

Pre-Production Planning Document (MINI DOC)

GENERAL INFO

1. **Your Name:** Christian Schaaf
2. **PROJECT:** Mini Documentary/Biography/News Package

CREATIVE BRIEF

1. **What must it be?** A 2–5 minute mini-documentary that tells the inspirational story of my high school running coach: her running journey, her experience developing runner's dystonia, the challenges and setbacks she faced, and how she continues to run with resilience, purpose, and a renewed mindset. The film will blend interview footage, narration, and b-roll to create a compelling, cinematic short story.
2. **Who is it for?** The intended audience includes:
 - a. Runners navigating injuries or neurological conditions such as runner's dystonia
 - b. Fitness enthusiasts seeking motivation
 - c. Coaches and athletes looking to better understand athlete mindsets and perseverance
 - d. Anyone inspired by real stories of resilience and personal growth
 - e. Viewers interested in neurological conditions that affect movement
3. **How long must it be?** Between 2-5 minutes.
4. **What is your objective with the piece?** To raise awareness about runner's dystonia, highlight the emotional and physical journey of adapting to such a condition, and inspire viewers by showcasing my coach's strength, perseverance, and passion for running. I want the film to motivate others facing obstacles and provide representation for athletes dealing with under-discussed conditions.
5. **When is it due?**
 - a. **Pre-Production Document:** Sunday, December 7 at 11:59 PM
 - b. **Completed Mini-Documentary:** Sunday, December 14 at 11:59 PM
6. **What is the overall idea?** The documentary will explore my coach's evolution as a lifelong runner, her diagnosis with runner's dystonia, and how it changed her physical movement, mental approach, and relationship with the sport. Through storytelling and cinematic visuals, the piece emphasizes resilience, adjustment, and the enduring joy found in running.

7. **What is the storyline summary?** The film begins by introducing my coach and her early passion for running. As the story unfolds, she describes the onset of runner's dystonia: symptoms, confusion, fear, and frustration. We follow her emotional journey of adapting to new biomechanics, rebuilding confidence, and redefining success. The documentary concludes with her message of hope, perseverance, and continuing to run not in spite of dystonia, but alongside it.
8. **Elevator pitch:** When a lifelong runner suddenly loses control of her stride, she must relearn not just how to run, but why she runs. This short documentary follows an inspiring coach navigating runner's dystonia with courage, creativity, and an unshakeable love of movement.
9. **Tagline:** When the stride changes, the spirit doesn't.
10. **Look and feel description (including "pacing"):**
 - a. Cinematic
 - b. Warm, natural lighting
 - c. Inspirational and emotionally grounded
 - d. Muted color palette with pops of athletic color (track lanes, running shoes)
 - e. Mix of smooth slow-motion elements during b-roll along with faster shots of her running.
 - f. **Pacing:** at the opening, the pacing will be gentle and reflective. In the middle, it will be slightly faster as my coach discusses challenges and training adaptations. At the end, it will be hopeful and increase in momentum, building towards the triumph of continuing to overcome runner's dystonia.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

SUBJECT:

1. **Why did you choose this story?** My coach is one of the most inspirational people I know, both as a runner and as a mentor. Her positive attitude, resilience, and love for the sport shaped my own running journey. Her story deserves to be told, and it can resonate deeply with others who feel limited by physical setbacks or obstacles.
2. **Story ideas:**
 - a. Interviewing one of my coaches about their running journey
 - i. Ex.) Interviewing my high school running coach about her challenges and setbacks with runner's dystonia.
 - b. Interviewing my mom about her famous holiday cookies and how she gives them to her community (family, neighbors, co-workers, hair dresser, etc.) and spreads joy throughout the holiday season.

NARRATION/HOST:

3. **Who will lead us through the piece?** Me (Christian Schaaf).

4. **Narration ideas:** I will provide some background narration about my coach's story and can fill in any gaps of how to connect each part of the story together.
- Running looks effortless from the outside. But for some athletes, every step becomes a battle.
 - This is the story of my coach, whose greatest challenge didn't come from the miles, but from her own body.
 - For runners, rhythm is everything. But dystonia disrupts that rhythm completely.
 - Runner's dystonia affects muscles neurologically. It can change movement, balance, and confidence.
 - But my coach wasn't done fighting.
 - Her stride changed, but her spirit never did.
 - This is more than a story about running. It's a story about perseverance, about redefining strength, and about finding joy, no matter how the stride looks.

