Final Documentary Script Draft

SB (Fady Ussama): I was really passionate about playing water polo because I played water polo for twelve years.

NAT Sound: Person swimming (in background)

SB (Mariam Amthal): I don’t play for money. I play for fun, for the love of the game. I’m passionate about the game

NAT Sound: Volleyball practice (in background)

SB (Sherif Adham): Without answering the question, it is very clear that I was very passionate. As I told you I played for 16 years’ old

SFX: Crowd watching Judo game (in background)

Music: Fade in music Rains of Castamere

Narration: Fady Ussama, Mariam Amthal and Sherif Adham are the names of the people you just listened to. These people have a story. Each faced a struggle to excel in what they love thanks to Egypt’s perception of sports.

SFX: Football crowd celebrating goal

Narration: Football is by far the most popular sport in Egypt, which has lead to it receiving extra attention and care that has stepped on the recognition of other sports such as squash, judo, volleyball and handball.

Players of these sports suffer the most, as they do not gain as much support as their football player counterparts to excel. Not to mention how they are made to feel that no matter how hard they try or how much they achieve, they will not be recognized.

SB (Fady Ussama): People didn’t look at us as if we were playing an important sport.
SB (Mariam Amthal): Maybe volleyball, basketball and all these stuff we don’t get much attention. We don’t travel to as many trips as they do in the football team and we have many problems with the federation.

Narration: Obscure sports players’ struggles are not only limited to how football overshadows their achievements. According to the Global Coalition against corruption, Egypt ranks as the 68th most corrupt country in the world. This filters through to sports, affecting the athletes’ chances of shining on larger stages.

SB (Sherif Adham): I had a competition before and I won it, but they didn’t qualify me for the world championships as I had a problem with my coach as the coach thought someone else should travel.

Music: Fade out Rains of Castamere

SB (Sherif Adham): Who is that other person? The coach’s son.

Music: Fade in Lumen

Narration: Yet the biggest obstacle faced by non-mainstream sports remains the funding they receive. Financial issues have caused numerous problems for athletes, and in many instances have meant that they missed opportunities to travel or train properly.

SB (Mariam Amthal): The last incident this year, my team, the national team, they were qualified to go to the world cup but the federation said that they have no budget.

SB (Sherif Adham): They have to buy the judo suits for us, but they don’t. And Judo suits aren’t cheap at all. The one that you are authorized to play international tournaments with is 3000 pounds.
Narration: 3000 pounds is equal to 165 dollars, a hefty sum of money. According to Fady, he started water polo with the expectation that his club would treat his injuries since he represented El Ahly sporting club in national tournaments, but he found that even that kind of support isn’t given to him. While Sherif also made it clear that in Judo, all competitions were played in halls, and due to the federation’s reluctance to pay for high quality halls, he encountered many situations where he had to watch his colleagues faint or play with high blood pressure himself because of how the halls had no ventilation.

Music: Fade Out Lumen

Music: Fade in Light of the Seven

Narration: Moving away from the issue of funding, it is worth mentioning that in terms of international performances, many sports achieve so much more than football but get a small fraction of the attention it does.

SB (Sherif Adham): I will be more specific that I feel like the obscure sports they are mainly individual sports such as judo, wrestling, boxing, fencing. If you concentrated, you will find that these sports are the main sports that raise the Egyptian flag in international ceremonies. The best achievements and the best results came from this kind of sports.

Narration: But what is really startling, is how all these factors have pushed many athletes into quitting practicing sports, logically meaning that Egypt loses a large pool of talent each year who give up simply because they feel that their respective clubs and federations are limiting them rather than giving them support to grow and excel.
SB (Fady Ussama): This was one of the things that made me quit, I reached a point where I cannot excel more without being funded by the club. We didn’t do any sports camps for the major tournaments.

Narration: Fady’s reasons for quitting mainly revolved around financials and feelings that his sport was treated as a second hand priority, Sherif quit due to the corruption he constantly faced by his federation. While Mariam quit as she claimed she felt disrespected by her coaches who did not appreciate her efforts in a time where her father was suffering from cancer.

SB (Mariam Amthal) I had to stay with him in the hospital in the 6th of October but my trainings were in Maadi, so it was really really hard for me to cope with both. I tried to maintain going to practice and visiting my father. Then we had a championship in Peru but I had to apologize. When I talked to my captain about it and someone else could go and we would win because it was an easy championship. He wanted me to quit from the national team and he said it was inappropriate.

Narration: However, Mariam still has hope, as she found an opportunity to continue practicing sports during her years as a student at AUC, claiming that had she played under the same conditions at Heliopolis club, she might have never considered quitting volleyball in the first place.

SB (Mariam Amthal): Of course I see many differences, at least they send us to trips, championships, international championships. They make us engage in new experiences, the courts, we can play on them and the material they are made of is really good.

Music: Fade out Light of the Seven

Music: Fade in Egyptian national anthem
Narration: So, since there ARE institutions in Egypt which give players of obscure sports the room to grow and excel, Egyptian sports officials and federations must re-consider how they will do the same, as these people have the right to practice sports and dream of raising the Egyptian flag one day.

Music: Fade out Egyptian National Anthem

Music: Fade in Progeny

Tag: This audio documentary is produced by Kareem El Kahky for the Audio Production course at the American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox. Special thanks to Mariam Amthal, Fady Ussama and Sherif Adham for their time. The music used in this documentary is Rains of Castamere by Sigur Ros, Lumen by Joseph Trapanese, Light of the Seven by Ramin Jawadi, Progeny by Hans Zimmer and the Egyptian National Anthem. NAT sound and sound effects were collected by me and from youtube.com.

Music: Fade out Progeny