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'When the Game Stands Tall'

By Derek Zemrak

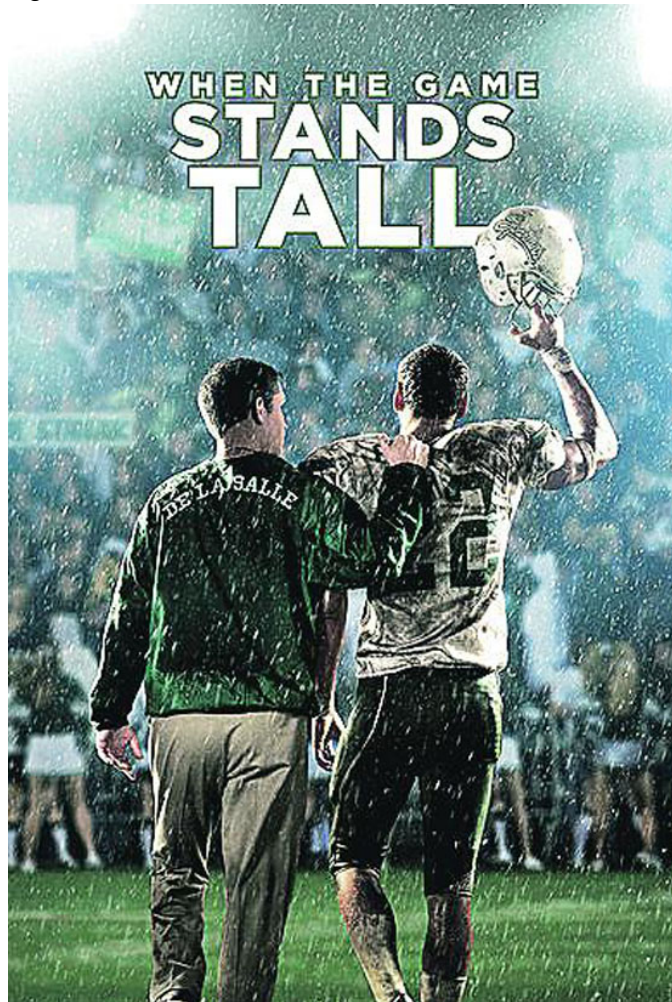


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Hollywood loves to produce sports themed movies and over the years they have scored on "Hoosiers," "Rudy," "The Blind Side," and "Remember the Titans." But Hollywood has also disappointed viewers several times with films like "Gridiron Gang," "Johnny Be Good" and "Summer Catch." If you missed these titles you did not waste two hours of your life. If you did see them, sorry, you wasted two hours of your life.

Now Hollywood has produced the film "When the Game Stands Tall," from the book of the same title by former Contra Costa Times sports writer Neil Hayes, based on one of the greatest sports records in history - De La Salle's historic 151-game winning streak that spanned more than a 12-year period. Yes, the Bay Area's De La Salle High School is a Roman Catholic boys' school in Concord. Over a 12-year period and a national record there should be a solid dramatic movie in there somewhere. The story focuses on head coach Bob Ladouceur (portrayed by Jim Caviezel, "The Passion of Christ," "The Thin Red Line") and his coaching style as he builds a family among the players. "It's not about the sports; it's about growing up, forgiveness, commitment and brotherhood." The movie also addresses Ladouceur's family life - especially his relationship with his wife Bev, played by Oscar nominee Laura Dern ("Rambling Rose"), and his son Danny (Matthew Daddario). This all seems like enough material for a miniseries, not a two-hour movie. Whenever Hollywood purchases the movies

rights of a real life story, they retain creative control and also have the liberty to embellish. Anyone who followed the remarkable winning streak of De La Salle or just casually read about the team in the newspaper will know the producers and writers exercised their creative license.

The three major storylines are based on factual events: the 151-game winning streak; player Terrance Kelly's murder in Richmond; and ending the streak to Bellevue, Wash., 39-20 in 2004. Even these three major storylines have had creative license added to them. The rest of the film shows Hollywood at its best - adding drama to what they feel makes a better movie. I question that. Most of the players in the film are fictional characters, such as star running back Chris Ryan, and his relationship with his overly obsessed father is all added drama. If you are looking for a factual movie, you may want to look elsewhere.

One thing I found interesting about the movie was that the film starts with De La Salle losing and Coach Ladouceur rebuilding the winning spirit of his football family. Seeing the local high school team with their actual team jerseys was an added treat.

"When the Game Stands Tall" is rated PG-13 with a TRT (Total Running Time) of 1 hour and

55 minutes. "When the Game Stands Tall" is now playing at the Orinda Theatre and to tie in with the national release of the movie, Orinda Theatre is offering discounted \$7 movie tickets on Thursday, Aug. 28 to any students who are dressed in attire showing their own school pride.

Listen to Derek every Saturday morning at 8 a.m. on Real to Reel, 1450AM KEST.

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