

# REEL CRITIQUE

**"Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story"**  
Starring Vince Vaughn, Ben Stiller, Christine Taylor, Rip Torn  
Twentieth Century Fox

Review by Jay Slovacek

Ben Stiller has some making up to do. "Envy," "Starsky & Hutch," "Along Came Polly" and "Duplex" have been disasters compared to previous films like "Meet The Parents" and "There's Something About Mary."

Given the recent failures, "Dodgeball" had every chance of being a dud. Surprisingly, Stiller and Vince Vaughn team up for some good laughs, and the movie keeps interest without focusing too much on Stiller's overblown ego. Some of the best moments in "Dodgeball" revolve around Stiller's mindless jock banter and Vaughn's squinting confusion.

Stiller plays fitness freak White Goodman who runs a gym with the motto "We're better than you, and we know it." Sporting a full Fu Manchu mustache and an inflatable crotch, Goodman sees himself as a shrine of manly perfection.

Across the street resides the "good guy's" gym, Average Joe's Gym, run by Peter La Fleur (Vaughn). La Fleur is Vaughn at his most shabby -- he's so lazy that Average Joe's hasn't collected dues in 13 months and now the bank is foreclosing. To add insult to

injury, Goodman's Globo Gym has bought the Average Joe's mortgage, and Goodman intends to level the eyesore and transform the space into a parking garage.

Average Joe's regular customers (Stephen Root among them) won't allow Globo Gym to close their favorite spot. They put their hopes on winning the \$50,000 dodgeball championship in Las Vegas to pay the debts. Globo Gym gets wind of this and produces a superior team to thwart Average Joe's.

"Dodgeball" gets a boost from Patches O'Houlihan (Rip Torn, Aggie Class of '52) as the wheelchair-bound dodgeball expert who gives the Average Joe's team a chance in the tournament.



White Goodman (Stiller), the egomaniacal owner of Globo Gym, soars for the ball in "Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story." IMAGE COURTESY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

O'Houlihan doles out dodgeball wisdom such as, "If you can't wrenches, you can dodge a ball."

The strengths of "Dodgeball" reside in the supporting cast and the cameo appearances. The game commentators are witty; Will Shatner is amusing as the dodgeball commissioner; Dan Hasselhoff mocks himself as the German team coach and Lance Armstrong dishes advice. Perhaps the best line of the movie is a line of profanity directed at Chuck Norris.

"Dodgeball" is a winner, but it's an ugly win. Expect a few good laughs, some groans and some boredom. Sit through the credits for Stiller's great outtake at the end.

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## Beliefs

Continued from page 3

blends Islamic beliefs with Christian ones. Here, she said, she learned how to connect with God on a different level.

"The healings help a person go into their heart and see place their heart that need love from God," Sikes said. "One of the things that attracted me to Sufism was that the (Sufi) teachers were so direct and I felt that they could take me further than Christianity. It's a religion that is more focused on your relationship with God, how you practice your beliefs on the outside."

Soon Sikes enrolled in a Sufi healing school in California, where she became certified to perform energy healings for other people. She said her mother and sister, who were both Christians before Sikes introduced them to Sufism, also became Sufis.

Sikes continues to practice her faith by meditating every day, usually waking up in the middle of the night for two hours to pray "Allah," the Islamic name for God. She said her strict devotion to her religion has paid off in the classroom.

"Sufism influenced the way I study because I learn for the deeper meaning instead of just learning information," she said. "All that I've learned from Sufism can be incorporated into a psychology practice."

While Sikes uses her religion to guide her studies, other students are using their studies to guide their religion -- or lack thereof. Christopher Walsh, president of Texas A&M's Agnostic Atheist Student Group and a senior English major, said his studies have led him to question God's existence. While the HERI study reports that only 8 percent of professors frequently encourage religious discussions, Walsh said he has found that many of his classes are open to religious debate. Those discussions, he said, have given him a stronger agnostic viewpoint on the existence of God.

Walsh, who considers himself to be a "weak" atheist, said he began soul-searching long before his first religious studies class.

"I was attending a Catholic high school, and someone asked me why I was Catholic. I had no idea," he said. "I had to ask myself what it was that I believed, and I finally decided that there was not enough evidence to say that there was a god."

Walsh said he chose to attend A&M despite its conservative reputation and predominantly Christian student body.

"It's just as difficult to have a different point of view at a liberal school as it is at a conservative school," he said. "The topic of religion comes up a lot no matter where you are."

And while a divine creator may be the topic of many classroom discussions, Walsh doesn't feel any closer to finding an answer than he did several years ago as a Catholic high school student.

"If anything, the classes I've taken have made me more agnostic," he said. "I've heard as many arguments for God's existence as I have arguments against it, but all of those debates bring up things you never even considered."

For Stadelmann, religious debates are a way of life. His studies often wait around outside his office, hoping their professor can do some religious guidance.

"Sometimes it's very difficult to keep my own beliefs out of my advice, but I try to stay professional," he said. "I'm convinced that religion is a very important part of life."

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