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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SALUKI SPORTS

by

Dominic Hoscher

B.S., Lindenwood University, 2022

A Media Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science

School of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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MEDIA PROJECT APPROVAL

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for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the field of Mass Communications and Media Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2 – Background.....	4
CHAPTER 3 – Production and Challenges.....	9
CHAPTER 4 – Subject Explanation	13
CHAPTER 5 – Documentary Breakdown	17
CHAPTER 6 – Conclusion	26
VITA.....	28

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Countless documentaries have been produced on sports over the years, highlighting the greatest athletes, most successful coaches, championship teams, and the best stories. When I think of sports documentaries, ESPN's "The Last Ride" featuring Michael Jordan comes to mind. It came out at a time where there were no sports at the beginning of the pandemic. The series covered a notable (to say the least) athlete in Jordan, and properly captured his and the Chicago Bulls' story. It was a documentary series that hit on all levels and most importantly, had a lasting impact on those that were featured in it and those who watched it. Most who have seen it can recall the story that was told, and that's what any good documentary should do. It shouldn't be forgettable but instead it should be remembered. That was a goal of mine with 'A Day in the Life of Saluki Sports', to create something that fans, athletes, and coaches will remember going forward.

This sense of importance was one of my biggest motivations in choosing this topic, as I wanted to choose something that seemed valuable and covered those areas previously mentioned. But also, I wanted to pick something that the common sports fan would be interested in watching. I went through several different ideas and topics in my initial thought process regarding the documentary, all involving something in the world of sports. I thought about following a specific team, from the start of their preseason to the conclusion of the season. I considered going across athletics and diving into each area of the facilities that makes up Southern Illinois University's athletic department. I also thought about looking at injuries at Southern. This would've gone into multiple different athletes and the injuries they've had, what

goes into the rehab process, and their journey back on the field or court. All of these ideas interested me, but the one that stood-out the most was doing *a day in the life*.

I thought it would be most intriguing to follow a certain number of athletes and coaches around and see just what it takes to be at the Division I level. The early wake-up calls, the grueling practices, the intensity of games at this level, and more. From a sports fan's perspective, I thought that this would draw the most eyes because most don't get to see this angle, they typically only see what happens in games. For some, they will also see what the social media team wants them to see, which may not cover the full story. With this in mind, I wanted to go outside-the-box and show just some of the many elements that make up the life of a Division I athlete or coach.

Once I had this idea down, it was then about choosing who to feature, how many sports to cover, and what the layout of this would look like. With the time requirement in mind, I thought it would be best to break the documentary up in four separate parts/sections. That way, the daunting idea of covering around 30 minutes of content was cut to six-to-eight minutes each, which was something I was much more comfortable with and confident in completing. As part of my job at SIU, which is the sports information director covering sports such as women's basketball, soccer, and track and field, I mainly work on videos that are, at most, two and a half minutes in length. Producing something that was longer than that by a significant amount was an intimidating task but one that I was mentally prepared to take on because I knew the benefits that would come out of it. I will address these benefits later on in this paper.

With the layout pictured, I next needed to find the sports, athletes, and coaches I wanted to take a look at. As a result of cutting the documentary up into four parts, I landed upon Southern Illinois' four fall sports: soccer, football, cross country, and volleyball. This made

sense as it keeps a common theme throughout the documentary of all of the sports that go on at the same time at the start of the year. Golf, baseball, and softball also compete early in the year, but their seasons are fully a go come the spring, with some of their fall competitions just being called 'fall ball.' One of the benefits of covering the fall sports was that most of them were already on campus in the summer. This allowed me to get a head start on doing interviews, filming b-roll, and planning out what the fall would look like. This put me in a strong position heading into the semester, as I had a good idea of what the foundation of the documentary would look like, and I already had a lot of footage before classes and games began. Once the semester truly got underway, I wouldn't have been able to spend the proper time needed to shoot each person's day in the life, so it helped out greatly and removed a lot of stress I had prior to shooting the documentary.

Before I go into the details on the athletes and coach I chose to cover from these sports, I would like to take time to provide background information on each of the four fall sports that were featured in the documentary.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Background information on Southern Illinois University Cross Country

Cross country is one of Southern Illinois' more unique sports, mainly because the athletes will compete almost all year. The athletes that make-up the cross country team also will be competing in track and field, both indoor and outdoor. The cross country season begins in the middle of August, with early-morning practices getting things underway for the group. They then participate in several meets through the months of September, October, and November. This season, the opening meet was the Belmont Opener in Nashville, Tenn., on Sept. 1. The team then went to Normal, Ill., two weeks later, Columbia, Mo., to end September, and then Peoria, Ill., on Oct. 13 to finish off the regular season. The postseason begins in late October with the Missouri Valley Conference Championships, followed by national competition in November. During this period of time, it is consistent practice after practice, followed by meets for weeks upon weeks. After the cross country season concludes, the workload decreases slightly, but picks back up again in early January with indoor track beginning. This will go from January to late-February, with outdoor track starting in March and going until May. The only months that the athletes truly have off from competing are June and July, and that is dependent on how well the athletes do in their events. If someone has a strong close to the season, they could end up competing in the NCAA Championships, which are in late-May and early-June.

