

1

**Bull Durham**

KEVIN COSTNER, SUSAN SARANDON (1988)



THE BASEBALL HALL of Fame might not want Tim Robbins and Sarandon (or their liberal politics) on display at Cooperstown, but as wild-armed

pitcher Nuke LaLoosh and a philosophizing Baseball Annie named Annie, they are assured of celluloid immortality. Some of the best-remembered scenes (particularly the candlesticks-make-a-nice-gift mound conference) strain credulity, but writer-director (and former minor leaguer) Ron Shelton has superb storytelling chops. Best of all, Costner, as crafty catcher Crash Davis, is a team player, having not yet maxed out on the self-importance scale.

2

**Rocky**

SYLVESTER STALLONE, CARL WEATHERS (1976)



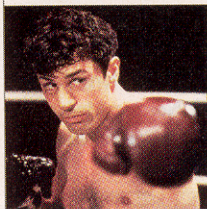
IN AMERICA'S bicentennial year Rocky Balboa became the first of the post-Vietnam War heroes, a frenzied expression of old-fashioned

individualism. A slow-on-the-uptake palooka who gets a chance to survive a fight with the heavyweight champ (Apollo Creed, played with panache by Weathers), Balboa has a Philadelphia story with heart and purity and just enough cruelty for resonance. Stallone informed his loser with a colossal goofiness that was impossible not to watch. He was so convincingly sincere that audiences actually jumped up and screamed for him to win.

3

**Raging Bull**

ROBERT DE NIRO, CATHY MORIARTY (1980)



A FIGHT FILM LIKE no other, it charges at you headfirst, the way its savage protagonist did in the ring. Adapted from Jake La Motta's candid

confessions and filmed in garish black-and-white, *Raging Bull* is a sort of anti-*Rocky*. Director Martin Scorsese presents La Motta's bouts as masterfully edited one-act miniatures and goes toe-to-toe with fight-film clichés: He neither romanticizes La Motta nor "explains" the anger that drives the champ inside and outside the ring. De Niro's unsparing portrait of this opaque, repellent villain is poignant in its precision—even his silences are smoldering.

4

**Hoop Dreams**

DOCUMENTARY (1994)



IT'S ALMOST THREE HOURS long but director Steve James's saga of Chicago basketball stars William Gates and Arthur Agee is worth every minute. An air

of dread hangs over this cautionary tale, as its protagonists confront the inevitable disappointments of hoops after high school.

5

**Slap Shot**

PAUL NEWMAN, MICHAEL ONTKEAN (1977)



NEWMAN'S HOCKEY COACH, Reggie Dunlop, revives a deadbeat minor league team by recruiting the hard-checking, high-sticking Hanson brothers.

Eyes obscured by taped-up glasses, fists swathed in tinfoil, these geeky goons revel in dirty play. So does the audience.

6

**Hoosiers**

GENE HACKMAN, DENNIS HOPPER (1986)



JACK NICHOLSON WAS first choice to play coach Norman Dale, but he declined. Just as well: It's hard to imagine anyone other than Hackman

goading his eight-man Hickory High team. So what if Indiana hoops history was slightly rewritten for this uplifting upset?



7 **Olympia**

DOCUMENTARY (1936)



INTENDED AS NAZI propaganda, Leni Riefenstahl's film is also a lyrical account of the Berlin Olympics. Critic Pauline Kael called it an elegy on youth, "dedicated to the highest ideals of sportsmanship—these young men who were so soon to kill each other."

8 **Breaking Away**

DENNIS CHRISTOPHER, PAUL DOOLEY (1979)



THIS BOY-MEETS-BIKE classic kickstands the test of time. Dooley is hilarious as a refundphobic used-car salesman, but this is above all a career movie for Christopher, who croons arias and pedals to an exciting finish against snooty college boys in the Little 500.

9 **Chariots of Fire**

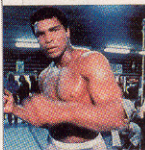
BEN CROSS, IAN CHARLSON (1981)



IT'S AMAZING THAT A movie about Caucasian sprinters, some of whom look slow even for the 1924 Olympics, won the Academy Award for best picture in the go-go '80s. But there's so much heart at the finish line that we accept the lack of soul on the blocks.

10 **When We Were Kings**

DOCUMENTARY (1996)



THIS LONG-DELAYED account of the 1974 Rumble in the Jungle between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman is nearly as enthralling as the bout. The footage is a heartbreaking record of Ali as a cultural force. Norman Mailer and George Plimpton provide sharp commentary.

