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Mr. Speice

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Bri TV

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A Journey the Center of Sports

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Assessment:

The article, *A Journey to the Center of Sports*, is an informative essay telling the day in the life of an ESPN, "SPORTSCENTER" employee. It goes into great detail about the prep work necessary to execute a successful telecast. The article begins with how the SportsCenter crew preps from nine hours until airing all the way down to the last minute. They begin with a group meeting discussing and brainstorming recent sporting events to report about. After deciding which topics they want to present to the public, the crew starts collecting highlights, statistics, and key information about each topic and begin to write their scripts. Approximately, five hours from airing, the team begins to split the topics into segments and deciding how much time they want to spend on each segment. Once the show goes on air, the research crew keeps an eye out for breaking news, giving the broadcasters the opportunity to adjust their segment and report about a brand new event. Overall, the article showcases the qualities, cohesion, requirements, and work ethic needed in order to achieve a successful outcome within the sports broadcasting industry.

After reading the article, I strongly feel that I've gained a deeper understanding of the teamwork aspect of sports broadcast. Prior to reading this article, I always thought that the broadcaster was responsible for gathering hot topics, statistics, and highlights, however, the ESPN crew, does preliminary research as one unit, and lets the research crew do the advanced, detailed research. Although, that's the case for ESPN, as an aspiring sports broadcaster, I still need to take the initiative to educate myself on relevant, recent, topics, in order to be able to apply and share my knowledge with future mentors, colleagues, and bosses. This information is very relevant and helpful for my ISM topic, because working in a cohesive environment is something that I excel in. As an athlete, I've fell in love with the aspect of being apart of a team, because I was able to learn from my peers and utilize what they taught me in order to improve my skills. The same way I learn from my coaches and teammates on the track, I can apply to my broadcasting career.

Know that I have acquired more knowledge regarding sports broadcast from the behind the scenes realm, I am going to further my research. I am going to build upon what I already know, by practicing my own broadcast segments. Every Sunday, approximately two to three weeks from now, I am going to compile three sports topics to report about, one high school, college, and pro sporting event. I will conduct research about each topic, present the information to my audience and record myself. I will upload my videos via YouTube and begin a channel called "BriTV." This will allow me to showcase my skills to the public and begin to build a global audience, as well as, help me become more comfortable in front the camera. Although, I do not have a crew to assist me throughout my journey, my research and mentorship will be enough to guide me and help expand my YouTube channel.

## **A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF SPORTS**

Listen

Boys' Life goes behind the scenes at an ESPN production of "SPORTSCENTER"

It's 6 p.m. and the control room at ESPN studios in Bristol, Conn., has sprung to life. "SportsCenter" has just gone live to millions of TVs across America, and for the show's production team, it's game time.

Like a football coach, the producer calls out orders over a headset to his team -- some located on ESPN's sprawling campus, some of them hundreds of miles away at stadiums across the country. Inside the control room, a 40-foot-wide wall dances with dozens of live and taped images from the day's sporting events. The atmosphere has a NASA-like feel -- from the high-tech digital equipment to a 10-second countdown prior to each show "launch." While broadcasting sports news is not exactly rocket science, every episode of "SportsCenter" is carefully planned and timed to the second.

And 18 times a day, as sports news breaks and games unfold, each "SportsCenter" production starts with a blank slate and a world of possibilities. Here's a detailed look at just one day in this journey.

### Global Meeting

In a conference room **nine hours before the broadcast, a group of about 20 ESPN staffers -- representing "SportsCenter," ESPN.com and ESPNEWS -- meets to brainstorm stories for the day's coverage.** While ideas volley back and forth, staffers check smartphones for statistics and breaking news. Some features are obvious: College football season opens the next day, and Major League Baseball teams are jockeying for playoff positions.

But even small sports facts excite ESPN employees. One staff member mentions that the last time the same major-league teams were all in first place on Aug. 31, it was 1997 (when the Washington Nationals were the Montreal Expos). This gets added to the list of possible stories to consider, a thinly sketched "game plan" for

the day.

During his 12 years at ESPN, Jack Obring has come to know every detail of a "SportsCenter" production. As a senior coordinating producer, he is responsible for the five live broadcasts between 3 and 8 p.m.

Just one "SportsCenter" episode can involve as many as 50 to 60 people, including camera operators, writers, researchers, editors, directors and on-air personalities. Hundreds of people are involved in producing an entire day's worth of "SportsCenter."