The cross country team is led by head coach Brian Biekert, who is in his second season in the role. Biekert was previously at Tulsa, Syracuse, Iowa State, and Brown University before arriving at Southern Illinois. Looking at the Saluki roster, the team is highlighted by a combination of veterans in Ethan Senti on the men's side and Rachel Anderson on the women's

side. Senti recently finished first in the 8K at the 2023 Missouri Valley Conference Championships in Nashville, Tenn., with a time of 24:24.9. The senior was also named the Missouri Valley Conference Scholar-Athlete of the Year for this success both on the course and in the classroom.

Anderson also did well at the conference championships, placing third in the women's 6K with a time of 20:39.0. The graduate student is in her fifth year with the program, and has led the team in both cross country and in track and field with strong finishes across regular season meets, conference competitions, and even in regionals at the national level. At the 2023 Missouri Valley Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships, Anderson finished second on the podium in the 3000m women's steeplechase, posting a time of 10:09.94.

Background on Southern Illinois University Football

Heading into Saturday's a critical showdown at North Dakota State (on put date), the football team here at Southern Illinois holds a record of 6-3 overall. The Salukis have beaten teams such as Missouri State, Southeast Missouri State, Austin Peay, and Northern Illinois. Southern has been a top-20 team ranking-wise for a majority of the season, and is fighting for a playoff spot heading into its final two games of the regular season. The six wins are already more than what Southern Illinois had in all of 2022, where the Salukis finished the season with a 5-6 record. This came one year after SIU won eight games in 2021, including at No. 2 South Dakota State in October, and a playoff game at South Dakota in late-November.

The football team's head coach is Nick Hill. Hill has been the program's head coach ever since 2016 after previously serving as the team's quarterbacks coach. As a player, Hill had a storied career as a Saluki, becoming one of the all-time greatest quarterbacks in program history at the end of his playing career. He now coaches sixth-year quarterback Nic Baker, who is SIU's

all-time leading passer in terms of yards, completions, and other categories. This season, Baker has 1979 yards, 12 touchdowns, and five interceptions.

On defense, the Salukis have been elite in 2023. Southern Illinois is top two in the Missouri Valley Football Conference in points allowed, yards allowed, touchdowns given up, and leads the conference in rushing defense and are amongst the top teams in the country in each category. The defense is led by veteran safety PJ Jules and linebacker Branson Combs, who anchor the defensive unit from the secondary and linebacker positions. Linemen such as Devin Cowan have also led SIU to ranking second in the Valley in sacks, with 27 on the season.

Background on Southern Illinois University Volleyball

The Saluki Volleyball team has recently had a complete turnaround under head coach Ed Allen. In 2021, the Salukis posted a record of 5-26 and went winless in 18 conference games within the Missouri Valley Conference. Since then, Southern Illinois has a combined record of 34-23 in the last two seasons. SIU went from winless in conference action in 2021, to winning 11 Valley games in 2022. This season, Southern has posted a record of 16-10 overall and 8-7 in conference play with a balance of underclassmen and upperclassmen leading the way.

Southern Illinois' trio of seniors, Tatum Tornatta, Imani Hartfield, and Nataly Garcia all rank top-four on the team in terms of kills. Garcia's 346 are nearly 100 more than second place Tornatta's 257 on the season. But it hasn't just been the production of seniors helping lead the charge for the Salukis, but freshmen like Ema Stermenska and sophomores such as Cecilia Buhlman have helped the program turn around in the last two years. Stermenska leads the team and is amongst the nation's leaders in service aces with 43 on the season, while Buhlman was recently named the Missouri Valley Conference Defensive Player of the Week.

Allen, the team's head coach ever since 2019, is one of the winningest active coaches in all of collegiate volleyball. He recently reached the 700 career wins mark, compared to under 400 total losses. Allen has spent time at Alabama, Tulsa, Presbyterian (Division II), and Anderson (Division III), along with his time in Carbondale, Ill. The long-time coach is in his 33rd year at the helm of a collegiate program.

