

Movie Review

Blue Pride State Champs!!

The Story of 2003....

By Lawrence Williams

Forget Hoosiers! Forget Chariots of Fire! Forget Rocky! If you want to see a terrific movie of the human spirit, that has heart-stopping action, compelling human drama, biting humor and pathos this is the movie for you. Actually, Blue Pride has it over the other aforementioned films because this is a documentary. There are no carefully shaved facts. This is all true. It is the real deal.

Co-directed by Andy Cohen and David Gardella, it is quite simply a masterful work. Blue Pride tells the story of the Quakers, the Brooklyn Friends School's boys varsity basketball team and their rise from obscurity to State Champions during the 2002-2003 season. Led by Head Coach Vlad Malukoff and ably assisted by coaches Maurice Washington, and Mike Petelka, as well as athletic director David Gardella's this is both a true Cinderella tale and an amazing story of profiles in courage. Blue Pride shows how this basketball team from a small Independent School in Downtown Brooklyn with no track record for basketball titles, overcame tremendous odds to win the State Title. The film is well paced, tightly edited and one can scarcely believe that the running time is a just under two hours.

The Quakers, in this remarkable season were comprised of a truly outstandingly committed group of young athletes. One is challenged in such a short review, to highlight the accomplishments of so many in such a small space. However, Kyle Neptune, who later went on to play professionally, was noticeably the star player. His insights and down-to-earth observations grounded the film in a very positive manner. However, Kyle could not have done it without team leader Chad Levy, the athletic prowess of Edson Elcock, the dazzling versatility of Jordan Foster, and the gritty determination of Ian Thomas. Kudos must also go out to Kenneth Mugai, and the team managers who contributed tremendously to the teams effort. Alap Vora, whose humorous asides brought great joy and warmth to this effort stole the show. Juniors Ryan Fischer-Werner and Richard Hempel's quiet humility on and off the court, brought tremendous grace to the project. The film also captures Vlad's passion and coach Mike's playful good humor, warmth and humanity. The film is rightly dedicated to his memory. Coach Mike passed away in 2008.

The second half of the film is the actual footage of the championship game at the Civic Center in Glens Falls. It is heart-stopping in its intensity. The final ten minutes (including overtime) when Brooklyn Friends plays their opponent are mesmerizing. This is quite a feat in a film in which one knows the outcome. If you have the opportunity to see Blue Pride, don't miss it. You will leave as I did, a bit dazed and in awe of the triumph of the human spirit. It gave me a heightened respect for athletes. Quite simply, do yourself a favor and see this film.

I give this film 4 and 1/2 basketballs

BLUE PRIDE all the way!!