### SportsCenter' Staff Meeting

A small "SportsCenter" team, including host John Anderson, meets to fine-tune the show's focus from the list of options discussed at the global meeting. The team must decide the key stories to cover because in the seven hours until broadcast, hundreds of clips -- from highlights to interviews -- need to be edited, field reporters need to be scheduled, graphics assembled and statistics compiled.

A portion of that work falls to Stuart Barbara, one member of a production staff of 10 developing the 6 p.m. show. On this day, Barbara is busy scheduling on-air personalities and guests. He's also working with producers of other ESPN shows, such as "Pardon the Interruption" and "College GameDay," to see what content they can provide for "SportsCenter," while monitoring the estimated 250 emails he receives per day.

### ESPN Newsroom

With less than five hours until broadcast, Jen Ahrens is in full work mode. Like every ESPN employee, her workstation includes a computer and small TV monitor showing what's currently airing on ESPN's family of

networks. Nearby, a giant wall-mounted world map highlights the 11 ESPN studio locations worldwide that broadcast international episodes of "SportsCenter" to more than 200 countries.

As a line producer, Ahrens' job is like a traffic cop's.

"I decide the order of the stories and how long the segments will be," she explains. She also tracks all the content, including graphics and highlights that are scheduled to be part of the show.

And if there's one thing ESPN has in abundance, it's sports highlights. The company estimates it has more than 2 million hours of footage in its archives. It would take a person 24 hours a day for 228 years to watch it all. But for people like Bryan Antos, that makes ESPN a sports-video playground.

With two hours until the show, Antos, a producing editor, is busy rifling through sports clips. He typically spends seven hours of his day cutting highlights for "SportsCenter," a fraction of which might see airtime. And he is not alone. There are more than 50 editing rooms on the ESPN campus, where thousands of images are reviewed and edited each day for the more than 6,500 hours of "SportsCenter" produced each year.

Often, Antos submits his final edits just minutes before the broadcast, when his handiwork becomes part of one of the most watched shows in America. In the United States alone, more than 148 million people -- the equivalent of nearly half the country's population -- view "SportsCenter" each month; that's enough viewers to fill every NFL stadium 70 times over.

John Anderson and Bram Weinstein, a "SportsCenter" anchor, get up from their desks where they've been typing their scripts for the past few hours. They head outdoors past the full-length basketball court and mini football field in the center of campus to the "SportsCenter" studios, one of 10 studios on ESPN's campus.

A day's worth of planning -- writing, research and editing -- is about to come together.

## Control Room

It's dark and cool in the massive control room in ESPN's Digital Center. Producer Rich Schroeder and director Vic DeLoureiro sit in the front row, monitoring a giant wall of sports clips. On one screen, a field reporter is going through a sound check. On another, there's a live feed of the crowd gathering at a football stadium. All will be woven together seamlessly to tell the day's top sports stories.

Schroeder knows the show won't go completely as planned, but that's one of the challenges he enjoys: "The show goes on air right at 6 p.m. and ends right at 7 p.m. If an interview we planned for two minutes goes on for three, we need to cut a minute from something else."

## Showtime

In the center of the control room wall, on a screen marked "on air," the opening "SportsCenter" montage appears. It's what viewers across America are seeing live. To the left, a screen marked "preset" displays what's scheduled to appear next in the show.

The screens change every few seconds at the commands of the director and producer: "Bring in screen 25; prepare the audio for screen 12; give me a wider angle on camera 2." Hundreds of decisions over the course of the hour are made and communicated. The talk and directions in the room are constant.

As Schroeder and his team carry out the day's plans, he constantly watches his computer for breaking news,

which can change the show's whole focus -- and content -- in an instant.

"If [New York Yankees shortstop] Derek Jeter announced his retirement while we were on air," Schroeder explains, "we'd change our plans and would be talking with someone in New York about Jeter within two minutes."

And researchers would be pulling statistics, and editors would be compiling Jeter's career highlights.

On this day, the show went largely as planned. And as a nation of fans got caught up on sports news, it was the behind-the-scenes work of hundreds of people that made it possible.

Left: Preparing for broadcast from SportsCenter Studio. Above: Control room action. Bottom: Operating a jib, a device that lets a camera be moved vertically, horizontally or both.

Above: Control room. Middle: A camera operator wears a steadicam. Mechanically isolated from the operator's movement, it allows for a smooth shot even when the operator moves quickly over an uneven surface. Below: Newsroom action.

Top: The "Top 10" plays/highlights are edited in the Digital Center. Below: Control room. Bottom: Another edition of "SportsCenter," with hosts Lindsay Czarniak and Kevin Negandhi.

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