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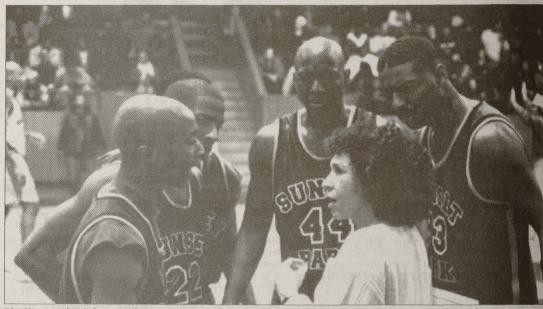
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AGGIELIFE

Perlman miscast as basketball coach in mediocre Sunset Park



Phyllis Saroka (Rhea Perlman) coaches a group of delinquents about basketball and life in Sunset Park.

MOVIE REVIEW Sunset Park Starring Rhea Perlman and Fredro Starr **Directed by Steve Gomer** Rated R Playing at Hollywood 16 \*\* (out of five)

By Wes Swift

While watching Sunset Park, the most recent foray into the world of basketball films, the same question raced through my mind quicker than a fast break: Has Hollywood run out of

Rhea Perlman stars in this mediocre drama as Phyllis Saro ka, a teacher who takes over as the head men's basketball coach in a Brooklyn high school. Saroka doesn't take the job for the love of coaching, but rather to

collect a little extra cash to open

a restaurant on St. Croix. The problem for Phyllis, however, is that she doesn't know a basketball from a

kumquat. But she forms a bond with her team, a motley crew of criminals, junkies and delinquents, and learns a thing or two about the crew As her team in-

evitably begins to succeed on the court, she and her players begin to discover a little bit about what it takes to win off the court. Director Steve

Gomer should have learned a thing or two about getting a good script before taking to the court. The screenplay too closely resembles 1986's Wildcats, the Goldie Hawn comedy about a woman who takes over as coach of a high school football team.

Wildcats, for all its sophomoric antics, was funny. It didn't bother to mire itself in the bog of reflection and profundity that Sunset Park does. Sunset tries to make audiences get into the minds of the characters and make them care about what happens.

The problem, though, is that Gomer doesn't give viewers

enough time to get attached to anybody in the film. Serious conversations — the breeding ground for the revelations of any film — are drowned between scenes of locker room machismo and thundering court action.

Perlman is severely miscast as Saroka, Call me nostalgic, but it's hard for me to imagine Perlman in any role beside Carla Tortelli, the quick-witted waitress from Cheers. She doesn't do anything to change my perception. The lovable loser role in this film just doesn't suit Perlman.

The rest of the cast, i.e. the team, is composed of potential stars. Fredro Starr, who received an Ace Award nomination for best supporting actor in the HBO movie Strapped and doubles as member of the rap group Onyx, solidly plays Shorty, the team's short-fused star player.

The remaining teammates are merely shades that allow the coach to bounce her pearls of wisdom. No one stands out, just like the film.

Someone should have stuffed Sunset Park before it ever got on the court.

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