**HOME + AWAY (WORKING TITLE)**

**FEATURE DOCUMENTARY**

**SUMMARY:**
This is a story about the search for the American dream on the extreme edge of the nation. For the kids of El Paso’s Bowie high, it’s a dream inspired by family, fueled by sports, and deeply complicated by the US/Mexican border – the fault-line between two worlds.

Sports is at the heart of the film – for these kids it’s a way of building community and belonging, learning to overcome adversity, and build self-respect and confidence. Bowie High’s sports programs don’t have the resources of other schools – kids and coaches struggle to make ends meet, even paying out of pocket for equipment. Sports anchors the film, it’s both a core theme and a narrative through-line. It’s a way of visualizing the kids’ challenges and victories in an active, dynamic way. A way of bringing to life their spirit, their efforts to overcome the challenges they face – as the border’s many challenges threaten to disrupt this community.

Soccer player Erik Villa is one of the 400 students who cross the border each day to attend Bowie. Erik didn’t know English before he started at Bowie and is still struggling in his senior year. He’s worried that his grades might not only get him kicked off the soccer team but that he may not even graduate. We follow him as he struggles to take his team to the playoffs and realize his dream to be the first in his family to graduate high school.

Shyanne Muirgia is also a senior who has been wrestling since she started at Bowie, but has never been a district champion. This is her last chance but she has to juggle wrestling practice with working every day after school to help her disabled mother, who recently returned from prison.

And baseball player Francisco Matta spends half his time with his mother in El Paso and the other half with his father in Juarez. Francisco’s love of baseball began when he used to play catch with his dad on the streets of Juarez as a child. But now his father cannot cross the border to see his son play, as Francisco fights to win the district championship for the first time in more than four decades.

The idea of the borderland is also at the core of the story. It’s about lives lived between two worlds, divided by a fault-line crackling with seismic energy, a place forever in transition. Living on the border raises the stakes for these kids, makes life more turbulent, more dangerous. It’s a place where national policy, the drug war, and immigration mandates all have immediate and very real consequences – for kids who are already dealing with the everyday struggles of underprivileged high school student athletes. At the same time, it’s a place of connection, where cultures meet – in fact one of students prefers life in Juarez – so it’s not a purely negative place. We’ll explore both sides.
Providing context for the sports story is the element that unites every team here – Bowie High School. The school has always been an underdog – rivals describe it as “that poor Mexican school” – but the fact that Bowie High has always had to try harder, to prove themselves is a huge part of the story. The loyalty the students, coaches and alumni feel for the school goes beyond school spirit – it’s a bond, a kinship, a movement.

In addition, this is a Coming of Age story – as these underprivileged teens, try to navigate their path to their futures. For some, this is their last semester, their last athletic season – which have more meaning in the context of their lives in the borderland. They’re crossing another “border” – from childhood to adulthood, from high school to college or work, innocence to worldliness. Most of them believe in the American dream – that if you work hard, you can succeed – but it can be hard to keep the faith when so many obstacles are in their way...

It’s through their experiences that we’ll begin to understand the precarious world of the borderland, and it’s through sports that we’ll see their hopes, their heartbreaks and their triumphs.

**DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT**

I was particularly drawn to Bowie High School as a paradigm of life on the border. What makes this story stand out are the multiple elements that all come together to create an incredibly layered story mixed with danger, sacrifice and the search for a better life.

The heroes in this film show incredible courage and determination to triumph over adversities many of us couldn’t otherwise imagine. These are stories about kids, their parents — and entire communities — fighting to find and hold on to the American Dream. In an age where there’s so much to be depressed and divided about in the Red vs. Blue battles, these stories bring people together. They’re filled with heart and pain, loss and redemption — and they reflect what’s best in all of us. They give people something to believe in again.

I’m drawn to films about underdogs who are down, but not out. People who have taken hits, but refuse to give up. They represent what’s best in the human spirit. There’s something beautiful and poetic about their will, and these are stories that we hope will resonate and captivate an audience in need of heroes. The reality of their lives sometimes has a brutal rawness that’s unnerving. But interwoven with that is a surprising beauty of hope that will not be denied.

**PRODUCTION NOTES:**

**Bowie High School**

At Bowie High School, kids risk travel every day across the border from the drug war zone of Juarez, Mexico to a high school in El Paso that had been plagued by corruption and, like their students, is once more striving for greatness. Our way into these stories is how under funded sports in schools have ripple effects far beyond
just the kids who suffer because of it. Entire communities are impacted. Along with the kids, we’ll follow the coaches, who want to give them the best possible experience and equipment, but instead have to scramble to make do with virtually nothing.

Bowie High School is the 2nd oldest school in El Paso. It opened in 1928 as the “Mexican” school, whereas the oldest was the “white” school. There was immense poverty back then too, and the high school athletes often slept under the bleachers at night. Now, almost a century later, it’s still predominantly Mexican and mired in poverty.

But there’s a pride in the school, a pride in their heritage and a sense of legacy as many of the students have parents and grandparents that went to Bowie. It's a part of their culture.

