . . . . all the childish games are gone, it’s more focused in. People understand that if we want something, were going to have to work every single day for it if we really, really want it. We’ve been blessed with some great weather and that’s always a plus because weather is always a factor I don’t care what anyone says. Weather will change your mentality on something. If you have to run in 100 degree weather opposed to 25 degree weather, you tell me which one you’d rather run in. You want to be hot and sweaty or do you want to be freezing cold and trying to get loose. The fact that we’ve been blessed with such great weather, we’ve been able to focus really on the true reason were here, and that’s to get better and to get more prepared for the season. Couple days away from spring ball, I’m just so excited to see how we look as a team and as a unit and as a family just once more before the season. I really think that there is going to be a lot of people with something to prove this spring ball, myself included. Nobody’s spot is safe, we have a lot of guys. We lost a lot of big roles. We have a lot of guys that are very young. Like I said no

one's spot is safe and everyone knows that, everyone wants to fight for that spot. I believe the competition is going to be there and I'm excited.

One last thing I'd like to add is just we have a great group of guys here and I promise that before it's all said and done we're going to show the world what we're capable of doing and we're really going to turn this around. I believe that when we do people will start to question what the problem was, start to question what are we doing now, what's changed? I'm just going to tell you now, the thing that has changed is our mindset. We really believe now. I believe that we had a couple of doubters, we had a few people that were kind of skeptical of coaching and how many people really bought into the program players are matured players who are trustworthy and disciplined. And I believe that we're really going to shock the world this upcoming season and it's going to start with spring ball, have a great spring, and get ready for the season."

### Jeff Vea Transcription

**Sam:** “Alright, first thing I want to know is what is the first memory you have of playing football?”

**Vea:** “The first memory?”

**Sam:** Ever.”

**Vea:** “Ever. Playing football ever? Hmm.”

**Sam:** “The first football memory you have, period. It could be watching the Super Bowl, it could be throwing the football around with some friends, it could be playing.”

**Vea:** “The first memory I guess I would say playing football ever was playing little league back home. It was my first time ever playing football. I was about seven years old, six or seven years old, I can’t really remember. But when I scored my first touchdown, playing running back, [I] was really small, [I] just took the ball right up the middle and just scored, it was a great feeling”.

**Sam:** “When did you know in high school that you could play at the collegiate level?”

**Vea:** Well my whole life growing up I didn’t really think much of it. [I] was just playing football, just something I was doing for fun, you know? Then when I got to high school, I kind of started taking it serious when my coaches started taking me to combines and camps and stuff like that. So I kind of just, I guess that kind of put the idea in my head that ‘Hey, if I take this serious, I can play college ball,’ and I did and that’s why I’m here.”

**Sam:** “How did you get to Southern Illinois University? What was the recruitment process like?”

**Vea:** “The recruitment process was kind of tough. I didn’t plan on coming to Southern Illinois University before I came, but the way everything happened, I’m really thankful and really grateful for actually being here. It’s just a blessing. I just wanna say that it was all in God’s plan that I came here because I was being recruited by Football Championship Subdivisons schools out of high school and then I didn’t really have any help by my high school coaches as far as recruiting. I’m a first time college student in my family, like first generation or whatever, so my parents didn’t know much so I was kind of going about doing everything on my own thinking. I knew it all, but really I didn’t. Then one day, Coach Flyger, from here, he came to my school and he said he’d like to recruit me and since then, we kind of just built that relationship and I kind of felt really close and it made me feel really good about coming here so that’s why I’m here.

**Sam:** Now in your time here you’ve gone through a couple of different systems or defenses. What’s it like switching to a new defense and trying to learn a new system?”

**Vea:** “I mean it’s not the easiest thing, but if you really take this serious and you really want to progress and like the little things you do, you’re going to just take everything in and listen to the coaches because they obviously know what they’re talking about and you know we just feel kind of good about the stuff we’re doing now and the coach we have now. It’s all just football if you ask me. Just playing ball.”

**Sam:** Tell me about this past season, in a few short sentences.”

**Vea:** “It was a tough season. We had a lot of well-fought games that we should have won, but that’s in the past now and we’re just working on being that elite team that we know we can be this season so really just kind of moving forward.”

**Sam:** “What was camp like last year?”

**Vea:** “Camp is camp. It’s always like we’re up here all day, every day so we’re just, you know, being around all the guys and the coaches and stuff, just building that brotherhood, just coming together, the unity I guess. I mean it was tough, but you just got to well prepare your body for camp. You got to know what’s coming ahead of you so you know how to well prepare “

**Vea:** “Well, for us, I think it’s important because it kind of just shows everyone and lets you know where I am right now and how well you’re going to play during the season. Camp is just kind of the deal where I feel like it shows the coaches and lets you know like hey, you’ve been working hard all summer all off season, kind of get that shot to show everyone what you got.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about you specifically; tell me about your season. What was your season like for you as a player?”

**Vea:** “For me as a player, I don’t feel like I had the greatest season because the season before, my redshirt freshman year, I played corner and last spring, like a couple weeks before the spring game, I moved to strong safety. It was interesting transitioning from corner to safety, but it’s all kind of the same to me; just playing defense and covering guys one on one. I feel like I could have done a lot of things better, I could have, I don’t know, just went harder and took over, you know what I mean? Just doing what I know I can do and not just thinking so much while I’m in the game and just playing ball, really.”

**Sam:** “What do you like about playing defense?”

**Vea:** “I feel like defensive guys are the best athletes on the field because we’re running backwards most of the time. I kind of feel like that’s something to really think of, just like playing defense, you like hitting people and doing things like that and covering guys because you don’t know what the offense has written up. They got plays drawn out for them we just have zone coverages and man coverages, really, and you’re just playing ball.”

**Sam:** “Let’s talk about the non-conference season. [A] tough game against Florida Atlantic University, you guys almost won and then two decisive victories versus Southeastern Missouri University and Murray. Tell me about your non-conference season.”

**Vea:** “I think we did pretty good non-conference. We should have won that first game of the season. If we would have won that, I feel like that would have kind of gave us that spark we probably needed to go on for the season, but it is what it is. They’re just non-conference games. We go into every game with the same mindset [that] we got to win.”

**Sam:** Is it harder to beat a Football Bowl Subdivision team at the Football Championship Subdivision level or was it just another game like you were saying?”

**Vea:** “If you ask me, I honestly think Football Bowl Subdivision schools, they are all athletes just like we are. They just have more, but so far [in] my years of being in college playing [at] Football Bowl Subdivision schools, competition wise, it’s all the same. We just got to want it more because we don’t have that many guys to come off of the bench to play if someone goes down or gets tired and they do. That’s just the difference; they just got more athletes. If you ask me, competition-wise, it’s all the same. We can easily beat Football Bowl Subdivision schools.”

**Sam:** “Out on [the] field, you’re a leader. What’s your role off the team? What’s your roll off the field?”

**Vea:** “As far as being a leader, I kind of just stayed myself. I don’t change on or off the field. What I do off the field is the same thing I would do on the field. If I see someone doing something they’re not supposed to do, I’m going to be there to show them the right path type deal, but other than that, I kind of feel like I’m the same all around. I don’t really change for anything. I’m just the same person on and off the field.”

**Sam:** “Now we come into conference season and conference season gets a little rough, you guys lose five straight. How hard is it to keep focus in a losing skid?”

**Vea:** “Uh...well...”

**Sam:** “Or maybe not lose focus, but lose sight of the end of the tunnel, lose sight of the end goal. Is it hard to keep that?”

**Vea:** “Um, I mean it’s all within us as players, to be honest, because there’s only so much the coaches can do. They can coach us and tell us what to do all they want, but when it comes down to it, we’re the ones on the field playing. So whether we win or lose, it’s all on us. I feel like sometimes there’s guys who do give up, ‘Oh we lost five straight we’re not going to go to the playoffs. We’re out.’ They kind of just lose focus of what the main goal is. Guys like me, I just want to try to keep everyone composed and keep everyone with that same mindset – know we’re going to win out, we’re going to win these games, anything can happen, just keep playing, don’t give up.”

**Sam:** “So that comes in fruition with your last three games. You guys really turned your season around starting with the home game versus South Dakota. Tell me about the South Dakota game.”

**Vea:** “We just came out with that fire and that juice. After we won that game, a lot of the team realized like, ‘Hey, this is what we want to play like every single game.’ Once we won that game, I kind of just feel like we just built from there. All it takes is to win a few games for you to build that confidence and when we started winning, we started building and [made] lesser mistakes. We just started building from the mistakes from the last game and just started progressing and doing better. That’s just what we work on: progression.”

**Sam:** “The others I have interviewed have been offensive guys. You’re the first defensive guy I’ve interviewed for this. You’re on the field for that, what was that [like]? Take me through that.”

**Vea:** “I don’t know. I just remember the last play of the game they were in the red zone. They could have easily scored, but we had some really good defense and we stopped them. I just remember going crazy. I felt like I won a playoff game. We were all going crazy because we really wanted that win and then, after that, the refs kind of called us back onto the field and they had an extra play because they had more time on the field and then we stopped them again. Everyone just kind of exploded. Everybody was excited, it just felt really good. It feels good to win.”

**Sam:** “You carried that momentum into a road game against Youngstown State. Youngstown’s the eventual runner up to the Football Championship Subdivision. [It was] a hard fought game, tough loss. Take me through it.”



**Vea:** “Like I said before, we just try to work on progressing from the past games and I feel like we played a hard fought game and we gave it all we had and everything. We just got to start fixing the little things because they come back and they haunt you, but it is what it is. We’re moving forward and focusing on the next season and stuff.”

**Sam:** “Last game of the season: huge win. You guys removed Western’s chances of going to the playoffs. Tell me about the Western game.”

