

Producer discusses Clemson movie filming

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CLEMSON — The producer of the Walt Disney Pictures movie inspired by a former Clemson University football player says a scene shot during tonight's football game will be used at the end of the movie, which is set to be released "in about a year."

Titled "Safety," the movie called has filmed on Clemson's campus since Sept. 14, and production will run through Monday.

The movie is inspired by the story of former Clemson football player Ray Ray McElrathbey, who adopted his then-11-year-old brother, Fahmarr, in 2006. Jay Reeves will play Ray Ray, and Thaddeus Mixon will play Fahmarr.

Students and fans have the chance to be part of the major motion picture during tonight's game against Charlotte, set to kick off at 7:30 p.m.

Fans are encouraged to stay in Memorial Stadium during halftime for the quick window of filming.

"We're trying to capture everything about the school. We broke it up into the football portion and non-football portion," producer Mark Ciardi said. "The response, I think, has been pretty amazing throughout the community. We're hoping the fans support our halftime — seven minutes of shooting — and they can show what I've seen at Death Valley the last couple of games I've been at."

Filming will focus on actors running down the Hill, followed with the filming of two defensive plays and a kickoff.



PHOTO COURTESY TIGERNET

Mark Ciardi, the producer of the Walt Disney Pictures movie inspired by a former Clemson football player who adopted his younger brother, speaks to the media about the ongoing filming of the movie.

"It's all going to look very strange when we're shooting," Ciardi said. "There's going to be a lot of cameras out there and switching between our double lead actor and lead actor. The hope is we can get the fans fired up, and we'll have Dale (Gilbert), the PA announcer, have a script to follow, and we'll remind people to keep in their seats."

The crew has avoided filming at locations around Clemson's campus updated since 2006, and Ciardi said an announcement will likely be made asking fans to put their iPhones away during the halftime shot.

Other portions of the film will be done in Atlanta, he added.

Ciardi has been a producer for several major motion pictures, including "Miracle," "The Game Plan," "Secretariat" and "Million Dollar Arm."

He said the movie has been in the making for more than a decade.

"I've been working on this thing for 12 years and brought it over to Disney about a year and a half ago and continued to develop the script, and we are now here shooting," he said. "All these things become a labor of love, and I've spent a lot of time here at the school over the last couple of months scouting the whole school and going to see a couple games and being a part of what it is here. It's pretty awesome."

Ciardi said the halftime scene will be at the end of the film, which is planned for release "in about a year."

Disney has the option to release it in theaters or on its new streaming service, Disney Plus.

"We're so fortunate to be here and part of this," he said. "It's all about family, and I think Ray's story exemplifies that with the support from the school and how that all laid out."

McElrathbey took custody of his younger brother in 2006 when his mother was fighting a crack cocaine addiction.

In 2008, former head coach Tommy Bowden did not renew McElrathbey's scholarship after he suffered a torn ACL, but offered him a graduate assistantship in the athletic department that would've paid for school. He elected to instead transfer to Howard University after graduating from Clemson and ultimately finished his playing career at Mars Hill College.

Ciardi said Ray Ray has been "behind the camera" and helped train actors.

"It's very surreal for him," Ciardi said.