However, as much pride as there is, it doesn’t change that this is a school struggling to provide for its students — especially in athletics. There is virtually no money for sports programs. To give a sense of how severe the budget cuts have been, the wrestling team used the money from recycled cardboard returns to buy wrestling shoes.

Bowie High School Students want to compete athletically at the top level. They have the will, they have the passion, and coaches willing to sacrifice everything to help the kids reach their goal. But they're always scrambling for the most basic equipment. All they want is an equal playing field against their opponents.

The Poorest Zip Code
This is one of the poorest zip codes in the entire country. Athletic funding is always near non-existent. The poverty that permeates the most destitute county in El Paso is particularly felt amongst Bowie’s students. 95% of the kids come from housing projects. Many are raised in single parent families and work afterschool jobs to help their families scrape by. Some live in one-room apartments. But strange as it sounds, the El Paso kids could be considered the Haves in this Have and Have Not scenario because there's safety on their side of the border.

A Tale of Two Cities
Roughly 1/4 of the kids who attend Bowie travel from the ravaged streets of Juarez, Mexico to El Paso each day in the hopes of bettering themselves and escaping where they're from. There’s a remarkable dichotomy between the two sides. Although extremely poor, this section of El Paso is safe and the people are hardworking. Whereas in Juarez, there's always danger lurking outside their doors — the diversity of the two settings make for characters themselves in our story.

The threat of Juarez violence hangs over nearly 400 students each day. Every time they go home there’s fear about what could happen. Most have been touched by the
drug wars in one way or another. But they also see that life doesn’t have to be that way, it’s why they face that fear, waking up at 5 AM each morning and brave the journey across the border. They legally cross through border patrol. Some of these kids have had family members killed. Two students were shot and killed several years ago. Just last year while practicing on the field, 100 yards away — yes, that’s how close the school is to Juarez — a Juarez cop was ambushed and killed within sight of the kids.

**Character and Story Approach**

This community is filled with engaging characters, emotionally evocative settings, and gripping stories. This is true documentary filmmaking — honest, unflinching, and gratifying to everyone touched by it. Not only by the physical journey of our players, but their emotional one as well. That’s what makes this project so important to me, to play some small part in shining a light on the plight of these kids.

**FILMMAKER BIO**

Matt Ogens is an award-winning filmmaker, known for an evocative visual aesthetic where image and narrative are intertwined. He works across a variety of media including advertising, documentary, virtual and augmented reality.

Ogens got his start directing long form docu-series for networks including MTV, VH1, CBS, and CNN, and earned three Emmy nominations for his work for ESPN. His feature documentary “Confessions of a Superhero” premiered at SXSW to critical acclaim. Ogens segued into commercials and branded content, working with top agencies and brands. He continues to work across both commercials and long form entertainment.

Other notable projects include the short documentary “Kid Yamaka,” which launched on Vice; “North VR,” a virtual reality film shot in Detroit; and “From Harlem with Love” about the Harlem Globetrotters for ESPN’s Primetime Emmy-winning “30 for 30” series.

Current projects include “Why We Fight,” a critically-acclaimed new documentary series, which Ogens co-created and executive produces for Verizon’s go90 network and a recent Emmy nomination for “LA Louvre,” an augmented reality film for RYOT and Huffington Post, which was recently nominated for an Emmy Award.

[www.mattogens.com](http://www.mattogens.com)

**PRODUCTION COMPANY BIO**

Bullitt Entertainment is a fully-integrated branded entertainment studio— part creative agency, part production company, part talent agency—that gives brands access to a deep roster of Hollywood’s foremost writers, directors and technologists (the creators behind Seinfeld, Game of Thrones, Usual Suspects, The Blindside, Old School, Mission Impossible, Curb Your Enthusiasm, and more).
Bullitt was founded by the Russo Brothers (directors of Avengers 3 & 4, Captain America Winter Soldier and Civil War, Arrested Development) and Justin Lin (director of Fast & Furious 3-6, Star Trek Beyond, Scorpion) to create content that breaks through and builds brands. From content people watch (e.g., documentaries, digital shorts, etc) to content they interact with (e.g., AR apps, VR installations, etc).

www.bullittbranded.com

CREDITS
Directed by Matt Ogens

Produced by Todd Makurath
Luke Ricci
Nathaniel Greene
Matt Ogens

Director of Photography John Tipton

Editor Dan Shulman-Means

Music Khari Mateen
Greg Kuehn

Tribeca Digital Studios and Dick’s Sporting Goods Foundation presents
A Bullitt Production
In association with Mother + Father

Co-Producers Vertel Scott
Chris Greene

Associate Producers Michael Cheng
Joshua Roth

Research + Writing Joshua Roth
Charlie Short
Scott Burn

Additional Cinematography Ellie Ann Fenton
Andrew Shuford
Bryant Marcontel
Benjamin Kitchens

Co-Editor Andrew Fredericks
Additional Editors

Mel Rodriguez
Tania Levia
Cristhian Arias
Siara Haider