**Vea:** “Yeah that was a really fun game. It was the last game and everyone knew that if Western had beaten us that day that they would make it to the playoffs and we had already known that we were out of the playoffs so we were all just like, ‘Forget them, we’re just going to win this game. We’re going to give it all we have. It’s our last game of the season,’ and that’s what we kind of did. Like I said before, we were still building off the wins we’ve had in the past so we were just trying to get things going. It was a really good game.”

**Sam:** “There was a coach on the other side of the sidelines that you played for, for quite a while in Coach Elson. Was the win sweeter because you beat Coach Elson?”

**Vea:** “Yeah, it was definitely sweeter.”

**Sam:** “Kind of wrapping things up here. If I didn’t know anything about the 2016 Salukis, or even about Football Championship Subdivision football at all, what would you tell me about the 2016 Salukis?”

**Vea:** “Hard working team. A lot of young guys with ambition and drive, just some go getters fighting hard [and] looking for that fix that we need to get things turned around to put the Salukis back on top.”

**Sam:** “A lot of people would say those last three games was a turning point for you guys. How are you carrying that momentum forward into this season?”

**Vea:** “We’re definitely just going to sit on that but we’re not going to stay complacent. We’re still working hard, we’re not going to look back at last season and dwell on things that happened last season. Like I said before, we’re progressing [and] moving forward. We’re getting better each and every day. Everyday we’re working hard, everybody’s doing something to make the team better so looking forward for that.”

**Sam:** “That’s all the questions I have, is there anything else you would like to add about last season?”

**Vea:** “Go Salukis.”

### Nick Hill Transcription

**Sam:** “Alright, first thing I want to know, what is the first football memory you have?”

**Hill:** “My first football memory, would be growing up in Duquoin as a football rich community. Ya know it’s a small town but ya know I think it was 28 years in a row in the playoffs growing up um whenever in 1992 when I was about seven we won the state championships. So when I was old enough to remember being in the end zone watching those guys go to state. Like my cousin Adam was the middle linebacker on that team so we went to the state championship game, watched them win it, came back to the high school gym that night and watch them bring home the trophy and the whole town was in the gym and all that. So when you grow up in Duquoin, you are, not that you just wanna play but you are almost expected to play so and my story is kind of like that ya know. I was a basketball player and I thought I had kind of everything figured out playing basketball and what not. I played because I lived in Duquoin. So those are my first memories playing in the end zones of Duquoin high school football games and remembering all the guys that came before me wearing their jerseys and going to them after the games and asking to put their helmets on and all kinds of stuff.”

**Sam:** “When did you know in high school that you could play at the collegiate level?”

**Hill:** “I didn’t play padded football until I was a freshman in high school. We didn’t have pop warner football in Duquoin so I played flag football when I was 5/6 years old in the boys and girls club in Duquoin. I played flag football growing up , there was a small season in the fall the high school players would come over and coach your team and so I did that but I didn’t play real organized football until I was a freshman in high school.”

**Sam:** “How did you end up playing at Southern Illinois?”

**Hill:** “Well just because I’m from here. I went to Western Kentucky University on a basketball scholarship and I didn’t realize how much I missed and loved football ya know and I spent that entire year just things going through my head and Jerry Kill said that if you ever wanna come home though that there would be a spot for you if you ever wanted to come home and play football again. That was kind of in my head for an entire year even when I was playing basketball. I was redshirted and I didn’t get to play as a true freshman. But that was just in my head. I missed being in the huddle and so I took a chance and came back. There was 5 quarterbacks on the roster and I was just another guy, redshirted. I thought I wanted to play both sports. Coach Lowry allowed me to play basketball too but I found out my passion and love was for the game of football. I’ve been here ever since.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about playing professionally.”

**Hill:** “It was a wild ride trying to play professional football. It was a lot of fun along the way. When I left we had a really good season. Picked up some interest, went and trained. Didn’t get invited to combine but I had my pro day. I remember on draft day I had four teams by the end of the draft like the seventh round offer me contracts. But the Bears number one growing up and being from Illinois I didn’t grow up a diehard Bears fan but I felt the Bears had the best opportunity to make the team. They only had two quarterbacks on the team, Kyle Orton and Rex Grossman. They signed two rookie free agents to compete for the third spot on the active roster so there wasn’t a better opportunity. The other teams had three veterans so I would’ve been the fourth guy, so it gave me an opportunity to compete. Didn’t work out, got cut. So I was the struggling professional player, never made much money playing football but I still loved it. I always

try to tell our guys that I came back and got my degree and finished my student teaching after I got cut from the Bears. I got cut now I'm back at Christopher Junior high finishing my degree because I knew that was number one. I was able to get that so I knew anytime I could still be a teacher and coach but I had a passion and love for playing so I got to move around with the arena league they gave me that opportunity and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I got to live in five different cities, been in every city around the United States playing football. It's taken me all over. You didn't make much money but you got to be in the locker room. I got to meet some of my best friends till this day playing arena football and then I had a good season in 2011, actually 2010 season for the arena, the packers called me for a workout, it went well, and they signed me after the workout. I lived in Green Bay for about four months and it was an awesome opportunity for me. Looking back now as a coach that was probably one of the best football opportunities and I didn't make the team but heck I was in there if that was an auction item people would pay big money to say hey I spent four months and be in the same room as Mike McCarthy and Aaron Rodgers and go to Quarterback school for the Green Bay Packers and be coached by the best in the world and sit next to in the film room the best Green Bay Packer in this day and age in Aaron Rodgers. I learned so much about the game and my philosophy for coaching and coaching the qb. I went back and played one more season of arena football. Throughout the time I was coaching, training Packers and coaching high school football because the arena league season is over in august. I was able to always coach in the fall so I was able to keep my love of coaching going and then once it was all over I started coaching."

**Sam:** “What was the transition like moving from player to coach?”

**Hill:** “It wasn’t much of a transition, I was coaching high school so it’s the same game. You know when you’re a coach and you’re doing it for the right reasons, there’s no such thing as part time. You give those kids and that season and that team all that you’ve got and that’s what I did. I remember the feelings I have now that I did when I was coaching Florida and here in Illinois. Keeping you up at night, scheming the other team, giving those kids the best opportunity and loving being around the kids and that’s the other thing coach gives ya: every single day you’re around a group of guys that are out there playing a game. There wasn’t much transition once I started doing that. Once I got to college coaching, the game doesn’t change: you’re recruiting and it’s a different lifestyle, but the game, once you get inside those white lines there’s a lot of high school coaches out there that can come and do what I’m doing. You love the players the same and you coach’em up and you play the same game. I thought training camp was good. You put a lot of thought and time. It was my first training camp and I always look back and remember that and continue and I think that one thing about experience in the coaching profession is that you can always look back at teams or look back at how you did things and you tweak things and every team is a little different. You rely on your coaching staff a lot and I did that this past season with the coaches that have been a lot of places a lot of the training camps I have been a part of, what I liked and didn’t like. Spring ball was over and we knew what type of team we thought we’d had. Training camp is fun, it’s meant to be a grind. It’s nothing but football for three weeks, you’ve got to get your team ready. I had a great time, so did everybody, it’s the atmosphere we created. Felt like we prepared our team the best we could for the season.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about some of the position battles that happened in camp this year?”

**Hill:** “There was quite a few. The biggest one was quarterback. The position is a special one. It is scrutinized, the most looked at, good or bad, the way the game is, everyone wants to know who it is. We knew going into the springtime Josh Straughan came in and competed, Sam had been here, they competed in the spring and we just really didn’t, one didn’t elevate themselves after spring that you’re the guy, they both played really good. They both did a good job all summer they earned the right to take it into training camp. As a coach, you love the competition, but you prefer to know hey that’s our guy we know going into the offseason this is our QB but we had two and they competed and it could’ve went either way. We just felt like josh at that time with his experience of playing even at D2 level games and made some plays in scrimmages and you just got to go with your gut. There’s nothing Sam did that lost him the job it’s just we went with josh and looking back you can’t ever regret anything. If you always prepare and you always do the things that you feel you run your program, we put a lot of thought into the process and charted the decision and did what was best for the team.”

**Sam:** “How was the decision made to switch from Josh to Sam?”

**Hill:** “We had dropped several games in a row, not because of Josh. In fact at Missouri State he played really good and that was the last game he started. It was a tough decision. Anytime you deal with that, the one thing I can do when I call him into the office, I have been in both conversations: I have been beat out. I was the guy coach called in and said hey I’m benching you, we lost three games in a row. I was also the guy winning that’s won the job and been successful. So you know the best thing is both

guys are good people and they are in it for the team and that's what we try to create around here. It was nothing Josh did, it was we needed a spark on the team. We had three games left, we were out of the playoffs. Sam had earned that right to get the ball. Quarterbacking, sometimes you don't know until you get them out there. You can try to simulate game action, in practice but you can't do it until you get the lights on and you get them in a real game and Sam did a really good job and won two out of the last three games."

**Sam:** "Why is it important to have the underclassmen be leaders?"

**Hill:** "It's important, when you look back and look at championship teams. You look back and see that you've got some juniors and seniors that have done it for years, they're not your best players but they are leaders. Not saying when you're young you can't be a leader because we have some young leaders on this team now but you need that senior leadership just in naturally, the younger guys look at the older guys and they have the respect and on good teams. Our seniors this past year what I always remember from the senior class this past year they bought into everything we sold them. They never questioned anything especially with a 31 year old coach and a new staff and I been around here and this is the way we are gonna do it and I'm not buying into that and they never did that. They never questioned: they were the first one to buy in. We weren't the ones to sign up to win four games but their legacy will be more than that when we win championships around here. You can still be a leader even though we won four games. They set the bar and they set the culture, they bought in and showed everyone had to work."