Background on Southern Illinois University Soccer

The newest program amongst SIU athletics is the Saluki Women's Soccer team. Prior to 2019, Southern Illinois didn't even have a soccer program. It has been a rocky road for Southern since the inaugural season in 2019, however, with three different head coaches in the span of just four years. This past season, SIU missed the playoffs after posting an overall record of 1-11-5 and a conference record of 0-8-2. The Salukis had also won one or fewer games in 2021 and in 2020-21. In 2019, SIU went 5-10-2, the most wins the program would have until a break-out 2022 campaign. For the first time in the program's brief history, the Salukis had finished above .500 at 8-5-4 and 5-2-3 in conference play. This led to Southern hosting its first-ever playoff match on Oct. 30, 2022, vs. Murray State, a game where the Salukis fell, 2-1, in overtime.

Leading the Salukis in 2023 is first-year head coach Graeme Orr. Orr, who is from Eaglesham, Scotland, had spent the last two years as the head coach of West Alabama at the Division II level. He was the team's first-ever head coach, starting up the program in 2011 and leading the team to an overall record of 115-78-19, conference record of 79-44-9, and had 10-consecutive winning seasons. Orr is joined by assistant coaches Carley Kandel and Ash Phillips, who are both in their first season in Carbondale. Jake Edwards, the team's graduate assistant, is in his second season in the role.

Looking at the roster, senior midfielder McKensey Bunch was the team's primary offensive threat, scoring a team-high four goals on the year. Bunch was followed by fifth-year player Kaitlin DuCharme, who scored three goals and tallied one assist. Both DuCharme and fellow fifth-year player Emma Spotak concluded their Saluki careers second all-time in scoring with seven goals each. The duo also had three assists each during their time in Southern Illinois. Spotak was the team's lone all-conference player, being named to the Valley's third team after the season had come to an end.

I felt it was important to provide this background on all four of the Southern Illinois University fall sports because when you watch each segment of the documentary, I want you to know the story and details behind each team. When the football portion begins, you know exactly how their season is going, and how the program has been in the last couple of years. With soccer, it is a new team on campus, which is important to know when watching the soccer episode, but wouldn't have been known without this background information being given.

CHAPTER 3

PRODUCTION AND CHALLENGES

The next thing I would like to do is break-down the production of this documentary, and the challenges that came along with it. Production started all of the way back in the spring, when I began to process what I was going to do for my thesis. Once I realized that it was going to be a day in the life documentary, I started to plan what the documentary would look like. That is when I pictured the layout of it, going with four segments and four different sports, eventually deciding to focus on the fall ones. In the summer, I began to shoot and film footage for the documentary.

Before I even began recording any b-roll or interviews, I met in-person with each person I was focusing on. In these meetings, I would get to know the subject, learn their stories, what a typical day looks like for them, and figure out what I want to feature in the documentary. These meetings were extremely helpful for me because originally, I was going into the shooting process with my previous knowledge on them and their teams. But after these meetings, I felt strongly about showcasing their stories as they had put their trust in me to tell them. The pre-filming meetings put me in a good position to plan out my interviews and b-roll in further detail with a clear focus as to what I wanted to capture.

I started the filming process with interviews that would involve a two-camera set-ups with lights and a lavalier mic. I also had a shotgun mic on the second camera just as a backup in case the lavalier died. This also made it easier to get the audio in-sync, as I could clearly hear the subject with the second camera and mic. The interviews would typically last beyond 30 minutes, so I'd also bring an extra lavalier mic and batteries in order to be safe. For each interview, I would prepare around 21 questions for each subject, but I would listen throughout each of their

responses to see if there was anything there that I wanted to expand on and didn't know before. This allowed me to take a further step in the interviews and explore areas that I hadn't had previous knowledge of.

After the interviews with the subject, I would ask them about who they think I should talk to next. For each athlete, I was given the names of their head coach (or for football, mentor) and close teammates. For the one coach I highlighted, he advised me to talk to two players, one in which played with the coach at a previous school. I would then plan out these interviews, while also planning when to shoot b-roll for the documentary. In order to shoot b-roll, I had to be in consistent communication with each subject regarding their schedules. For each of them, they would sometimes begin their days around 6 a.m. I would arrive around 5:30 a.m. to grab equipment, test out settings, and get in the right position for when they would get there as well. Sometimes, plans would change at the last second and I would have to either adjust or decide to shoot on another day.

The filming process took a total of six months, starting back in June and wrapping up in early November. I was constantly thinking of new things I could shoot, while also listening to the subjects on what they thought would be important to include also. For example, I was asked to film a morning practice with the football team because my subject's longtime mentor was in town for the only time this season. So, I made time to go to this practice, interviewed the mentor, and it ended up being a key piece of the documentary.