11 **Bang the Drum Slowly**

MICHAEL MORIARTY, ROBERT DE NIRO (1973)



NOBODY LOOKS MUCH LIKE a ballplayer, least of all pitcher Moriarty and doomed, tobacco-chewing catcher De Niro. But *Drum* movingly hugs the foul line between myth and reality. And there's not a dry eye in the stadium as De Niro stumbles around under that final pop foul.

12 **Dogtown and Z-Boys**

DOCUMENTARY (2002)



A HARD-CORE LOOK AT how surfing values and style morphed into extreme skateboarding for a ragtag gang of Southern California beach kids, this movie is also a wonderful evocation of time (the '70s) and place (Dogtown, a shoddy area of Santa Monica). Groove on the old school rock.

13 **A League of Their Own**

TOM HANKS, GEENA DAVIS (1992)



THERE MAY BE NO CRYING in baseball—but the game once had females, as recounted in this lightly fictionalized and spiritedly feminist account of the World War II-era women's pro league. Hanks as a fall-down-drunk skipper and Davis as a loose-limbed catcher provide the pathos.

14 **The Freshman**

HAROLD LLOYD, JOBYNA RALSTON (1925)



THE MOST PLUNDERED sports film ever made, this sidesplitting silent stars Lloyd as a callow youth who becomes the laughingstock of his college. He tries out for the football team, fails and serves as water boy until the final crazed seconds of the Big Game.

15 **The Endless Summer**

DOCUMENTARY (1966)



WRITER-DIRECTOR-narrator Bruce Brown followed surfers Mike Hynson and Robert August around the world in search of the perfect wave. The story line is small, but sweet. In this classic you can see the DNA of every surf movie that came after.

16 **North Dallas Forty**

NICK NOLTE, MAC DAVIS (1979)



WITH SOMEWHAT LESS splash *NDF* demystifies the Dallas Cowboys the way *Ball Four* did the New York Yankees. The action is vivid and violent, the dialogue remains fresh, and pot-smoking, pill-popping, glue-fingered wide receiver Nolte is an All-Pro antihero.

17 **Brian's Song**

JAMES CAAN, BILLY DEE WILLIAMS (1971)



A GROWN-MEN-DO-CRY classic. Caan and Williams are a dream backfield as Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers, of course, but the TV movie gets two extra points for casting Jack Warden (as crusty George Halas) and Shelley Fabares (as Piccolo's plucky wife, Joy).

18 **Caddyshack**

RODNEY DANGERFIELD, BILL MURRAY (1980)



AS LONG AS MEN GATHER to drink beer and break wind, director Harold Ramis's masterwork will be deconstructed frame by frame, including the memorable bit in which Murray provides his own play-by-play as he uses a hoe to make a shot out of a flower bed.



19

## Downhill Racer

ROBERT REDFORD, GENE HACKMAN (1969)



THE THEN CUTTING-EDGE, skier's-eye camera work gave a visual rush to this tale of a U.S. Olympic ski coach (Hackman) who tries to tame a talented but

wayward medal hopeful (Redford). What ever happened to Redford's dynamic love interest, Camilla Sparv?

20

## Requiem for a Heavyweight

ANTHONY QUINN, JACKIE GLEASON (1962)



THIS MELANCHOLY MOOD piece features Quinn as a tender, mumbling giant who plods down lonely streets as if the ground were tapioca. Highlights

include Mickey Rooney's wary, sympathetic cutman and the shadowy, darkly glamorous cinematography.

21

## Pumping Iron

DOCUMENTARY (1977)



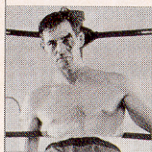
ADULATORY, VOYEURISTIC and engaging, this irony-pumped work dissects the grotesque subculture of men's bodybuilding. The film focuses on Arnold

Schwarzenegger, whose main rival, Lou Ferrigno, is incredibly bulky but not yet Incredibly Hulky.



## 22 The Set-Up

ROBERT RYAN, GEORGE TOBIAS (1949)



IN THE MOST BRUTAL indictment of boxing ever filmed, Ryan is unforgettable as the shabby, shambling tomato can who still believes he can be a contender. Based on a prose poem and shot in real time, it still packs the power of a Joe Louis uppercut.

## 23 The Hustler

PAUL NEWMAN, JACKIE GLEASON (1961)



THIS HEMINGWAYESQUE tale of circling pool sharks is crammed with atmosphere and incisive acting. As the disenchanted drifter who tests what's inside himself, Newman is upstaged by George C. Scott as the wicked manager who rejects him as a born loser.