**Sam:** "Tell me about last season in a brief few sentences?"



**Hill:** “Everybody was excited. Everything was new. Everybody was looking. When I’m around everybody they were excited about the season being undefeated, zero and zero. I liked the demeanor of us going down to Florida Atlantic University, the confidence we weren’t just going down there to play in that game, that hey we were going down to win that game and that’s how the coaches and I felt. We had the lead at half time and probably gave up a couple of big plays and stalled out on offense in the third quarter and got in a rut and kind of got things going back in the fourth quarter and made some plays but it definitely was a game that in the locker room it almost stung a little bit more because it was a game that especially the players went we should have won it. We should have won it.”

**Sam:** “Why do Football Championship Subdivision teams play Football Bowl Subdivision opponents each season?”

**Hill:** “Number one, I think that all these players your dream is to play at the highest level. This is an awesome place to play football, the Missouri Valley Conference, and you saw that we won four games and we won two of them around here, beating Northern Illinois and Indiana in 06/07 and it’s just a way to compete against the best. Even in recruiting: people players and parents, they wanna know, hey who is your Football Bowl Subdivision game, who are we playing this year? As a player we did that, hey who are we playing this year? And all summer you’ve got that scheduled and circled on the schedule. It’s fun for the players for the coaches to go and play against the best.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the Florida Atlantic University game?”

**Hill:** “We knew that anytime you’re on the road they’re gonna make a run and that we have to play 60 minutes and nothing was gonna change. Both teams were no huddle and there was gonna be a point in that game that one of them was gonna hit the wall and you could see that in the game. People were cramping up on both sides in the second half and it took a while. There was a lot of plays in South Florida, it was hot but we knew we were gonna have to keep slugging away and both teams were gonna make some plays and you saw that in the last two minutes of the first half. It started to get up and down. They went fast on offense, you snap the ball 90 times there’s gonna be some explosive plays and we had to limit those. Still had to go out there and keep having fun and playing the game and take care of the football and ultimately we played a pretty clean game until we tried to go down there and tie it up.”

**Sam:** “Where did the game slip out of hand?”

**Hill:** “Well, I don’t think there was ever a time when we had the ball with the last possession with over two minutes to go, to go and tie the game which happens every week in college football, so we felt pretty good. I thought there was times in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, like I said, that you could tell that we started to hit a little bit of a wall, that we had to get re-going, somebody needed to make a play. And we did that to go back and score. But they started getting into a bit of a rhythm on offense, hit a few plays and they ran the ball well. But there was never a point on the sideline when I thought the game got out of hand.”

**Sam:** “How hard is it to keep focus being down during a game?”

**Hill:** “I don’t think it’s very hard at all. As a coach you try not to let the game influence you, your preparation always got to stay the same. If not you’re going to be up and down, you try to preach to your team. We’re going to prepare the same as coaches, we come in here and have the same routine on a game week no matter who were playing. If you don’t you’re going to get beat by somebody because you weren’t prepared. Southeastern Missouri State is a rivalry game, its 45 minutes away, two Football Championship Subdivision programs, and no reason we shouldn’t ever play and be competitive. A lot of players on our team know players on their team, they recruit a lot of the same guys so it’s a fun game to play in. But the preparation is always the same no matter who were playing.”

**Sam:** “tell me about the week leading up to Southeastern Missouri State.”

**Hill:** “Well excited to get home but also excited to get our first win. We needed to get a win and you need to play well at home. We knew we were going to have a good crowd, and we just wanted to play well for the guys. They deserved it. So I was just looking to go out there and get a win. It’s the beginning of my coaching career so I wanted to get a win and get the season off to a good start. After getting beat at Florida Atlantic University we knew against Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State that we need to get both of them.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the Southeastern Missouri State game?”

**Hill:** Well I thought it was a good game. You know really it was kind of back and forth and it was a physical game. We let some opportunities slip away in the First half. We thought on offense some things were there we just weren’t hitting them. They were a

physical football team. When we went down and went for it on fourth down and scored to go into halftime, you could just feel the momentum. Sometimes you get that gut feeling that you're going to come out in the third quarter and play well and we kind of did that to take control of the football game. They battled back though, we had to get a stop there at the end with only an 8-point lead. Ultimately, we were able to get that stop and get the win."

**Sam:** "Tell me about it."

**Hill:** "Yeah it felt great. It was a lot of time and a lot of preparation. Hopefully it's the first of many. But just like now, you never know how many of those you're going to get, nothing is guaranteed in life. When you get a win, anytime you get a win, a lot of stuff goes into winning a football game, so many moving parts so many people so you want to enjoy them all."

**Sam:** "How did the first win feel?"

**Hill:** "You want to get that first win, you want to get your guys thinking and positive. It easier to learn from a win, even after your mistakes you come in. Whether people want to admit it or not, you come in with better moods, they're more excited to come into work after a big win than a tough loss. You have to get up and do it after tough losses, but winning cures a lot of things. Getting wins no matter when they are but especially the first one of the season to get things rolling is huge."

**Sam:** "Tell me about the week leading up to the Murray State game?"

**Hill:** "Well we just needed to keep it going anytime your back at home again. We felt it was a winnable game and we needed to come out and keep being consistent. That's something that we have to continue to get better at is consistency. We go out there

against Murray State and got off to a good start and I thought we played a pretty good football game.”

**Sam:** “How do you keep focus while winning?”

**Hill:** “Same things, I always tell them to give me their best effort they can. Play 4-6 seconds as hard as you can as long as you can. When the play is over regroup, and look over to the sideline and know that there are players that are behind everybody if you need a break let’s get someone else in there that can play as hard as they can.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the Murray State game?”

**Hill:** “Well obviously DJ Davis with the opening kickoff return got us going. There were some big plays obviously, we scored over 50 points. I love it when everybody gets to play in the game. You have a lot of people that put in a lot of hard work throughout the season in practice that go unnoticed and might not get in a game, so it was fun to get everyone involved in that game. We turned them over a few times, it’s always fun to watch your defense get some turnovers. There were a lot of big plays but DJ Davis’s return made for an excited sideline.”

**Sam:** “Why is the non-conference season important?”

**Hill:** “They all mean something, especially in our schedule. Every win means the same because you’re trying to get to that certain number to get to the playoffs now. Our conference is a grind and so is our non-conference schedule. We were able to get two wins in non-conference but we knew our conference schedule ahead was going to be a grind. If you come out in the top 3-4-5 in our league you know you had a heck of a season. We know each other a bit better in the conference, a lot of times in non-conference you play someone that you don’t see every year, so the familiarity is a little

different. Here once you've been in the league for a while you get to know the coaches and their schemes. Things get ramped up a bit especially when you put a conference title on the line."

**Sam:** "Tell me about playing at the University of Northern Iowa Dome?"

**Hill:** "It's a fun place to play, I enjoy doing it. I've never won there even as a player. It's a tough place to play, it gets loud but those are the games that you want to play. You look forward to going to Northern Iowa, playing against Northern Iowa. It's a good rivalry so we were excited to get up there. We had to bus up there this year so it took some planning as far as being in the hotel and getting up there. A lot of our conference, especially the teams that played in the old Missouri Valley in the Gateway. There's a lot of history there, a lot of years and a lot of alumni that have been a part of those games that make it fun."

**Sam:** "Where did the game get out of hand?"

**Hill:** "It was 21-14 we have the ball with I think about three minutes to go in the half. We had the opportunity to go down and score and either tie the football game or get a field goal and be down 4 at halftime. We stalled out, we got a penalty, we got backed up. We shanked a punt, I think it was a net gain of 10 yards. They scored on the following play, we get the ball back and throw a pick-6 and just like that were down 35-14 going into the half after just being down 21-14 with the ball. We let things get away from us there quickly with three minutes to go. A 21-point swing is tough to overcome. We came back and played a pretty even half and they had something to do with that too, they sat on the ball at the end of the game. You know it was too late those three minutes were key. That's something in this offseason that we have to learn about is game situational

football and doing a better job right there. And me coaching as well, maybe on the road I was too aggressive with the play calling and probably should have sat on trying to get to halftime knowing we had the ball coming out. It was a good learning experience but definitely one that got away from us before halftime.”

**Sam:** “How hard is it to keep focus after losing five games in a row?”

**Hill:** “You just have to keep sticking to the plan. As far as the moral, you can’t ever let your team see you up or down or change the way you are. You have to trust in the process of how we’re practicing and why we’re doing things. You know sometimes they give you everything they got and you want them to win for them because you see what they are going through. Everybody’s competitors and everybody wants to win so it’s tough when you go on a 3-4-5 game losing streak. Especially after some of the games that we lost close. After the Northern Iowa game, there wasn’t a game that we played in that didn’t come down to the last possession. One way or another, even the games we won, they came down the fourth quarter with the game on the line. We came back, South Dakota State we were down six with the ball two minutes to go, you go down and score, kick an extra point and you win the game. We weren’t able to get some of those games done. Playing at Missouri State and Illinois State you look back at those games. That’s how this league is, those teams are being well coached too and have good players. Looking forward those are all things that we have to learn from. We have to go back and look at why we got beat at that time. But as far as the moral goes as a head coach, especially as first year head coach, how you come into the building everyday sets the tone for your team and your coaches.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the end of the south Dakota game?”

**Hill:** “We’ve won it and then they make you come back out and put it back on and it wasn’t like they were throwing a Hail Mary. They were at the 3-yard line so our defense had to bow up again and get another stop, so it felt like we’ve celebrated twice there. Everybody had to come back in, but it’s a game we’ll always remember, I promise. The coaches on the last play weren’t even in the press box to call out personnel. They were already down almost halfway to the locker room so they didn’t even know we were still playing. It was a different game, but exciting because they were a good team. They had just been in the top 25 playing for a playoff berth, really good talented quarterback that we had to play against so it was a fun game. It was fun to get in that locker room and let them celebrate because it had been a grind of a month and those players stuck with it and kept believing.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about going up to Youngstown.”