In terms of editing, putting the documentary together took around three months to complete. I started editing in September, and finished up in November on Adobe Premiere Pro. I aimed for each section to be six-to-eight minutes in length, and successfully achieved this due to the large amount of b-roll and interviews I had already gotten. For music, my job has access to a

service called 'Epidemic Sound' which allows us to use copyright-free music on our videos. Each segment of the documentary has three songs in them, and I fit them in in a way where the transition sounds smooth between one song and the next.

There have been a number of challenges I have experienced along the way in this process, with one of them being scheduling. Working with four different sports all at the same time has been difficult to balance, as there'll be times where they run into each other and I have to figure out the best way to approach it. Luckily, the athletes and coach are all very understanding, and have helped make this balance a little bit easier. Also in scheduling, I have had to work long days in order to properly capture someone's story. For example, soccer had an early practice at 7:45 a.m. But I wanted to start filming the b-roll right when the coach began his day too, which was at 5:30 a.m. As a result of this, I had to get up around 5 a.m., get the equipment, and be at the coach's office ready to go for when he arrived. Each team I worked with had similar hours, so I had to adjust my own sleeping schedule if I wanted to get exactly what I wanted.

Another big challenge for me has been editing, and running into walls while I edit. A lot of these walls occur right at the start of the editing process. The first section I edited was the cross country one, and it took me hours to come up with an opening that I felt good about. I was running through multiple different ideas, and none of them were landing. I finally ended up having the athlete do a full introduction, relying on the interviews heavily for this portion. But the walls wouldn't end there, as sometimes I would be two or three minutes in, which is the length of the typical videos I shoot, and I wouldn't know what to do next. Which angle to show, which interview clip to insert where, what b-roll I thought was best. All of these elements

continued slowing me down and causing me to have to overcome hurdles that were thrown in my way during the process of editing.

Editing has been the biggest challenge of the entire documentary experience, but one other challenge I have run into is determining how much content I need for this set of segments. As I've stated before, I have never done anything like this before so I went into it unsure of how long exactly I need to be filming. I will shoot for an hour at a practice, or at someone's home with them cooking dinner, hoping I got enough. Most of the time I did, but there were other times where I left feeling unsure on whether or not I got enough. To deal with this, I would make it out to either more events or similar ones and get more footage there. That way, I had enough to cover the topic and was good to go.

The challenges along the way, whether in editing, scheduling, or filming, have made the last several months difficult but have also given me plenty of confidence. I went from the unknown of what it takes to shoot a full documentary to now having the mindset that I can film and capture any type of video required of me. It can be highlights from a game, a fun short video for social media, or now, a 30-minute documentary. Each has its own separate challenges, but I now know that I can get through these hurdles and ultimately, take another step as a content creator and video person.

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT EXPLANATION

Why I chose Claire Ayers from cross country

With each individual I wanted to cover for this documentary, I tried to think of a new angle for all four of them and change it up each time. An obvious candidate for this would have been Rachel Anderson and all of the success she has had in her career. However, I wanted to try something a little more challenging and that's why I went with graduate student Claire Ayers. Ayers is in her final year at Southern Illinois and is from Washington, Mo. In her career, Ayers has had plenty of success on the track side of things but for cross country, it hasn't been as easy. The graduate student has dealt with injuries and set-back after set-back, both in the sport and in the classroom. I chose Ayers because I wanted one of my segments and angles to be focused heavily on school and an athlete's career and for her, this is a big part of her identity.

Ayers is the only non-international athlete or coach that I used in the documentary, and I thought that would be good too because it gives a wide range of backgrounds for this piece. It isn't based solely on people from the United States, or only featuring internationals, but rather a mix of both to showcase just how deep Southern Illinois is and especially in athletics.

I felt Ayers' story stood out amongst the rest of the field, and with her going into med school, I thought capturing that and showing just how difficult it is for a student in her situation to balance both preparing for that next step while also competing in a Division I sport. Through interviews and b-roll, I am confident that each of these areas are displayed in the documentary.

Why I chose Nathan Torney from football

The football team is unique compared to every other sport included in this project because of the sheer number of athletes that make-up the program. Whether it's offense, defense,

or even special teams, the size of the roster trumps nearly every other sport out there and especially at Southern Illinois. This opened up many possibilities in terms of who to cover and identifying who had the most interesting story. I thought about looking at the team's sixth-year quarterback in Nic Baker, but quarterbacks are almost always highlighted in documentaries such as this one. I considered a defensive player, but none of this felt unique enough for what I wanted to accomplish.

