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Utah State University Women's Soccer iPod Idol

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Myself

On a charter bus from Logan, Utah to Salt Lake City, Utah

August 2017

Utah State University Women's Soccer iPod Idol

Rite of Passage

Informant

My name is Mealii Enos and I am twenty years old. I was born and raised in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. I moved to Logan, Utah in the summer of 2016 for my freshman year of college and have lived here since. I am a student-athlete at Utah State University, and I just finished my sophomore season on the women's soccer team. I have absolutely loved my experience with Utah State Athletics thus far. I have been playing soccer since I was around ten years old and have been playing competitively since I was around thirteen years old. I am also an undergraduate at USU and double majoring in Special Education and Communicative Disorders.

Context

USU's soccer team is Division 1, and we play in the Mountain West Conference. This means we play in the highest division of collegiate competition and play other universities in the mountain west area. This rite of passage is done once a year by the Utah State Women's Soccer team at the beginning of the season. It takes place during our first bus ride to a game. We don't often play close enough to take a bus, so it's not how we normally travel. This year it was on the way to play in-state rival University of Utah. Generally, the seniors will start the ritual and every single new person on the team will have to perform. They have no idea before this that they are going to have to participate in a rite of passage. This means new freshman, but also new coaches, transfer players, academic coordinators, and marketing directors. For closer in-state games the team will bring people who normally don't travel to games with us, like academic coordinators and marketing directors. That's why they are there for this rite of passage when they normally wouldn't be. Transfer players are athletes that have transferred to play at USU after previously playing at another university. Academic coordinators are like counselors/advisors that provide support for the academic side of athletics. Sometimes coaches will even call out veteran players to perform again. The ritual will begin about halfway through the bus ride. I would not feel comfortable performing this folklore outside of the soccer team. It can be very embarrassing, and I wouldn't want anyone outside of soccer to see me do it. The name of this rite of passage is a parody of "American Idol" which is a popular singing competition television show. Instead of being these amazing singers like in the show, we are terrible singers singing along to songs from our iPods, which makes the name a little comical.

Texture

iPod Idol begins when the seniors call everyone to the back of the bus, where they are already sitting. They will just suddenly start yelling "Everyone to the back of the bus!" or "Back of the

bus!” Everyone who is a sophomore or older knows what’s going to happen and gets excited, but the freshmen have no idea what is going on. It is made clear that this is not an optional request. Everyone crams into the back seats, sitting three or four to a bench and standing in the aisle. Once everyone is there, the seniors will explain the game. Everyone new to the team or our program selects a song, whatever song they want, and must sing it while wearing noise-canceling headphones. People usually stick to classics or current/well known hits. For example, I sang “Burning Up” by the Jonas Brothers my freshman year. Popular artist choices include Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Hannah Montana, and Justin Bieber. Because they can’t hear themselves, they sound terrible. Even if people are decent singers the headphones will make them sound off key. It is encouraged to have fun with it and dance around while singing. They have to keep singing until the team starts clapping. This is usually after one verse and chorus, but sometimes the team makes a person go an awkwardly long time because it’s so funny. Once everyone new goes, sometimes the team or the coaches will call on older players to perform. People will sometimes do duets during this part. Occasionally, the team gets the coaches themselves to perform. Everyone knows that if our coach, Trevor, goes then he will pick on two or three other people who are quiet or shy to go, so the shy people try and hide from him after he sings. During the entire game, everyone has their phones out recording and taking pictures of people singing and posting it to social media (usually snap chat). There is no formal finish to the rite of passage. Once everyone starts getting bored or the songs get repetitive the team will collectively call for a “last one” and the next person to go is the last. Then the team claps for everyone and returns to their normal seats.



One of our freshman, Kami Warner, singing “You Belong with Me” by Taylor Swift.



On the left: Taylor Garza, a freshman, singing “She’s Country” by Jason Aldean.



On the right: Sadie Mertlich, a freshman, singing “Just the Way You Are” by Bruno Mars.

Texture

The texture of this folklore varies depending on if you are participating or watching. The people singing will sing very loudly and off key because they can't hear themselves. Often, their voice will crack or be very low pitched, which makes everyone else laugh. People who are shy will close their eyes while singing, or not move around, or try not to sing loudly. More outgoing people will dance, sing louder, gesture along with the lyrics, and laugh at themselves while doing so. There is a sense of vulnerability and nervousness while performing, and the person is visibly relieved when they are finished. The rest of the team as the audience is talking, laughing, and imitating the singers. For people who have done this rite of passage in past years, there is an attitude of "I had to do this before so now you have to." The environment is loud and energetic. The overall environment on the bus and of the team is excited, encouraging, and having fun. The rite of passage does involve a certain level of embarrassment for the person who is singing, and the team does poke a little fun at the people who are singing. However, the goal of this folklore is not to make people feel bad about themselves or to bully them. Instead, it develops a sense of unity. Our team is very close, and we spend extensive amounts of time together during season. This becomes a way to break the ice between team members and break down any nervousness or reservations between each other. People are cheered on when they are scared to perform, and everyone cheers for them when they finish. In the end, it brings everyone closer together.

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Introduction to Folklore/English 2210

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