**Hill:** “I thought it was a tough game. We knew it was going to be a tough game. They got a really good defense, they can run the football, they’re playing at home late in the year and Youngstown, Ohio is always a tough place to play. We were down 14-0 at halftime and I thought that at halftime, we made some adjustments and we felt like, ‘Hey, we’re not out of this game. We’ve got to adjust some things.’ We came out and started being more aggressive in the passing game. We weren’t able to get the running game going in the first half. Sam and Izzy got going and Billy had made some plays and got it back tied up and they came back and scored and then, we had two opportunities at the end of the game. We go all the way back down to the 4-yard line and have three cracks at it at the 4 to try and tie it up. Couldn’t get it done and we get the ball back



again and throw a Hail Mary and catch it, but Izzy was four or five yards short so I think after the game, even then, I thought the message was that, 'Hey, we came here to win this game and you can see how close that we are. This is a team that, when looking back, they went to the national championship and beat some really good teams on the way there and we were right there, two weeks to go in the season. The last play of the game meant something against the national runner-up, so I think it proved to them that they're doing something right and we need to come back and finish the season off right, send the seniors out right, and for some momentum for the underclassmen to say, 'Hey, yeah, we are doing something right,' and we were going to get a team that had everything on the line coming in to play us and if they won, they got to go to the playoffs. They were a top-25 team so it was kind of like our bowl game is the way I played it all week. 'Hey, this is our bowl game. They're a great team and you could prove to yourself that you're a deserving team and a good football team.'"

**Sam:** "What's it like going on the road with a football team?"

**Hill:** "It's fun. Going on the road with a football team I enjoy. It's the one time that you're always together. You eat together, your meetings, and you get on the road and you get to be together and you bond. As players, they're some of the best memories that you have are road trips. If you gotta drive, you gotta be in the bus or if you're flying and you're staying in a hotel and your roommate. Even as coaches, same thing. You're together and that's what a football team is so when you get on the road, I enjoy that time with the team."

**Sam:** “Is that part of buying into to the culture?”

**Hill:** “I think so. I mean it’s a culture and it’s who you are as a person. It was a great way to talk about life. When you’re struggling in life or it’s your job, what, are you going to quit? Are you going to not come to work and give it everything you’ve got? Like in practice, are you going to come to practice? And then that starts to talk about what kind of person you are. We’re a team and we got these games on the schedule and we’re going to give it everything we’ve got until the last game and the last second and that’s the way we told them we were going to coach and we’re going to prepare and same thing as coaches. Going into the last two weeks like, ‘Hey, we’re not going to make the playoffs. Are we not going to put in the best game plan we can put in?’ No, we are going to come to work as the rest of America does every day and punch the clock and give it everything you got and that’s what our guys bought into. There was never a day where I felt like we wasted a practice, just where we couldn’t get it out of them or they’re not working or they’re cashed out or they hit the wall. They continue to buy in and that’s what I’ll always appreciate about that team is they had some unfinished business to do and they played their best football the last month of the season.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the Western Illinois game?”

**Hill:** “Well, it was a game that, at the beginning, we weren’t playing our best football. We turned it over a little bit and they got going and they got up at halftime. Then, we came out in the third quarter, stalled out, and they went up by 17. Probably more so than any game, it challenged them the most at halftime. It wasn’t the way that we were going to go out. We made a few mistakes in that game that were just mental mistakes. Some bad checks, not turning the ball over, just things that we could fix and we had one

last half to play together as a team. That's what I told them and I expected their best and they came out there and the third quarter was a little rocky, but we played our best football of the season in the last quarter of the last game. That was a fun sideline. That was a fun way to come back in the locker room. That was fun to watch a lot of plays going through my head. Watching Jeremy Chin get an interception, it wasn't just the offense or defense, everybody playing. Deandre Barnett getting a sack and you just feel it. You can just feel it on the sideline; once we started getting it rolling, that it was going to be hard to stop us any time we got the ball. When the defense went back out there, it was fun to see that confidence that late in the season. Even on special teams, you could feel it when they went out there to kick the ball off. So, that's what I always remember and heck, when we won the game, it felt like we just won a big playoff game because we knew that was the last time we were going to be together as that group."

**Sam:** "What's it like ending the season with a win?"

**Hill:** "Yeah, I think it was a lot of things. A lot of seniors that the last time they put on pads, they're going to remember a win. Looking back at some of those pictures and some things that we're going to hang around the office, they got to go out a winner. We talked about that before the game is that very rarely do you get to win your last game. Unless you win the national championship, if you're a senior and you're in the playoffs, you're losing your last game. To win your last football game, that to be the last feeling in the locker room, a lot of people don't get to experience that. I never got to experience that as a player. That's a special thing, whether we're going to the playoffs or not, that was our last game against a really good team. Not only that but, as a coach, looking at your younger players and looking even at the redshirts in the locker room after the

game, seeing that feeling and seeing that atmosphere of, 'Hey, this is what winning feels like. Now we gotta do it more.' This feels good, think about winning it all or coming back in here after winning a Missouri Valley Conference championship or thinking about those type of things, but it's gotta start somewhere. We felt like that Western game gave us that start, gave us that feeling that when you really have a competitive team and a team that's hungry for winning, something's gotta trigger that and that game gave us that."

**Sam:** "If I knew nothing about the 2016 Salukis what would you tell me?"

**Hill:** "Well, I think that it was the start of something special is what I would tell you. Every program's gotta start somewhere, but I didn't want the seniors to feel like, 'We gave that thing everything we had.' Some of the seniors played the best football of their life. I'll remember Izzy and Billy's best games of the season were at the end. They deserve that and as a Saluki, I'm proud of watching them, not even as their coach, but the way that they came to work every day I feel like that's the sign of our culture. They played every single day. They never took a day off as far as coming out there for practice. They set the standard for what it's like to be around here and these guys will always remember that. I told them that after the game, the seniors. Those underclassmen will always remember that game, that season, what it looked like, who came to work every single day in practice. They looked up to those guys and I appreciated their effort."

**Sam:** "What were some lessons you learned from being a first year head coach?"

**Hill:** "There's a ton. There's a ton of lessons, things that you would go back and learn from and get better from and if you don't, then you're gonna stay down. You always got

to be getting the pulse of your team, doing things different, schedules, attention to detail on every little thing. Now, it's my second offseason, my second February. You can go back and see what you were doing last February and what was good, what wasn't good, what changes you want to make. Just a lot of things as far as that goes, your schedule, and we also know our team a lot better. I was able to stay here so I knew a lot of the guys. Not so much on defense or know them personally like I do now as their head coach, but I brought in a whole new staff. There's only two other guys that were on staff so those guys only went into the season only knowing their players for five months. Now, they've got the same guys in their rooms and they're getting to know them and we know the roster a lot better. We know what they do good, we know what they do bad. We can put together a better plan for, 'Hey, this is going to make the 2017 Salukis the best.'

## Roman Tatum Transcription

**Sam:** “Just to kind of warm up here: what’s your first football memory ever? First thing you ever remember about football.”

**Tatum:** “For my entire life or as a Saluki?”

**Sam:** “For your entire life.”

**Tatum:** “I was on flag [football]. My uncle came up, tied my cleats super tight. Before he tied them, I wasn’t really playing like my normal self, it was one of my first times playing football ever. I was super nervous. He came up, tied my cleats, and said, ‘Get out there and do your thing.’ and they gave me the ball and I took it all the way. I was running as fast as I can and that’s probably one of my best memories of football.”

**Sam:** “When did you know that you could play at the Division 1 level in high school?”

**Tatum:** “Probably around my sophomore year. My freshman year I played football, basketball, track, and soccer, but my sophomore year, I kind of just focused on football and track and I told myself [that] I know I can play at the next level so that’s what I wanted to do and I put the work in and now I’m here.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about your recruiting process. How did you end up here?”

**Tatum:** “My recruiting process was crazy. Originally, out of high school, I went to the University of Delaware. [I] played there for two seasons. There’s a story behind that, [I] got into a little trouble there. I was home for about a year. Coach Hill, he actually coached me in high school my junior year. He was the offensive coordinator and he called me up here, he heard about my situation, he said, ‘You know what, when things get cleared up, I have a spot for you.’ A few other schools were offering me, took a few other visits, but I definitely wanted to come and play for Coach Hill again.”

**Sam:** “Why did you want to come back and play for Coach Hill?”

**Tatum:** “Because he was somebody that I knew personally. We had a good personal relationship. I knew he would take care of me. I knew he had my best interests at heart and after getting into a little trouble, my trust was a little bit out of whack so playing for Coach Hill, I just knew that I would be in a good place.”

**Sam:** “Let’s talk about the season. Tell me, in just a few, brief sentences, kind of sum up what the 2016 season was.”

**Tatum:** “Man, there were highs and there were lows. For myself, I missed all of the 2015 [season] so then coming back [in] 2016, my first game, I actually broke my hand the first play of the game so that was bogus, man. I was like, ‘Man, out of all I’ve been through, now I come here and the first play of the game, I break my hand.’ I missed, I think, two games after that. Came back playing with a club, that was definitely different. [I had] never done that before. [I] definitely had to get used to that. But, just being with the guys, I knew it was difficult for us. We weren’t winning, but we got to know each other a lot better. There were a lot of tough situations. We definitely had to fight, had to persevere. The season was a learning experience I would say. It humbled a lot of players.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about training camp. What was training camp like this year?”