Eventually, I stopped looking at the offense and I stopped looking at the defense, and instead looked at the special teams unit that makes up the program. There, I saw Nathan Torney, SIU's sophomore punter from Australia. Not many others on the team had an international background, nor one quite like Torney's. He hadn't played a game of football until his first one at Southern Illinois: last season's season-opener on the road at Incarnate Word in Texas. His first-ever game came at the Division I level, a mere months after arriving in the United States for the first time.

Torney's experience as an Australian punter who is still new to the sport but playing anyways at a high level made for something that I thought stood-out more than any other story on the team. Right away, I wanted to dive-in and find out more about what got him here, what are the biggest obstacles he has had to overcome, and his overall mindset on the experience as a whole.

Why I chose Nataly Garcia from volleyball

Now, I wanted an athlete who has become an all-conference player who is rewriting the history books of the volleyball program here at SIU while also having a fascinating story. This led to the no-brainer decision of choosing Nataly Garcia, one of the team's four seniors. Garcia is an outside hitter, which means she is primarily going for the ball on either the left or right side of

the net and hitting it over. And hit it over she has. With over 1,000 kills on her career, Garcia is amongst the greatest-ever Salukis to play the sport of volleyball thanks to her success on the court and also her ability to stay healthy.

What locked me in on Garcia, however, wasn't just her incredible athletic ability that has been on show for multiple years at SIU. What made me realize Garcia was a slam-dunk candidate as the third person to feature in the documentary was her journey from Puerto Rico and similar to Torney, how she has overcome obstacles during her time away from home. Seeing how she involves her culture from back in Puerto Rico here in the United States was something that not only I was interested in seeing and telling, but also something I think others would be as well.

Garcia's unique combination of talent, background, and also utterly unselfish personality made her a perfect fit for this, as I knew she would be easy to work with and that she was. Anytime I had an idea, she was all-in on it, making my job all the easier and allowing me to properly tell the story of Nataly Garcia.

Why I chose Graeme Orr from soccer

Last but not least is Southern Illinois University's women's soccer team. So far, I had an athlete who embodies the student-athlete title, a punter who plays a unique position with a rare background, and a volleyball player who has become one of the better players that SIU has ever had on the court. Each of those three angles were already taken, and I wanted to keep the documentary fresh. In order to do this, I had to think outside the box and instead of filming another athlete, I wanted to feature a coach instead.

No team at SIU has experienced more turnover than the Saluki Soccer team. Year-after-year, a fresh new coaching staff has come in, making the stability of the program in question.

The biggest story amongst the program since its creation in 2019 has been its coaching situation, so I thought it would be perfect to feature its third head coach, Graeme Orr. I wanted a topic that was most relevant to the audience involving the program that is being highlighted, and I thought that most people would mainly want to see what a day in the life of a coach for an SIU soccer team would look like.

Orr, with a background of coaching at the Division II level, has had to adjust to the Division I lifestyle and what it takes to be at the highest level in collegiate sports. From training sessions to gamedays, my goal was to show off what his regular day looks like and present something that hasn't been done with the program yet.

Each athlete or coach I included in the documentary had their own unique reasons for being chosen. Throughout the project, I wanted to keep the content fresh while also covering as many areas as I could. I felt like Ayers, Torney, Garcia, and Orr all helped me accomplish that and gave me a diverse set of stories to present for the day in the life documentary.

With the reasons displayed for why I chose those four individuals, I now wanted to look into each specific section and break them down minute-by-minute, explaining why I did one thing, why I included this interview or another one, and so on.

CHAPTER 5

DOCUMENTARY BREAKDOWN

Claire Ayers Documentary Breakdown

As I started off every other documentary segment, I opened Ayers' with a quick montage of different elements that I shot. From running to cooking and also to studying, it gives a brief look at what to expect from her episode of the project. After this, I put in a clip of her doing a full introduction. She says her name, sport, and what she is studying. Once this is done, she goes on to talk about her schooling a little bit further as well. I covered some of these parts with b-roll so it wasn't just the interview for the entirety of her quotes. My goal with opening the documentary up with these clips from the interview was to give the audience a good idea of who Claire Ayers is prior to seeing what a typical day looks like for her.

Once the introduction was complete, I wanted to show off the main element of the documentary: *Claire's day in the life*. Her day typically starts at 6:30 a.m. with an early-morning practice. They decide to run this early to avoid the summer heat, and run in the coolest conditions possible. It was Ayers, Rachel Anderson, and Ansley Bailey (two teammates) running with her during the practice. The training session was a challenge to shoot, because I had to move to certain checkpoints in order to capture them running. I did take advantage of the conditions, however, which provided a puddle and what I thought was a cool shot of Ayers and Anderson running past it.