## 24 Searching for Bobby Fischer

MAX POMERANC, BEN KINGSLEY (1993)



A BUDDING GRANDMASTER learns that the force is with him in a chessboard version of *Star Wars*. Battling for his mind and game are a street hustler (Laurence Fishburne) preaching tactics and attitude, and a somber scholar (Kingsley) demanding discipline.

## 25 Horse Feathers

THE MARX BROTHERS (1932)



THIS COLLEGE-FOOTBALL caper has Groucho, Chico, Harpo, Zeppo, passwords, stolen playbooks and madcap dialogue that generations have heard once and recalled forever: "Baravelli, you've got the brain of a four-year-old boy, and I bet he was glad to get rid of it."

## 26 The Bad News Bears

WALTER MATTHAU, TATUM O'NEAL (1976)



BIBULOUS MANAGER Matthau bitches, precocious O'Neal pitches, and a hilariously foulmouthed gang of Little Leaguers scores big laughs. Having seen the two sequels and the formula copied by the *Mighty Ducks* movies, dare we label *Bears* seminal?

## 27 National Velvet

ELIZABETH TAYLOR, MICKEY ROONEY (1944)



THIS LIVELY AND immensely likable film involves an English butcher's daughter (rapturously played by 12-year-old Taylor) who practically wills her sorrel gelding to win the Grand National. The climactic race was filmed on a Pasadena golf course.

## 28 Eight Men Out

JOHN CUSACK, DAVID STRATHAIRN (1988)



AUTEUR JOHN SAYLES tackles the 1919 Black Sox scandal, telling the complex story completely. He gets brilliant, understated performances out of Strathairn (as game-fixing pitcher Eddie Cicotte) and Cusack (as apparently innocent third baseman Buck Weaver).

## 29 Rollerball

JAMES CAAN, JOHN HOUSEMAN (1975)

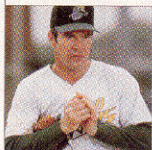


IN 2018 A CORPORATE world-state channels the bloodlust of society through a sport that weds hockey, football and Roller Derby. Ruling execs try to off the champ (Caan) by making the game a fight to the death. A defiant Caan keeps the allegory from seeming too high-handed.



## 30 The Rookie

DENNIS QUAID, RACHEL GRIFFITHS (2002)



AN EARNEST QUAID HAS the right stuff in this true story about Jim Morris, a failed minor league pitcher turned high school teacher-coach who gets

another shot at the Show. Quaid's mound scenes pop the glove, and Griffiths supplies a mood changeup as his encouraging wife.

## 31 Baseball—A Film by Ken Burns

DOCUMENTARY (1994)



VIVIDLY EMPLOYING HIS patented and burnished technique (archival film, still photos and talking heads), Burns furnishes, in 18½ enthralling hours, an

unparalleled history of our national pastime. *Baseball's* MVP? The ageless, twinkling former Negro leaguer Buck O'Neil.

## 32 Vision Quest

MATTHEW MODINE, LINDA FIORENTINO (1985)



WE CAN BELIEVE THAT A high school wrestler, even one as lanky as Modine, could cut enough weight to take on a foe two classes lower. But having an older

woman who looks like Fiorentino move in with you because her car broke down? Well, movies are all about dreams coming true.

## 33 Fat City

STACY KEACH, JEFF BRIDGES (1972)



GRITTY DOESN'T BEGIN TO describe this absorbing but overlooked tale, directed by John Huston, of two boxers, one (Bridges) on the way up, the other

(Keach) on the way down. Look for *Cheers's* beloved Coach, Nicholas Colasanto, as trainer Ruben. He's gritty too.

## 34 Everybody's All-American

DENNIS QUAID, JESSICA LANGE (1988)



QUAID AND LANGE DISPLAY great legs as a Big Couple on Campus in the evocative cinematic version of Frank Deford's novel about a Southern

gridiron hero. John Goodman, as Quaid's boisterous buddy, and Carl Lumbly, as foil Narvel Blue, add heft and heart.

## 35 Million Dollar Legs

W.C. FIELDS, JACK OAKIE (1932)



THIS SCREWIEST OF screwball comedies has Fields as president of Klopstokia, where every woman is named Angela, every man is named

George and every citizen is an Olympic-caliber athlete. They all come to Los Angeles for the '32 Games. Mayhem ensues.



## 36 Jerry Maguire

TOM CRUISE, CUBA GOODING JR. (1996)



IN MAKING THE emotional leap from stonyhearted to softhearted, a sensitive Cruise almost gives sports agents a good name.