**Tatum:** “Man, training camp was **so** fun. You said the staff?”

**Sam:** “Yeah, with the new staff, what was it like?”

**Tatum:** “Oh, it was my first time with this staff so it was just like coming out of high school, I guess, but training camp was fun. Like I said, I was out for all of 2015 so coming back to training camp, the competition level was definitely high. The energy was

high. Every day we were coming out [like], 'Let's get better, let's get better, let's get better.' It was hot. Practices were long, they were definitely long-winded, but it was so fun, man. It was so fun."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about non-conference season. You guys lose a heartbreaker. I mean, one play changes, [and] you guys win that game against Florida Atlantic University and then you guys decisively win against Murray State and Southeastern Missouri State. Tell me about your non-conference season."

**Tatum:** "Florida Atlantic University: we had a lot of guys go down in that game, whether it was injuries or cramps. I don't know if it was the change of weather or what it was, but that's definitely a game I feel like we should have won, but it was the little things. You go back and watch film and see these things like, 'Aw man, that's stuff we know we can do right,' but it was the first game of the season. The first game of the season is usually a learning experience, [to] see where everyone is at, see where everybody's head is so \*shrugs\*. But, Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State: I didn't play Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State, but I played Murray State. We blew them out. That game was fun. That was my first game back so I was super excited, running around, yelling, just having fun, you know? So that was that."

**Sam:** "What's it like playing in the stadium here?"

**Tatum:** "It's definitely dope. The fans, they're pretty cool, especially when you're winning. Everybody is on their feet cheering you on, but when you're losing, it's kind of like, dry. We definitely want to create an atmosphere where people love to be here because, I feel like, [the] Salukis have a pretty good fan base. There's a lot of alumni



that come back to the games. They speak to me after the game. I talk to them or whatever. So, when you're winning, it's obviously a whole lot better, but it wasn't bad."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about conference season. Not the way you guys wanted to start, you lose your first five games. How hard is it to keep focus in a losing streak?"

**Tatum:** "Well, you know, you [have] got to love the game, especially when you're losing. You've got to be able to tell yourself that, 'I'm tired of losing, and I've got to take my focus up to another level. You're losing. You got to get back in the training room, get back on the field, what do I have to tweak to do better on this play or do better on this drive?' You're always just trying to find ways to get better, especially in a conference like this. It's a tough conference. Every week, you're playing against a good team. It's always coming down to the last play of the game. You look back on the season; almost every game that we won or lost came down to the last possession."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about the South Dakota game. Without giving too much away, don't talk about the ending quite yet, just tell me about before, when the clock originally struck zero, tell me about from the start of the game until then. What was that game like?"

**Tatum:** "It was an uphill battle. We were going back and forth. They made plays, we made plays, but we knew it was going to come down to the end. We were back at halftime, telling each other, 'The game's not over. We know it's not over.' I think we were up at halftime, I don't remember what the score was, but we were telling each other, 'We have to keep playing. This is a good team. We know they're a good team. They are coached by some great guys,' so were telling ourselves, 'We've got to do more. We've got to find a way to make more plays than them.'"

**Sam:** “What about the end of the game? The end of that game was crazy.”

**Tatum:** “Man, the end of the game was **so** crazy. The clock hit zero. We’re thinking we won the game, which we did win the game, but everybody, the fans, everybody coming out screaming. We’re running all over the field, I’m running all over the field, I think I probably did a backflip when the game was over, but that was my first time doing a backflip in while. I did it and I was so excited and then they put time back on the clock saying that, I forgot what the penalty was or whatever, but I think they put like two seconds back on the clock. I’m just sitting there, devastated. There was a cameraman \*points\* right here. I was just sitting there, looking at the camera like, ‘What? How does this even happen?’ They put the time back on the clock. We win the game. They let you know that we were the team that was supposed to win the game.”

**Sam:** “So, you go on the road to Youngstown. They’re the eventual runner-up. You guys play a super solid game there. Then you come back home and that game against Western is huge. I think those last three games in the season is a turning point for you guys for where the team is now and [for] where you’re headed. Tell me about that Western win.”

**Tatum:** “The Western [game] was definitely a confidence booster to end the season. Youngstown State: that one hurt. It came out to what, the last play of the game? Our offense did a really, really good job moving the ball. I think Izzy caught a ball on like, the two- or three-yard line. That definitely hurts, you know? We could have tied the game up. But coming back to [face] Western Illinois, we knew we had to get a win. We had to get a win bad. We knew it was going to come down to the last possession, just like every other game, so we came out there, we fought hard. We fought really, really hard

that game. They made plays, we made plays, but obviously, we made more plays.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about when the clock strikes zeroes on that game, you guys sing the fight song, you go back into the locker room, describe that feeling to me.”

**Tatum:** “It felt great, you know? We were over here singing the fight song, the cameras [are] out, we are over there dancing, having a good time because it was a really good feeling to know that we put together a solid win. We did things we were supposed to do and I felt like, if we played that way the whole season, the season would have been different.”

**Sam:** “If I didn’t know anything about the 2016 Salukis, or Football Championship Subdivision football at all, what would you tell me about the 2016 Salukis?”

**Tatum:** “What would I tell you about the 2016 Salukis...we fight hard. We definitely fight hard. Despite looking at the schedule, you come to watch us play, you may see us give up big plays or do whatever they say that we do, but nobody can say we don’t compete because we come every game to compete, no matter who we’re playing, whether it’s Football Bowl Subdivision or Football Championship Subdivision.”

**Sam:** “With those last three games and that turning point, the momentum you guys had carried forward into spring ball now and the momentum will carry forward into next season. Tell me about how you guys are turning it around. What are you seeing coming up in the future for Saluki football?”

**Tatum:** “I see big things coming for Saluki football. They’re trying to change the culture here, definitely trying to get it back to a winning program. [They’re/I’m] trying to go get a ring. It’ll be my senior year. That Western Illinois win, like I said, it was a confidence booster. Everybody is going into spring ball excited. We are excited to get better. Get

closer as a team. We had a lot of young players, a lot of transfers coming in, so there's a lot of new faces. I definitely feel like we're getting to where we want to be at, but spring ball, I think that will turn us up a little bit more."

**Sam:** "That's all the questions I have. Is there anything you'd like to add about last season, anything else I didn't cover that you'd like to make known?"

**Tatum:** "No, not really."

**Sam:** "Cool, thanks man. I appreciate it."

**Tatum:** "Thank you."

### Ryan Neal Transcription

**Sam:** “First, I want to know, what’s the first thing you remember about playing football? Like your first football memory ever.”

**Neal:** “First football memory was playing Pop Warner and the first thing they did with me was throw me at tight end because I was new and I was kind of mad about that because I always played football in the streets and I was always good at running the ball but as soon as I got to practice, they threw me at tight end and I was blocking forever until I got my first pass, which was for a touchdown, so that’s when I started getting the ball a little bit more and having more fun with it so that was probably my first memory.”

**Sam:** “When did you know you could play at the college level?”

**Neal:** “Probably after my junior year of high school. That was the year I kind of popped out, so to say. I had like 120 tackles and nine picks in the season so I was like, ‘Huh, maybe I can play this game in college.’ After my senior year, I got 4 more picks and like 60 tackles so it kind of solidified that to me. Also, my dad played college ball, all of my brothers played college ball, so I kind of knew I could play college ball if they could.”

**Sam:** “What was your recruiting process like?”

**Neal:** “Weird. Even though my brothers played college ball, I didn’t know about the recruiting process myself, [I] kind of went about it the wrong way. I know, coming out of high school, one way to get looked at is the camps you get invited to and stuff like that and we didn’t have the money to do all that because it was very expensive so I didn’t really go to a lot of them. I had schools looking at me, sending me letters and stuff like that, but I didn’t really know what all that meant. If they didn’t actually come see you,

then they didn't really want you. I had a school, Michigan State, I got invited to two spring games and everything, so I kind of thought I was going to end up there and I kind of closed the door on everybody else, like D-2's and all that stuff that was calling me and everything. When I got there, they said, 'We don't have any more scholarships left and we don't really want to offer you a scholarship,' so I was kind of heartbroken by that. I had Indiana State talking to me and Austin Peay, but I didn't know who Southern Illinois University was at all until one day, I'm sitting at home thinking about what I'm going to do and I get a random phone call from this school talking about, 'We've just seen your film. We want you to come down for a visit.' They have never contacted me my junior year or my senior year until December so it was like, 'Okay, who's Southern Illinois?' I had no idea where this place is, where Carbondale is, so when I came down here, I kind of fell in love with it as soon as I got here. I was like, 'Oh man. I've never heard of this place and it's beautiful. I like it. It's Division-1 ball,' so I just went with it."

**Sam:** "Let's talk about the season. Tell me about camp. What was camp like for you this year?"

**Neal:** "Fall camp?"

**Sam:** "Yeah."

**Neal:** "Well, it was kind of different. I mean, they're not too much different. It's kind of the same. You work hard. You put in the work day in and day out. [It] kind of separates the boys from the men. It's a tough time and really, it's kind of a cool thing because you just get to spend time with your team and the guys and everything, develop your team, and just find out more about each other and the coaches. One thing that was different was this year, we did this thing where we had the coaches and the seniors go up and

basically tell their life story and that was one of the coolest things I've ever been a part of because you got to find out things about people that you never knew about. It kind of brought us closer together as a team. Having the coaches open up, tears were shed, tons of emotional stories that you just wouldn't tell anybody. That was one thing that was real cool and I hope we do it again this year because I find that [to be] a very cool thing to do for our team."

**Sam:** "Why is camp important?"

**Neal:** "Camp is important because number one, that's where you find out who your starters are going to be, who's going to be those guys, who's going to go out there and perform. Another reason, like I said before, is team building. You're around each other for two weeks so that's the only people you talk to and you develop a kind of brotherhood that you just don't get to see in the regular world, like at work or anything. Football, and especially team camp, is one of the most significant things as far as sports because in the work world, you might not develop the same relationships as you would in fall camp because you're around the same people day in, day out. You're going through the same struggle together and you just kind of develop a vibe and it's amazing to be honest."