At the end of the practice, I had Ayers stand in front of the camera and lead the audience into the next couple portions of her day. This started with her making breakfast for her fellow teammates, which I thought was important to include because it is something that the viewer can easily relate with. It also shows what a Division I meal looks like for an athlete, especially one

that is in a rush. I showed her making the meal, the meal itself afterwards, and then all of the members of the team present eating together to show the commodity between the group.

After this, the group went to work. Their work requires them to clean houses for people who are selling them. From scraping the floors to cleaning a dark basement, it's not the job you would typically expect for athletes. Showing the details of this gives an idea at just how much hard work they put into not just their sport or school, but also in their daily life at work. I also think this gives an idea of Ayers' diverse set of abilities, and the wide range of things that she is able to do.

The next portion leaps to after the shift, when the team meets and has a session in the gym. This particular session was at 6 p.m. at the Banterra Center and Lingle Hall (Lingle Hall is an extension of the Banterra Center, where the athletes' study area and gym are located). I showed off the exercises and lifts that cross country athletes experience while training. Once these clips were done, I moved on to show Ayers studying. With a lot of her episode focused on her academics, it was an important part of the documentary so I inserted another clip from her interview where she goes into detail on this. This was where I thought it would be good to include the other interviews as well.

For Ayers' documentary, I interviewed her head coach, Brian Biekert, to get the coaching perspective but also her teammate, roommate, and close friend Rachel Anderson. No one at Southern Illinois knows Ayers better than Anderson, making her the perfect fit for the episode. Biekert is the first one to be featured, talking about Ayers' ability in the classroom and how it affects her in the sport too. He highlights the pressure she puts on herself, his respect for her, and his confidence in her after college.

Anderson comes in and talks about the person in Ayers, her mindset, and the teammate in Ayers too. Anderson sees and is with Ayers on a daily basis, seeing each of these elements more than anyone else does. Having her explain this in the middle portion of the documentary serves as a strength as it backs up what Biekert said and what can be assumed by earlier and then later clips.

The next jump occurs in order to move along the timeline to show what an in-season practice looks like with the cross country team. Similar to summer training, the day starts at 6 a.m. with stretches with the whole team. After that, the team hits the course and runs through it while Biekert watches on. While some of this is being displayed, Ayers' voice is in the background talking about what her day looks like with the practice and then what follows, which is class. One of my favorite shots from the entire documentary is during this sequence. As the team is running away from the sun, the sunrise provides a nice glare over the runners as they continue on their path. This, along with the slowed down clips of Ayers running, helps keep the b-roll fresh and show something that is repetitive in more ways than one.

After training is complete, Ayers heads off to class around 12:50 p.m. Due to confidentiality, I could not show the class itself. However, I showcase a part of the campus to give a sense of place as she heads there along with her teammate Stephanie Anthonies. I was disappointed not to get in-class footage but considering her field of study, I understood why I couldn't. Through her interviews, I felt like the hole this may have created was covered due to her strong analysis of the situation. Once she heads into the building, the shot fades to black.

The clips fade out of black to Ayers speaking directly to the camera and giving an update on her studies. In the first interview, she was still studying for the MCAT (an entrance exam for med school) and applying to med schools across the country. In the updated interview, Ayers

informs the audience of her success on the MCAT and also in her applications. Instead of leaving a cliffhanger, having Ayers give this update removes that sense of ‘what happened next?’ that the audience may be feeling, as the story wraps itself into a circle and fulfills this topic. She then talks about the broader picture, and how this experience has impacted her as she also gives advice. I thought this was a good way to close-out her segment of the documentary because it wraps everything up in a fulfilling way and Ayers gives a deep answer that was intended to have a lasting effect on those watching as well.

Ayers’ segment was the first one that I completed and it gave me a boost in confidence as it showed that I was indeed capable of making pieces at this length, and that my plan was succeeding. This confidence would continue to grow after the completion of the next section, which was on Nathan Torney.

Nathan Torney Documentary Breakdown

Torney’s segment starts off the same way as Ayers’ with the opening montage followed by the introduction. The sophomore punter starts off by saying his name, where he is from, and his class. After this, he details his major and what his career aspirations are. Right away, the audience knows the important information on Torney. They now know what makes him unique (Australian background), what he wants to do in his life, and with that info, go into the day in the life with a decent idea of who they are now watching. That was the goal of each introduction, and his intro successfully accomplished it.

The day in the life begins at 6 a.m. during the summer with what is called OTA’s, which is a fancy term for football’s summer practices. At first, it was just the special teams unit on the field getting warmed up. Torney, of course, is punting away. Then the rest of the team joins when stretches begin. At the end of the OTA, the team is doing full-field sprints up and down the

turf at Saluki Stadium. This shows just how difficult their practices are and what is expected of them on a daily basis. No matter the summer heat, the intensity remains the same and this portion of the documentary shows that.