Renee Zellweger, as his love interest, is winning, and Gooding's "Show me the money" rap never stops being funny.

## 37 The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick

ARTHUR BRAUSS, ERIKA PLUHAR (1971)



A GERMAN GOALKEEPER, sent to the bench after surrendering a goal, wanders through Vienna and commits a random murder. Directed by Wim

Wenders, this stark, beautiful, morally ambivalent film uses soccer as a metaphor for existential dread.

## 38 Field of Dreams

KEVIN COSTNER, JAMES EARL JONES (1989)



CORNBALL, YES, BUT ALSO a cornfield classic that touches the bases of nostalgia, baseball history and the bond between fathers and sons. Costner

excels as ball field builder Ray Kinsella. And Burt Lancaster is unforgettable as old-timer Moonlight Graham.

# SWEAT FLOPS: THE 10 WORST

*You know how some movies are so bad they're good? These just stink*

**1 Space Jam** (1996) Lazy and spiritless, this cynical merchandising exercise strips Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck of their anarchic energy and peddles Michael Jordan (*right*) for canonization.

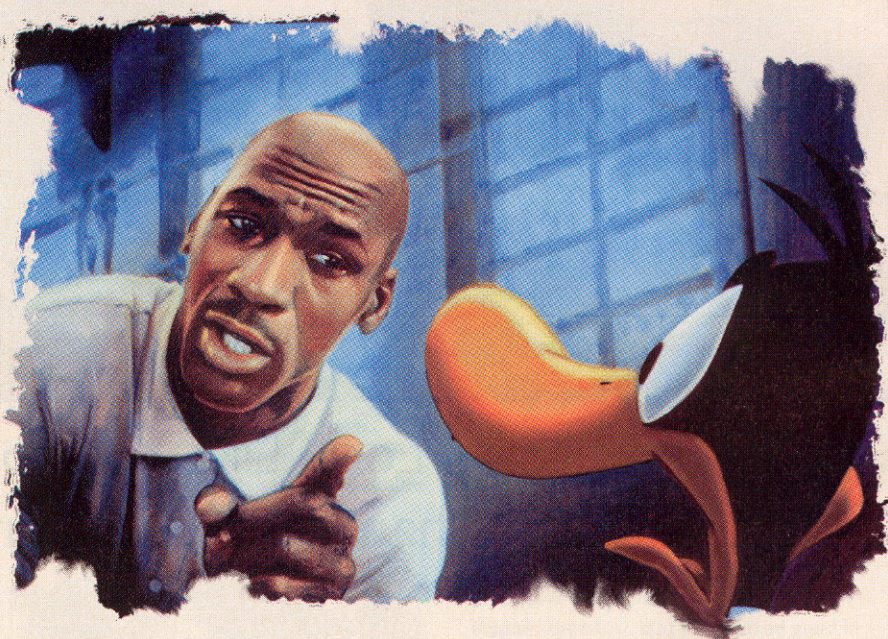
**2 The Other Side of the Mountain** (1975) Insufferably fulsome, true-life tale of Olympic skiing hopeful Jill Kinmont, who is paralyzed by a fall and tortured by Olivia Newton-John's cloying title song.

**3 Rocky IV** (1985) In a performance unmarred by subtlety of any kind Sylvester Stallone's aggressive bodybuilder is so self-inflated he could be a float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

**4 The Program** (1993) Long bomb of a film about a college football team in which a moronic quarterback lies faceup on a highway like a human speed bump. Moronic moviegoers aped him.

**5 Days of Thunder** (1990) NASCAR blockbuster that's all Formula One cliché. Deafening soundtrack obscures lack of plot, suspense or chemistry between hotshot Tom Cruise and brain surgeon (Nicole Kidman), who massages his ego.

**6 The Replacements** (2000) Antiunion greed-and-gridiron screed about mewling NFL players and their sad-



sack fill-ins that's about as watchable as replacement-player football.

**7 Players** (1979) Pulp, soapy, helplessly camp romance between Wimbledon finalist Dean Paul Martin and rich bitch Ali MacGraw, who expresses emotion by contorting her nostrils.

**8 Caddyshack II** (1988) Even fans of the original's dumb monkey-house humor will find this punishingly unfunny. The embarrassing Dan Aykroyd signals to the audience that he's smarter than the movie. But he's in it; he's not.

**9 The Kid from Left Field** (1979) The set-up to the one-joke plot: rosin-bag-sized Gary Coleman manages the San Diego Padres. We're still waiting for the punch line.