**Sam:** "Why is that brotherhood important? Why is going through that struggle together something that needs to happen before you guys start the season?"

**Neal:** "Because it sets a value about what you go through and what you've been through and why it's so worth it coming into the season, like why should we be able to go to a national championship, to go to the playoffs. I mean, we've been through all this hard work together. Having that bonding moment is like, when you play football, there's

eleven guys out there on the field at one time. You have to be able to trust and believe in every person that's on the field with you at the same time and even when they make substitutions, you have to be able to trust the next man because you've been here together, you know everybody, you've got to have that trust and when I look across the field and I see a teammate, I can look at him and know that he's going to have my back and I'm going to have his and I'm going to do my job and my part to make sure we're successful so that's why that's so important."

**Sam:** "Let's look at non-conference, tell me about week one. Tell me about week one in practice and going down to Florida Atlantic University."

**Neal:** "Really exciting, to be honest. Going to Boca was probably the coolest thing ever, but non-conference games are just as serious as conference games. You want to win, that's the whole reason. You're not going there just to [say], 'Oh yeah, we're playing a bigger school. Let's get close.' You're not playing to get close, you want to win, you want to beat them. It kind of sends a message to the whole conference and to everybody else. It's really exciting. It's the first game, first game jitters, everybody gets to touch the field for the first time, playing somebody different because, for the first two weeks you're here in fall camp, you're playing the same people over and over and over again. When you play this sport and you play the same person for two weeks, it kind of gets old, you kind of get bored, and you start getting chippy because you're tired of seeing them so it's like, 'Man, I'm ready to play somebody different. I'm trying to hit somebody else,' so week one is like kicking off everything like, 'Man, I finally get to hit somebody else, show them what we've been doing,' and that's basically what the non-



conference game is for, just to get those first game jitters out and just put it all together and show Carbondale and all the fans what the season is going to look like.”

**Sam:** “The Florida Atlantic University loss was a tough one, but you guys come back and kick things into high gear with decisive wins against Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State. Tell me about those games.”

**Neal:** “Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State: two good teams, very competitive. After the Florida Atlantic University loss, it really wasn’t the fact that they beat us. We beat ourselves. They were easily beatable. If you Florida Atlantic University in this conference, they’re going to have to compete with some really tough teams because this conference is really strong so we knew coming out of there that we were supposed to win that game and we didn’t like the way that felt so when we came up to Southeastern Missouri State and Murray State, again not in our conference, we were like, ‘These two are going to get what they’re supposed to get. We’ve got to go get this W no matter who it is, whether they’re in our conference or not, we look at everybody the same. They’re a good opponent, they can compete with us, but, at the same time, we’ve got to go out there and put forth everything that we’ve been going through in the week and all the work that we put in to go out there and win this game.’”

**Sam:** “Conference season comes around and you guys hit a bit of a losing skid. It happens, but tell me about it. What were those five weeks like?”

**Neal:** “The past three years that I’ve been here, it’s kind of been the same story. Personally, I’m tired of being a part of that story because every team that we play, like I said, is good enough to beat us and we’re good enough to beat them, but we lose by the smallest margins. Not one team in this conference has totally beat us, physically,

mentally, strategically. Not one team has and it's irritating and annoying because when you look at the scoreboard at the end of the day, like, 'Oh, three points. Oh, throw points. Oh, touchdown,' it's not what people think. The record doesn't show what happened in that game. It's not like we were trash, you know what I mean? It's always just been the little things and that's one thing that's kind of been clouding this program. It's just we need to get the little things right because the little things is what's going to make us win games. Like I said, field goals, you get little things like a missed block. One missed blocked kick could've led to an 80-yard screen touchdown that we missed in Northern Iowa. A missed field goal when we played South Dakota two years ago. It's just silly stuff like that. It's hard. People don't understand when you're going through something like that. It's very difficult and it weighs down on you. It weighs down on the whole city of Carbondale and one thing that we owe to the city is to start winning games because that's what people look for. This place is not just a depressing football team and we're not a losing program by any means. That's one thing that isn't going to start now."

**Sam:** "We were talking about brotherhood a little bit ago. During that time, you were talking about how camp really developed and strengthens that brotherhood. What do those five weeks do to that brotherhood? Does it strengthen it? Does it put some strain on it or what happens with that?"

**Neal:** "That's a good question. Guys seem to go both ways. My freshman year, I've seen it put a strain and everybody lost each other. They just kind of went their own separate ways, became more of individuals and we had great players on the team. People like MyCole Pruitt, Malcolm Agnew, like some good players and we started out

hot, but as soon as we started losing, everybody just disbanded and just separated. Same thing had happened that following year. But, the past year was different because, like I said, the record may now show, but it was totally different. That was the first year I felt like we stuck together no matter what and you've seen it by what happened in that last game where we played Western. You didn't see a team that was like, 'Oh, this is the last game. Whatever happens, happens. We don't care.' Instead, we were like, 'You know what, this is our last chance to show people that we have improved as far as a team. As far as character building and team bonding, like, 'We need to come together and show everybody this is not the same old story,' and that's what we did. Like I said, I've seen it go both ways. Sometimes, depending on the teams you have, if you start losing, some teams will disband. Other teams will come together and become stronger no matter what and they're just going to continue to keep fighting. We kept fighting through the rest of the season, every single game, gave it everything we had, but it was just the little things that just separated us from a W to a loss and finishing with Western, finishing with that victory really made a statement as far as who we are and that is a team that, no matter what it looks like, we are going to continue to stay together and find a way to win."

**Sam:** "The last three weeks you guys kind of hit a turning point. You guys get a good win versus South Dakota. Tell me about the South Dakota win."

**Neal:** "That game felt like nobody wanted us to win to be honest. Just being in the atmosphere, just everything that was going on, it felt like everyone was against us and having that win, that was the first big statement before Western, beating that team because that team was actually, in my eyes, they were better than Western. They

sought to go to the playoffs and everything and just beating them really showed the conference, like, 'Okay, these dudes, they're not rolling over.' We're not laying down for anybody and that was one of the biggest things of hope that we got winning that game and when you go through a bunch of losing streaks, getting a win means so much more. You never realize how much a win means to you until you win a game like that. We weren't going nowhere and we knew that. We weren't going to the playoffs and we knew that, but still coming out there and competing as hard as we can shows people that we're not just going to roll over and lay down and just call it a season. We had a reason to beat that team. We've got to get this W. We've got to keep them out of the playoffs. We got under that one goal and we just went out there and did it and that was one of the most satisfying feelings that I've probably ever had playing here, just having that win against that kind of a team and they're a great team, they're a good team, and they were sound, but we just came out there and found a way to get the job done."

**Sam:** "You said that you felt like no one wanted you guys to win that game and at the end of the game, it kind of seemed that way. Take me through the end of the game."

**Neal:** "Emotional rollercoaster, man. I'm on the sideline like, 'This is unreal.' It was like watching a bad movie. Everything seems to be going against you. It was like something you would see in a movie theater. It was like, 'Man, all these calls,' and that last pass, [they] were talking about the clock didn't run. It was just crazy and the craziest thing about football is it teaches you so much about adversity. You can get anything thrown your way, no matter what in life. A whole lot of oppositions are going to come to you, obstacles, but you've just got to keep on pushing forward. If we focused on the fact that they did us bogus with the time, we probably would've lost if we had focused on that."

Instead, we said, 'No, forget it. Let's show them again that we won. Let's just do it again.' Yeah, the end of the game, that was the first time I've ever been through something like that, which was like, 'Wow,' so now having that experience under my belt, just knowing that it's not over until it's over. Anything can happen so just be ready for any obstacle to come your way."

**Sam:** "You guys go on the road and lose a heartbreaker, a game you almost could've won against the eventual runner-up in Youngstown State. Tell me about the Youngstown game."

**Neal:** "That hurt. I'm not going to lie, it hurt. Just seeing how far they made it and how close we played them when we could've beat them. [It was] like, 'Wow, we should be where they are.' That game was just different because it was back and forth, back and forth. That was hard for me, I got scored on in that game, had to swallow that pill. Other people are getting scored on in the game. But, one thing about the teams that I've played on, especially last year's team, is that we're going to continue to just keep going on and on and on until it's over and, had we not made a couple little mistakes, that penalty on the punt, and after Sam threw that bomb and they ended up catching at the one-yard line, had it not been for that little penalty, that bomb could've potentially been a touchdown. We've just got to focus on kicking out the little things, working it out, massaging it out. Getting it so that we don't suffer from the tiniest mistakes and we're going to start winning games."

**Sam:** "You guys put an exclamation point on the end of your season with the Western win. Tell me about Western."

**Neal:** “It felt great. It felt really great. [We] really needed that to be honest. That was a very uplifting moment. How the game went, at one point, you could’ve said, ‘They’re going to lose again,’ but at halftime, everybody in the locker room, you could feel it was just a positive feeling. We were in the locker room, everybody [had] tears in their eyes, blood on sweat, just looking at each other like, ‘We’re not losing this game no matter what. We don’t care how bad it looks, we are not going to walk out of here with a loss. When you get a group of guys on that one accord, you can’t be stopped. It’s a mindset. After we come out of the locker room at halftime, you could just feel the energy coming out, knowing like, ‘Oh yeah, we are going to win this game. That’s how it’s going to go,’ so having that win kind of solidified what we can do when we all become on one accord.”

**Sam:** “If I didn’t know anything about the 2016 Salukis, what would you tell me about them?”

**Neal:** “The 2016 Salukis, that’s the foundation, if people don’t know it. That’s the foundation of where this program is going to go. It starts there so, this year, next year, and the year after that, when you start seeing us be very successful and winning games, going to the playoffs, you could know that that’s where it started. Whether people see it or not, you hear it from me, that’s where it all began.”

**Sam:** “You guys really turned your season, we have been talking about this the last few questions about the last three games of the season, you guys really turned it around. How are you and your team carrying that momentum forward into this year?”

