

Dane DiLiegro's Path to Becoming the Predator

Career takes former basketball starter from Durham to Italy to Hollywood

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DANE DILIEGRO OF "PREY" POSES FOR A PORTRAIT FOR TV GUIDE MAGAZINE ON JULY 21, 2022, IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA. PORTRAIT BY MAARTEN DE BOER/GETTY IMAGES

What do basketball, butchering, Anthony Bourdain and bad-guy movie monsters have to do with each other?

Admittedly, not much. But they are all connected if you are Dane DiLiegro '11 and you're on a career journey that has taken you from New England to Italy to Hollywood in a relatively short few

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years.

DiLiegro became a household name, if not a recognizable face, with last summer's "Prey," a prequel to the Predator series of action-horror movies first made famous by Arnold Schwarzenegger. DiLiegro played the Predator — a human-hunting, highly evolved alien who lands on Earth. The film was a hit with critics and audiences for its action sequences, its casting of Indigenous actors and the powerful cast performances, including DiLiegro's.

"I just feel like I was super fortunate that all the pistons fired together and at the right time," DiLiegro told UNH Magazine during an interview this summer amid the buzz about the movie.

Basketball Career and European Adventures

DiLiegro was not a star student at UNH, he admits, but basketball fans will remember him as a star player during his undergrad years. He started all four years, and after graduating with a degree in tourism, he spent the next eight years playing professionally in Italy and briefly in Israel. In a nod to his Italian heritage (his father, fellow alum and Wildcat basketball player Frank DiLiegro '76, comes from an Italian family), DiLiegro took an active interest in the culinary culture of Italy. He



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eventually became apprentice to famed Tuscan butcher Dario Cecchini.

After a few years in Europe he began to think about what he would do next when he was done with basketball.

He wanted to pursue his passion of culinary travel — exploring the world and its cultures through food. He had designs on being the next Anthony Bourdain; he

created a YouTube series as a pilot showing his adventures with food and other explorations. He titled it Adventure Monday, because Mondays were the only days the pro ballplayer had off from the sport.

Back home in Massachusetts in 2019, on a whim he decided to answer an ad for extras in a Boston movie shoot for Ryan Reynolds' "Free Guy."

Dane was never used in Reynolds' flick, but he still counts that day as the moment where his Hollywood career started: a stunt coordinator working on the film told the 6-foot, 8½-inch-tall Dane he should pursue an acting career.

He moved to L.A. intent on making a dream come true — pitching the travel show, or at least following up on the stuntman's advice.

One of them worked. DiLiegro's first gig was starring in a Korean series for Netflix titled "Sweet Home" where he played Muscle Monster. He would go on to play the demon Ba'al in "American Horror Story," the Dragior in the Disney series "The Quest" and

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Master Chief in the Halo video game commercials. Earlier this year he was in Doja Cat's music video for her hit "Get Into It (Yuh)."

For "Prey," DiLiegro spent three months shooting in Calgary — something he called a physically grueling experience, even for a former professional athlete. A lot of it had to do with the Predator's look, which comes in the form of six different suits. The creature's head (there are actually four of them, with two being controlled remotely by puppeteers) weighs 15 pounds and sits on top of Dane's head, meaning he was really looking out of what we see as the Predator's neck.

DiLiegro, who went to mime school and has studied acting since moving to L.A., says playing monsters and creatures like the Predator is even more challenging than if he were acting as a human with dialogue.

"I don't have the luxury of words, so my hands became a big communicator, and also my breathing was a big way I conveyed this character's story," he explains. "Then I have to remember choreography, blocking, timing; then I have to act on top of that. And I can only see three feet in front of me, because of the makeup and costume. There's definitely a lot to juggle there."

So unfortunately for culinary travel show fans — but very fortunately for DiLiegro — the offers just keep on coming. He'll appear in the next "Guardians of the Galaxy" movie, and last year was shooting a project with LucasFilm, George Lucas' production company, home of the "Indiana Jones" and "Star Wars" franchises.

And while he once thought he might stay in the monster genre, the more time he spends in the industry, the more he realizes he wants to move on to more dramatic roles.

"I want to be a doctor, or a lawyer, or just a guy scooping ice

cream,” says DiLiegro. “It would be great to show my acting skills that way.”

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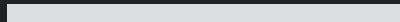
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