Immediately following OTA's is a trip to the gym for lifts at 9 a.m. Torney does stretches and other exercises, while also having a smile on his face for most of it. I thought it was good to keep this in because it shows his personality and his easy-going nature. Even after a difficult morning session on the field and then in the gym, his positivity shines through and the simple shot of him smiling helps show this. At this same point, I wanted to insert another clip from his interview, which gives background information on his history with the sport, which is a brief one. This also shows how unique his story is, as his teammates have likely been playing the sport for most of their lives. For Torney? He's played two seasons now and hearing him talk about it was something I found interesting.

The summer consisted of a similar routine, so I jumped to the fall, beginning with him in class. Here, I include quotes from teammates such as Thomas Burks (kicker) and Cade Stephenson (safety). They talk about their relationship with Torney and how his story has inspired them. After this, I focus on showing a regular season practice to show how it differs from the summer. In the summer months with OTA's, a lot of the time they are down without pads. That isn't the case with the fall, as while in-season, Torney and the Salukis are in helmets, pads, and the rest of their gear.

Here, I include what was possibly my favorite interview of the entire documentary. Torney's mentor, Darren Bennett, was in town observing practice, so I asked him questions about Southern Illinois' punter. Bennett was a successful punter at the NFL level so hearing his thoughts was interesting and helped also show the strong connections that Torney has made in

his career. He breaks down punting better than any of the teammates could have, adding that expert angle that I was looking for. After Bennett's interview, I go back to Torney, who addresses how this move from Australia and the experience as a whole has helped him.

I transitioned this to a gameday, starting off with warm-ups. Torney begins warming up without any sort of padding on, and then he enters the locker room. When he exits, he is in his gear ready for the second set of warm-ups. After shots of him stretching and punting, I move forward to gametime. I included footage of him on the sideline, each of his three punts, and also postgame going out for the handshakes. There, he talks further about the benefits of making a move like this and that serves as the ending quote, as he concludes it by saying "follow your dreams."

Nataly Garcia Documentary Breakdown

After the opening montage, Garcia's section begins with the introduction. She goes over where she's from, class level, and why she is in Carbondale. Garcia talks about her major next, and then what her goals were while back in Puerto Rico. She lists the things that she wanted to do and how she thought the move to the United States would help her, giving the viewer an idea of why she is in the position that she is in.

Her day in the life starts at 5:50 a.m. with workouts, which take place in the gym. After doing stretches, Garcia and the team go straight to lifting and other gym exercises. Garcia helps with the transition from one part at the gym to the next (practice) by speaking directly to the audience and informing them where they are heading next. At the volleyball gym, Garcia gets warmed up and then competes in several drills with the rest of her team. All of this is showcased in this portion of the segment. Another quote is added during this time about how, as a senior,

she is trying to cherish this year. This now addresses another element of her story as she is in her final year at SIU.

Garcia did another stand-up to move the section from practice to the rehab area. My favorite part of this series of clips is the team's athletic trainer Samantha going over what she is doing with Nataly and why she is doing it. Working with trainers and going to rehab is an important part of every athlete's day, but most don't get to see what goes on behind-the-scenes. With this, you do and Samantha explains it all well in a way for the audience to easily understand. The next interview takes place with Garcia's teammate and close friend Anna Jaworski, who is a junior setter on the team. Jaworski talks about the person in Garcia and what it is like to be around her.

The next portion shows off Garcia in a completely different area: class. Her major isn't like most others, as her class is her going into an art studio to paint. Over this, head coach Ed Allen's interview on Garcia's talent off the court is featured. I thought this was good to include because you can always listen to coaches talk about their players on the field or court, but how many times do you hear them talking about said players in their majors? Allen got to experience this and him sharing gives a different angle on Garcia's abilities off the floor.

The audience is then taken into Garcia's kitchen, where she makes something that is traditional in Puerto Rico. She also gives a call to her grandma while addressing topics such as the benefits of cooking a meal from home. Now, while still showcasing the day in the life, Garcia's background is covered and how she still stays connected with her home roots is shown. Then, it's gameday. They arrive at 9 a.m. and go straight to treatment with the trainer. An hour later, the team warms-up which is followed by gametime at 11 a.m. Garcia is introduced by the PA announcer, then her highlights from the game are shown. The final interview clip featured

goes over what she wants to do after SIU, which is to play and work back in Puerto Rico. The segment ends with Garcia walking out, saying that's the end of her documentary, and saying goodbye.