**Neal:** “We just got to ride the wave. We got it. You can feel it through the offseason conditioning, through the lifting, everything has just been going on the up. We haven’t

had a down day since then. We've just been going up and up and up. The recruiting is going up and up and up. The coaches' attitude is going up and up. We've just in the facilities always together, having more team-bonding things, like we had a team barbecue. Just doing stuff like that, and you can feel the way we're just riding it so it's going to be an exciting time. We're excited."

**Sam:** "Is there anything else you would like to add about last season?"

**Neal:** "Nope, that's all."

### Sam Straub Transcription

**Sam:** “First one, easy, what’s your first football memory?”

**Straub:** “First football memory?”

**Sam:** “First memory you have of football ever.”

**Straub:** “Probably flag football way back when I was really young. I was a receiver, actually, my first year ever playing football and then gradually went to quarterback.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about transitioning from wide receiver to quarterback. Did it just kind of happen?”

**Straub:** “Yeah, it just kind of happened, I’m not sure exactly how. I think the guy who was the quarterback was a year older than I was. Maybe he graduated middle school, or something like that, and I was the quarterback after that, but I have no idea. I’ve always had a good arm so I think that’s why I started playing quarterback.”

**Sam:** “When did you know you could play at the next level?”

**Straub:** “I wouldn’t say there was a point in time where I actually knew, but I made it a goal after I started as a sophomore on varsity that I wanted to play division one ball and then sophomore and junior year, I started to fill out and started to get pretty big so I figured that if I kept putting in work, then an opportunity would arise and it did and that’s where we are.”

**Sam:** “Tell me about the recruiting process.”

**Straub:** “I was recruited by a lot of Missouri Valley schools, a couple Big 10 schools. Iowa State is where I’m from so they recruited me. I didn’t get my first offer until our first playoff game my senior year and that was South Dakota State. I got an offer from



Missouri State and then Southern Illinois University, came here on my visit, and committed on my visit so it was a pretty easy decision.”

**Sam:** “Now, there’s an interesting story with you and Nick. I won’t dive or anything into it, tell me about the first time you met Nick.”

**Straub:** “So I initially committed here because of Randy Headberg, who was the quarterbacks coach at the time, and it was a good month or so after I committed where he called me and said he was taking the job at North Dakota State, so I didn’t really know what I was doing until Coach Lennon called me and said Coach Hill was getting the job and I was excited to meet him. The first time I ever met him was he came down for one of my basketball games and normally, you go out to eat after the game and everything, but the game went long so there wasn’t anywhere open, so we came back to my house and my mom made us grilled cheeses in my kitchen and we sat and talked so that’s the first time I ever met him. I think that was his first job, when he got the job, to come to Ames and see me, so it was kind of a first for both of us.”

**Sam:** “What was that experience like? Did it reaffirm your decision?”

**Straub:** “Absolutely. Meeting Coach Hill, right off the bat, he’s a great guy and he has good intentions for everybody and you can see that he really cares about you. I was kind of iffy after Coach Headberg left if I was going to stay here and that completely reassured everything.”

**Sam:** “Let’s switch focuses here. In a brief, couple of sentences, tell me about last season.”

**Straub:** “It had a lot of ups and downs, obviously, for our team. Not really the way we wanted it to go, but I think that it puts us in a position to be successful next year.”

**Sam:** “What was camp like?”

**Straub:** “Camp was fun. I thought it was a lot more fun this year than it has been in the past, especially with our new staff that we got last year. [It’s] always interesting, there’s new twists and turns to camp. I don’t think I can say that I did not enjoy camp this year. In the past, I think I can speak for a lot of guys in saying it’s been a long grind and it always is like that, but it was a lot more fun this year.”

**Sam:** “With most training camps, there’s always position battles. You were involved in one this year. Tell me about it.”

**Straub:** “It’s tough. It’s an everyday thing. You can’t take a day off. You’ve got to be consistent and everything like that. I’ve done that two straight years with Mark and Josh now and it’s tough. You’ve got to compete every day. Your job is on the line every day. You have a bad day, [then] the other person gets the upper hand. He has a bad day, you get the upper hand, so it’s an everyday thing. You’ve got to stay locked in and that’s the toughest part about camp is staying mentally focused throughout the whole thing.”

**Sam:** “What was your mindset when they told you Josh was going to get the starting gig?”

**Straub:** “Tough. It wasn’t what I wanted to hear obviously. It was pretty disappointing. I was not expecting it at all, but it is what it is. I knew that if I kept faith in what the plan was, then my opportunity would arise.”

**Sam:** “Did it make it easier that you had gone through that a year and digesting it and accepting it or did it make it that much harder that another year had come around and yet it happened again?”

**Straub:** “I think it was that much harder because my redshirt freshman year, Mark had pretty much taken the job after the first few days of camp. Everybody knew that he was going to start and that was it. I felt, this year, that I had the upper hand and I felt like a lot of the guys were behind me so it was a lot tougher, especially since this is my third year. I’ve been here since the beginning so all the guys being with me, I felt it was my team.”

**Sam:** “How does something like that motivate you?”

**Straub:** “It pushes you. You can’t stop competing and that’s the biggest thing on why I think the end of the year went so well is because I always stayed locked in. I felt like I had a point to prove and I knew that if I had my opportunity that I wouldn’t let that slip.”

**Sam:** “Now we get into the season, Josh has a few good games, and you settle into being the backup. At that point, or by conference season, were you still trying to win the job?”

**Straub:** “My opportunity was one play away, so I always had to be ready. Yeah, I come competing every day during practice and everything like that. Josh had the job, but you never know when he’s either going to get hurt or something could happen, so I had to stay ready.”

**Sam:** “Did the five game skid affect you wanting the job more or less?”

**Straub:** “I don’t think it mattered if we were winning or losing, I still wanted to play. To be honest with you, yeah, it was tough to watch those five games because I felt like I could help or do something. [It] doesn’t matter if we were winning or losing, I wanted to play, but it is what it is.”

**Sam:** “Now the last three games of the season turn into good luck. You start all three games. The last three games, you break record after record after record in all three games in a row. Let’s start with the South Dakota game. Take me through that week of practice all the way up through the end of the game.”

**Straub:** “Well, the week before, Coach had talked about the Missouri State game, about how if things weren’t going well, then I could have a shot at playing and I didn’t, which was really tough, getting my hopes up and then getting shot down. Then, Monday morning, we came in for film and they told me I was going to start and I was on cloud nine. I wouldn’t say that the week went any differently; [I] prepared the same. I felt way more locked into the game plan and everything like that, but nothing significantly different that I did to prepare. The game itself though, I’ll never forget that. It was probably my best football memory that I’ll ever have besides possibly winning a national championship. Going through the game I was extremely nervous. I’m not going to lie, I was very nervous starting off, but [that’s] something you’ve got to deal with. Once we got into the first quarter [and] second quarter, I really settled in. After that, I felt really comfortable. I think that’s the best word.”

**Sam:** “That game doesn’t come without some controversy because the end of that game is kind of messed up.”

**Straub:** “Right.”

**Sam:** “You were on defense for those plays. What’s the atmosphere like on the sideline?”

**Straub:** “Very nervous; very nerve-wracking. Everybody’s like, ‘Wow, it’s really happening again. Is this going to happen again?’ The coaches were emphasizing [we]

got to stay locked in. If they score, we're tied and we got an opportunity to win in overtime so nerve-wracking, but at the same time, you've got to stay calm, cool, and collected because this game's not over yet."

**Sam:** "Next week, you start your first road game at Youngstown State, the eventual runner-up in the Football Championship Subdivision. Take me through that game."

**Straub:** "Tough game. First half, stuff was not going our way at all. We weren't really moving the ball, I don't even know if we got the ball on their side of the field at all. Then in the second half, [we] just stuck to the game plan and started making plays, guys started making plays. They were good. They were the best defense we played all year. Their D-line was incredible. But, we feel short so that one I think hurts the most because watching film, you see there's so many opportunities, little opportunities, that we had to tie the game and possibly take a lead if we were to go for two."

**Sam:** "You come back home [the] last game of the season versus an old coach that's now gone to Western. I wouldn't call it a rivalry game, but a game that's got a little grit to it, like you guys want to win. Take me through that Western win."

**Straub:** "Well, it was senior night, which was the first thing and I think it was extremely important for us to send our seniors off with a win. I wanted that bad because I had so many good friends on that team. We wanted to come out and really hit them in the mouth and I think that's what we did. I think we went up fourteen-nothing, but being able to respond to adversity and stay the course throughout that game was our biggest thing. I had four turnovers, but being able to just stick with it and stay confident with what the outcome was going to be, that was huge. That was probably my most fun

game out of the year other than the first start. I mean, that was incredible how we came back and won.”

**Sam:** “You go in and you throw those four picks. How do you stay in the zone? Do you just brush those off and keep chugging along?”

**Straub:** “Yeah, my old coach told me a quarterback’s got to be able to fix it and flush it immediately so dwelling on an interception is not going to do any good other than hurt you in future possessions. That’s always been my mindset is no matter what happens, you’ve got to go to the sideline and have composure and that’s part of being a quarterback. Throwing interceptions and fumbling is part of the game, you can’t do anything about it. Yeah it sucks, but it’s about what you do your next possession.”

**Sam:** “Going off of that last question, how are you carrying that momentum forward into this upcoming season?”

**Straub:** “Well, we’ve got a lot of guys back. We were really young last year and a lot of guys are really, really hungry for that winning taste we experienced those last two out of three games and I think that you’ve seen that, if you’re at any of our workouts or anything like that. Everybody’s getting after each other and really pushing each other and competing. You see what it takes now. We see what it takes to win conference games and I think getting a lot of those guys back, a lot of the leaders back, is going to be a big thing for us in the future.”