INTERVIEWS:

1. **Who will you interview?** My high school running coach, Dr. Maria Winters.
2. **Why is this person important to the piece?** She is the central subject of the documentary. Her lived experience with runner's dystonia provides authenticity, emotional depth, and an educational component. Her insight as a coach also offers inspiration to athletes and fitness communities.
3. **What questions will you ask?**
 - a. Can you introduce yourself?
 - b. Can you tell me about your early running journey? How did you first fall in love with running?
 - c. When did you first start noticing symptoms of runner's dystonia? What did it feel like physically and mentally?
 - d. Can you walk us through the diagnosis process? What was most confusing or frustrating about it?
 - e. How did runner's dystonia change your training? What did you do differently after the diagnosis?
 - f. What emotional challenges came with this condition? Fear? Grief? Frustration?
 - g. How did the diagnosis affect your relationship with running?
 - h. What helped you push through the hardest moments?
 - i. How did you reframe your relationship with running after the diagnosis?
 - j. What strategies or adaptations have helped you continue running?
 - k. How has this experience shaped you as a person?
 - l. What message do you have for runners facing similar discouragement or obstacles?
4. **What follow-up questions might be important?**
 - a. What was a specific moment you remember thinking, "I don't know if I can keep going"?
 - b. How did your family or athletes react to your diagnosis?
 - c. What do you wish more people understood about runner's dystonia?
 - d. Was there a turning point when you felt hope again?
 - e. Can you describe what a typical run looks like for you now?

B-Roll:

1. **What b-roll visuals will be important to convey the story? Keep in mind you should show what the interviewees are talking about.**
 - a. Slow-motion shots of her feet striking the track (to visually show dystonia symptoms)
 - b. Her running on a straightaway and bending around curves

- c. Close-ups: running shoes, laces, watch, breathing, hands
- d. Medium shots of her jogging on the track
- e. Stretching pre-run (hamstrings, quads, calves)
- f. Tying shoes
- g. Standing at the starting line
- h. Shadow running shots during golden hour
- i. POV from behind her training
- j. Track signage, lanes, and environment details

2. Any still images or charts or graphics?

- a. Still images of her from past races or coaching
- b. Ken Burns effect on track photos to emphasize mood
- c. Simple on-screen statistics about runner's dystonia prevalence, symptoms, or common challenges
- d. For any still images used, the Ken Burns effect will be applied.

3. Is the nat sound of the environment important? If so, be sure to record it properly. Yes. Natural sound will be integrated with the visuals to create the ambience of the track:

- a. Footsteps hitting the track
- b. Breathing during a run
- c. Crowd ambience (light cheers, murmurs)
- d. Wind across the field
- e. If needed, I can add some sound effects of the above sounds.

4. Additional B-roll ideas:

- a. Her writing in a training journal
- b. Close-up of her hands holding old race bibs or medals
- c. A wide shot of the empty track at sunrise or sunset
- d. Aerial-style low-angle shots of her stride
- e. Coaching moments (if applicable)
- f. Her sitting on the bleachers reflecting/contemplating

MUSIC:

1. **What is overall "mood" and "feel" of the piece?** Sporty, cinematic, introspective, resilient, and emotionally uplifting. A balance of vulnerability and strength.
2. **Music track ideas:**
 - a. Soft piano/guitar for intro narration
 - b. Slightly melancholic ambient track during discussion of setbacks
 - c. Motivational, slow-build cinematic track for the closing sequence
 - d. Genre: neo-classical, ambient indie, cinematic storytelling

PERMISSIONS:

1. **Am I allowed to film here? Do I need permission and/or a permit?** Yes.
 - a. **Interview:** Filmed inside my coach's home
 - b. **B-roll:** Filmed at a public track (or backup track if primary location is locked)
2. **Will any people be in my shots? Do I need permission and/or release forms?** Only my coach. She will complete the required permission and release form.

GENERAL:

1. **What gear do I need to pack and bring with me for the shoot? Film gear, sunscreen, water, etc.**
 - a. Camera, tripod, extra batteries, SD card, lighting materials, lavalier microphone, gloves, coat, water, permission form.
2. **How will I transport everything and keep it safe?**
 - a. I will drive to each location and store equipment securely in padded cases. All items will be placed in stable areas of the car to prevent movement during travel.
3. **Are there any potential hazards or complications at this location?**
 - a. **At her house:** Dog may bark or wander into frame: Plan to secure the dog in another room during filming.
 - b. **At the track:** Primary track may be locked; backup location secured and confirmed. Cold weather may affect equipment or athlete comfort: Bring warm layers and gloves.