Graeme Orr Documentary Breakdown

Coach Orr's section starts off by him stating his name, where he is from (to explain the accent), and his former role. He then talks about how he ended up in the United States, how long he has been here, and where he went when he got here. Orr talks about his playing career and how he landed in coaching.

The first clip of Orr's day in the life is him entering the office at 5:30 a.m. I show what he does while in the office, and him working with the rest of his staff ahead of a practice. Carley Kandel and Ash Phillips, the team's two assistant coaches, are showcased to give the audience an image of what the rest of the staff looks like as they can be seen throughout the episode. Then, at 7:15 a.m., the staff setting up practice is shown, followed by the training session itself. Orr's instruction through practice is what is most heavily featured.

During the training clips, junior defender Kylie McDermott talks about what she enjoys most with working with Coach Orr and also what she has gained from the experience. This adds the player's angle on Coach to the documentary and shows how he has impacted them in his first year. Orr leads the audience to the next portion, which includes a meeting and the team eating lunch. Junior midfielder Dana Cruz, who played for Orr at West Alabama and now Southern Illinois, first talks about how long she has known the head coach but then also how Orr has helped her both on and off the field.

Once lunch is complete, it is a road gameday for the team. From leaving the office to the bus ride to the destination, arriving, and then the pregame talk are first featured. This is followed

by the game itself and then the team getting back to Carbondale around 6:30 p.m. This stood out compared to the other three episodes because they never left Carbondale. For Orr, this showed what traveling requires of a team and the toll it takes. My goal was to present a gameday in a unique way, and the road gameday gave me that opportunity.

Orr's segment ends with him joking with the team's bus driver because I wanted to show off the head coach's funny personality and this displays that. He is always making others laugh so including this and other humorous clips throughout the section gives the audience an idea of just the kind of person Coach Orr is and what it is like to be around him, even if they are watching on a screen.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Not included in the earlier details of the documentary are the on-set recordings and opening montage. At the start of the doc, a montage of multiple Saluki sports will be played prior to any of the segments being shown. With the title being 'A Day in the Life of Saluki Sports', I wanted to start with something that covered the SIU sports topic and the opening montage of this successfully accomplishes that.

Once this finishes, it goes to me on set introducing the documentary. I'm not trying to steal the spotlight or anything, but I thought it would be good for the person making the documentary to be the one that is shown in-between each segment. That way, the audience knows who is responsible for what they are watching. The intro serves as something to give the viewer an idea of what to expect as they get set to watch the following 30 minutes of content. I will also be on set to lead-in to each section of the documentary to keep it moving smoothly. I begin each lead-in by wrapping up what the audience just watched and then previewing what they are about to watch as well. The on set clips of me conclude with the ending, which is me thanking everyone for watching and to each person featured for trusting me to tell their stories.

Like I mentioned earlier, this is an idea that was first created all of the way back in the early months of 2023. To take it to the next step and go from just an idea to something more solid, I needed the confidence in myself to accomplish this lengthy task. Once I built up the confidence, I took what was initially just an idea and made it something that has never been done at Southern Illinois before. Placing each fall sport, no matter its following, on the same pedestal and diving into each of them in details that hasn't been shown before gives the SIU audience something fresh and something they hadn't seen before. Having the opportunity to do this, it

motivated me. It gave me motivation when I ran into those walls while editing. It gave me motivation to wake up at the crack of dawn in order to arrive at a practice or training session on time. It gave me the motivation to leave and make an impact on Saluki sports that will hopefully have a lasting effect on those who watch and those involved.

I won't sugarcoat it: this has been the most challenging project of my life. The time commitment was unlike anything that I have ever done before. Spending months and months on one project was a completely new territory for me, and this initially scared me. The thoughts of not being able to finish or properly tell these stories were intimidating to face, but that earlier motivation helped me get through it. But not only that, the thought of the growth I would see from myself during this process also helped me push through it. If I can do this, I can do anything. That was my mindset throughout this entire experience.

The confidence that has followed has been game-changing. I now am never too intimidated by a task, because I was able to get to the finish line of this one. I worked with amazing people during this process that have only helped me keep pushing. And keep pushing I did. Late nights, early mornings, long days that at times felt so overwhelming that I didn't know what to do next. I got through all of this and did something I never thought I would be able to do and I'm very proud of that.

In the end, I hope everyone who watches it enjoys it. Whether it is a player or coach featured, a random fan, or someone else. My goal was to create an impact but also to entertain. I believe that, with the wide range of individuals featured, I was successfully able to do this while also helping the common person learn. At the end of this documentary, they will now have an idea of what a 'Day in the Life of Saluki Sports' truly looks like.

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