**Sam:** “Anything else you want to add about last season?”

**Straub:** “Nope.”

**PART 2**  
**SCRIPT**

<b>Title: Turning Point</b>	
VIDEO	AUDIO
<p>Open: Coach Hill Addressing Players after game. Talking heads of coaches and players cut in between the speech.</p> <p>Title plays for:30 Sec</p>	<p>Coach Hill telling his players he is proud of them for not giving up and fighting hard.</p> <p>Players and coaches giving vague yet uplifting SOT's in between Coach Hills Speech.</p> <p>Title Track: Shroud</p>
<p>Training Camp - Players and coaches interacting getting gear and setting up for camp.</p> <p>Talking heads supplement b-roll. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	<p>Natural Sound Players opening lockers talking to coaches and eating.</p> <p>Player and coach SOT's</p>
<p>Player Meeting - Israel Lamprakes talks to the team about his time at SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY and Playing football the night before practice. Coach Hill</p>	<p>Nat Sounds - Israel talks about his time in Saluki football and the upcoming season. Coach Hill surprises Charlie Harris with a Full ride Scholarship.</p>



<p>gives Charlie Harris a full ride scholarship. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	
<p>Fall Camp - Montage of fall camp. Coaches teaching players and practice footage. Coach Hill Addressing the media after Day 1 of practice. Sam Straub, Connor Iwema and Coach Hill talk about the quarterback battle. Coach Hill reveals who will be the starting quarterback. Talking Heads supplement b-roll. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	<p>Nat Sound's - Coaches and players talking. Plays and drills being done. Sam, Connor and Coach Hill talk about the battle for quarterback.</p>
<p>Non-Conference - Coach Hill previews the weeks match up vs FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY. Game footage at FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY. Coach Hill Previews week 2 at weekly press conference vs SOUTHEASTERN MISSOURI STATE. Game footage of SOUTHERN</p>	<p>Coach Hill talking at weekly press conferences. Game day audio of game play with radio calls. Nat sound of player and coach's meetings. SOT's of players and coaches talking about the non-conference season.</p>

<p>ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY vs SOUTHEASTERN MISSOURI STATE. Week 3 press conference vs Murray State. Game day footage of Murray State. Player and coach's meetings. Talking heads supplement footage of game day footage. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	
<p>Conference - Montage of weekly press conferences. Montage of game day footage at 5 games. Talking heads supplement b-roll. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	<p>Coach Hill speaking at weekly press conferences. Music under montage of game day footage and sot's talking about losing 5 games in a row.</p>
<p>Turning Point - Sam Straub and Coach Hill talking about Sam being named the new starting quarterback. Game day footage at home vs South Dakota. Coach Hill addressing players in locker room after game. Players talking about</p>	<p>Players and coaches talking about Sam Straub being named starting quarterback. Game day audio with music underneath. Players talking about beating South Dakota. Coach Hill press conference audio before Western</p>

<p>losing at Youngstown State. Press conference of week 11 vs Western Illinois. Game day footage of Western Illinois win. Coach Hill addressing players in locker room after Western game. Players and coach's talking heads supplement b-roll. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	<p>Illinois. Game day audio of Western Illinois win with music underneath. Nat sound of locker room after game of Coach Hill addressing players. SOT's of players and coach's talking the last 3 games of the season.</p>
<p>Wrap up - Coaches and players talking heads about the season and what it means to Saluki football. Montage of game day from all games. Title cards help move the story along.</p>	<p>Coach and player SOT's explain what the past season meant to them and what it means for Saluki Football moving forward.</p>
<p>FTB</p>	<p>Audio fades out</p>

**PART 3**  
**GRAPHICS**

### Graphics List

- November 19, 2016 – Southern Illinois vs Western Illinois
- Nick Hill – Head Coach
- Kraig Paulson – Asst. Head Coach
- Darrell James – Wide Receiver
- Saluki Athletics Presents
- Directed by Sam McGlone
- TURNING POINT
- Starring Nick Hill Kraig Paulson Sam Straub Connor Iwema Darrell James  
Jefferson Vea Ryan Neal Craig James Roman Tatum
- The 2016 Salukis
- Training Camp
- August 5, 2016 Report Day Fall Camp Starts in 24 Hours
- Sam Straub Quarterback
- Roman Tatum Cornerback
- Kraig Paulson Asst. Head Coach
- Ryan Neal Safety
- Team Meeting – 6:30 PM Final Meeting Before Camp Starts
- Wide Receiver Israel Lamprakes will be entering his sixth season. Two separate injuries have sidelined Lamprakes over his tenure at Southern Illinois University. Making him one of the most senior players or coaches this season.
- Israel Lamprakes Wide Receiver

- At the end of the meeting Coach Hill brings up walk on safety Charlie Harris to give the team an update on his mother who had recently fallen ill. After the update Coach Hill surprises Charlie with an amazing opportunity.
- Charlie Harris Safety
- August 6, 2016 Fall Camp – Day 1 27 Days Until Game 1
- Jefferson Veal Safety
- August 25, 2016 4 Days until week 1 of the 2016 season
- Craig James cornerback
- Quarterbacks Sam Straub and Josh Straughan find themselves in the midst of a battle for the starting role and a chance to lead the saluki offense. Through most of camp both have shown the same ability to lead.
- Connor Iwema Wide Receiver
- Non-Conference
- August 29, 2016 – Week 1 Southern Illinois University versus Florida Atlantic
- September 1, 2016 – Coaches Meeting 2 Days until Game 1
- Each Season most Football Championship Subdivision teams schedule and Football Bowl Subdivision or 1-A team. This year Southern Illinois University Plays Florida Atlantic.
- The salukis lead at halftime but struggle in the third quarter letting Florida Atlantic University score two touchdowns. The roles are reversed in the fourth quarter but late mistakes take Southern Illinois University out of the game. FINAL Florida Atlantic University: 38 Southern Illinois University: 30
- September 5, 2017 – Week two six days until Southeast Missouri

- Ryan Neal Safety
- Darrell James Wide Receiver
- Through the remainder of the non-conference season the Salukis would have their way with the final two opponents.
- Final Southern Illinois University: 30 Southeastern Missouri State: 22
- September 10, 2016 – Week 3 Murray State versus Southern Illinois
- Final Murray State: 17 Southern Illinois University: 50
- Conference
- The Salukis would go on to lose the next 5 games.
- Final University of Northern Iowa: 42 Southern Illinois University 21
- Final SDSU: 45 Southern Illinois University: 39
- Final Indiana State University: 31 Southern Illinois University: 28
- Final INST: 22 Southern Illinois University: 14
- Final MSU: 38 Southern Illinois University: 35
- Turning Point
- November 5, 2016 – Week 9 Southern Illinois University versus South Dakota
- As time expires on Southern Illinois University versus South Dakota the game comes down to one final play for South Dakota. With the clock at 0:00 the Salukis rush the field to celebrate their first conference victory...However the game was not over.
- The officials would put two seconds back on the game clock. However, the salukis would not be denied. The Saluki Defense would come up with another Stop. Giving Southern Illinois University its 1st Conference Win.

- Final SD: 28 Southern Illinois University: 35
- The Salukis last road game came against Youngstown State. Southern Illinois University played a close game but in the end fell short of a win. Youngstown would place 2nd in the Football Championship Subdivision FINAL YSU: 21 Southern Illinois University: 14
- November 14, 2016 – Week 11 Southern Illinois University versus Western Illinois
- Final Western Illinois University: 34 Southern Illinois University: 44
- Southern Illinois University finishes its season 4-7. Just one game above last year's record.



**PART 4**  
**CREDITS**

## **Credits**

This Documentary is a thesis project done for the completion of a degree from Southern Illinois University's Professional Media & Media Management program in the college of Mass Communication and Media Arts

### **Advisor**

Jan Thompson

### **Production Crew**

Written, Directed, Edited and Produced

BY

Sam McGlone

### **Camera Operators**

Brad Gray

Zach Thomas

Shane Gibbons

Robbie Hisgen

### **Associate Producers**

Zach Thomas

Zach Scruggs

Zach White

### **Special Thanks to**

Saluki Athletics & Saluki Football

ESPN 3

Florida Atlantic University

YouTube Audio Library

**Music**

Title track:

**Artist:** Silencyde

Song: *Shroud*

Social links:

<https://soundcloud.com/silencyde>

<facebook.com/Silencyde>

<youtube.com/user/Silencyde>

<http://www.silencyde.com/>

**Artist:** Jingle Pranks

Song: *Voyuer*

**Artist:** Audionautix

Song: *Namaste*

Namaste by Audionautix is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Artist: <http://audionautix.com/>

**Artist:** Ethan Meixsell

Song: *Taking a Beating*

**Artist:** Silent Partner

Song: *Dude Bro*

**Artist:** Silent Partner

Song: *Big Screen*

**Artist:** Kevin Macleod

Song: *Devastation and Revenge*

Devastation and Revenge by Kevin MacLeod is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Source: <http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/index.html?isrc=USUAN1100694>

Artist: <http://incompetech.com/>

This video and its rights are held by Sam McGlone and Saluki Athletics

**PART 5**  
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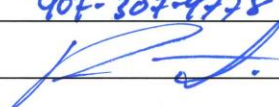
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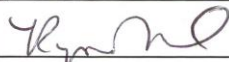
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## Bibliography

Bernard, S. C., & Bernard, S. C. (2007). *Documentary storytelling*. Oxford: Focal.

Rabiger, M. (2015). *Directing the documentary*. Burlington MA: Focal Press.

Whiteley, G. (Director). (2016). *Last Chance U* [Motion picture on Netflix]. USA: Netflix.

Callner, M. (Creator). (2001-2016). *Hard Knocks* [Documentary Series on Television].

USA: HBO.

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