BTN features Street on most recent episode of “The Journey”

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Across the state of Iowa, there was plenty of build-up for last Sunday’s episode of the much-acclaimed Big Ten Network series “The Journey: Big Ten Basketball.” One of the episode’s story-lines chronicled the 20th anniversary of Chris Street’s death and how Iowa went about honoring him that evening during its game against Wisconsin.

Overall, I’ve always felt BTN has done a fantastic job with this series because it manages to provide a side of players and coaches that is rarely seen. Sunday’s episode of “The Journey,” and specifically, the segment about Street, was no exception.

After leaving Purdue’s Mackey Arena late Sunday evening, I proceeded to watch one of the replays of this episode start to finish because like many, I was curious to see how this turned out. Earlier in the week, I spoke over the phone with BTN coordinating producer Bill Friedman to gather some insight from him about the makings of BTN’s work surrounding the Street story.

Friedman said telling the story “made sense,” especially after learning details featured in many of the stories written earlier about Street (including my own). Details like Iowa playing a Wisconsin team featuring former Hawkeye assistant Gary Close, who helped recruit Street to Iowa, and other things done by the school that night.

“Most of the players on my staff are old enough to remember Chris Street, remember the kind of player that he was and remember the tragic situation around his death,” Friedman said. “Our show is to kind of humanize the league and the conference and we want to hear this story of a guy 20 years ago who still has an enormous impact and meaning to the Iowa basketball program.”

From the humanization aspect, I thought BTN’s work was solid. It captured footage from inside the Street household and showed all the memorabilia his family held onto. The producers also got key people to open up about Street – family members, Close, former Iowa head coach Tom Davis, etc. The footage captured here was powerful. Even the interview on camera with current Iowa coach Fran McCaffery resonated.

I liked that BTN managed to obtain footage from Street’s final game against Duke, as well as the first game played at Carver-Hawkeye Arena after his death when Iowa played Michigan. From a storytelling perspective, the footage from those games (especially that Michigan game) complemented everything else told up to that point.

With this episode also telling two other stories, I feel the best thing BTN did here was make the Iowa-Wisconsin game played Jan. 19 its own separate segment at the very end. There’s a saying in journalism about being able to “show, don’t just tell.” For the most part, I thought BTN did a nice job of showing what that night at Carver-Hawkeye Arena was about.

Personally, I was a bit surprised by the lack of footage surrounding the halftime ceremony honoring Street, but that was really the only major criticism I had after watching this. BTN did capture the team coming out of the locker room with the plaque of Street prominently displayed. It did capture pregame footage of Close interacting with Street’s parents.

It ended by showing the postgame inside the Iowa locker room, which Friedman said would be “the highlight” of the episode. Street’s parents got a chance to interact with the current players and were then given the game ball by McCaffery. Being able to show this at the end illustrated the connection between Iowa past and present and that’s something I could tell others who watched this were able to appreciate.

This, overall, was a job well done by those associated with putting together, “The Journey.”

For those who missed this episode, BTN is replaying it numerous times over the course of the week. Below are the listings for when it will be on air (all times listed are Central):

Monday, Jan. 28 – 11 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 29 – 1:30 a.m., 8 a.m., 2 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 30 – 2 a.m., 10 p.m., 11 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 31 – 10:30 a.m., 10 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 1 – 10 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 2 – 3:30 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m., 9:30 p.m.