

Spring 2017

Stealing Home: The Akron Baseball Documentary

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Recommended Citation

Cermak, Daniel, "Stealing Home: The Akron Baseball Documentary" (2017). *Honors Research Projects*. 436.
http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/honors_research_projects/436

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Stealing Home: The Akron Baseball Documentary
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School of Communication

Honors Research Project

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The Honors College

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Stealing Home: The Akron Baseball Documentary

Abstract

My honors project focused around the elimination of the Akron baseball program in the summer of 2015. I produced, directed and edited this project. The potential audience for this project is anyone in Northeast Ohio with some knowledge on the University of Akron and their sports teams. I did most of the work on this project during the Spring semester of 2016, where I travelled to interview former players and others to comment on the cutting of the team and the future of the players, program and school. During the summer of 2016 I conducted research and reshot interviews and conducted additional interviews. In the fall, I continued interviews and edited a rough cut. In the spring of 2017 I completed the final draft for the honors project and have provided it in the form of a YouTube link.

Stealing Home: The Akron Baseball Documentary

My goal for my Honors Project was to tell the story of the University of Akron baseball players who had to transfer to other universities as well as hear the administration's side of the story, whether that be through research or primary sources like on-camera interviews. I wanted to get as many interviews as possible from various sources, including third party sources like the baseball historian. I also simply wanted to work on something that could be considered "controversial" as a lot of other things I have worked on in my college career have not been too edgy or run the risk of upsetting anyone.

Based on my experience, I recommend that future producers stay organized and be willing to take a story a different direction if the opportunity presents itself. I let the players themselves decide the story. If a player did not respond to a question well, I tried to approach it in a different way, and I was not afraid to change my questions.

One thing I am working on improving is my willingness to be aggressive in securing interviews. This was especially evident with the administration of the University of Akron. I tried to secure an interview with (then) President Scarborough and again tried to get an interview following his resignation and was denied both times, but I feel if had I pressed then I would have gotten the interview. All in all however, the process of finding who to interview and then trying to secure the interview and ultimately performing the interview was one of if not the most rewarding experience of the project.

This was a topic that I cared a lot about at the beginning, but luckily I only grew to care about it more as I continued. I went to every home baseball game in my Sophomore year and cheered them on as they went into the MAC tournament, coming back from an eight-run deficit in the bottom of the ninth in an elimination game, and being sad when they lost in the next elimination game after being one strike away from their second straight MAC championship game, a loss that would be the program's final game.

The day of the announcement I remember going to the Cleveland Indians' game against the Oakland A's. As what I feel fate would have it, The University of Akron's only current Major League Player, Chris Bassitt of Oakland, was starting less than an hour away from where he played his college baseball, a day after that same program was eliminated. Chris was called up from Triple A shortly before because of an injury to another pitcher. Chris gave up just two runs in six innings of work, a solid outing, and the A's won. Seeing a pitcher from the University of Akron pitch so well in Cleveland the day the program was cut was incredible and spurred my interest in finding out why the team was cut. I never outwardly heard any justification other than budgetary, and I wanted to find out.

I noticed that most Akron baseball players transferred away, but many transferred to bigger schools, something which I found somewhat surprising, and left me wondering what this team could have done if it had stayed. Johnny Valek went to LSU and helped led them to the SEC semi-finals, while Daulton Mosbarger and Ohio State defeated Kris Simonton and Michigan State in the BIG Championship.

I enjoyed following players at their new schools and monitoring their progress, and interviewing them was extremely rewarding. I learned a lot about resilience and rolling with the punches. Every player and coach I talked to said how they didn't let themselves get down about the elimination and learned from it, and I think that tells a lot about their character.

All in all, I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to work on this documentary and I am so appreciative that I was able to do a documentary on a subject that was not necessarily a bright spot at the University of Akron. The chance to find out what elements have to go into a documentary was incredible and it really sparked a passion in me. Every time I find something interesting I think of how it could be a good documentary, and I hope someday, with the experience I've gained with this documentary, I can make more, regardless of where my career takes me. This is why I am so happy to have made a documentary: it does not require an official job or title, all it takes is a good story, and people willing to tell it.

Link to Project:

[Stealing Home](#)

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Zak Basch

Brian Bealko

Zach Beaver

Cathy Bongiovi

Robert Corts

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Patrick Kilkenney

Laura Miller-Francis

Kara Riccardi

SportsTime Ohio

Masashi Sakamoto

Don Wagner

ZTV

ZTV Sports Report

Additional Thanks:

Dayton Athletics

Kent State Athletics

Malone Athletics

Michigan State Athletics

Northwestern Athletics

Oakland Athletics Organization

Ohio State Athletics

Youngstown State Athletics