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## **COVID-19 Restrictions Place Havoc on Family & Friends during the NCAA National Indoor Track & Field Championships!**

***For immediate release: Fayetteville, Arkansas-*** The current environment at the NCAA 2021 Division I National Indoor Championships can be likened to a scene stolen from the Academy Award Winning Movie based on a true story the “Chariots of Fire” produced many years ago to depict a scenario with restricted coaching access and personnel exclusion from physical presence at the competitive site. Due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic the environment has changed the atmosphere of the NCAA championships to a non-traditional approach filled with restrictions and hinderance of athlete support. Family and fans are not allowed into the Razorback Indoor Facility and no athletes coaches or staff can enter unless tested by a team of medical personnel assigned by the NCAA. Traditional routines and rituals established by athletes and coaches prior to the pandemic are now altered and disrupted from the normal.

In the movie, Sam Musabini private coach of Harold Abrams, was relegated to stay in a hotel room during the athlete’s bid to win the 100 meters at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris but was in earshot of the public address speakers being his only touch with the athlete. Since Sam was not on the official British Olympic Coaching Staff he was not allowed to participate during the contest. The scene shows the intense emotion and anxiety that presented itself with a helpless feeling and anticipation of the result. It was not until the British National Anthem was played that indicated Abrams had won the Olympic race and was presented the Gold Medal on the victory podium. Sam’s total elation resulted in jumping to his feet and smashing his hand through the crown of his straw hat! Sheepishly realizing his reactions brought him back to his senses and turned to pride and accomplishment. Such is the mood and atmosphere here at the University of Arkansas the host of the National Championships.

In the case of Anna Hall, University of Georgia Sophomore, with her father in attendance at the meet and he was not able to enter the stadium or even the practices facilities. Therefore, alternate plans were established, and dad had to change plans to ensure that Anna would still have his support.

Anna was ranked second in the national standings and poised to challenge the favorite entrant from Texas A&M University. Her father, David Hall, once an aspiring Decathlete from the University of Michigan was an elite athlete eventually invited to the US Olympic Training Center in 1989. David later became a strength coach and upon his completion of an MBA became a financial business entrepreneur. David is now in Sam’s shoes having to stay in a motel only receiving intermittent texts and videos from a Georgia assistant coach inside the stadium. There are five events in the Pentathlon each with its own peculiar physiological and psychological preparation. Each individual performance is scored with the final total score determining the champion. It is usually a back-and-forth competitive situation creating a four hour or more span of worry and anticipation for the final outcome. Family members, fans, and previous coaches that have supported Anna are desperately feeling the anxiety and the helpless feeling

of not knowing outcomes due to the inconsistency of the media coverage. Only final standings once confirmed will ease the tension and anxiety of a season's long wait.

The avid sports fan might think that these elite athletes are only motivated by a huge crowd with screaming at the top of their lungs and thunderous applause. Not the case as the only sound heard are the firing of the starting pistol and its echo. Performances were raised to an elite level as Anna's battle for first was an emotional high and sometimes hindered with a brief low event after event. As the final event, the 800, was contested a nervous and anxious dad had been running the race in his mind for Anna and now felt so helpless as to not being able to provide physical support. The result a "hat destruction" moment took place as dad had heard the echo of the stadium announcer that reverberated outside the stadium back door. Anna had finished as runner up to the eventual national champion that had set a collegiate record and one of the best performances in the world.

In retrospect one might find that the physiological and psychological preparations of practice and previous performances can and do establish a motivational effort and the aspiration to become the best is a long and arduous journey to excellence.

Congratulations Anna and Dad!!!