**10 The Legend of Bagger Vance** (2000) Awesomely unsuccessful parable about selfhood (or something) in which a shuffling black golf whisperer (Will Smith) rejuvenates the game of a white hacker (Matt Damon) at a racially tolerant (huh?) Savannah country club circa 1931.



## 39 The Harder They Fall

HUMPHREY BOGART, ROD STEIGER (1956)



IN HIS FINAL FILM BOGART plays a down-and-out sports columnist who teams with a sleazy boxing promoter (Steiger) to hype—through a series of fixed fights—a clumsy giant with a glass jaw. The verbal sparring between heavyweights Bogart and Steiger goes 12 riveting rounds.

## 40 The Longest Yard

BURT REYNOLDS, EDDIE ALBERT (1974)



REYNOLDS IS A FORCEFUL presence playing a convict and ex-quarterback now calling signals for his prison squad. Former Green Bay Packer Ray Nitschke is among Reynolds's formidable foes, as is Albert, the sinister warden. (Is there ever any other kind in the movies?)

## 41 Remember the Titans

DENZEL WASHINGTON, WILL PATTON (2000)



NO CLICHÉ IS OVERLOOKED in this fact-based Disney movie detailing the integration of a Virginia high school and its football team in 1971. But Washington (as the black coach put in charge) and Patton (as the white coach who has to swallow his pride) are terrific.

## 42 The Pride of the Yankees

GARY COOPER, TERESA WRIGHT (1942)



COOPER ACHIEVES A QUIET nobility and grace in this sentimental biography of Lou Gehrig. To mimic the lefthanded Iron Horse, Cooper—a righthander—wore a uniform with the number reversed and ran to third base instead of first. When processed, the film was flipped.

## 43 Fists of Fury

BRUCE LEE, MARIA YI (1971)



TYPECAST ON AMERICAN TV, San Francisco-born Lee returned to Hong Kong, where he had been a child star. The best of the "chop sockies," in which the small, corkscrew martial arts master takes on all comers, *Fists* sparked a worldwide craze for kung fu flicks.

## 44 The Deadliest Season

MICHAEL MORIARTY, KEVIN CONWAY (1977)



THIS MADE-FOR-TV HOCKEY movie details the fate of a defenseman (Moriarty) who becomes goonish in an attempt to extend his career. He kills a foe on the ice and is tried for manslaughter, turning *Season* into a gripping courtroom drama. Conway is compelling as the defense lawyer.

## 45 Grand Prix

JAMES GARNER, EVA MARIE SAINT (1966)



THIS PIONEERING FORMULA One movie uses split screens and 70-millimeter cameras strapped to vehicles (which were jacked up on the other side for balance) to convey the sensations of a race. The driven characters take a backseat to the high-octane crashes.

## 46 Any Given Sunday

AL PACINO, CAMERON DIAZ (1999)



DIRECTOR OLIVER STONE created the first football film for the music-video age, a movie full of quick, jarring cuts and slam-bang action. Pacino is credibly harried as a dictatorial pro coach clashing with his controlling owner (Diaz) and his rebellious young quarterback (Jamie Foxx).

## 47 It Happens Every Spring

RAY MILLAND, JEAN PETERS (1949)



A LIGHTEARTED ROMP about a chemistry professor (Milland) who accidentally invents a compound that repels wood. To test it from the mound, he tries out for the big leagues, makes a team and proves unhittable. This gem anticipates steroids and corked bats.

## 48 The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings

BILLY DEE WILLIAMS, RICHARD PRYOR (1976)



IT'S 1939, EIGHT YEARS before Jackie Robinson will cross major league baseball's color line, and a rowdy African-American team is barnstorming the country. The script is sneakily subversive: For a black man to succeed in a white world, he must clown and cakewalk.

## 49 Phar Lap

TOM BURLINSON, RON LIEBMAN (1983)



THIS BEAUTIFULLY FILMED Australian period piece is a loving biography of the thoroughbred that captivated the land Down Under in the 1920s and '30s. The movie touchingly depicts the relationship between Phar Lap and the groom (Burlinson) who cares for him.

## 50 Best in Show

CHRISTOPHER GUEST, EUGENE LEVY (2000)



GUEST'S WILDLY HILARIOUS "mockumentary" revolves around show dog owners—a fly-fisherman and his mopey bloodhound; neurotic yuppies with their depressed weimaraner. Fred Willard steals the final dog show as a Joe Garagiola-like commentator.