



Encyclopedia of Sports Films

By K Edgington, Thomas Erskine, James M. Welsh

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Whether chronicling an athlete's rise, fall, and redemption or following a team's improbable triumph on the field, sports have been a favorite theme of filmmakers almost since movies were first produced. And whether focusing on soccer (*Bend It Like Beckham*), boxing (*Rocky* and its sequels), hockey (*Slap Shot*), baseball (*Bull Durham*), football (*The Longest Yard*), basketball (*Hoosiers*), cycling (*Breaking Away*), or tennis (*Wimbledon*), such films capture the competition and thrill of sport. All major films with a primary focus on athletic endeavor are contained in *Encyclopedia of Sports Films*. In this volume, more than 200 fictional feature-length movies released between 1925 and 2010 are described, including comedies, dramas, and biopics. While the focus is on Hollywood productions, independent films and foreign releases are also represented. Though boxing and baseball films have tended to dominate the genre, many other sports are also included here, including skiing, curling, and cricket.

Arranged alphabetically by title, each main entry contains a synopsis of the film, principal production information, and a critical analysis. In addition to the main entries, credits and brief descriptions for more than 200 films are also provided. DVD and VHS distributors are included, if available. Appendixes include made-for-television movies, documentaries, and films based on or inspired by true events and persons. For teachers who wish to incorporate films into their lesson plans, as well as librarians ordering titles for their patrons, *Encyclopedia of Sports Films* will be a valuable resource.

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Editorial Review

Review

Edgington (English, Towson Univ.) and Erskine and Welsh (cofounders, *Literature/Film Quarterly*) have produced a specialized encyclopedia describing sports films across categories such as silent films, prominent directors, independent productions, major hits, and obscure movies. Each film entry identifies production crew (from director to costume designer), cast members, running time, and available format (DVD and/or VHS). This information is followed by film synopses and relatively brief evaluations. The oldest film is *The Freshman* (1925), produced by and starring the successful comic Harold Lloyd and featuring action sequences performed by members of the University of Southern California football team. Coverage extends through 2010. There are six appendixes: films by sport, a chronological title list, movies made for television or direct to video, movies inspired or based upon actual events, sports documentaries, and ESPY Awards for best sports movies. These are followed by a bibliography, index, and information about the authors....**BOTTOM LINE** By providing film synopses and evaluations, Edgington and team have developed an engaging encyclopedia that should appeal to individuals interested in film studies, sports, and the history of popular culture. Recommended for film reference collections. (*Library Journal*)

Intending “to present a representative sample of the range of films that have been classified as sports films,” this encyclopedia covers more than 400 movies, excluding documentaries; films not readily available; made-for-TV movies (with a few exceptions); and films about dog shows, academic or intellectual contests such as spelling bees or chess, and bullfighting. Beginning with early examples like *The Freshman* (1925), coverage continues to the remake of *The Karate Kid* in 2010. Each entry starts with a boxed listing of credits, run time, and availability in either DVD or VHS. More than 200 films, such as the *Marx Brothers’ Day at the Races* and all the Rocky films, receive expanded treatment that provides some commentary on plots and themes as well as a detailed plot summary. Other entries consist of the box and a one- to two-sentence summary. Some black-and-white photographs are included. Six appendixes follow the A–Z entries: “Films by Sport,” “Chronological Title List,” “Movies Made for Television or Direct to Video,” “Movies Inspired By or Based Upon Actual Events,” “Sports Documentaries,” and “ESPY Awards for Best Sports Movie.” A bibliography of books and articles precedes the index. This work is a valuable addition to public and academic libraries with an interest in either sports or films. The appendixes identifying movies by sport and those based on actual events will help anyone looking for movies on specific sports or “true” stories. (*Booklist*)

Teachers use sports films in the classroom as an instructional tool, and scholars generally agree that depictions of sports in film can serve to reinforce cultural values in powerful ways. This encyclopedia by Edgington (Towson Univ., Baltimore) and Erskine and Welsh (cofounders, *Literature/Film Quarterly*) covers all major films with a primary focus on athletic endeavor. It describes more than 200 fictional feature-length movies released between 1925 and 2010, including comedies, dramas, and biopics. Though it features primarily Hollywood productions, it includes independent films and foreign releases. The authors exclude documentaries, films not readily available in VHS/DVD format at the time of publication, and made-for-television movies, except for a few exceptional titles. Despite the dominance of boxing, football, basketball, and baseball films in the genre, this volume discusses many other sports, including auto racing, skiing, and soccer. Arranged alphabetically by title, each main entry presents a synopsis of the film, principal production information, and a critical analysis. Entries for minor films have one-sentence synopses. The authors, who clearly are film aficionados, offer very well-written synopses that provide insights beyond the superficial. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All libraries; lower-division undergraduates and above, and general readers. (*CHOICE*)

This book cruises through 100 years of just about any sport you can think of that's been committed to film. Whether it involves travelling at fast speeds in motorised or pedal-powered vehicles to opponent match encounters, is team or mano-a-mano based or rain, shine, snow, sky and water-based, all sports are covered. (*Filmwerk* 2011-09-01)

This work provides a much needed update to the study of sports films, covering more than 20 years of film releases that have appeared since the publication of *Sports Films: A Complete Reference*. It is accessible, affordable, and handsomely illustrated with black and white film stills. *Encyclopedia of Sports Films* would be a fine addition to any public or academic library. (*Reference Reviews*)

This is an informative work on sports films that have a story line focusing on an athletic endeavor. The main emphasis is on Hollywood productions, with significant independent and foreign releases mixed intermittently. Documentaries have been excluded from the full entry list, as well as most made-for-television movies, yet dedicated appendixes for selected works in these genres are included in the back. Other appendixes, such as films based on actual events, a chronological list of sports films, and ESPY awards, are also included. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

Encyclopedia of Sports Films consists of detailed synopses and production credits for some 200 narrative films that place sports, athletes, or competition in the foreground. This is the only reference work of its kind to span as wide a range of film history, from 1925's *The Freshman* to the 2010 remake of *The Karate Kid*, while providing immediate access to significant film titles by sport. *Encyclopedia* authors Edington, Erskine, and Welsh make the wise choice to sacrifice comprehensiveness for salience and impact, selecting representative works and considering them at length. This work provides a much needed update to the study of sports films, covering more than 20 years of film releases that have appeared since the publication of *Sports Films: A Complete Reference*. It is accessible, affordable, and handsomely illustrated with black and white film stills. *Encyclopedia of Sports Films* would be a fine addition to any public or academic library. (*Reference Reviews*)

About the Author

K Edgington is associate professor at Towson University.

Thomas Erskine and **James M. Welsh** (Salisbury, MD) are cofounders of *Literature/Film Quarterly*.

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