SCRIPT

Name: Christian Schaaf

Title: When the Stride Changes, the Spirit Doesn't: Maria Winters' Running Story

VIDEO	AUDIO
<p>WS - Empty track at sunrise; faint fog or golden light over the lanes.</p> <p>CU - Slow-motion shot of her running shoes stepping onto the track.</p> <p>CU - Her hand pressing the start button on a GPS watch (thumb click).</p> <p>MS - Her silhouette jogging along the curve of the track.</p> <p>MS (Interview Setup) - Coach seated in her living room, natural light, clean background.</p> <p>CU - Warm close-up of her face as she begins telling her early running journey.</p> <p>B-roll:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CU - Her lacing up shoes.• CU - Hands flipping through old race bibs.• WS - Archival still photo of her finishing a race (Ken Burns effect). <p>CU - Her foot striking the track in slow motion. Slight instability or asymmetry shown visually (even if reenacted).</p> <p>Interview shot - MS as she explains symptoms.</p> <p>MS - She stands at the starting line, looking down at her legs.</p> <p>MS (interview) - Coach speaking.</p> <p>CU - Her face, showing emotion.</p>	<p>Ambient: Soft morning wind, distant birds, faint footsteps.</p> <p>SFX: GPS watch beep.</p> <p>Music: Soft, slow-building piano/guitar begins underneath.</p> <p>Narration/Voice Over: <i>"Running looks effortless from the outside. But for some athletes, every step becomes a battle. This is the story of my coach—whose greatest challenge didn't come from the miles, but from her own body."</i></p> <p>Interview: (Coach's response) <i>"Hi, my name is Maria Winters...I started running when I..."</i></p> <p>Music: Continues soft + hopeful.</p> <p>Narration: <i>"For runners, rhythm is everything. But dystonia disrupts that rhythm completely."</i></p> <p>Interview: (Coach's response) <i>"One day, something felt off..."</i></p> <p>SFX: Foot scraping, uneven stride, breath tightening (subtle, symbolic).</p> <p>Ambient: Wind brushing over the mic at the track.</p> <p>Interview: <i>"The diagnosis was confusing. Frustrating..."</i></p>

WS - Slow pan of an empty, quiet track.

Collage of Photos - using Ken Burns effect

Graphic visualizing runner's dystonia - apply Ken Burns effect

CU - Her doing strengthening exercises (band work, balance drills, core activation).

MS - Slow-motion of her practicing deliberate, careful strides.

CU - Her adjusting her stance or gait; intentional steps.

MS - Stretches pre-run

WS - She runs on the track confidently, even if the stride is adapted.

CU - Her feet striking track consistently

CU - Her smiling mid-run.

MS - She jogs toward camera along the straightaway, golden light behind her.

MS - Interview shot; warm lighting, emotional resonance.

WS - She walks off down the track, moving toward the horizon.

CU - Final close-up of her smile or determined expression.

Music: Switch to a softer, more melancholic piano phrase.

Narration:

"Runner's dystonia affects muscles neurologically. It can change movement, balance, and confidence. But my coach wasn't done fighting."

Interview:

"I started working with specialists..."

Narration:

"It wasn't about going back to who she was. It was about becoming who she could be."

SFX / Ambient:

- Footsteps on the track
- Breathing during exertion
- Watch beeping between interval

Music: Subtle rhythmic pulse begins lifting the energy.

Interview:

"Now I run differently..."

Ambient: Steady footsteps, rhythmic breathing, wind.

Music: Builds into inspirational, cinematic tone.

Narration:

"Her stride changed, but her spirit never did."

Interview (final message):

"If you're struggling, don't give up..."

Music: Reaches soft emotional peak, then gently fades.

Narration:

"This is more than a story about running. It's a story about perseverance. About redefining

*strength. And about finding joy-no
matter how the stride looks."*

(Fade music up)

(Fade music and ambient out)

(OPTIONAL) STORYBOARDS

If it is useful for you, sketch out a storyboard, for each of the visuals listed in your script above, or possibly the kind of b-roll shots you would like to capture. Be sure to clearly show the kind of shot (i.e. WS - Wide Shot, CU - Close Up, ECU - Extreme Closeup, O/S – Over Shoulder), and indicate any camera or subject movement. You might want to make a note of what this is and why this shot is important (i.e. “establishing shot for barn”, “show detail of blue flowers”, “show reflection of tree in fountain”, “visitor walking from right to left in frame”, etc.).

You can print out and sketch (hand draw) on the separate *Storyboard Template* document, then scan or snap a photo of it to add the completed storyboards here (as JPG files).

[If desired, insert all storyboard images here]

CREATE A PDF

When you are done creating this document, you should create a universal PDF document that can be easily posted to your blog or emailed (it's not safe to assume everyone has Microsoft Word, and the files can be very large).

To do this on a Mac, click File>Print and then click the option for PDF in the lower left, followed by "Save to PDF". Contact me if you need help on a PC.